

ARTÍCULOS

More than a Letter: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī* *

Más que una carta: *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī*

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Abstract

In both his *Iğāza* and *Fihrist*, Ibn al-‘Arabī referred to *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī* as a separate work. This document is a letter written to the disciples of Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Mahdawī of Tunisia by Ibn al-‘Arabī himself, and it has recently been determined that it also serves as a kind of prolog to *Mašāhid al-asrār*. This prolog covers such subjects as how the *Mašāhid* should be studied and by whom, explanations of difficult words found in it, and defenses of possible criticisms of it. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s letter is important in its own right: it develops the concepts of *ḥatmiyya*, *walāya*, *nubuwwa*, and *wirāṭa* in their original forms and references discussions in the scholarly circles of al-Andalus and North Africa. This paper will show how the *Risāla* must be understood with the *Mašāhid* and explore its contents in the light of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works and his social and intellectual milieu.

Key words: Ibn al-‘Arabī; *Risāla fī l- walāya*; *Risāla ilā Aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī*; *Mašāhid al-asrār*; ‘ilm, *nubuwwa* (prophethood); *walāya* (sainthood); *wirāṭa* (inheritance).

Resumen

Tanto en su *Iğāza* como en su *Fihrist*, Ibn al-‘Arabī se refirió a *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī* como a una obra separada. Este documento es una carta escrita a los discípulos del Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī de Túnez por el propio Ibn al-‘Arabī, y recientemente se ha determinado que también sirve como una especie de prólogo de *Mašāhid al-asrār*. Este prólogo cubre temas tales como quién debe estudiar el *Mašāhid* y cómo debe hacerlo, las explicaciones de las palabras difíciles que se encuentran en él y las defensas de posibles críticas contra él. La carta de Ibn al-‘Arabī es importante por derecho propio: desarrolla los conceptos de *ḥatmiyya*, *walāya*, *nubuwwa* y *wirāṭa* en sus formas originales y hace referencia a discusiones en los círculos académicos de al-Andalus y el norte de África. Este artículo mostrará cómo debe entenderse la *Risāla* con los *Mašāhid* y explorará su contenido a la luz de las obras de Ibn al-‘Arabī y su medio social e intelectual.

Palabras clave: Ibn al-‘Arabī; *Risāla fī l- walāya*; *Risāla ilā Aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī*; *Mašāhid al-asrār*; ‘ilm, *nubuwwa* (profecía); *walāya* (santidad); *wirāṭa* (herencia).

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Introduction

One of the best-known and most influential figures in the history of Sufism, Ibn al-‘Arabī has attracted the attention of numerous researchers, who find much to explore in his travels, his students, the relationships he had with the Sufis and scholars of his time, and the orders and schools he influenced, along with his voluminous works, published in hundreds of volumes.¹ However, this reputation has brought the result that many works that are not his have been attributed to him. In some cases, this is because those works bear some similarity in content with his own and began circulating at the same period, and in others, it is because they reflect the views of Akbarī school and have similar titles.² As a result, attempts have been made to list his works to allow his doctrines to be examined objectively. While there is no doubt that the subject of this paper, *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Ṣayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī*, was written by Ibn al-‘Arabī: it is mentioned in his *Fihrist* and *Iğāza*, which are undoubtedly written by him, the fact that *Risāla* is recorded under different names in different bibliographical records and that in some others it appears together with *Maṣāhid al-asrār*,³ which was one of the first works of Ibn al-‘Arabī, indicates that a more detailed examination of the *Risāla* is required. Therefore, the first object of this paper will be through examining the bibliographic sources and library catalogues to elucidate *Risāla*’s relation with *Maṣāhid* and the unclear records about it.

Risāla is known as and seems to be a letter from Ibn al-‘Arabī to Ṣayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī, which incorporates praise of al-Mahdawī and narratives about Sufi concepts. However, the succession of irrelevant subjects and the defensive style, both of which are shown throughout the letter, stand out. Therefore, the second object of the paper is to read this letter in the conditions of that era and investigate the possibility of discovering its subtext.

Finally, a noteworthy classification of knowledge that seems different from most of the prevalent taxonomies in the literature of Sufism will be analyzed and compared to the other works of Ibn al-‘Arabī.

1. Literature

The *Risāla* is addressed to the leading Sufi of Tūnis (Tunisia) in the thirteenth century, Ṣayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī (d. 621/1224) who is considered to be the most influential mentor of Ibn al-‘Arabī.⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabī made the two letters

⁴ There is limited information about Mahdawī’s life in the bibliographic sources. Mahdawī left Tunisia in a certain part of his life to continue his education with Abū Madyan (d. between 588/1192 and 594/1198). Abū Madyan was a determinant figure on Andalusian Sufism. For a brief portrait of him and his era see Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*, pp. 1-40. This book also includes the Arabic texts and their translations into English of his four booklets and eulogy poems in Biḡāya (Bougie). Mahdawī was with a group of Sufis who had known as “Ifriqiyyā’s finest” (*aḥyār Ifrikiyā*) on this journey. Even though they separated in the advancing years he never severed his connection with Abū Madyan and his circle. (Ibn Qunfuḍ, *Uns al-faḡīr*, pp. 97-99; Casewitt, *Harmonizing Discursive Worlds*, pp. 91-92). He had also relationships with Alexandrian Sufis in Egypt thus considered as “a kind of Madyanite link between West and East.” Beneito & Hirtenstein, “The Prayer of Blessing”, p. 6; Gardiner, “‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī”, pp. 1-3; Elmore, “Ṣayḥ ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz Al-Mahdawī”, p. 602.

Ibn al-‘Arabī visited Mahdawī twice, first in 590/1194 and second in 597-598/1201-1202. He refers to Mahdawī several times in *Futūḥāt* underlining his devotion for the ascetic life style and yet having a strong and healthy body. Indeed, the best-known narrative about his life is related to his asceticism. He was on a forty day seclusion, and a native imām had declared that nobody should pray after his death because of the strict and long fast he had chosen, hence his death would be a suicide, a capital sin. Mahdawī in response had prophesied that the imām would die first and he will pray for him (Ibn Qunfuḍ, *Uns al-faḡīr*, p. 97). This anecdote is important in terms of showing the influence of Abū Madyan in his understanding of Sufism, as Abū Madyan was also known for his practice of asceticism like *ṣawm al-wisāl*. Additionally he had praised Mahdawī for being the most ascetic among his disciples because he had a deep knowledge of what he had secluded (*ḡahada*). (See Ibn al-Tawwāḥ ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Muḥammad, *Sabk al-maḡāl li-fakk al-‘iqāl*, p. 66; Ibn Qunfuḍ, *Uns al-faḡīr*, p. 98). Cornell attributes this emphasis on asceticism by Abū Madyan and his followers to the importance they place on complete and absolute trust in God’s will, that is, *tawakkul*. As to him, *tawakkul* leads the seeker (*sālik*) to the ultimate union between the servant and God which is fusion (*ḡam’*) (Cornell, *The Way of Abu Madyan*, pp. 30-31). Only a few texts attributed to Mahdawī remained our day, so it is difficult to talk about his tenets. (Gardiner, “‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī”, p. 2). However, the most recent findings, according to the *al-Minaḥ al-bādiya* of Abū Sa’īd al-Bāḡī, who was Abū Madyan’s successor and a close companion of Mahdawī, show that Mahdawī may have established his own type of Sufism. See Casewitt, *Harmonizing Discursive Worlds*, p. 97.

¹ See Keklik, *Muhyiddin İbnü’l-Arabî*, 2nd ed., p. 7.

² Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, pp. 19-20; Mālih, *Ṣayḥ al-akbar Muḥyī l-Dīn b. al-‘Arabī*, MIAS Archive Report, (consulted 26/09/2018). Ibn al-‘Arabī made a list of his own works in response to the demands of his entourage. Thus, his *Fihrist* and *Iğāza* are the primary sources for determining whether a given work was written by him. Baṣar Awwād made another list of additions to *Fihrist*. See Kılıç, *Şeyh-i Ekber*, pp. 52-53.

³ For the critical edition of *Maṣāhid*, a detailed introduction and Spanish translation, see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Las Contemplaciones de los Misterios*. For additional bibliography, see Aladdin *et al.*, “Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥatīmī/al-Ṭā’ī”, 2, pp. 272-275. For the English translation, see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*.

he addressed to him into the prologs of *Mašāhid* and *Rūḥ al-Quds*, and he also dedicated *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* to him.

The *Risāla*, described by Ibn al-‘Arabī as a letter he wrote to the circle of students of Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī in Iṣbiliyya (Seville) in 590/1193,⁵ is included in manuscripts with the *Mašāhid*. In 1985, the *Risāla* was published by Ḥamid Ṭāhir under the title of *Risāla fī l-walāya*, as a separate work from the *Mašāhid*, along with Ṭāhir’s introduction and review,⁶ in which, describing *Mašāhid* as among one of the epistles in the manuscript, Ṭāhir omits to note that the *Risāla* is a prolog to the *Mašāhid*. This relationship between the two texts was not recognized by researchers for a long time. This was so for several reasons, such as the placement of a blank page between the two texts, indicating that the *Mašāhid* was to be understood as a separate work. Ibn al-‘Arabī described the *Risāla* as an independent work in his *Fihrist* and *Iğāza*,⁷ and his disciple Ibn Sawdakīn omitted it from *Kitāb al-Nağāt*, the best-known commentary to the *Mašāhid*. Addas was the first researcher to draw attention to the question of the relationship of the *Risāla* to the *Mašāhid*. In her doctoral dissertation, Addas examined this possibility, considering common themes in the contents of the copies of the *Mašāhid* and the *Risāla* mentioned in the literature. Addas’s final judgment relies on Ibn Sawdakīn’s deliberate exclusion of the prolog of *Mašāhid* in his commentary.⁸ He declares at the beginning of his commentary that the part of the work that gives valuable information on the merits of Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī is so clear that it does not need to be explained and that it does not contain

information on divine reality in the way that the *Mašāhid* did. Therefore, Addas confirms that the *Risāla* is intended to be read with the *Mašāhid*.⁹

In fact, in most copies of the *Mašāhid* that we have seen, the *Risāla* is placed where a prolog would be. Sitt al-‘Ağam, another commentator on the *Mašāhid*, a Sufi woman living in thirteenth-century Bağdād, expounded certain selected parts of the *Risāla* in a text titled “Commentary on the Problems of the Epistle (*Risāla*) to the *Mašāhid*.”¹⁰ Finally, in a commentary on the *Mašāhid*, which was understood to have been written by Ibn al-‘Arabī, a few sentences from the *Risāla* are discussed under the title of “Šarḥ al-ḥuṭbat al-kitāb” (“Commentary to the Prolog to the Book”),¹¹ the Manisa manuscript, which is considered to be a copy in the author’s own hand and includes the *Risāla* and the *Mašāhid* together,¹² are among the most significant proofs that the *Risāla* is a part of the *Mašāhid*. The question explored here is why Ibn al-‘Arabī gave the *Risāla* a separate title in his *Fihrist* and *Iğāza*. Addas assumes that *Risāla fī l-walāya* and *Risāla ilā aṣḥāb al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī* are two lost works that did not survive until the present and that their names were later inadvertently given to the prolog to the *Mašāhid*, an error that was repeated in ensuing history. However, we think that the confusion is quite recent, originating in Ṭāhir’s publication, in which he edited the *Risāla* under a separate title. As far as we can determine, no previous example exists of this letter being registered under the title of *Risāla fī l-walāya* in library catalogs. In the records, works with the titles *al-Risālat al-Mahdawīyya* and *Risāla ilā Abī Muhammad Abd al-‘Azīz al-Qurašī* are in fact given to a different letter from that of Ibn al-‘Arabī to Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī that Ibn al-‘Arabī later made into a prolog to his *Rūḥ al-Quds*. The main reason for the confusion may be the existence of two different letters.¹³ On the other hand, as Ibn al-‘Arabī was writing his prolog in reference to

⁵ According to Gerald Elmore, the *Risāla* was the first letter by Ibn al-‘Arabī, as has been shown, that he then made into a prolog to the *Mašāhid*. Elmore adds that the first traces of the concept of sealness (*ḥātamiyya*) can be observed in this letter. See Elmore, “The Millennial Motif”, pp. 410-437. Elmore mentions that he had translated this letter and would publish it with some other treatises that Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote in the Mağrib, but we were not able to locate those translations. However, he mentions the contents of the *Risāla* in another work: Elmore, “Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī”, pp. 593-613.

⁶ Ṭāhir, “al-Walāya wa-l-nubuwwa ‘inda Muḥyī l-Dīn b. ‘Arabī”, pp. 7-38 (hereafter HT1985). We relied on another manuscript (Ulu Camii 1600/2) which is different from the one used in HT1985 because Ṭāhir’s manuscript dates from a later year, is missing words and exhibits copyist errors. See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Mašāhid al-asrār* (hereafter BUK1600/2).

⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Iğāza*. Osman Yahiā gives the number of *Iğāza* as 173 but we prefer the numbering given in the critical edition of *Iğāza*.

⁸ Ibn Sawdakīn, *Kitāb al-Nağāt*, fols. 254-267.

⁹ Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, pp. 127-129. Addas’s discovery of this correspondence, which brought her to realize that the *Risāla* and the *Mašāhid* had the same introduction, was related to her opinion that the two were separate works. This opinion can be traced back to Ṭāhir’s publication of this letter as a separate work, under the name of *Risāla fī l-walāya*.

¹⁰ Sitt al-‘Ağam, *Šarḥ al-Mašāhid al-asrār al-quḍsiyya*, pp. 7-24.

¹¹ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Šarḥ Ḥuṭba*, fols. 48a-50a (hereafter BUK1600).

¹² Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Mašāhid al-asrār*, fols. 47a-83a.

¹³ See MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (İstanbul), Fatih 2631, Hacı Mahmud Efendi 2445, Şehid Ali Paşa 1183.

Mašāhid, he referred to it with such expressions as “the book,” “the *maṭāli*,” “the *mašhad* of the book,”¹⁴ and “the epistle” (*risāla*); the fact that the *Risāla* was probably written after the *Mašāhid*, may have caused the relation between the two to be missed. Accordingly, we can conclude that in 590/1193, Ibn al-‘Arabī decided to divulge the mystical secrets he had acquired, likely the year in which he had entered into “the land of truth” (*‘arḍ al-ḥaqīqa*),¹⁵ a turning point for him in his writing. Following this prompting, he wrote the *Mašāhid*. However, as can be deduced from his expressions in the *Risāla*, Ibn al-‘Arabī saw the need for an explanation in relation to the language and style he used in *Mašāhid*, the nature of the secrets he was divulging, and the new problems caused by their disclosure in the minds of the readers, especially in the recipient of the letter, his cousin Abu al-Ḥasan Ibn al-‘Arabī. These features led him later to use this letter as a prolog for the *Mašāhid*.

2. Content

In what way can a letter help us understand another work? This letter is essential because it is one of the first works of Ibn al-‘Arabī that remains, and it lets us show the progress of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s system throughout his life. Furthermore, it allows us to locate common themes in those of his works that were written near to each other in time and place.¹⁶ Elmore asserts that while studying the original forms of the key Akbarian concepts, such as that of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), Muḥammadan reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), and general, or universal prophethood (*al-nubuwwa al-‘amma*), such early texts as the *Mašāhid*, the *Mawāqī*, and the *‘Anqā* should be fundamental sources.¹⁷ In our examination of *Risāla* from this point of view, two main themes stand out: its defensive content and its emphasis on the concept of science.

2.1. The Defensive Style of the Work and Its Rationale

The relationship between prophethood and sainthood, the types of inheritance, science, and scholarship, and the opportunity for and the foundations of prophethood and esoteric knowledge stand out as subjects in this long prolog, itself as long as the *Mašāhid*. These issues are discussed using the evidence and narratives found in Qur’ānic verses and the *ḥadīths* that find frequent use in the history of Sufism. Ibn al-‘Arabī makes it clear that he was fearful of being misunderstood in relation to the various issues he deals with in the prolog, and he sought to make the content of *Mašāhid* acceptable to his intended audience. Indeed, after the praise to Allah and greeting of the prophet Muḥammad, he states that “God had brought him into the infinite number of stages, and then He gave (*ibrāz*) him this book and took him out to the perceptible world (*‘ālam al-mahsūs*), so Ibn al-‘Arabī expresses a salutation (*ḥiṭāb*).” Ibn al-‘Arabī emphasizes the holiness of his work, referring to the verse “Which none toucheth save the purified” (Wāqī‘a, 56:79).¹⁸ This emphasis on the divine source and holiness of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s work continues to manifest itself throughout the *Mašāhid*. However, Ibn al-‘Arabī also feels the need to support the statements he makes such as “He showed to me,” “I said to Him,” and “He said to me.” Thus, he states that the reciprocity between him and God only refers to the relationship between God’s attributes and acts, and he criticizes the Mu‘tazila’s description of the *kalām* (speaking) attribute of God.¹⁹ In this way he defends himself, asserting the unity of the acts (*tawḥīd al-aḥḍāl*) of God against possible criticisms that rest on an understanding of the attribute of *kalām* while drawing attention to the divine source of *Mašāhid*.

The *Risāla* also exhibits a defensive attitude regarding its findings related to the nature of the sacred knowledge of vision in the *Mašāhid*, in which the interlocutors are portrayed as heirs (*wārīt*). According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, this knowledge

¹⁴ *Mašāhid* consists of fourteen contemplations (*mašhads*), and each *mašhad* also indicates a place where a star can be born (i.e. *matla*, or *maṭāli* in the plural).

¹⁵ Addas, relying on part 351 of the *Futūḥāt*, claims that Ibn al-‘Arabī entered the land of truth in 590/1193, the year the *Risāla* was written, and that he remained there continuing his servitude to God. See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 119; Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 8, 368. Concerning the land of truth (*‘arḍ al-ḥaqīqa*), see Hakīm, *al-Mu‘ḡam al-Šūfī*, pp. 69-73.

¹⁶ Here I must mention my colleague Ercan Alkan and express my gratitude for having drawn my attention to this subject.

¹⁷ Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*, p. 79.

¹⁸ BUK1600/2, fol. 31b. Ibn al-‘Arabī stresses the divine source of his works elsewhere as well. See Konuk, *Tedbīrāt-ı İlahiyye Tercüme ve Şerhi*, p. 22; Uşşāqī, *Tawālī ‘manāfi*, vol. 1, pp. 184-187. İbnü’l-‘Arabī, “Dībāce”, in Konuk, *Fusūsu’l-hikem Tercüme ve Şerhi*, vol. 1, p. 110, Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 9, p. 400; Ibn al-‘Arabī, “Fihrist”, in *Unwān al-dirāya*, p. 163.

¹⁹ BUK1600/2, fol. 38b.

is unique, and some of it should be hidden, not to be revealed to anyone apart from experts. Indeed, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,²⁰ Ibn ‘Abbās,²¹ and Abū Hurayra²² tended to hide this knowledge. However, because Niffarī,²³ Ṣayḍala,²⁴ Ibn al-Barraḡān,²⁵ Ibn al-

‘Arīf,²⁶ and Abū Mūsā al-Dubaylī²⁷ published secrets related to this in their works, Ibn al-‘Arabī simply followed suit.²⁸

His defensiveness and his emphasis on explanation, which we see throughout the *Risāla*, is ultimately due to the hostile attitudes that non-Sufi groups express in reaction to the Sufi themes of speaking with God and sacred secret knowledge. However, the fact that mystical groups could use the information provided in an unprincipled way was also taken as a reason to guard it. As a matter of fact, this attitude is also seen in the statements against *samā’* practice in *Rūḥ al-quḍs*, which Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote in 600/1203. In this work, Ibn al-‘Arabī describes a group that he called “the people of *samā’* and *waḡd*,” who “took their religion for a sport and pastime” (A‘rāf, 7:51); one did not hear anything from them besides statements like “I saw God, he made me so, He did so.” When they are asked to share the truth that was bestowed upon them or the secret they gained through ecstatic words their answer is only their carnal taste and devilish lust.²⁹ It is clear to see why Ibn al-‘Arabī is concerned about this: the aforementioned statements such as “I saw God, he made me so, He did so” constitute the main backbone of the *Maṣāhid*.

According to Ruspoli, who published a French translation of *Maṣāhid* with a commentary, the

²⁰ Among the first believers of Islam, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muḥammad, Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) was considered in the Sufi traditions as a source of spiritual knowledge.

²¹ The uncle of Prophet Muḥammad, Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687-688) is the first commentator of the Qur’ān. Many Sufi interpretations of the Qur’ānic verses and *ḥadīṣ* are attributed to him.

²² Abū Hurayra (d. 58/678) is a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad who narrated the highest number of *ḥadīṣ* from him. Some of his sayings are regarded as a source of spiritual knowledge and his intimate relationship with the Prophet Muḥammad is one of the starting points of the sainthood (*walāya*) concept.

²³ Irāqī Sufi Niffarī’s (d. after 354/965) name is mentioned in *Risāla* as the author of *Mawāqif* which consists of the conversations of the *wāqif* (who is the subject of the contemplations in the book) with God. It is clear that *Maṣāhid* have many concepts, themes and style in common with *Mawāqif*. For the examples of these common elements, see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Ṣahit ve Anlatıkları*, pp. 61-66. For a series of articles which discuss *Mawāqif*, *Maṣāhid* and the *Risāla* as the prolog of *Maṣāhid*, see also Baṣīr, *Bayna Mawāqif al-Niffarī and Maṣāhid Ibn al-‘Arabī*. Beneito argues that Ibn al-‘Arabī follows the dialogical inspiration tradition represented by Niffarī and Ibn Barraḡān. (Beneito, “Introducción a la ciencia de las tipologías espirituales que resultan de la manifestación de los nombres divinos”, p. 79). This statement sheds light on the relation between Ibn al-‘Arabī and these Sufis.

²⁴ In *Risāla* the name “Ṣayḍala” appears as the author of the *Lawāmi’ al-anwār al-qulūb fī asrār al-muḥib wa-l-maḥbūb*. In the Ḥāmid Tāhir publication of the *Risāla*, the author of the work is recorded as “Abū al-Qāṣim (...)” and the last word cannot be read. In the Inebey copy, the author’s name is “Abū al-Qāṣim Ṣayḍala” (Ulu Cami 1600/2, fol. 37a). There is a high probability that the aforementioned author should be (although the name Abū l-Qāṣim mentioned in the *Risāla* raises doubts) the Ṣāfi’ī scholar Abū l-Ma’ālī Ṣayḍala ‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḡīlī (d. 494/1100). See Mertoğlu, “Şeyzele”, XXIX, 106; Ṣayḍala, *Lawāmi’ al-anwār al-qulūb*. For a study on the content and manuscripts of this ten-chapter work on divine love, see Dajānī, “Dirāsa”, pp. 99-124.

²⁵ Famous for his commentary (*tafsīr*) to the Qur’ān, the Andalusī Sufi Ibn Barraḡān died in 536/1141. For a thorough study on his life and thought see Casewitt, *The Mystics of al-Andalus* pp. 91-245. As we can observe, Ibn al-‘Arabī refers to Ibn Barraḡān’s works on three main subjects. The first one concerns Ibn Barraḡān’s foresight on the conquest of Jerusalem. The second reference is about Ibn Barraḡān’s work on the commentary of *al-Asmā’ al-ḥusnā*. The third reference is the concept of “the reality upon which creation is created” (*al-ḥāqq al-maḥlūq bihi*) which he developed from Qur’ān. This last reference is brought up in *Futūḥāt* throughout the discussion on the source of human’s actions and is a key element for the justification of the style of *Maṣāhid* which Ibn al-‘Arabī points out in *Risāla*. See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Ṣahit ve Anlatıkları*, pp. 66-69.

²⁶ Abū l-‘Abbās al-Sanhāḡī (d. 536/1141) known as Ibn al-‘Arīf is an Andalusī Sufi, author of *Maḥāsīn al-Maḡālīs*. Ibn al-‘Arabī mentions his name and book in *Futūḥāt* several times. In the section about knowledge and knower Ibn al-‘Arabī names Ibn al-‘Arīf among the Sufis who agree with him about the below mentioned distinction between ‘*ālim* and ‘*arīf*. See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 5, p. 590.

²⁷ Abū Mūsā al-Dubaylī is a well-known disciple of Abū Yazīd Bistāmī. According to Sehlekī, the expression, quoted by Ibn al-‘Arabī in the introduction: “I will take three hundred words from Abū Yazīd to my grave because I could not find a competent person to tell them” refers to another Abū Mūsā, the nephew of Abū Yazīd. See Sehlekī, “al-Nūr min kalimāt Abī l-Ṭayfūr”, pp. 67-72.

²⁸ What is more striking is that Ibn al-‘Arabī mentions Dubaylī in *Futūḥāt* in the same context, and this coincidence makes clear the reason for mentioning this name here: first, Ibn al-‘Arabī attracts the reader’s attention to the value of the secret, which is about the fact that there were other prophets of Prophet Muḥammad’s community (*umma*) who follows him but were not sent by God. Then he states that such secrets cannot be learned from others, and he would not have disclosed them if he did not receive divine inspiration (*ilhām*), which forces him to reveal it. Later, he stresses that when servants hear such secrets, they should praise God and say that they are unique to some of God’s servants, and he recommends that they should accept them. Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī’s advice to Dubaylī goes in the same direction. See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 4, p. 278.

²⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Rūḥ al-quḍs*, p. 9.

reason that the *Risāla* was written as a prolog and the reason for its defensiveness can be found in the relationship between Ibn al-‘Arabī and Šayḥ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mahdawī.³⁰ When Ibn al-‘Arabī arrived in Tunisia in 590/1193, he was not warmly welcomed by Šayḥ al-Mahdawī.³¹ Ibn al-‘Arabī attributed this attitude to the fact that Šayḥ al-Mahdawī was self-conscious lest he betray his status in the presence of al-Mahdawī and his followers and that Ibn al-‘Arabī read the poem “I am the Qur’ān and the seven binaries (*sab‘ al-maṭānī*).”³² According to Ruspoli, al-Mahdawī was hesitant to appear to confirm Ibn al-‘Arabī in the attitude expressed in this poem, which resulted in his cold behavior. In response to this, Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote the long letter that became the *Risāla* and included in it a depiction of some of al-Mahdawī’s virtues, to prevent the cold attitude and to ease his entry into al-Mahdawī’s circle. In addition, to indicate his own competence, he mentioned works beyond the ones he noted in the epilog to the *Mašāhid*.³³ Ruspoli may be correct in these findings. To bolster this claim it should be noted that Ibn al-‘Arabī twice states his intention to write a single piece of work that would contain the hagiography of Šayḥ al-Mahdawī,³⁴ in addition to the fact that he tells several anecdotes that are very complimentary to the obedience to the tradition (*sunna*), devotion, and altruism of al-Mahdawī and his followers.³⁵

2.2. Discussions of What Makes a Scholar (‘Ālim)

The position of scholars, who are the true heirs of the prophets, is a central issue in the *Risāla*.

³⁰ Ruspoli, *Le Livre des Contemplations Divines*, p. 36.

³¹ Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 115.

³² Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 1, pp. 83-84.

³³ Ruspoli, *Le Livre des Contemplations Divines*, pp. 36-37.

³⁴ There is no record of such a work, however Elmore states that it is possible that this may refer to *Kitāb fī faḍā’il mašyahāt ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Abī Bakr al-Qurašī al-Mahdawī*, which 14th-century “physician-litterateur” Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Ḥātima mentions among Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works in his book on the history of Almeria. These works are among Ibn al-‘Arabī’s earliest writings. See Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*, p. 77.

³⁵ However, it should be noted that Ruspoli did not interpret Ibn al-‘Arabī’s attitude as a deliberate—and pretended—action made in order to impress al-Mahdawī. Ibn al-‘Arabī dedicated *Futūḥāt* to him and his attitude towards al-Mahdawī appeared to be both positive and insightful, as can easily be seen when his works are assessed as a whole. The narratives and praise of al-Mahdawī that appear in the *Risāla* indicate the same intent. Therefore, Ruspoli’s claim essentially rests on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s desire to establish an affinity with the disciples of al-Mahdawī, who, as he himself stated, found his attitude somewhat strange.

We suggest that Ibn al-‘Arabī used the concept of the scholar as a key concept to express his views on two basic subjects. The first of these is related to the comparison of the concepts of science and gnosis (*ilm* and *ma’rifā*) through portraits of the scholar and the gnostic. As for the second, he bases the concept of inheritance (*wirāṭa*) through the concepts of the scholar and the prophet and puts forth the idea of absolute prophethood (*nubuwwa*), that is, sainthood (*walāya*).³⁶

³⁶ For an elaborated study on the origins and development of the concept sainthood (*walāya*) through the example of Morocco, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. xvii-xliv, 1-155. Cornell is of the opinion that Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ in his *Kitāb al-Šifā’* the first to imply a relationship between prophecy and sainthood in Maḡrib lands. However, this relationship had been considered in detail by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidī (d. 320/932) a long time ago in a far different country (Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint*, p. 205). Tirmidī is considered to be the one “who introduced the term *walāya* into the technical vocabulary of Sufism where it had not previously existed” in the nineteenth century (Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 27). According to him, saints are truthful people who emerged after the death of the prophet, through them the world exists, and were replaced by another saint (*walī*) someone else when they died. When they run out of numbers, God chooses one from among them, him closer and bestows on him the rank of *ḥatm al-awliyā’*. He will be the possessor of the *station of the intercession* (*maqām al-šafā’a*). (Tirmidī, “The Life of the Friends of God”, p. 109). Cornell stresses the point that Tirmidī asserts the *intercessory* term as a shared specialty between the prophets and saints. As to him, the prophet’s intercessory feature emerges in the *Seal of Sainthood* (*Ḥatm al-awliyā’*) (Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint*, 205). This feature indicates the need of the friends of God (*awliyā’*)—and all other people—for the seal of sainthood, thus the superiority of the *seal* to all people. However while Tirmidī mentions this superiority among many virtues of the saint, he emphasizes that no one should ever claim the superiority of a saint over a prophet. See Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint*, pp. 157-168.

As to Ibn al-‘Arabī, sainthood is the sphere (*falak*) that encompasses all the other spheres, including prophethood. However, he extends the scope of the term prophethood and assigns it to two dimensions, legislative and absolute. The first one refers to the prophets who bring the law, and the second refers to sainthood. Legislative prophethood has reached an end; on the other hand, absolute prophethood or sainthood remain. One should be aware that these concepts do not speak about partial beings but universal notions. Therefore, the encompassing and superior character of sainthood over prophethood does not indicate the superiority of the saint over the prophet. Every prophet is also a saint but not every saint is a prophet. Therefore, this theory demonstrates that the sainthood feature of a prophet is superior to his prophethood feature (see Ḥakīm, *al-Mu’ḡam al-Šifī*, pp. 1038-1047, 1231-1241; Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 50-52). Ibn al-‘Arabī probably is aware of the possible misunderstandings about this subject, so stresses diligently and repeatedly this distinction in his works as well as the need to use the prophethood (*nubuwwa*) concept with a restriction (like “legislative prophethood”), see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 4, pp. 269-271. A person who prays his God until the inevitable comes onto him (see Qur’ān, *al-Ḥiḡr*, 15/99) will eventually see what the prophet whom he follows sees, hear

According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, there are three groups of those who reach God: scholars, stayers, and gnostics (*‘ālim*, *wāqif*, and *‘arīf*).³⁷ Among these, the most outstanding are those scholars who return (from God).³⁸ Because stayers do not return and gnostics do not always return but in particular cases,³⁹ they are both rated as being beneath the scholars/inheritors. These scholars sustain the Prophet’s legacy by preserving the knowledge he left as his legacy after his death. Prophets and saints can unite all of these sciences, while others are only able to know some of them.⁴⁰ Ibn al-‘Arabī also claims that to understand the differences among these concepts, it is necessary to master the truth of Sufism. However, so-called Sufis are mistaken when they call those Sufis who reach God gnostics and call those who know theology and jurisprudence scholars while believing that the first are superior to the second. He considers that the gnostic is between the scholar who knows himself and the scholar who knows God, in agreement with Ṣayḥ al-Mahdawī.⁴¹

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s comparison here between science (*‘ilm*) and gnosis (*ma‘rifā*)⁴² can be seen as

the projection of a terminological confusion that already existed in Sufi thought.⁴³ Kutluer argues that Sufis made the distinction between science and gnosis to emphasize the difference between gnosis related to status (*ḥāl*) and the gnosis associated with spiritual state (*maqām*),⁴⁴ but this did not prevent prominent Sufis from centering their systems on the concept of science, and he gives Ibn al-‘Arabī as an example, together with Muḥāsibī, Mākkī, and Ġazālī.⁴⁵ In fact, at the beginning of the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-‘Arabī gathered together the entire system of knowledge under the notion of science, under the three headings of reason (*‘aql*), status (*aḥwāl*), and secrets (*asrār*). Further, he emphasized that those who associate the concepts of gnosis and science with the divine and celestial stages are speaking of the same subject, and those who claim that gnosis is superior to science are thinking of science while talking about gnosis. Thus, the explanation of the divergence is not to be found in the content, but in the naming.⁴⁶ However, in his *Mawāqī‘ al-nuḡūm*, which he cites in the *Futūḥāt* in the same section as cited above, he criticizes those who hold that the gnostic is superior to the scholar more harshly.⁴⁷ The fact that Ibn al-‘Arabī foregrounds this question in two

what he hears and “join him in his stage (*daraḡa*)”—without having a share in legislative prophethood—. This stage reached is the true inheritance of the soul who confirms and pursues (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 9, p. 17). We can observe that Ibn al-‘Arabī developed the concept of *nubuwwa* through a comparison with al-Tirmidī. Tirmidī argues that *nubuwwa* and *risāla* are concepts that are restricted by worldly life and will lose their validity after the Day of Resurrection (Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 26-30). As to Ibn al-‘Arabī extended the scope of the *nubuwwa* concept (which already has a solid place in the Islamic literature) through bringing forward the concept of absolute prophethood and associated it with *walāya*. Consequently he improved his theory of sainthood to the next level and consolidated its position among the Islamic sciences.

³⁷ To draw a comparison, we can refer to a contemporary Ifīṭī Sufi and also another disciple of Mahdawī, Ahmad al-Būnī. He sorts Sufis into three ranks: *sālikūn* (the seekers), *murīdūn* (adherents) and *‘arīfūn* (gnostics). He regards gnostics as the owners of the highest rank and describes his master Mahdawī as *tāḡ al-‘arīfīn* (the crown of the gnostics). See Gardiner, *Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture*, p. 230.

³⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabī emphasizes the superiority of scholar to the gnostic in his *Kitāb al-Inbāḥ* too. This book was written by ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥabaṣī but consists of the sayings of Ibn al-‘Arabī, see Gril, “The Kitāb al-Inbāḥ”, *JMIAS*, parts 1-2.

³⁹ As to Chodkiewicz this particularity means the gnostic’s return for his own sake. On the other hand, “return of the scholars in a general sense” means a return in order to guide created beings, see Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 171.

⁴⁰ BUK1600/2, fols. 32b-33a. Ibn al-‘Arabī similarly examines this subject, with the same narrative, in the 45th part of *Futūḥāt*. See Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 2, pp. 37-42.

⁴¹ BUK1600/2, fols. 34a-34b.

⁴² For a noteworthy study on Ibn ‘Arabī’s classifications

of knowledge and their origins in Eastern Sufism and al-Andalus, see Ebstein, “Classifications of Knowledge”, pp. 33-64. However, Ebstein does not mention the distinction between science (*‘ilm*) and gnosis (*ma‘rifā*) in the works of Ibn al-‘Arabī.

⁴³ Quṣayrī states that there is no difference between science and gnosis. According to him, all science (*‘ilm*) is gnosis and all gnosis (*ma‘rifā*) is science. A person who knows God is a gnostic (*‘arīf*) and every gnostic is a knower (*‘ālim*), see al-Qushayrī, *al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, p. 320.

⁴⁴ Two factors in the Sufi literature are crucial in the formation of this separation. The first is the interpretation of the word “worship (*li-ya‘budūnī*)” in the verse “I created *ḡinn* and humans only to worship Me” (Qur’ān, al-Dāriyāt, 51/56) as “knowing (*li-ya‘rifūnī*)” and the second is the central position of the Holy *ḥadīṭ* “I was a hidden treasure, I loved to be known and I created the world.” (For the Holy *ḥadīṭ* see Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 4, p. 576).

⁴⁵ Kutluer, “‘Ilm”, vol. 22, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 5, pp. 590-591.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Mawāqī‘ al-nuḡūm*, pp. 112-120. For the process by which gnosis, as a type of spiritual knowledge, came to be considered superior to science, which expresses rational knowledge, and the answer of why Sufis gave preference to gnosis in substitution for science, see Shah-Kazemi, “The Notion and Significance of ‘Ma‘rifā’ In Sufism”, pp. 156-164. Kazemi stresses that there was not a consensus on the superiority of gnosis to science within Sufi texts. Some examples demonstrate that gnosis and science are used interchangeably or one of them is described as a form of the other. Shah-Kazemi, “The Notion and Significance of ‘Ma‘rifā’ In Sufism”, p. 158.

of his works, written near to each other in space and time, namely, the *Risāla* (590/1193) and the *Mawāqī‘ al-nuġūm* (595/1198), should indicate that such debates were in the air and on the Sufi agenda, and his works may in part have come in response to accusations and attacks from others.

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s emphasis on the idea of scholarship corroborates Alkan’s research on the reasons for the popularity of Sufism in al-Andalus at the end of the al-Almoravid period, in spite of the aggression shown by scholars and rulers against Sufism only a century before Ibn al-‘Arabī.⁴⁸ Alkan discusses Fierro’s finding that the people of al-Andalus were seeking a new authority because of their despair and the inadequacy of their judges and rulers in the face of the spiritual crises caused by the material crises during the rule of the al-Almoravids. The Ṣayḥs, or authorized teachers of Sufism, entered this gap to fill it because they had a certain degree of moral authority, in contrast to the scholars and the judges.⁴⁹ However, Fierro states that in the eleventh century, orthodox Sufism was represented by Muhāsibī and Quṣayrī, and other Sufi views were criticized or rejected. Those censured opinions, which included that the saints could perform miracles, that prophethood could be obtained through spiritual perfection, that the saints were superior to the prophets, and that the saints could contemplate God and speak with him,⁵⁰ corresponded exactly to the issues that Ibn al-‘Arabī felt the need to defend himself in *Risāla*. The accusations of Sufis regarding these subjects were not groundless: acquisition of prophethood, for example, was seen as possible by the followers of Ibn Masarra,⁵¹ and al-Ġazālī is also accused of claiming to have acquired it.⁵² It would only be natural, in such an environment, that Ibn al-‘Arabī would want to specify exactly what type of knowledge belonged to Sufism (and also on which its authority was based on), calling it science (‘*ilm*), which includes all kinds of knowledge, in contrast with wisdom (*ma‘rifa*), which was already accepted in Sufism but was not claimed to be a superior type of knowledge.

The second theme that Ibn al-‘Arabī discussed in relation to the concept of scholarship in the *Risāla* is that of inheritance and sainthood; he considered these two issues to be complementary because the saint receives prophecy from God through an inheritance.⁵³ Ibn al-‘Arabī used the concepts scholar and inheritor to refer to the same truth, grounding the idea of prophecy in the concept of inheritance and consolidating the central position of science for both Sufi and non-mystic groups. His statements in the *Risāla* are noteworthy in this respect:

Although the Prophet’s (*nabī*) person and appearance have been lost, the *ṣarī‘a* and *sunna* have not disappeared. On the contrary, God has left them to be entrusted among the treasures of the inheritor scholars, and when they knock on the doors of the treasures to ask for them, the treasures are opened. These doors are the tongues of the scholars, from which the things that are needed by the one who is knocking on the door, are given. In fact, Ṣayḥ al-Mahdawī points to this when he says, “The scholars (‘*ālim*) of this community (*umma*) are in the midst of the prophets (*nabī*) of other communities (*umma*).” But they do not reach the stage of prophethood, for the Messenger of Allah said, “There is no prophet (*nabī*) after me.” The Sufis, people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqā‘iq*) and our Ṣayḥ, who has mastered this, are united in the belief that the last step of the saints (*walī*) is the first step of the prophets (*nabī*). The beginning of the prophets (*nabī*), is the end of the truthfuls (*ṣiddīqūn*) and the saints.⁵⁴

Ibn al-‘Arabī would surely have been aware that these statements could lead to misunderstanding. For this reason, through an examination of the root meaning of the word prophet (*nabī*), he indicates that it expresses both the active and passive voices, including both the meanings “the one who informs” and “the one who is informed.” Accordingly, a saint (*walī*) informs and is informed through inspiration (*ilhām*). Thus, *nabī* has the same meaning as saint (*walī*) but does not have the meaning of bringing a new religious law (*ṣarī‘a*), which is instead the task of the *rasūl*. This is why Ṣayḥ al-Mahdawī uses the word *nabī*, not *rasūl*, in his statement. For that statement, Ibn al-‘Arabī acknowledges that a non-prophetic *nabī* and a scholar (‘*ālim*) are similar not entirely but regarding two aspects: knowledge and position. A scholar (‘*ālim*) resembles a non-prophetic *nabī* because of the

⁴⁸ Alkan, *Şerhu Hal‘u‘n-na‘leyn*, pp. 65-66.

⁴⁹ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus”, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁰ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus”, p. 185.

⁵¹ Fierro, “Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus”, p. 183.

⁵² Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus*, p. 56. Cornell also points out to a similar environment in Morocco and stresses that not only sainthood but even miracles had to conform to juridical ideals in that era, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 275-276.

⁵³ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, vol. 5, p. 591.

⁵⁴ BUK1600/2, fol. 33a.

knowledge he possesses. As for the position, they both are subject to the prophet (*rasūl*) and his religious law (*ṣarī‘a*), they are the guardians of the religious law (*ṣarī‘a*) and they govern the Islamic community (*umma*). However, Ibn al-‘Arabī emphasizes that he takes a narrow sense of the active form of *nabī* and allocates it to the prophets who bring the law. On the other hand, in the passive form, the word *nabī* pertains to both *nabī* and *walī*. The difference between them is that the *nabī* is informed by an angel, and the *walī* is informed through inspiration.⁵⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabī is concerned also that the statements he uses in the first pages of the prolog such as “the book” and “I was told [by God]” could be misunderstood to refer to the holy book (Qur’ān) and the divine call of God (*wahy*), respectively:

I have been ordered to convey this information. (...) God charged and bequeathed me to present this book from the stage of the divine essence (*ḥadrat al-huwiyya*) and to reveal it to the sensorial world (*al-a‘lām al-maḥsūs*). (...) Then I was told: “Take it with strength⁵⁶ and make it known to everyone who sees it.”

Therefore, produced a similar pre-emptive defense, stating that even if divine revelation (*wahy*) no longer existed, the hearts of the saints can continue to be inspired.⁵⁷ With this last point, Ibn al-‘Arabī touches on the concept of scholarship, which is the basis for his theory of sainthood as absolute prophethood, proposed with many examples in the *Risāla*.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, after Ibn al-‘Arabī annotated his book *Tarḡumān al-aṣwāq*⁵⁸ in response to its denunciation by a group of judges of Aleppo, who were opposed to the claim made in the book that it bore divine secrets, he also pre-emptively added annotations to his own work in the *Risāla* regarding subjects that might produce a negative reaction in the *Maṣāhid*. Issues such as knowledge, wisdom, sainthood, the acquisition of prophethood, the word of God (*kalām Allāh*),

miracles of the saints, the sight of God (*ru‘iyat Allāh*), and the acquisition of knowledge from inspiration and revelation, were being discussed in the intellectual circles of al-Andalus in that period,⁵⁹ and their dissemination influenced the political balance of the country. The fact that all of these issues were addressed in the *Futūḥāt*, which Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote at the end of his life, confirms Elmore’s claim that the key concepts in his system were already present in the *Risāla*, which he wrote in 590, as demonstrated in this article through the example of sainthood (*walāya*). Ibn al-‘Arabī wanted to situate himself and his work in a position in Sufi literature relative to the names he brought forward in the prolog, Niffārī, Ibn Barraḡān, Ṣayḍala, and Abū Mūsā al-Dubaylī, and to ground his response to this tradition. It is clear that the concepts and theories he thus employed were based on concepts of science (*‘ilm*) and scholars (*‘ālim*) to ensure the legitimacy of the knowledge of scholars of mysticism.

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⁵⁵ BUK1600/2, fols. 33a, 34b.

⁵⁶ This expression is also a part of a verse of *Qur’ān* which mentions the address of God to Moses about the tablets, see *Qur’ān*, al-A‘rāf, 7/145. This reference of Ibn al-‘Arabī, which brings to mind a parallel between the *Maṣāhid* and the Torah tablets, is another sign indicating the sanctity of *Maṣāhid* and the necessity of conveying its content to the interlocutors.

⁵⁷ BUK1600/2, fol. 32a.

⁵⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Ḍaḥā‘ir al-a‘lāq*, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Casewit tells us that Sufism-based discussions under the Almoravids continued in later Sufi epistemology. The main question was whether to accept that gnosis (*ma‘rifa*) or even a higher level of knowledge could be reached by the purification of the heart and soul. Here, polemics were shown through a discussion of the miracles of the saint and the acquisition of prophethood. Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus*, p. 40.

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