

The Figure of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

The following section is not meant to be a biography of any sort, for that is something that has already been addressed. It is however supposed to try to illuminate upon and give us a picture of something of the personality and figure of Jīlānī as may specifically be extracted from the sources we have been using so far. It is thus entirely based upon the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī*, for that is where we find his oratory unmodified (as opposed to the *Ghunya*, which was a completely composed text, and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, which was made into a more organised text), in addition to finding occasional comments upon his physical actions and the situational condition, which are given to us by the scribes taking note of his speech. For this reason the section has intentionally been placed after Jīlānī’s views, in order that the small offerings of personality and character that are presented here be better understood and appreciated. In this way the section also differs from the biography, because while that used biographical sources that were produced after the death of Jīlānī, this section relies on material produced during his lifetime and from individuals that personally witnessed the events and comments that are recorded. This material however also gives support to various aspects of the biography, which then allow one to place more faith in some of the biographical information, and it is with this that we should begin.

1 His Life

The biographies claim that Jīlānī had immense respect for all his teachers, and we read, for example, that he did not say anything to his spiritual teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās after the latter pushed him into the Tigris on a cold day. He did not even ask him why he did such a thing. In the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* Jīlānī addresses his audience by saying “you have shortcomings when in the company of shaykhs, while we always keep good manners.”¹ He also mentions that he used to keep company with somebody who was able to tell him what had and what would happen to him, and about his spiritual states.² Although he does

¹ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, n.d.) 349.

² Ibid. 348.

not mention any name, it seems that he is talking about none other than Ḥammād al-Dabbās, who, as we read in the biography, was able to clear up many of Jilānī's difficulties, knew him well, and could help him in a way that no other person could.

We also read in the biography that he was thought to be a crazy and insane person, by those people who used to lurk in the deserts and wastelands outside Baghdad, and that he gained from them the name 'Abd al-Qādir al-Majnūn, or 'Abd al-Qādir the insane. In addition to this, he felt a strong desire to leave Baghdad, and even attempted to on occasion, but was always brought back to the city where he ultimately became, without in any way desiring it, an extremely popular preacher. In the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* he says that his name in other places is *akhras*, or mute, and that he used to behave as a crazy and mute person, unable to speak Arabic.³ He also says that he did not desire to stay in Baghdad but rather wished to travel from town to town, and from village to village as a stranger, unknown to anybody, but that God desired something other than this for him and thus placed him right in the middle of what he was trying to run away from.⁴ His poor opinion of the city can also be found in his statement, "were it not for compliance with the Almighty Truth, would any sane individual remain in this city and live alongside its people?"⁵

We also find an example of him speaking out without any fear against powerful people, something that was claimed in the biographies, with the usual example of him famously speaking out against the Caliph when the latter appointed an unjust judge. We find a different example in the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī*, which records that the master of the household of Imam 'Izz al-Dīn, son of the Commander in Chief, was present with a whole host of servants and attendants during a particular sermon. As the group entered, Jilānī addressed them with, "You are all serving one another. God! Who will serve Him?"⁶ He then tells the master of the household, "Put your hand upon my hand, that we may rush off to our Lord, away from this ruined house, your property, and your family!"⁷ This recorded incident shows not only that Jilānī was able to speak his mind bluntly to both normal and higher society, but that people from the entire spectrum

3 Ibid. 254.

4 Ibid. 283.

5 Ibid. 15.

6 Ibid. 356.

7 The request that the master of the household put his hand upon the hand of Jilani is an interesting one, not least because this is one of the ways that the seeker or student gives his allegiance to the shaykh. This act known as the *bay'a* was also the way in which allegiance was given to the early Caliphs. Ibid. 357.

of society were interested in him and his talks. Again this fits in well with the Jīlānī that is portrayed in the biographies.

Finally, we find Jīlānī, in the desire to demonstrate the bounties that come through the Prophet and from the unseen, claim that more than five hundred souls had accepted Islam at his hands, and that more than twenty thousand had repented. This, he states, “is from the blessing of our Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.”⁸ Such a statement from Jīlānī himself is completely in line with what we find in the biographies, such as when Dhahabī reports that Jīlānī converted more than 500 people and reformed countless thieves and bandits.⁹ Of course with all these examples, and especially in one with so similar a congruence as in the example above, one could claim that the biographers merely lifted facts about Jīlānī’s life from his works and quoted them in their biographies. However, there is the fact that some of these examples show correspondence through character traits, such as when Jīlānī speaks out to different powerful personalities in the biography and in his works, or show correspondence in a mutual fact being confirmed with slightly different information. These examples show that we are able to find facts and events from the works of Jīlānī that agree perfectly with things that are claimed in the biographical sources, giving us confidence that what is portrayed in the biographical sources might on the whole be accurate information.

2 His Interactions

Jīlānī asks his students to treat him as a mirror in order to be able to see things about themselves that they would not be able to discern without him. If there is anything that is lacking in them with regards to religion then he will make it clear to them, without being shy or showing leniency. “My manner when it comes to religion is very forward, I was trained by a rough hand that was not conducive to hypocrisy.”¹⁰ Thus we find that Jīlānī does indeed seem forward when dealing with people, but that he behaves in this way in order to teach and train people. We can see this aspect of Jīlānī manifesting itself in various places.

8 Ibid. 148.

9 See the Biography chapter and also D.S. Margoliouth, *Contributions To The Biography of ʿAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan* 304.

10 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 36.

At the end of a session, after a few people have asked questions and he has given them answers, a man gets up to ask him a question. Before the man has even said a word, Jilānī tells him, “Hold your tongue! I can see that your question arises from your natural impulse and your *nafs*. Do not play with me. I am an executioner. I am lethal.”¹¹ It seems that Jilānī was aware of what he was going to be asked, or at least the nature of what was going to be asked in as much as he was able to give such a sharp response. He continues by giving an interpretation of the verse, “And God warns you to beware of Himself,” and warns everybody that God will soon take away their hearing, sight, property and family, perhaps giving an indication to the question that these are the sorts of things that Jilānī is concerned about.¹² In the same session he receives another question in written form to which he replies, “This is absurd. A Sufi is not attached to the creation; he pays no attention to them. A Sufi is sought and does not seek.”¹³ Again we find that he is not afraid to speak his mind in a forward manner, not only to get his point across, but in order to use it as a training method. In a different session a man approaches him to ask a question while he is already speaking, and he ignores him and does not listen to him, while in another session he declares to the audience, “You are all stupid and crazy! Your staying away from me is a capital loss on your part for which there is no excuse. Do not fantasize and do not let your pride and insolence get the better of you. You will all soon be dead!”¹⁴

Perhaps he was able to behave in this manner because he knew exactly the type of people he was dealing with. In his own words: “There is no enmity between me and you; I only speak the truth and treat you impartially for the religion of God. I was myself trained in the rough style and speech of the shaykhs.”¹⁵ In addition to this he claims to know people’s conditions, for as he says “Alas, you try to hide your condition from me, but it will not be hidden from me!”¹⁶ We will return to what he may exactly mean by this below. He also seems to feel strongly that the scholars of the age are not doing their job properly. As we have seen above, practice of knowledge is far more important to Jilānī than mere intellectual pursuit as an endgame in itself. After advising that the only way to prosper is to turn away from creatures and to God, he comments that “if one wishes to benefit others, then this is what one should do rather than raving

11 Ibid. 354–355.

12 Qur’ān 3:28.

13 al-Jilānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 355.

14 Ibid. 344, 356.

15 Ibid. 22.

16 Ibid. 55.

on about complete rubbish,” where this comment is directed at other preachers.¹⁷ He also warns people to be wary of scholars who do not practice what they preach:

Do not be deceived by these scholars who are ignorant of God. All their knowledge works against them and not for them. They are knowledgeable in the laws of God but ignorant of God himself. They command people with things which they themselves do not do, and forbid the people from things which they themselves do not abstain from. They call people to the Truth, while they themselves flee from Him. They rebel and sin against Him with impudence. I have their names written, recorded and listed.¹⁸

This attitude perhaps explains the reason for the jealousy and enmity that a few of the other scholars of the time had for Jīlānī. A clear example of this is the attitude of Ibn al-Jawzī—who was probably the second most popular preacher in Baghdad—towards Jīlānī. Being a younger contemporary of Jīlānī, and also being the author of the extensive history work, *al-Muntaẓm*, one would expect Ibn al-Jawzī to have provided us with ample information on our subject. However, we find that in his biography of Jīlānī he provides us with only a few paltry lines. In fact the entry on Jīlānī is so meagre as to have prompted Dhahabī to comment that “the jealousy of Ibn al-Jawzī did not permit him to write any more about the life of Jīlānī than he did, because of the hatred that was in his heart for ʿAbd al-Qādir. May God protect us from such passion.”¹⁹ We know from surveys on the writings of Ibn al-Jawzī that he even wrote a book against Jīlānī entitled *Kitāb al-Dhamm ʿalā ʿAbd al-Qādir*, although today this work is not extant.²⁰ In addition to this we know that he also criticised

17 Ibid. 323.

18 Ibid. 56–57.

19 See Dhahabī’s biography provided in Arabic and translated in Margoliouth, *Contributions To The Biography of ʿAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan* 277. Interestingly Yāfʿī later criticised Dhahabī’s biography, especially as he perceived Dhahabi to have not given Jīlānī his due rank and credit. Dhahabī referred to Jīlānī as a Zāhid, while Yāfʿī considers this to be one of the preliminary levels of the Sufi path that Jīlānī eclipsed early in his life. See ʿAbdullāh b. Asad al-Yāfʿī, *Mirʾāt al-Janān* (1; Hyderabad Deccan: Oriental Publication, 1919) 345.

20 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ʿAlwājī, *Muʿallafāt Ibn al-Jawzī* (Kuwait: Markaz al-Makhtūṭāt wa al-Turāth wa al-Wathāʾiq, 1992) 178. Merlin Swartz believes that this work is extant, referring to ʿAlwājī. However ʿAlwājī only mentions that the work is known to have been written by Ibn al-Jawzī as mentioned by Ibn Rajab in his *Dhayl Alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Swartz also references this to ʿAlwājī pages 178–179, while the actual reference is only at the bottom of page 178, and so perhaps Swartz misread the entry and read over the page into the entry for the book *Kitāb fī Ajāʾib ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, which does have an extant copy. See Mer-

Jilānī's teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās, because "he was on the path of Sufism, and claimed inner knowledge and spiritual unveilings, but was devoid of knowledge of the *sharī'a*," and that "he did not have an ear except with the ignorant." The famous historian Ibn al-Athīr also noted this in his biographical entry of Dabbās, writing that, "I have seen Ibn al-Jawzī criticise and slander him. This shaykh (Ibn al-Jawzī) has treated other righteous persons in the same manner, and he wrote a book entitled *Talbīs Iblīs*, wherein he did not spare any of the masters of righteousness."²¹

Massignon goes as far as to claim that the anti-Hallājism of Ibn al-Jawzī was due to his hatred of Jilānī (who had sympathy for Ḥallāj), and that he had Jilānī's remains thrown out of the *madrasa* in the period when it was in his control.²² The *madrasa* was initially in the control of Jilānī's own grandson, Rukn 'Abd al-Salām, but he was stripped of the *madrasa* by the government, had his books burned, his *taylasān* removed (a shawl like garment worn over the head and shoulders that was the symbol of a scholar), and his person charged with *fisq* (moral corruption); all this due in part to the efforts of Ibn al-Jawzī, who had great influence with the authorities.²³ In the account of Qifṭī of this affair, there is no mention of Ibn al-Jawzī, and he suggests that Rukn had good relations with the Imāmīs, which led to envy and jealousy from people who accused him of having 'heretical philosopher beliefs.'²⁴ However, in the account of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, his grandfather Ibn al-Jawzī was indeed involved in the public burning of the books of Rukn, an event where the crowds present protested against Rukn, his grandfather 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī and even Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, a result that Ibn al-Jawzī cannot have been too pleased about. There is no reason to doubt this fact from Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī because he was, if anything, biased in favour of his grandfather, and it would serve no purpose for him to relate this unless he were sure of its veracity. In fact his account only mentions these events as a preamble to make sense of what his entry for that particular

lin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 15.

21 'Alī Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (10; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.) 671.

22 On Jilānī's sympathy for Ḥallāj, see for example Jilānī quoting him in his speech: al-Jilānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 329 and 351. Unfortunately Massignon does not reference where he gets the information that Jilānī's remains were thrown out of the *madrasa*, and so we cannot check its authority and whether it is reliable etc, see Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam* (2; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 10.

23 For evidence of this see any of the biographies of Ibn Jawzī, e.g. the critical assessment by Swartz in Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*.

24 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf al-Qifṭī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā'* (Leipzig: s.n., 1903) 228–229.

date aims to record: the banishment of his grandfather, Ibn al-Jawzī, to Wāsiṭ. Thus Sibṭ writes that the *madrasa* was ultimately returned to Rukn ‘Abd al-Salam, after a new Caliph returned honour to the Jīlānī family, and so Rukn had his revenge on Ibn al-Jawzī, who was sent to Wāsiṭ where he was housebound for five years as a punishment. Sibṭ ends the account by quoting some hateful verses against Rukn from al-Muhadhdhab al-Rūmī, a resident of the Nizāmiyya *madrasa*.²⁵ It seems pertinent to quote ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī himself in regard to these events. He had of course long passed away before their occurrence and thus could not have been a living witness to any of it. He claims that, “Whoever accuses me and calls me a liar, God will show him to be the liar and will separate him from his family, his wealth and his country unless he repents.”²⁶

However, all biases aside, we may do no better than to refer to Swartz’s fair assessment of Ibn al-Jawzī, that he was simply a controversial figure who “could be severely critical of those who differed with him or those who tried to steal the limelight, as happened on more than one occasion,” and he cites his animosity towards Jīlānī as a case in point.²⁷

Although we have seen that Jīlānī claims his manner to be in the ‘rough style of the shaykhs,’ and in spite of his apparent harshness and abruptness, we can see that he is only doing this for the benefit of those around him, for the benefit of the people, his people. As he himself explains:

I am an advisor, and I do not want any reward for it ... my happiness lies in your success, and my sadness lies in your destruction. When I see the face of an honest disciple who has succeeded at my hands, then I feel satisfied and rejoice as how someone like them has turned out under my supervision. My goal is you and not I, that you might change and not I. I have already made the crossing.²⁸

Thus Jīlānī sees himself as somebody who has already secured his future and is intent on helping as many others as possible. His call extends to all people, and he even calls out to the ascetics (*zuhhād*) to come to him, “O ascetics of the Earth advance! Destroy your monasteries and come to me. You have been sitting in your retreats for no reason, and have gained nothing. Advance and

25 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī is quoted in Abū Shāmā al-Maqdisī, *Tarājim al-Qarnayn, al-Sādis wa al-Sābi‘* (Cairo: Kutub al-Malakiyya, 1947) 56–57.

26 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 358.

27 Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī’s Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt* 27–28.

28 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 38.

gain the fruits of wisdom!”²⁹ He does not assume that he will be able to change every person that he comes into contact with, but still hopes for their salvation: “if I have anything with God on the day of judgement, then I will surely bear the burdens of the first and the last of you.”³⁰ In fact this strong desire for the salvation of the people extends to the whole of humanity and to all creatures of God:

O creatures of God, I seek for your total welfare and benefit. I wish for the closing of the gates of hell and for it to cease to exist completely, and that not a single thing from the creation of God enter it. I wish for the opening of the gates of paradise and that not a single thing from the creation of God be prevented from entering it. I desire all this because of my acquaintance with the mercy of God and His compassion for all His creation.³¹

While this may only be a wish of Jilānī and not something certain, we do find that he has something sure for his people: “O you who are present, and O you who are absent, on the Day of Judgement you will see a strange thing from me. I will be arguing on behalf of the hypocrites, so what about the believers!”³²

Thus we can sum up that the way in which Jilānī treats those who come to him, whether seemingly good or bad, comes ultimately from his concern for them. This is shown not only through his statements confirming this, but also from the statements highlighting his desire for the salvation of all humanity. This attitude in turn arises from his own internal state and from the state of his heart, for as he says, “when the heart is sound, it is filled with mercy and compassion for all creation.”³³

3 His Insight and Acumen

Throughout the *Faḥ al-Rabbānī* we find various instances of Jilānī making claims and predictions about things and events unknowable to him. Part of this comes as a result of his *firāsa* which may be translated as ‘penetrating insight,’ ‘spiritual intuition,’ ‘perspicacity,’ ‘cardiognostic acumen,’ or simply insight and

29 Ibid. 95.

30 Ibid. 63.

31 Ibid. 207.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid. 70.

understood to be an overwhelming perception that enters the heart and dominates it.³⁴ Its veracity is often quoted as being based upon two factors: the quality of one's mind, which is based on the keenness of one's heart and intelligence, and the appearance of signs and indications on others.³⁵ Jīlānī asserts that "the light of the heart is from the light of God, the Prophet having said, 'beware of the *firāsa* of the believer, for they see by the light of God.'"³⁶ Thus he advises the sinners and morally corrupt people not to enter the presence of a believer because "they will, by the light of God, see what condition you are in."³⁷ It is perhaps this *firāsa* that is in action when Jīlānī declares: "Woe unto you! You are trying to hide your condition from me, but it will not be hidden. You are pretending to be a seeker of the hereafter and yet you are actually a seeker of this world. This delusion in your heart is written on your forehead."³⁸ Although the language here would permit the statement to be interpreted metaphorically, that their behaviour or attitude shows them to be more interested in worldly gain than in spiritual matters, its intention in being more literal becomes more evident when the statement is considered against others such as, "were it not for the law, I would indeed talk about what goes on in your houses ... were I to reveal just a little of what I know then it would cause you to separate from me."³⁹

However, there seems to be something more than just *firāsa* at work when considering other statements. Jīlānī claims to have once kept company with a person who was able to tell him what had happened to him and what would happen to him, this person having possibly been his teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās.⁴⁰ Jīlānī displays a similar ability too, as for example when a resident of Baghdad who has just returned from the *ḥajj* pilgrimage pays a visit to Jīlānī and is told to repent to God. He protests that he has just returned from the pilgrimage and thus cleansed of sins, and Jīlānī replies: "I know that, but then there was fornication, sins, and flagrantly corrupt behaviour!"⁴¹ The visitor is no

34 The term 'cardiognostic acumen' is the term used by Eric Ohlander, see Eric Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: Umar al-Suhrawardi and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhood* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

35 Muḥammad Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Tahdhīb Madārij al-Sālikīn* (UAE: Maṭbaʿa al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1991) 491–493.

36 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 16.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. 55.

39 Ibid. 15.

40 Ibid. 348.

41 Ibid. 359.

doubt surprised at this revelation of what, at least he thought, was a very private affair. An interesting occurrence no doubt, but over and above this type of display of his talent is a very singular and interesting occurrence that is recorded thus:

The Shaykh [Jilānī] said ‘News has come to me of a catastrophe that will befall this city [Baghdad].’ He then made a prayer for the people of the city, that they may be saved, and then said in a submissive tone, ‘By my life there is somebody in this city that deserves to be killed and crucified. For every individual You [God] honour, there are a thousand individuals on whose account You will destroy us.’ He then said as if exasperated, ‘You have put both friend and foe into the vastness of destiny, they have both melted and become one ingot.’⁴²

This prediction of a future disaster for the city of Baghdad could of course be linked by those adhering to his words to many an event, but would in hindsight be most fitting for the Mongol invasion that took place in 656/1258, less than a hundred years later. There is no doubt in my mind that this is what many of his followers studying his speech would have concluded. The person who deserves to be killed and crucified would most fittingly be the Caliph at that time, al-Mustaʿsim, an arrogant individual who grossly underestimated the Mongols, and thus did little to protect the city or its inhabitants.⁴³ Regardless of what this statement may or may not have referred to, we have here, along with the other occurrences noted above, an interesting phenomenon whose basis or origin, at least according to Jilānī, merit explanation. Fortunately we have within the *Faḥ al-Rabbānī* plenty of statements that reveal his perspective.

Jilānī’s speech does not seem, on examination, to be ad-lib, for the language, style, and rhetoric suggest some preparation, and yet by his own claim is not an arranged or rehearsed act. When careful examination is somewhat ignored and one’s intuition relied upon there does indeed seem something spontaneous about it. He states that, “when speech manifests itself from me to you, then take it as coming from God, for He is the one that causes me to utter it.”⁴⁴ There is no ambiguity here, he is clearly asserting that at a minimum his speech must

42 Ibid. 321.

43 On the Mongol invasion see George Lane, *The Early Il-Khanate, 1258–1282: a re-appraisal* (London: s.n., 2001), David Morgan, *Mongols* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), Svet Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

44 al-Jilānī, *al-Faḥ al-Rabbānī* 22.

be considered inspired. He moreover does not want his listeners to have any doubts about his speech being contaminated in any way by his own whims and desires:

Listen to me and accept what I say, for there is no one else on the face of this earth who speaks about what the text means in a given case. I want people for their sake, not for my own ... with every word I utter, I only want the Truth.⁴⁵

The ‘text’ or *naṣṣ* here refers to the Qur’ān and *sunna*, indicating that only he for certain knows the meaning and application of any particular text in a particular given situation. This obviously is supposed to have come as a result of his spiritual status and access to a knowledge not contained within the scriptures alone. Again the emphasis is on his role as a ‘helper’ to others, for he personally has no need to do this task and furthermore as we have seen, would, if it were up to him, leave the city entirely. In another place he asserts, “if you are raised to the *‘illiyyūn*, then you will see that my words originate from there.”⁴⁶ The *‘illiyyūn* is the highest heaven, and it is sometimes considered as a level even higher than the seventh heaven.⁴⁷ Various biographies of Jīlānī have commented that a ‘pressure’ or ‘weight’ would come upon Jīlānī with matters that he could not contain, and this would increase until he stood up and spoke what was on his mind. In Dhahabī’s account Jīlānī says, “I used to receive orders and prohibitions in both sleep and wakefulness, and things to be said would overwhelm me, and if I did not speak then it would crowd my heart until I began to

45 Ibid. 152.

46 Ibid. 176.

47 *‘Illiyūn* has sometimes been understood by certain western scholars to refer specifically to a scroll or book as seemingly mentioned in the Qur’ān 83:18. Some further allege that it is “*undoubtedly* derived from a *misunderstanding* of the Hebrew ‘elyon (the highest)” [Emphasis mine]. See J. Horowitz, Jewish proper names and derivatives in the Koran, in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925), 215, Rudi Paret, ‘Illiyūn, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 1132. How they so unreservedly arrived at such a sure conclusion is baffling. Nevertheless we may stick with what the vast majority of scholars have concluded: that it refers to the highest heaven. In addition we have evidence that this is exactly what Jīlānī meant in this statement, because in the previous sentence he says that “if you put into practice what I say, and die on that practice and are raised to the *‘illiyyūn*, then you will see ...,” the meaning clearly referencing a location and not an object. Furthermore we have in the commentary on the Qur’ān ascribed to him, his interpretation for the verse at 83:18 as “the *‘illiyyūn* is the highest level of the highest heaven.” See ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī* (6; Istanbul: Markaz al-Jīlānī, 2009) 318–319.

choke, so I was not able to remain silent.”⁴⁸ According to his own statements, therefore, both in biographical material and in his works being examined here, the words he spoke were not from his own intellectual composition but were rather inspired and therefore of more merit than if they had just been based on intellectual endeavour alone. We saw above how he spoke out against scholars whom he considered ignorant of God, and we have a clarification here of which type of scholars or persons should actually address the public:

If your heart is sound ... then you will never lose the intimations of the Almighty Truth, and His wisdom will reach you through your *sirr* (inner consciousness); the *sirr* informing the heart, the heart informing the tranquil self, the self informing the tongue, and the tongue informing the people. One should either speak to the public in this method, or not speak at all.⁴⁹

This then, is the only type of scholar that is fit to address the public; one that has travelled the spiritual path himself. Any other type of scholar will necessarily to some degree be hypocritical, and Jīlānī is quite harsh against hypocrites. He declares, “I have truthfulness, and with it I cut the head of every unbeliever and lying hypocrite who does not turn to his Lord and repent.”⁵⁰ In another place he claims, “I cut the necks of the hypocrites who lie in their words and deeds. I examined the accounts of the scholars on many occasions, until I was able to verify their information.”⁵¹

In addition to these statements about where Jīlānī’s words originate from, we have other statements that show us that his lectures and lessons are divinely sanctioned. In the very first discourse of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he proclaims, “O my people, conform with the divine decree and accept it from ‘Abd al-Qādir (the slave of the All-Powerful Decree), the expert in conformity with the divine decree. My conformity with the decree leads me to the Decree.”⁵² We have already examined how conformance with destiny is a high station on the spiritual path, one that Jīlānī would have had to attain to be at the level of a teacher or guide himself, and that is confirmed for us here. Even more interesting is the claim that he has angels attending his sessions, a fact which he informs his audience of by suddenly giving a loud cry and then calling out: “O God, O God O

48 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ‘Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 283.

49 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 232.

50 Ibid. 103.

51 Ibid. 137.

52 Ibid. 10.

God, an absent friend has come ... O rabble!, here we have the servants of kings and the friends of the elite,” while the commentator informs us that he was pointing to angels and saints present within the session, but hidden to the rest of the audience.⁵³ In another place he informs his listeners about having personally met the Angel of Death. He tells them that on a particular night when remembering death, as was his habit, and weeping about it, he prayed to God: “I ask you that the Angel of Death not take my soul but rather that You take it Yourself.” While his eyes were still closed, he saw a very handsome old man enter through the door, and he asked him, “Who are you?” The man replied, “I am the Angel of Death,” to which Jīlānī said, “I have already asked Almighty God to take my soul rather than you.” The man asked, “Why did you ask Him for that? What have I done wrong? I am only a servant under orders, I am commanded to be gentle with some people and violent with others,” and he began to cry, and embraced Jīlānī.⁵⁴

For those thinking that Jīlānī may only be putting on an ostentatious show, or wondering why he would divulge such things as meeting angels, we do have instances where he makes statements that perhaps explain such behaviour. At one point during one of his speeches, he suddenly declares:

O God, I beg Your pardon for speaking openly about these secrets, but You know that I am overwhelmed. As somebody once said, ‘beware of what you seek pardon for,’ but when I get up onto this chair, I disappear from you all and there doesn’t remain a single person in front of my heart for me to seek pardon from, or for me to guard my speech from.⁵⁵

In another place we find him giving the explanation concerning the saints, that “the friends of God are very well mannered in front of Him. They do not make a single move, nor take a single step except with a clear permission in their hearts that comes from him. They do not eat anything permissible, nor put on clothes, nor marry, nor deal in any affair except with a clear permission in their hearts.”⁵⁶

These statements take us back to the discussion of the reports of miraculous and supernatural behaviour ascribed to Jīlānī that was given at the end of the biographical section. It is also pertinent here to make mention of the

53 Ibid. 332.

54 Ibid. 302.

55 Ibid. 283.

56 Ibid. 26.

puzzlement that is shown by Ibn ‘Arabī when he—in agreement with the above statement by Jīlānī—states that saints, even at the status of ‘pole’ (*qutb*), do not openly display the charismatic gifts and ‘miracles’ (*karamāt*) bestowed upon them by God, for that would be a breach of the respect and manners that are to be observed before God. As for Jīlānī seemingly going against this etiquette himself, then the only explanation that Ibn ‘Arabī could think of in ‘the strange case of ‘Abd al-Qādir,’ was that he must have been commanded by God in whatever he did.⁵⁷

4 His Mannerisms

On rare occasions the reader of the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* is treated by the scribes recording the words of Jīlānī to very short but fascinating glosses on his actual physical actions. These few recorded instances, which are examined below, give us perhaps the most interesting observations of the manifest behaviour and mannerisms of Jīlānī, and beyond this allow us, in a fashion more than any other, to gain an instant rapport and connection with the human being who is the voice of so many words and who inhabits a unique position in the spiritual nexus of the Sufi world.

In the middle of one of his speeches, he tells the crowd, “Let us await the arrival of the divine decree. In the name of God ...,” and then leans against his chair, with his head resting on his hand and his eyes closed. He remains in this position for a while and then proceeds to sit down upon the chair before continuing with his speech.⁵⁸ At one point somebody from the crowd asks Jīlānī, “Why do we see you hugging this piece of wood, the pommel of the chair?” The questioner was most likely referring to an ornamental piece of wood shaped like a ball or pomegranate, attached to the arm of the lecturing chair. Jīlānī replies, “Because it is close to me. You see things but you do not experience them, you do not reveal them, and that is why I am hugging it.” The questioner responds by asking him, “So we are closer to your heart?” to which Jīlānī replies, “O my foster brother, you will be like that when you become fully devoted to God, when you are observant of Him, fear Him and seek Him. I will then be a loving servant of yours.”⁵⁹ This exchange, mannerisms aside, also illustrates the

57 William Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1997) 376–377.

58 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 356.

59 Ibid. 319.

freedom and ease that the audience felt in Jīlānī's gatherings, and their confidence in even being able to ask him what seems to be a trivial question with no apparent relevance to his words.

Some of Jīlānī's actions seem to be done with no apparent connection to what he is saying, such as when in the middle of a particular discourse he suddenly blows into his hand while turning his face around in every direction.⁶⁰ This may just have been something idiosyncratic or an eccentricity which he did from time to time, or it may perhaps have been a practice that he carried out with specific intent but whose purpose we cannot gauge without being privy to further information. In a different discourse, his described actions are perhaps due to his being affected by the thoughts behind his words:

Whenever fear attracts you to Him, proximity brings Him closer to you and thus there is constancy. Do not be concerned about whether your life is long or short, whether it is the Day of Resurrection or not, whether people love you or hate you, give to you or deprive you ...⁶¹

At this point he stands up screaming and covers his face. He then uncovers it and says "O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham."⁶² O God, do not reveal our reports!" He then sits down and continues with his discourse. However, after relating only an anecdote or two to the crowd, he stands up again and begins to sway and lean; to the right and then to the left in a repeating motion, with his hand upon his chest clasp his breast. After a while of doing this, he sits back down and continues his speech.⁶³ The fact that he broke off from what he was saying could mean that the import of it was too much for him to bear, and that the words were the cause or co-effect of some personal experience, possibly spiritual. On the other hand his words may have had no connection whatsoever with the actions that followed them, and may have been due to something he'd seen or may even have been completely unrelated to anything in his environment. Of course with such pithy information it is impossible in most of these described cases to give any sort of grounded indication as to the cause of his disturbance.

In a similar occurrence as the above, and near the end of another discourse, he gives a great cry, stands up and begins swaying to his right and left and raising his hands towards the sky in a gesture of submission. He continues in this

⁶⁰ Ibid. 345.

⁶¹ Ibid. 310.

⁶² Qurʾān 21:69.

⁶³ al-Jīlānī, *al-Faḥḥ al-Rabbānī* 310.

manner until the end of the session and then says, “Oh what a blazing fire! Oh what a disaster for you all!” After this outburst he raises his hands and sits down in order to supplicate but does not say anything aloud. Then when he stands up again his face keeps changing colour, sometimes a yellowy colour and sometimes a red.⁶⁴ The comment that ‘he continues this until the end of the session’ indicates that perhaps he was this way for quite a while before his outburst. This may be right if we are to believe a report in the biography of Dhahabī that states, “The silence of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir was lengthier than his discourse, and he spoke from his heart.”⁶⁵ Thus such moments may have been quite the norm in Jīlānī’s sessions.

We find throughout the *Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* that Jīlānī often ends his discourses with “Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire,” which is an oft-used prayer from the Qur’ān.⁶⁶ However, as we have just seen above, some gatherings finished in a more animated manner, and there is record of a particular gathering that ended in a most spectacular fashion. It begins with Jīlānī stating, “Today I am losing an affirmation of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) that I was brought up upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect.” This statement of his is immediately followed by a man screaming and crying out, “Allāh!” Jīlānī tells him, “You shall be asked about this, you shall be called to account for it. Why did you say it? Was it ostentation or hypocrisy? Was it sincere or faithless? This day is a sledgehammer; whosoever wishes may leave and whoever wishes may remain.” Jīlānī then screams himself, and is approached by a great multitude of people, repenting, shouting and crying. While all this commotion is going on a bird comes and lands upon Jīlānī’s head. He tilts his head for the bird and remains in this position while the bird remains upon his head, and the people are upon the steps of his chair.⁶⁷ There are people screaming all around him, but he does

64 Ibid. 320.

65 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ‘Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 286.

66 Qur’ān 2.201. See as examples, al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 37, 40, 52, 62.

67 When speaking of the chair (in Arabic *kursī*) that Jilani speaks from, we are not talking of a simple table chair, but rather something more in line with the ‘chairs’ found in mosques that imams deliver sermons from. At minimum they usually have at least two steps and a main seating area (a sort of large step) and therefore raise the user to a higher position than a normal chair, and not only when seated but also when standing, for the user will be standing on one of the steps of the chair which will raise them above ground level. The height of the chair and therefore the number of steps it might have can vary considerably, from ones with only one or two steps to ones with over fifteen. The larger types are called mimbars or pulpits (*mimbar*) and where a chair becomes a mimbar is vague. How-

not stir until one of his companions holds out his hand towards the bird at which point it flies away. Jīlānī then makes a supplication, and the people create a great tumult with their crying, supplications and repentance. Jīlānī leaves for the Ruṣāfa Mosque amid this great commotion with a great many of the people following him with their crying, screaming, ecstatic states and tearing of clothes. The description ends with Jīlānī stating “This is the end of the age. O God we seek refuge in You from its evil.”⁶⁸ This scene, or spectacle if we may call it such, cannot have gone unnoticed by many of the residents and workers along the route. We can therefore be almost certain that the person of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī must surely have been known to the residents of at least a large part of the city, and moreover must have been known as a person associated with Sufism and Sufis, for it cannot have been too difficult for a local of that time and place to have identified the constituent members of the scene as such.

However, let us now return to his statement, which we related at the beginning of this event where Jīlānī declared, “Today I am losing an affirmation of divine unity that I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect.” It is indeed, on first reading, a very strange statement. What does he mean by declaring that he is losing a *tawḥīd*? Divine unity being the quintessence of Islamic belief, the statement cannot simply mean that he is in some respect no longer a monotheist. With a slight change in the punctuation (classical Arabic texts are not punctuated) we may change the translation to read: “A divine unity that I have been brought up upon from a young age, what, shall I lose it this day! Will I myself close a door that is open to me! I

ever, the term used in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* is clearly *kursī* and not *minbar*, although we have descriptions from the biographies that claim “he gave his sermons from a high pulpit in order that vast crowds may be able to hear him.” See the Biography chapter and ʿAbd al-Razzāk al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994) 172. The term *minbar* also seems to have been in usage from the earliest times and so *kursī* cannot in this instance have been the only term known to the scribe for the object in discussion. Perhaps it was called *kursī* because it was smaller than what would normally have been termed a *minbar* at that time. Or it may have been termed thus because it was not just a pulpit from where the Friday sermon was given, but was rather a chair of a professor, and as such represented something more than just an average *minbar*. Of course it may be that perhaps the scribe used the word *kursī* for no particular reason other than that he could, and in most of the biographical material the term *minbar* is used rather than *kursī*. On *mimbars* see Johannes Pederson, *Minbar, Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 73–76.

68 The Ruṣāfa Mosque was one of the Ḥanbalī mosques in Baghdad, see chapter 4. al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 359.

have forsaken you all. There is neither love nor respect in this.”⁶⁹ This although softer in import still raises the question of its meaning. Both translations can be appreciated with a single explanation, I believe, but we must go to what Jilānī is talking about before he makes this statement to get a fuller understanding. He begins by relating an incident that took place at the funeral of a person he had told to repent, but who died without doing so. The person during his own funeral appeared to Jilānī in spirit, pulling at his clothes, and begging for his help, whereupon Jilānī told him, “I warned you about this.” He then tells the audience:

How much you all lie in what you claim. You have a shaykh and he is there for you, so refer to him, that he may give you a record that has some weight so that you are not weak in piety and goodness. Then it can be read at death, at separation. I hope for your intercession on that day even though this is *shirk* (attributing partners to God). Today I am losing a divine unity I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect.

The words come after a person, who did not take the normal recourse and repent for his sins, comes to Jilānī asking him for help. We are not informed that Jilānī did immediately help him but neither are we told that it was the end of the matter. More importantly is the fact that this incident is related to the audience for a purpose, that they should be taking the standard path of repenting for their sins and obeying their shaykh in all that he instructs them. They will then “have a record that has some weight,” and will not need to recourse to any extra-normal means of help and intercession, as did the man who did not repent. This should be the normal state of affairs in a system of simple *tawḥīd*. The rules are clear, that one must follow and obey the commands and prohibitions of God, and repent before death for any of one’s inadequacies and shortcomings in that. Asking for intercession from an intermediary saint after death should not be the normal state of affairs and in a way seems to imply *shirk* or associating partners with God. However, Jilānī does not declare that he will not help and intercede for those who do not follow these simple ‘rules,’ and on the contrary wishes for their intercession. In his own words: “I hope for your intercession on that day even though this is *shirk*.” The statement fol-

⁶⁹ This translation is based on the Urdu interpretation of this line in, ‘Āshiq Ilāhī Mīrtī, *Fuyūḍ Yazdānī, Tarjama li-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* (Dehli: Rabbānī Book Depot, n.d.) 523.

lowing that, does not then mean that Jīlānī is in fact no longer on *tawḥīd* and that he is committing some form of *shirk*, but rather must be seen as a lament from him that a certain way of *tawḥīd*, of following the simple ‘rules’—where one’s transgressions are resolved by petition to God alone—is tainted by his necessary interference in the affairs of those under his care. Thus his statement, “Today I am losing a divine unity I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself,” shows his emotion at the gravity of his situation and his position. He himself has become an intermediary of God—albeit a valid intermediary—and someone who will, in a way, be sidestepping the law of God. We may remind ourselves here of the idea of God’s knowledge being over his legal ruling which we have already come across, and a statement of his which is quoted in the next section, that “the knowledge of God is not diminished by the law of God. The law changes but the knowledge does not change.”⁷⁰ This then is one way in which his words might be interpreted.

5 His Death

It seems appropriate to end this chapter with some descriptions that are given of Jīlānī’s death. In a small section entitled ‘Dhikr Wafātihī,’ a brief mention is given of certain events that occurred while Jīlānī was on his deathbed. The section is approximately four hundred words of Arabic, is found both at the end of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and is reported by an unnamed person—most probably one of the scribes who would have recorded his words—and by his sons, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, ‘Abd al-Jabbār, ‘Abd al-Razzāq and Mūsā among perhaps others who are not mentioned explicitly by name. There are however slight variances between the report at the end of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and these differences will be elicited below.

Jīlānī gave various religious advice to his son ‘Abd al-Wahhāb including telling him that, “When the heart is sound in relation to Almighty God, then it lacks nothing and it loses nothing. I am a kernel without a shell.”⁷¹ This was given from his deathbed, where in addition to the presence of his sons, there seem also to have been many other visitors, including ones that his sons could

70 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364. On this statement see also chapter 6, section 4 and a few paragraphs below. I must thank Malik A. Shaheen for this particular understanding of Jīlānī’s words.

71 ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2003) 121, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 363.

not see, for he tells them, “Others besides you have come to visit me, so make space for them and be courteous with them. There is a great mercy here so do not crowd their space.” To some of his visitors he would raise his hand and stretch it out and say, “And upon you be peace. Repent and join the ranks and then I will come to you,” as well as, “And upon you be peace. May God forgive me and you all, and may God relent towards me and you all.”⁷² In the name of God, farewell.” In addition to this he also told his sons: “Move away from me, for I may be with you outwardly, but I am with others inwardly. Between me and between you and all the creatures, there is a distance equal to that between the heavens and the earth, so do not compare me to anyone, and do not compare anyone to me.”⁷³ This is a considerable claim from Jīlānī, that he is unique and should not be explained with reference to anybody else, even other spiritual figures. We may present here the thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabī who claimed that he knew that Jīlānī was the *quṭb* of his time but could not understand his behaviour which went against how any saint should have behaved. He concluded that Jīlānī must have been commanded to behave as he did and thus held a unique position even as a *quṭb*.⁷⁴

In the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, when he is asked by one of his sons about which part of his body it is that gives him pain, he replies, “All of my limbs are hurting except my heart. That has no pain for it is with Almighty God.”⁷⁵ This particular report does not appear in the *Faḥ al-Rabbānī*, but the following report can be found in both books: It is related that some of his sons merely ask him how he feels, and he replies, “Let nobody ask me about anything. I am basking in the knowledge of God.”⁷⁶ Thus Jīlānī remained true to his chosen path and beliefs right till the end of his life. Even when he is at the door of death, we are not related any quotes of regret of past acts, such as is sometimes the case with classical Muslim scholars, but rather his bliss in “basking in the knowledge of God” even while his whole body is in pain.

In the *Faḥ al-Rabbānī*, the scribe who is reporting all of this claims that he entered Jīlānī’s presence while some of Jīlānī’s children were with him, and was asked to write the following for Jīlānī: “After hardship, God will surely grant ease.”⁷⁷ Leave reports of the attributes as they have come. The law changes but

72 However in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* it reads “Repent and join the ranks when it comes to you,” which could also be taken to mean, ‘when it comes to your turn.’ al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* 121.

73 al-Jīlānī, *al-Faḥ al-Rabbānī* 363–364.

74 Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* 376–377.

75 al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* 122.

76 Ibid, al-Jīlānī, *al-Faḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

77 Qur’ān 55:7.

the knowledge does not change. The law can be abrogated but the knowledge is never abrogated. The knowledge of God is not diminished by His law.”⁷⁸ However in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, the scribe makes no claim whatsoever and it is after his son ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz asks him about his illness to which Jīlānī replies, “Nobody knows about my illness, and no human, jinn or Angel can comprehend it. The knowledge of God is not diminished by the law of God. The law changes but the knowledge does not change. Reports of the attributes should be left as they have come.”⁷⁹ They are more or less the same words, albeit in a slightly different order. The import of the words, however, takes us back to Jīlānī’s quote of “the judgment of knowledge over the legal ruling” that we claimed gave evidence that Jīlānī relied on an inner knowledge. It can also be taken to mean that the truth behind the law and the *sharīʿa* is constant, though the laws and rulings themselves may change. The addition of “the attributes should be left as they come” is an interesting one, perhaps added here to explain that God’s attributes are as they are described and related, even though the human faculty of reason may not comprehend them. It is thus to the inner knowledge, or real knowledge that one’s attention must be turned, a knowledge that is unchanging. Perhaps this was some advice, not only to his sons and the others present at his deathbed, but to those who would read it after them.

Both books also report that he exclaimed, “Woe unto you! I am not worried by anything, not by any angel and not by the Angel of Death. O Angel of Death, He who cares for us has bestowed us with something other than you,” and this was said in the late evening of the day on which he died.⁸⁰ We have already related above that Jīlānī claims to have witnessed the Angel of Death after protesting to God to take his soul Himself.

The moment of his actual passing is reported in exactly the same way in both books except that before his final words, in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* he is recorded as repeatedly saying, “Wait!” while in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he says, “Be gentle, be gentle!”⁸¹ The difference is probably due to an error by either one of the manuscript copyists or by the publisher because the two different Arabic words are nearly identical in how they are written except for a single dot exchange.⁸² The last statement that he made was:

78 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

79 al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* 122.

80 Ibid. 121, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

81 al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* p. 122, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

82 The difference is between the Arabic words *ارفقوا* and *اوقفوا* (it is necessary to write them in Arabic to discern the possible confusion) whereby the second letter in both words would be very easy to confuse with one another, and the three dots over the second and

I seek help with the words: There is no god but Allāh, the Ever Living, the Everlasting, who neither dies nor fears extinction. Glory be to the one who is exalted in his omnipotence and who subjugates his servants with death. There is no God except Allāh, and Muḥammad is his messenger.

He had difficulty pronouncing the word ‘exalted’ (*ta‘azzaza*) and kept stuttering it until he was able to pronounce it fully. After saying this, he kept repeating God’s name, “Allāh,” until his voice grew faint and his tongue became stuck to the roof of his mouth, at which point he finally passed away.⁸³

6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the personality and character of Jīlānī, as extracted from his works. Each separate point that was given was of course based on very bitty and disjointed information, but as a whole, the chapter paints a picture of Jīlānī even more interesting than that found in the biographies. Here we have Jīlānī as someone who is unafraid to speak his mind—whether to those in authority or just the general public—who makes predictions about events and claims to know people’s hidden secrets, who claims to converse with angels, has access to the unseen, and claims for himself a unique spiritual position. This Jīlānī does not seem to fit the picture of the ‘sober Ḥanbalī preacher’ described in the introduction, but does correspond very well with the Jīlānī venerated by Muslims all over the world.

third letters could also be confused with two belonging to either one of the letters and the one belonging to the other.

83 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 122, al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.