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**Introduction**

This article is an introduction to Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan al-Kūrānī’s thought on Islamic theological and mystical concepts discussed in one of his Sufi treatises entitled *Iḥṭāf al-dhakī bi-shahī ṭalḥah al-mursalah ilā al-nabī ᵉˡˡahi wa-sallama* (The bestowal dedicated to one of discriminating intelligence in explanation of the gift addressed to the spirit of the Prophet).¹ The text is one of only few Arabic sources addressed to the Jāwī Muslim community in the seventeenth century, written by Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan al-Kūrānī al-Shahrazūrī al-Shahrānī al-Kūrānī al-Madani al-Shāfi’ī (1616-1690 CE), to whom I will further refer as al-Kūrānī.

I began philological research on the *Iḥṭāf al-dhakī* in August 2006, thanks to a fellowship award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to do research at the Malaiologie Institute, Orientalisches Seminar der Universität zu Köln, Germany, until April 2008. Such research was kindly hosted and

¹ A discussion with A.H. Johns highlighted the fact that some manuscripts of the *Iḥṭāf al-dhakī* consulted bear in their title the word as *al-zakī* (pure), not *al-dhakī* (intelligent). However, since the author himself mentions that the addressed reader is *al-dhakī al-munsīf*, it is likely that the intended word is *al-dhakī*. Then, one would need to be very intelligent (*dhakī*) to follow closely the argument in the text. Philologically speaking, it is easy for a copyist to mistake ‘zay” for ‘dhal’, and vice versa.

* Archipel 81, Paris, 2011, pp. 177-198
supervised by Edwin Wieringa, a Professor of Indonesian Philology and Islamic Studies at the Institute, whose help and advice highly contributed to the success of doing the research. Seventeen manuscripts of the *Ithāf al-dhakī* which are preserved in different libraries around the globe, have been consulted to prepare a scholarly edition, while the total number of the manuscripts identified so far is thirty. The edition will be published separately, consisting of an introduction, an annotated text, a translation, and a commentary of the text.²

This article is therefore part of my ongoing research on the text, data and analysis of which have been improved thanks to the Chevening Fellowship for conducting research at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies during the Michaelmas Terms (27 September-10 December 2010). The extensive references on Islamic studies at the Centre and at the Bodleian library, as well as the opportunity to meet and discuss with other scholars, have greatly helped me to enrich this article.³

**Islam in Southeast Asia**

The increased political and trade relations between Nusantara and the Arabic Islamic world since the 15th century made the first an important part of the Islamic tradition as a whole. Several theories regarding the coming of Islam in the Nusantara World have been suggested by scholars in the field,⁴ and I do not pretend to overview this aspect here. Regardless of the different arguments about its early propagation in the Nusantara World, Islam spread and rooted in the Malay Muslim community, thanks to the global and international networking developed, both through trading activities and other mediums, including politics, religion, or marriage.

From the late sixteenth century, such networking continued to flourish due to the developing of Islamic sultanates in the region. A vigorous involvement of the local rulers in the international trade activities not only brought them into contact with Arab merchants but also with authorities in the Middle East.⁵ This in turn encouraged a tremendous exodus of Malay

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2. I am keenly aware of my indebtedness to A.H. Johns who gave to me his research materials for a planned critical edition of the *Ithāf al-dhakī* he didn't have the opportunity to complete. His preliminary research has helped me to figure out the understanding of the text. My sincere gratitude is for Annabel Teh Gallop who kindly helped me to examine some materials from the British Library collections.

3. My sincere thanks goes to Francis Robinson who was kind enough to read the draft version of this article and gave some valuable comments and advice to explore some parts of the discussion, and to Michael Feener who reviewed it and suggested some revisions.


5. Azra 2004: 9. Bruinessen (1990: 42) mentioned that in the 1630's, the rulers of Banten and Mataram competed each other to gain the title 'sultan' from the Sharif Mecca, which was
Muslims to perform pilgrimage, and eventually a religious journey to follow Islamic teachings by some prominent scholars in Mecca and Medina (Haramayn). With the growing number of pilgrims, the Haramayn became the hub of dynamic networks as the basis of a global Muslim intellectual community. 6

Later, especially from the seventeenth century when the Islamic world was going through a political downfall, the Islamic intellectual tradition in contrast flourished with the Haramayn as the center of scientific activities. At that time, the Haramayn had become the melting pot where the various Islamic traditions from all over the world, including the Nusantara World, met and melted into a highly cosmopolitan intellectual network. Some Arabic sources referred to the Malay-Nusantara 7 ulamas as jamāʿat al-jāwiyrn, or “the companions from ‘Jawā’” 8

As suggested by Peter Riddell, Islam in the Nusantara World was derivative of the Middle East countries on the one hand, but on the other hand, some “Jawi” scholars such as Hamzah Fansūrī, 9 Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrāl, 10 Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1658 CE), ‘Abd al-Raʿuf ibn ‘Alī al-Jawī al-Fansūrī (1615-1693 CE), 11 Muhammad Yūsuf al-Makassārī (1629-1699 CE), ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Palimbānī, 12 Arshād al-Banjarī (1710-1812)

regarded as a formal recognition of their sultanates. Moreover, the sultans believed that such title would add a supernatural endorsement to their power.

7. The Nusantara World refers to the Archipelago area as a whole, including the Malay Peninsula.
8. One of the oldest Arabic sources found so far which mentions jamāʿat al-jāwiyrn is Iḥāf al-dhakī by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī which I am dealing with, probably written in 1665 (Fathurahman 2009: 47-58). A specific discussion regarding the adjectival patronymic form (nīshāb) ‘al-Jawī has been carried out by R. Michael Feener & Michael Laffan (2005: 185-208). Based on their observation on Tabqāt al-khairāwās by Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad al-Shārij (1410/1487), and Mīr ʿal-jāriin by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Asʿad al-Yāfīrī (1298-1367), the nīshāb ‘al-Jawī was already used in the thirteenth century.
9. A recent epigraphy-based argument regarding the date of his death has been proposed by C. Guillot & L. Kalus, who stated that he died in 1527 (2000: 3-24). Vladimir I. Braginsky (2001: 20-33), however, disputed this claim, but his criticism was countered furthermore in the same publication by Guillot & Kalus (2001: 34-38); see also Azra 2004: 171; Feener and Laffan also support this revised dating for Hamzah Fansūrī’s death, as it fits with their suggestions about the early Aden-Jawi linkage in the fifteenth century (Feener and Laffan 2005: 205).
11. Some sources, including Azra 1994, add ‘al-Sinkili” at the end of his name. However, his full name is ‘Abd al-Raʿuf ibn ‘Alī al-Jawī al-Fansūrī, as mentioned in one of his canonical works, Tarjumān al-mistāfīd (Fathurahman & Holli 2007: 32-33). A scholarly edition of his only Arabic work, Tanbīḥ al-masāḥ al-mansūb īlā jurj al-Qushāsīr, has been published by Fathurahman (1999).
12. The precise time of his life and his career are still obscure. See Azra 2004: 113.
CE), Dāwūd al-Ḥattānī (d. 1847 CE), Nawawr al-Bantanr (1813-1879 CE) and others successfully demonstrated their ability as prolific and distinguished scholars originating from the region. As scholars, their names were connected to those of a number of ulamas in the Haramayn who had been their teachers. Some of them, like ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Palimbanr, even enjoyed their popularity as teachers for Arab, as well as Jawr students in Arabia.

Their works on various Islamic subjects were recognized not only by their local Muslim communities, but also by wider audiences in the Muslim world. As mentioned by Hooker, they were also formidable in translating heterogeneous Islamic thoughts from the original in Arabic language into the local languages and contexts, in order to provide teaching materials for those who, for some reasons, were not able to access the original sources.

One of the Islamic traditions that settled in the Haramayn and bore significant influence on the formation of the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Nusantara World was that from India. As will be seen below, one of the Sufi works that triggered debates in the Nusantara World was the al-Tuhfah al-mursalah ilā al-nabi ʿallāh al-aślāma (the Gift addressed to the spirit of the Prophet), further to be referred to as the al-Tuhfah al-mursalah, written by the Indian Sufi named Faḍl Allāh al-Hindī al-Burhanpurī (d. 1619 CE). It became widely known to Nusantara Muslims, especially through the ulamas network that was set up among the members of the Haramayn community.

It was also thanks to this network established between ulamas with various backgrounds that intercultural contacts and communication started to develop. It was not rare that a Haramayn scholar (ʿālim), who had never visited a specific area, knew, although only in general terms, about social and religious events which occurred in other parts of the Muslim World, including the Nusantara World, thanks to the information he received from his colleagues or students from these areas.

Sometimes, relations between Malay-Nusantara scholars and their Haramayn teachers were apparently very close and strong as recorded in the written sources we still have at our disposal. A number of Malay-Nusantara ulamas did not hesitate to speak of, or to report on developments regarding the religious social life in the Jawr lands and to request fatwa on many religious issues that had become a problem.

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13. For an extensive discussion on the localisations of Islam in Nusantara as well as the engaged involvement of local Muslims in the region within a global, cosmopolitan community of Islamic religious scholarship, see Feener 2010: 471-503.
The following is an example from the Sultanate of Banten. Sultan Pangeran Ratu or Sultan Abu al-Mafakhir (Abū al-Mafākhir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jāwī al-Shafi‘ī, r. 1626-1651 CE) dispatched a special delegation to Mecca in 1638, carrying a number of inquiries about al-Ghazālī’s Naṣḥat al-mulūk. The questions were put to Muḥammad ibn ‘Aḥmad ibn ‘Allān al-Ṣiddiqī (1588-1647 CE), another famous scholar in the Ḥaramayn Islamic intellectual tradition. To answer the sultan’s questions, ibn ‘Allān wrote a book entitled al-Mawāḥib al-rabbānīyyah ‘an al-as’īlah al-Jāwīyah (Various divine gifts in connection with the questions from the Jāwī Lands). 17

Another example is the case of ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf ibn ‘Ali al-Jawī al-Fansūrī who once asked his teacher in Medina, Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan al-Kūrānī, a question about the Unity of Being (waḥdat al-wujūd) and the Seven Grades 18 doctrines discussed in al-Tuhfah al-mursalah, a Sufi treatise written in 1590 by an Indian scholar named Faḍl Allāh al-Hindī al-Burhānī. He asked al-Kūrānī to write a clarification about these doctrines, because it had caused misunderstanding among the Nusantara Muslim community, especially in Aceh. As suggested by many sources, Aceh at that time held a strategic position as “the gate to the Holy Land” (Serambi Mekkah), 19 and maintained strong political and socio-religious relations with the Middle East. Therefore ulamas living there at the time were in good contact with their teachers in the Haramayn.

In answer to this request, al-Kūrānī wrote a text entitled Iḥāf al-dhakhī bi-sharḥ al-tuhfah al-mursalah ilā al-nabi wa-sallama (Tribute to a pure soul: an elucidation of the book that was bestowed upon the Prophet). We also know that al-Kūrānī wrote a pamphlet entitled al-Jawābah al-gharwiyah ‘an al-ma‘āṣir al-Jawīyah al-jahriyah (Proper and clear answers to the questions from the Jāwī Lands). 20

In the following century, Arshad al-Banjarī also asked for a fatwa from his teacher, Sulaymān al-Kūrānī (1715-1780 CE), regarding the policy of the Sultanate of Banjar to prioritize taxes over zakāt. 21 Sulaymān al-Kūrānī also wrote a book entitled al-Durrāh al-bahiyyah fi jawābah al-as’īlah al-Jawīyah (Valuable pearl to answer the questions from the Jāwī Lands).

17. Voorhoeve 1980: 204-205; for a discussion of this text in the context of the tradition of the Islamic Malay sultanate, see Burhanuddin 2007: 30-31.
18. The seven grades are ḥadhīyāh (the grade of emptiness), waḥlāh (the stage of first individuation), ṣāḥidīyāh (the second grade of individuation where God manifests His Name), ‘alām arwāḥ (the world of spirit), ‘alām mithāl (the world of ideas or prototypes), ‘alām ajṣām (the world of form), and ‘alām īnsān kāmil (the world of Perfect Man).
It is clear from the examples above that a number of works were written in certain contexts and that they became an important part of the social-intellectual history of the Nusantara people. For this reason, the study of these texts is, of course, very important.

In brief, Ithāf al-dhakī has its own context which makes it important, especially for the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Nusantara World, because it was written in response to, in the words of al-Kūrānī, the Jamā'at al-Jāwīyīn (Jawī community), and more specifically to shed light on debates and misunderstandings surrounding the wahdat al-wujūd doctrine in Aceh.

On the Ithāf al-dhakī

As hinted at in the title, the Ithāf al-dhakī is an Arabic commentary (sharḥ) on another work entitled al-Tuhfah al-mursalah written by Fadl Allāh al-Hindi al-Burhānpūrī. It is related to the teachings of the Seven Grades (Marā'ibat Tujh), which were very popular among the Muslim community in the Nusantara World. However, in fact, the Ithāf al-dhakī is more than just a commentary because its own introduction, which deals with al-Kūrānī’s elucidation on the concept of Sufism and the Sufi experience, takes up two thirds of the text.

Even though it was initially written at the request of some Jamā'at al-Jāwīyīn, the exposition of the divine concepts in the Ithāf al-dhakī are more theoretical and of a very general nature. Al-Kūrānī does not seem to have had any knowledge, because he never touches upon it, of who was engaged in the study of, and what works had emerged in the Nusantara World at the time that touched upon the issues he discusses. For instance, he never mentions Ḥamzah al-Fansūrī, Shams al-Dīn al-Ṣumatrā‘ī, Nār al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, or even ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf ibn ‘Alī al-Jāwī al-Fansūrī who allegedly pointed out the issue to him.

It is also because of its very general nature, that in a way the Ithāf al-dhakī became the answer to divine questions, or more specifically, the answer to questions about the concept of wahdat al-wujūd, that captivated readers from other areas in the Muslim World, and was quoted, for

22. Azra (1994: 196; 2004: 75), basing himself on another Arabic source uses the term qāshāb al-Jāwīyīn (the companions of Jawī) to denote the Nusantara community in the Haramayn. However, since the Ithāf al-dhakī is the main source for our discussion, I will use the expression jamā'at al-Jāwīyīn instead, as used by al-Kūrānī himself.

23. He was a disciple of Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn ibn Qādī Nasr Allāh ‘Alawī Hindī Ahmādabādī (910-998 A.H.), and the pupil of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Kāthīr al-Dīn Husaynī, commonly named Muhammad al-Gauth, the author of al-Jawāhir al-khamsah (Loth 1877, I: 191-192).

24. See, for instance, Johns 1978: 481.
instance, in an influential Sufi text from West Africa entitled *Kitāb rimah hizb al-rāhim* written by al-Ḥajj 'Umar.²⁵ It is therefore not surprising that a rather large number of copies of the *Iḥāf al-dhakū* have been found (there are thirty known manuscripts so far), scattered over various libraries around the world.²⁶

The earliest date for the redaction of the *Iḥāf al-dhakū* is found in two of the oldest copies, namely MS 820 in the collection of Fazıl Ahmed Pasa, Köprülü Library, Istanbul,²⁷ and MS Arab 250 in the Library of Harvard University,²⁸ which mention that the *Iḥāf al-dhakū* was written starting on Sunday, 30 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1076/10 October 1665, and completed in early Jumādā al-Ākhir of the same year. It may be that this date refers not to the time of al-Kurâni's own writing but to the year the text was copied.

Whatever the case, we may safely assume that MS 820 and MS Arab 250 are the closest to the autograph, which may have been written some years earlier. Drewes was of the opinion that the *Iḥāf al-dhakū* was written before 1660 because al-Kurâni wrote the text at the request of his teacher, Ahmad al-Qushāshī who died in 1071/1660.²⁹ However, as emphasised by Azra, Drewes failed to offer any evidence to substantiate his hypothesis.³⁰ Similarly, Basheer M. Nafi, who claims that the *Iḥāf al-dhakū* was written in 1072/1661,³¹ does not mention his source as MS Al-Azhar 288, to which he refers, does not contain the year of writing but only the year when it was copied, namely 1302/1884.

**A Glimpse on Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī**

Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī was an 'ālim known to be reconciliatory and keen on reaching compromises, as he was inclined to choose the middle way between two opposite opinions. Not unlike his teacher, al-Qushāshī, al-Kūrānī focused on shari‘ah as well as on Sufism so that, in his view, a Sufi should not let his mystical practices conflict with the shari‘ah and other religious obligations. Al-Kūrānī’s character did not build up overnight but, to a large extent, was influenced both by his educational background and by the social intellectual context that surrounded him.³²

²⁹. Drewes 1959: 283.
³². See Johns 1978.
As may be seen from the addition to his name, al-Shahrazūrī, al-Kūrānī came from Shahrazur, a town in the Hawraman area, presently known as Iraqi Kurdistan at the border with Iran. Arab biographers assign him a number of nicknames (laqab) such as Abū 'Irfin, Burhan al-Dīn, Abū Ishāq, Abū Muḥammad, and Abū al-Waqīt, which are found in a number of copies of his work.

Sources differ regarding the lifetime of al-Kūrānī, although most mention 1025/1616 as the year of his birth and 1101/1690 as that of his death. Al-Murādī (1988, I, p. 6) gives a more precise date for al-Kūrānī’s death, stating that he died on Wednesday, in the afternoon after Asar prayers, on the 12th of Rābi‘ al-Thānī 1101/23 January 1690. However, al-Albānī (1996: 66) has claimed that al-Kūrānī died a few months later, on 28 Jumādā al-Ulā 1101/9 March 1690.

It is clear that the young al-Kūrānī enjoyed wandering from place to place seeking Islamic knowledge. After having finished elementary education at his birthplace, including Arabic, theology (kalam), logic (mantiq), and philosophy, he went to Bagdad during Turkish Ottoman times, the place any Kurdish ulama dreamed of going to study with religious figures there.

After spending two years to study with, among others, Muhammad Shāfī al-Kūrānī in Bagdad, al-Kūrānī went to Damascus to study with ʻAbd al-Baqī Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥanbālī (d. 1070/1660) and Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī. The teacher first mentioned was mufti in Damascus and a foremost Hanbālī scholar in the mid 17th century. It was in Damascus that al-Kūrānī specialized in Hanbālī fiqh texts, and in the works written by Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328 CE) and one of his students, Ibn al-Qayyīm (1292-1350 CE). Al-Kūrānī also seems to have had spare time to study Islamic literature in various languages because besides Arabic (of course), he was also very versed in Persian and Turkish.

In 1061/1650, al-Kūrānī found the opportunity to study with Abī al-ʻAzīzīm Sullāṭ ibn Aḥmad al-Mazāḥī and Muḥammad ibn ʻalā al-Dīn al-

33. For a preliminary discussion on the sources of al-Kūrānī’s biography, including his own work entitled al-Amām ʼil- iqād al-himām, see Azra 1994: 91.
34. See al-Sawwās 1986, II: 14.
35. See, for instance, the first part of the Matla’ al-jāmī MS 3765 in the Laleli collection, al-Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.
38. Ibid.
39. Al-Kūrānī, al-Amām..., MS 504, Dār al-Kutub Library, Cairo, f. 43.
Bābilī in Cairo before he finally studied with various ulamas in Medina such as Abū al-Mawāhib Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Shanāwī, Muḥammad Sharīf ibn Yūsuf al-Kūrānī, ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Abī Bakr al-Ḥusaynī al-Kūrānī, and especially with Ṣafī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qushāshī (d. 1660 CE). 41

Al-Kūrānī established a special relationship with al-Qushāshī which went far beyond that between teacher and student. Apart from succeeding him as the leader of the Ṣhaṭṭārīyah mystical brotherhood and studying a wide variety of Islamic knowledge, he also married al-Qushāshī’s daughter; by so doing, their relationship was both familial and scholarly. 42 This reminds us of the relationship al-Qushāshī himself had with Ahmad al-Qunawī who was his intellectual teacher, his murshid in the Ṣhaṭṭārīyah brotherhood, and his father-in-law, all at the same time. 43

Although he had acquired comprehensive knowledge from al-Qushāshī, al-Kūrānī enriched it by studying with a number of other ulamas in Medina, most specifically with Muḥammad al-Bābilī and ʿĪsā al-Thaʿālibī. Thus he became an ‘alīm al-Murāḍī likened to ‘jabalān min jibāl ‘al-‘ilm būḥrān min buḥrār al-‘irfān’ (a mountain between numerous other mountains of knowledge, and a ship among many other barks of wisdom).

It is not surprising that al-Kūrānī’s reputation in scholarship was already ‘extraordinary’ in his lifetime. His studies in ḥadīths, for instance, not only included the collections of the commonly recognized ḥadīths, but also the collections of ‘less important’ or commonly unrecognized ḥadīths, which sometimes escaped attention. The same holds for fiqh. Al-Kūrānī not only studied and mastered the Ṣafī’ī and Ḥanafī fiqh texts that were the main focus at the time among the Medina Muslim community, but also the Ḥanbalī and Mālikī fiqh texts. In theology, he was not only versed in al-Ashʿarī and al-Mātūridī’s thoughts, but his studies also encompassed those of ‘Abd al-Ghānī al-Maqdisī in his Kitāb ʿtiqād al-Ṣaḥīḥ, and al-Bukhārī’s views in his Khaṭq afʿāl al-ʿibād. Both were considered as ‘non mainstream’, as far as theological thought among Sunnī ulamas was concerned, because they did not always accord with al-Ashʿarī and al-Mātūridī’s thoughts which were most influential at the time. 44

This complicated scholarly background clearly shaped al-Kūrānī’s character and made him a moderate, so that he could always empathise with ideas that differed from his own, and take the middle path between opposing views rather than clearly siding with any one of them. In his Iḥāf al-dhakī, al-Kūrānī himself says that:

[41. Al-Murāḍī 1988, I, p. 3.
44. Al-Kūrānī, al-Amām ..., ff. 10-12 and 16; see also Nafi 2002: 322.]

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(Combining [two different thoughts] is preferable over choosing either one of them, in as far as this is possible)

In this matter, al-Kūrānī quotes 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s words, who said:

وضع أمر أخيل على أحسنه حتى يجلب منه ما يقبله ولا تظلل بكلمات خرجت من مسلم شما أو سوءا وأثن تجد لها في الخير محملا

"... and interpret your brother’s stance according to the best perspective, until you find some proof that can help you change your mind; and do not regard the words of a Muslim as bad or wicked as long as you can find a good interpretation of it." (terjemahan tidak jelas, perlu dibetulkan).

Al-Kūrānī’s stance, as a Sufi himself, towards Ibn Taymīyah is a prime example of his moderate and polite approach towards conflicting ideas. It is common knowledge that Ibn Taymīyah was the foremost Sunnī figure who was most diligent in his criticism against Sufi interpretation, understanding, and practices because he considered them to deviate from the pillars of the shari‘ah, although he had studied Sufism rather in-depth. In one of his works, al-Aqīdat al-wāsīfīyah, for instance, he strongly rejects the views of Sufi theologians and launches sharp criticism against the Jahmīyah and Mu’tazilah whose theological ideas Sufi figures had adopted.

One of Ibn Taymīyah’s criticisms concerns the Sufi interpretation of Qur’ānic verses, which he thought far exceeds the inner meaning of the Qur’ān itself.45 As sketched by al-Suyūtī in al-Iṣqān, Ibn Taymīyah idea was that among the Sufis there were those who interpreted the Qur’ān in a sense that in reality could be right, but that the Qur’ān itself did not point to that kind of understanding.46

Considering this kind of criticism by Ibn Taymīyah, al-Kūrānī thought that as far as Ibn Taymīyah was only convinced that the interpretation of the Sufis did not accord with the inner meaning of the Qur’ān, this was acceptable and need not pose a problem because for al-Kūrānī, the Qur’ān was all-encompassing and perfect, and contained both an inner and an outer meaning. Each meaning that was the result of a particular model of interpretation, as long as it was supported by the rules of Arab grammar and

45. Ibn Taymīyah prefers to interpret the Qur’ān literally. For instance, in the case of the attributes of Allah, he held the principle to ‘describe God as He described Himself, both in the Qur’ān as through the hadith of the Prophet’ (Laoust 2003, “Ibn Taymīyah”). He was, for instance, convinced that Allah, as mentioned in the Qur’ān, had hands, a face, eyes, and others, although he did not look like any other creature.

46. See al-Suyūtī, 1354, chapter 78, for a discussion on this issue.
accorded with the law principles of the *shari'ah*, was an inherent aspect of the Qur’ān and could therefore be justified (al-Kūrainī, *Ithāf al-dhāki*, f. 14r).

More than just being tolerant, at the end of his work entitled *Ifādat al-‘allam*, al-Kūrainī even stated his earnest defense of Ibn Taymiyyah’s theological ideas and those of his star student, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. It was mainly directed at ulamas from Ash’arīyah circles who accused Ibn Taymiyyah and his students of ascribing human characteristics to God. According to al-Kūrainī, Ibn Taymiyyah merely wanted to describe God with the description He gave Himself, rejecting characteristics that God did not mention Himself while emphasizing the difference between those characteristics and those of His creations”. Through this way of looking, al-Kūrainī tried hard to create a theological reconciliation between the adherents of Ash’arīyah and the Hanbalīyah, especially in connection with the basic characteristics of the Qur’ān. Through these kinds of elucidations he hoped that the Sufi Ash’arī would be more willing to accept Ibn Taymiyyah’s theological views.

Once again, al-Kūrainī’s tolerance towards, and his simultaneous defense of Ibn Taymiyyah’s thought cannot be viewed without considering his complex educational background. Although Ibn Taymiyyah’s works are never specifically mentioned in his intellectual biography, it is clear that al-Kūrainī was well acquainted with his views – that follow those of the Hanbalī School – when he was studying with “Abd al-Baqī’ al-Hanbali. Moreover, al-Kūrainī was very familiar with and had intimate knowledge of the ideas of one of Ibn Taymiyyah’s foremost students, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691-751/1292-1350). Having knowledge of various often-conflicting schools and currents, al-Kūrainī was able to put himself in a proper position and to adopt a moderate and far from extreme attitude in expressing his views.

His affiliation with a number of mystical brotherhoods also played a role in forming his character as a Sufi who was on the one hand, able to defend the notion of Ibn ‘Arabi’s *wahdat al-wujūd*, but on the other hand to emphatically emphasise the importance of adherence to the principles of the *shari’ah* by often quoting the views of Sunnī ulamas such as al-Junayd al-Bagdādi (d. 298/910) or Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111). The Naqshbandīyah was one of the brotherhoods that influenced al-Kūrainī’s intellectual tendencies, and al-Kūrainī was one of its leaders next to being leader of the Shattāriyah brotherhood. Al-Kūrainī must have known well how ʿAḥmad al-Sirhindī (1564-1624), an innovative ʿālim from India

49. Ibid.: 330.
who was also a Naqshbandīyah leader, once severely criticised Ibn `Arabī's wahdat al-wujūd (ontological monism) which he considered pantheistic. He proposed to replace it with the wahdat al-shuhūd (phenomenological monism) which he considered more in line with shari'ah principles. Although there were already other scholars in the seventeenth century who rejected any relation between Sufi teachings and the wahdat al-wujūd doctrine, al-Sirhindī was the earliest innovator and most outspoken in his criticism of the formulation of the mystical-philosophical doctrine of conservative Sufis and offered an alternative doctrine of his own.

As reported by al-Ḥamawī - al-Kūrānī’s own student who came to Medina in 1083/1672 - there were fierce debates about al-Sirhindī’s teachings among the ulamas in the Haramayn which had resulted in two contesting factions. On one side there were al-Sirhindī’s followers and a group of Naqshbandīyah ulamas who actively disseminated his thought, while on the other side were those who equally aggressively wrote books against them. Muhammad al-Barzanjī (1040-1103/1630/1691), for instance, was a Kurdish scholar and a prime student of al-Qushashī, and wrote the Qadāl-zind fi radd jahālāt ahl Sirhind attacking al-Sirhindī’s thought.

Being an adherent of the Naqshbandīyah brotherhood, al-Kūrānī did not oppose al-Sirhindī’s ideas about the need for conformity between Sufi teachings and shari'ah principles. Later, this teaching became the essence of al-Kūrānī’s thought as reflected in his works, including the Ḳhāf al-dhākī. The difference was that al-Kūrānī did not think that the wahdat al-wujūd doctrine was pantheistic or in violation of the shari'ah. Rather than accepting al-Sirhindī’s ‘offer’ to replace the doctrine with the wahdat al-shuhūd, al-Kūrānī made a new reinterpretation of the wahdat al wujūd so that it would no longer be understood as opposing the shari'ah.

Indeed, he lived between two worlds: one was a world where mystical-philosophical doctrines like the wahdat al-wujūd together with the Ash'arīyah theology strongly influenced the way of thinking of the ulamas, while in the other there were reform movements to propose new formulations that wanted to step out of these two established traditions. While al-Sirhindī and a number of other ulamas before al-Kūrānī used the ‘vehicle’ of reformation to attack the wahdat al-wujūd ideology and the Ash'arīyah theology, al-Kūrānī positioned himself between these two inclinations that already at the time had started to become extreme and accused each other of deviance.

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In al-Kūrānī’s eyes, an innovation the ultimate objective of which is to comprehensively destroy Sufi ideology and Ash’arīyah theology is a futile endeavour that leads to nothing. Therefore, he preferred to reconstruct and reinterpret both in such a way that both would be more in line with shari‘ah principles.

Al-Kūrānī was evidently acutely aware of his position among Haramayn scholars as a Sufi teacher and leading intellectual with students from various backgrounds behind him so that he tried to look after all of them. He also did not seem to want to repeat, or to try to find a solution, to the harsh animosity he had witnessed between al-Sirhindī and his own colleagues among the Haramayn ulamas, such as Muhammad al-Barzanjī.

Fortunately, al-Kūrānī was very authoritative in the field of hadīth and not just because of his pedigree and the chain of his knowledge that connected him with leading muhaḍīthīn whose scholarly credibility was unquestionable, but also because he truly mastered their complicated ins and outs. Therefore his knowledge of the second most important Islamic source was so extensive that he could use them to read and reinterpret various Sufi and theological subjects.

Then, not surprisingly, many students of al-Kūrānī found it convenient to ask religious matters to him. We may see, for instance, that some of al-Kūrānī’s works are explicitly written to answer questions asked by his colleagues and students on various religious issues. Among them are Niẓām al-zabarjūd fī al-arba‘īn al-musalsalā, written as a response to religious issues raised by Saiyid Yāsīn ibn a-Sayyid A. Al-Ḥusaynī al-Khaṭīb al-Jazārī (Brockelmann 1996, 11, 505), Jawāb al-‘aṭīd li-masʿalat awwal wājib wa-masʿalat al-taqālīd, al-Jawāb al-kāfī ‘an masʿalat thāṭat ‘ilm al-makhluq bi-al-gayr al-mutanābī, al-Jawāb al-mashkur ‘an al-suʿūd all-manzūr, Kashf al-maṣṭūr fī jawāb as’ilat ‘Abd al-Shakīr, al-Jawābāt al-gharāwīyah ‘an al-masāʾil al-Jawīyah al-jahriyah, and Ithāf al-dhakhī. The last two works mentioned clearly indicate that the questions posed to al-Kūrānī came from his students from the Nusantara World (jamā‘at al-jawīyin).

Therefore, the transformation of al-Kūrānī’s stance, which was not radical but courteous and reconciliatory, combined with his argumentative approach to various main issues in theological and Sufi thoughts and his tendency to reveal his ideas by basing them on traditional scholarly norms, in its turn left a strong mark on the scholarly tendencies of many of his students, among them ‘Arūf ibn ‘Alī al-Jāwī al-Fansūrī in Aceh. In several of his works, such as the Tābīt al-maṣla, Kifāyat al-muḥājīn, and Daqīq al-ḥurūf, ‘Arūf ibn ‘Alī truly continued al-Kūrānī’s intellectual tradition as the defender of the wābdal al wujūd teaching by consistently defending the Ash’arīyah theology and being consistent in shari‘ah principles.53


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It is interesting to notice that later the intellectual thought of al-Kūrānī influenced other scholars who came to the Haramayn and interacted with his students. Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al- Raḥīm, popularly known as Shāh Wafī Allāh (1703–1762), a prominent Indian scholar, is a good example. In India in particular, Shāh Wafī Allāh is celebrated as a scholar who attempted to bring about reconciliation between the various schools of law and theology, and to carry out a reconciliatory approach regarding the so-called metaphysical doctrines of wabdat al-wujūd, typically represented by Ibn ‘Arabī, and wabdat al-shuhūd, a critical response to the latter by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī.55

Shāh Wafī Allāh could be regarded as a ‘grand student’ of al-Kūrānī, who inherited his intellectual attitude, since among the prominent scholars who influenced him most, was Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdi al-Madānī (d. 1145/1733), a disciple and son of al-Kūrānī, whose intellectual genealogy can be traced back to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī (d. 1502). It is not surprising that al-Kūrānī’s thought and approach to Islam were very close to those of Shāh Wafī Allāh’s father, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm (1644–1718), who also belonged to the al-Dawwānī tradition through the influence of his elder brother, Shaykh Abū al-Ridā, and his teacher, Mīr Zāhid Hirāvī.57

Abū Ṭāhir even passed the Sufi khīra he received from his father, al-Kūrānī, as a recognition of Shāh Wafī Allāh’s appreciation for mysticism. Of their close relationship, Muztar explains that:

“This advanced stage of mutual affection between the teacher and the pupil seems to have originated from the fact that their fathers, Shaikh Ibrahim Kurdi, and Shaikh ‘Abdur Raḥīm respectively, had identical views on Shaikh Muḥy-al-Dīn Ibn-e-‘Arabī, the great exponent of ontological monism (wabdat al-wujūd). Both of them interpreted the Qur’ān in the light of the philosophy of Ibn-e-‘Arabī...”

Al-Kūrānī’s Sufism Interpretation in the Ithāf al-dhakī

As a whole, the Ithāf al-dhakī may be considered as al-Kūrānī’s defense and his effort to reach a compromise with Ibn ‘Arabī’s main ideas in relation to the Islamic mystical-philosophical doctrines as mentioned above. Some parts of this work emphasize the specific Sufi views regarding the position of the Qur’ān, the hadith of the Prophet, and Sufi theology.

54. For a discussion about his early life and intellectual journey to Hejaz and Haramayn, see Muztar 1979: 36-62.
The basic principle of al-Kūrānī’s exposition is his acceptance of the general teachings that had been put forward by ulamas from the Sunnī tradition and by those of the so-called salaf al-ṣālih (the pious ancestors). He subsequently interpreted and augmented the scope of the intent of these teachings until they ran parallel with the doctrines in the Sufi tradition. The result of the amalgamation of these two traditions became the most important aspect of the discussion in the Iṭṭāf al-dhakā and with this also an important part of al-Kūrānī’s true nature as a conciliator, who wanted his ideas to be accepted by as many circles as possible, including those who opposed him. On a certain level, the Iṭṭāf al-dhakā also constitutes a rectification to, and an orthodox interpretation of heterodox, pantheistic Sufi understandings considered to circumvent certain aspects of the shari‘ah, especially those caused by the misunderstanding of Sufi doctrines in the al-Tuhfah al-mursalah.

Looking closely at the very detailed, extensive, and complicated explanation it offers, the Iṭṭāf al-dhakā may be viewed as one of the most important commentaries of Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophical Sufi teachings, especially in relation to the concept of the wahdat al-wujūd, or, as al-Kūrānī prefers to call it, the tawḥīd al-wujūd (unifying Being). Al-Kūrānī also extensively discusses the Necessary Being (al-wājib al-wujūd) and the undelimited Being (al-wujūd al-muḥaqiq) and he positions his discussion in the context of the ontological relationship between God and creatures.

The Iṭṭāf al-dhakā is indeed not the only work by al-Kūrānī that offers explanations of the philosophical ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, because he also deals with the same topic, be it with a different approach, in other works such as the Matla‘ al-ji‘d bi-taḥqīq al-tanzih fi wahdat al-wujūd and Tāḥqīq ‘alā tanẓih al-ṣūfiyyah ‘an i’tiqād al-tajsid wa-al-‘ayniyyat wa-al-biṭāh wa-al-talūl. It is not the longest work he wrote as well, for the Qaṣī al-sābil ilā tawḥīd al-Haq al-Wakīl— a commentary of the al-Manẓūmat, the work of his teacher, al-Qushshālī— is almost twice as long. However, Iṭṭāf al-dhakā is the only al-Kūrānī’s work that could be found so far among those he wrote for the benefit of Jāwī audiences.

One outstanding methodology al-Kūrānī uses to present his ideas is by relying on the evidence found in the Qur‘ān through literal interpretations and by emphasising the importance of the hidden meaning and the context of

59. Iṭṭāf al-dhakā MS 288 of the Al-Azhar Library collection, and its copy, MS 9276 in the Dar al-Kutub Library, Cairo, note that what is meant by ‘salaf al-ṣālih’ are those who lived in the early third century Hijrī/ninth century CE.
60. Johns 1978: 481.
the verses he quotes. Apart from that, al-Kūrānī also put forward very convincing argumentations in the field of ḥadīth because he based his analyses on the tradition of its narration as well. In various parts, al-Kūrānī even shows that he truly masters Arabic grammar by offering linguistic analyses of the sentences he uses. We also find this kind of methodology in some of his other works such as the Qāṣd al-sabil and Matla’ al-jād.

Through the Ithāf al-dhakhī we may get a picture of al-Kūrānī as someone who mastered various Islamic sciences, and who does not only follow the perspective of the School (madhhab) he adheres to, but also other perspectives that conflict with his own. Even when he wants to oppose a point of view, he always first sets out these views by referring to both the persons and their works that have a connection with it. Only after that he will set forth his own opinions which he bases on proof from the Qurʾān, ḥadīth, linguistic analysis and other sources.

Unfortunately, al-Kūrānī’s sources cannot always be easily traced because he often incorporated them directly into his exposition so that an understanding of the context of the sentence he discusses in the Ithāf al-dhakhī needs to be considered carefully. This way of quotation or paraphrase was apparently still customary in the past, because other important works, such as the al-Durrah al-fakhirah written by Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad al-Jāmī (817-898/1414-1240), also use this way of exposition.62

The most important references al-Kūrānī uses in the Ithāf al-dhakhī – and in fact also in his other Sufi works – are of course the thought of Muhīy al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArabī al-Hātimī al-Tā’ī (560-638/1165-1240), more commonly known as Ibd al-ʿArabī, especially in his al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah although al-Kūrānī also uses Ibn ʿArabi’s other works such as the Mawāqī ʿal-nujūm wa-matājīl ahillat al-asrār wa-al-ʿulūm and al-Iṣl al-bārī.

This should not be surprising because from the outset, al-Kūrānī was apparently already aware of his position as interpreter and advocate of the philosophical Sufi ideas of the ‘Al-Shaykh al-Akbar’.63 Looking at the parts of the al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah he quotes, for instance, it appears clearly that al-Kūrānī wants to show, by adding proofs, that Ibn ʿArabi’s mystical-philosophical ideas indeed do conform to the Islamic orthodox notions that are based on the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth of the Prophet. To invigorate his explanation, al-Kūrānī also quotes interpretations made by Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Qūnawi (w. 673/1274), one of Ibn ʿArabi’s own

63. See Knysh 1995. For a very valuable study of the perception of Ibn ʿArabi’s personality and teaching by Muslim scholars throughout the four centuries following his death, see Knysh 1999.
students through his work *Ijazz al-bayân fi ta’wil umm al-Qur’ân* and the *al-NafaSah al-ilahiyyât*.

Before offering his ideas on the *waḥdat al-wujûd*, *al-wujûd al-muṭlaq*, and *al-wâjih al-wujûd* concepts, al-Kitanî first quotes explanations from a variety of sources that are related to the understanding of the knowledge of God (*ilm al-ma’rifah*) or knowledge of Reality (*ilm al-haqa’iq*) itself, such as ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn ‘Alî ibn Ahmad al-Mahâ’îmî’s *Mashra’* *al-khuṣûs ilâ ma’âni* al-nusîs and the *Maṣbâḥ al-uns bayn al-ma’âqîl wa-al-mashhûd* *fi sharh miftâh ghayb al-jami’* *wa-al-wujûd* written by Shams al-Dîn Muhâmmad ibn Ḥamzah al-Fanâri, although al-Kitanî consistently quotes Ibn al-‘Arabî as his main source.

The concept of *ilm al-ma’rifah* indeed forms the main framework for all of al-Kitanî’s discussions in the *Ijazz al-dhakî* so that the topic receives special attention at the outset of his exposition. Apart from the sources mentioned above, he also explains the so-called *‘al-tawhîd al-haqa’iq* (the ultimate unity) by referring to the views of Jalâl al-Dîn Muhâmmad al-Diwânî in his *Risâlah khalq al-awmâl* and the *Najât al-hâ’irin fi sharh Manâzil al-sâ’îrin* written by Kamâl al-Dîn ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ka’shânî (d. 730/1329), and a number of narratives in the *al-Riyad al-nadirah fi ma’naâqîb al-‘ashra*î* by al-Muhibb al-Tabari* that describes the attitudes of the close companions of the Prophet in connection with the issue of theology.

However, among the sources that al-Kitanî evidently considered most important in connection with the topic of theology is the *al-Ibânah fi usûl al-diyanah*, the last and most often cited work written by Abû al-Hasan ‘Alî ibn Ismâ’il al-As’hâ’î (260/873-935). al-As’hâ’î’s theological views as laid down in the *al-Ibânah* formed an important starting point for al-Kitanî in writing his own Sufi doctrines so that they accorded with the principles of orthodox Islam.

In setting out his evidence from the Qur’ân and the ḥadîth of the Prophet in order to support his thought, al-Kitanî strongly emphasises the importance of explicit and implicit meanings of the Qur’ânic texts and the ḥadîth that he quotes. It is thus not surprising that in large parts of his discussion he tries to convince his readers that the text of the Qur’ân and the ḥadîth always carry two meanings: the explicit and implicit ones, and that interpreting the revelations of Allah and His Prophet by using the implicit and ‘uncommon’ meaning does not mean that the explicit understanding of

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64. This work has also been published under the title *al-Tafshîr al-süfi li-al-qur’ân*, see ‘Ata’, 1969.
65. The text of *Manâzil al-sâ’îrin* itself was written by Abû Ismâ’il ‘Abd Allâh ibn Muhâmmad al-Ansârî al-Harawi (w. 481/1088) (Loth 1877, I: 99-100).

*Archipel 81*, Paris, 2011
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As we know, al-SuyutT's ways of interpreting the Qur'anic verses. This is not too surprising because both had a very strong foundation in hadith scholarship so that they shared the same attitude, namely always seeking support for their ideas in the tradition of the Prophet, and both loved Sufism so that they were able to uncover the hidden meaning of the Qur'an in a Sufi perspective. As we know, al-SuyutT was not only a mufassir, mubaddith, historian, and biographer, but also a Sufi teacher affiliated with the Shadhiliyah brotherhood.66

This does not mean, of course, that al-KurranT ignored other interpretations as he also often refers to other works such as the Anwar al-tanzil wa asrar al-ta'wil written by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali 'Abd al-Khayr Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi (716/1316), the compilation of which was inspired by the Tafsir al-Kashshafi mentioned above.67

It is interesting to notice that in his Sufi thought, al-KurranT also quotes the Tafsir al-baqa'iq by Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (330-412/941-1021), who was considered by al-Dhahabi as being less reliable (ghayr thiqa) and his interpretations were even considered to deviate because they legitimised the philosophical views of the Sufis.68 However, al-KurranT looked for Quranic explanations that could support his interpretation of the Sufi philosophical doctrines so that his interpretations were acceptable to a wider Muslim public.

As mentioned above, linguistic analysis was one of the argumentation methods al-KurranT used in his Ittqf al-dhaki so that his exploration of the hidden meaning of a text would not look perfunctory. He did this, for

67. J. Robson, in El, 2003, "al-Baydawi".
instance, when he offered his defense of the interpretation by some Sufis of the following hadith of the Prophet: “al-Iḥsān an ta'būda Allāh ka-annaka tarāhū fa-in-lam takun tarāhū fa-innahu yarākā” (Iḥsān is to adore Allah as though thou didst see Him, and thou dost not see Him: he nonetheless seeth thee). Various Sufis al-Kūrānī agreed with considered this hadith as an indication of the possibility for man to see God because they read and understood “is” to mean “fa-in-lam takun” (if you are not something), that is, if you are nothing, you are fana69 from yourself so that it is as if you are not there, and thus you are ‘tarāhū” (at that moment you see Him).

Al-Kūrānī used linguistic evidence to demonstrate that Arab grammar supported this kind of reading so that by itself it cancels al-Ḥāfīz Ibn Ḥajar’s contrary view in his work, Fatḥ al-bārī, which al-Kūrānī extensively quoted before. Naturally, al-Kūrānī not only based his views on the possibility that man might see God through linguistic analysis only, because in the following parts he also refers to various other sources like the Muntahā al-madārik fi sharḥ tā’īyat ibn al-Fāridi by Sa’d al-Dīn al-Fargānī and the Sharḥ al-mawāqif written by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1474), which are explanations of the al-Mawāqif fi ‘ilm al-kalām written by ‘Abd al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Rukn al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Bakrī al-Shabānkārī al-Ṭī (d. 756/1355). The latter work is used to this day as a source to teach Islamic theology at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Closing remarks

Taking his Sufi thought into account, especially those related to his interpretation of the wahdat al-wujūd doctrine as evidenced from his Iḥtāf al-dhākī, al-Kūrānī may clearly be considered as an interpreter and advocate of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s philosophical Sufi thought.

Unfortunately, in general, modern scholars of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought only mention ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Kāshānī (w. 736/1335), ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīfī (d. 832/1428), or ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jāmi (d. 898/1492), among his interpreters and never mention al-Kūrānī. The reason is maybe the fact that his thought is not well known. So far, only three of his almost one hundred works have been published and they do not include the Iḥtāf al-dhākī, which actually contains a long and in-depth discussion of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s mystical-philosophical doctrines.

I hope therefore that this article will represent a preliminary contribution to an introduction of al-Kūrānī’s thoughts, especially those related to the wahdat al-wujūd, al-wājib al-wujūd and al-wujūd al-muflaq concepts that

69. fana is a station of annihilation in God (see Nasr 1972: 66).
are often related to Ibn al-'Arabī’s teachings. Regarding the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Nusantara World in the mid 17th century, the Ithāf al-dhāki may be considered as one of the most important sources because it forms one, if not the only, Arabic source that mentions the misunderstandings among the Muslim community in this region in connection with the waḥdat al-wujūd.

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