



*WALĀYAH:*  
AN ANALYSIS ON THE HIERARCHY OF *AWLIYĀ'*  
IN THE WORKS OF IBN 'ARABĪ

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation runs a critical analysis on Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā’*. The study itself is a library based research which attempts to analyse his perception on a number of important subjects related to such a hierarchy. They are, the meanings and divisions of *walāyah*; the similarities and differences between the *awliyā’* and both the Legislative Prophets and Messengers; the issue of superiority of *awliyā’* above the Legislative Prophets (*tafdīl al-walī ‘alā al-nabī*); the position of this hierarchy in light of Qur’anic verses, prophetic *aḥādīth* and spiritual thought of early Sufis; the sources of Ibn ‘Arabī’s hierarchy of *awliyā’*; his construction of the hierarchies of *awliyā’*; and finally, the specific features of the holders of such hierarchies, as well as their relation to the Divine Names and their status as the heirs to the Legislative Prophets. Utilizing the writings of the Shaykh with a special reference to chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt*, this study shows that *walāyah* in his thought was fundamentally ontological and spiritual in nature. It follows that he divided *walāyah* into that of God and that of the creatures, where the latter is further divided according to the number of species in the universe, two of which are the *walāyah* of angels and of human beings. A number of strong points are also found in relation to his perspective on the similarities and differences between the *awliyā’* and both the legislative Prophets and Messengers, as well as to his standpoint regarding the inferiority of the former to the latter. The study also demonstrates that the Sufi idea of hierarchy of *awliyā’* as especially reflected in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī bears scriptural justification from the Qur’anic verses and prophetic *aḥādīth*. A historical survey on the flow of this idea in Sufi thought testifies that the Shaykh was the first among the Sufis to come with a full set of this doctrine, taking as his sources both the Qur’an and prophetic *aḥādīth*, the spiritual thought of his Sufi predecessors, as well as his own method and spiritual illumination and experiences. On the basis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s categories of the groups of *awliyā’* into those whose numbers are fixed and not fixed at any given epoch, this study demonstrates that the hierarchy of *awliyā’* in his thought are held by the Men of Mother Levels (*ummaḥāt al-ṭabaqāt*) and the Men of Ranks (*rijāl al-marātib*). This study also makes some suggestions for future research.

## ملخص البحث

مقصد كتابة هذه الرسالة هو إجراء دراسة نقدية تحليلية على نظرية ابن عربي في طبقات الأولياء التي يبدو أنها قد غابت عن عيون الباحثين المعاصرين رغماً أنه تزايد اهتمامهم بفكرة ولايته. ومنهج هذا البحث هو الدراسة المكتبية التي تبحث عن المسائل المهمة المتعلقة بهذه الطبقات، هي: معاني وتقسيمات الولاية، أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين الوليِّ والنبيِّ والرسول، مسألة تفضيل الوليِّ على النبيِّ في فكر ابن عربي، مكانة هذه الطبقات في ضوء القرآن والحديث وأفكار المتصوفين القدماء، المصادر التي بنى عليها ابن عربي فكرة طبقات الأولياء، هيكل طبقات أوليائه، مزايا أصحاب هذه الطبقات وعلاقتهم بالأسماء الحسنى، ومكانتهم كوراثة للأنبياء. بدراسة مؤلفات ابن عربي، خاصة باب 73 من كتابه "الفتوحات المكية"، كشفت هذه الدراسة أن مفهوم الولاية عنده تتميز بسمات أنطولوجية وروحية حيث أنه لاشيء من الوجود إلا وهو يسميه بالوليِّ. ومن ناحية أخرى، قسم ابن عربي الولاية إلى قسمين هما ولاية الخالق وولاية المخلوق. فولاية المخلوق تنقسم حسب أجناسها إلى أقسام أخرى منها ولاية الملائكة وولاية الإنسان. كما يكشف هذا البحث فكرته القوية الرئيسية فيما يتعلق بأوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين الوليِّ والنبيِّ والرسول، ودونية مرتبة الأولياء أمام الأنبياء والرسول. وكذلك أثبت من خلال هذه الدراسة أن فكرة الصوفي كما بينها كتاب طبقات الأولياء، وكما ظهرت في آراء ابن عربي، مؤيدة أصلاً بالآيات القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، كما هو معلوم من خلال الدراسة التاريخية عن تطور هذا الرأي في عالم التصوف أن ابن عربي هو أول صوفي أسس هيكل هذه الطبقات على وجه شامل. وأخيراً، ملاحظة تقسيم ابن عربي الأولياء بالمحصور بالأبد وغير المحصور بالأبد. أثبتت هذه الدراسة أن قضية طبقات الأولياء في فكره تتكون من جماعتين: جماعة أمهات المقامات وجماعة رجال المراتب. خاتمة هذه الدراسة تحتوي على اقتراحات مهمة بأبحاث حول هذا الموضوع في المستقبل.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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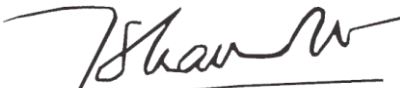
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Wahabuddin Ra'ess  
Chairman

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Iskandar Arnel

  
Signature.....

Date: October 14, 2014

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*With love and respect*  
*Papa, Mama, Ayah, Amak, Bunda,*  
*Vali, Fazra, and 'Abduh*

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## SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

ARAB	=	LATIN	ARAB	=	LATIN
ء	=	'	ض	=	d
ب	=	b	ط	=	ṭ
ت	=	t	ظ	=	ẓ
ث	=	th	ع	=	'
ج	=	j	غ	=	gh
ح	=	ḥ	ف	=	f
خ	=	kh	ق	=	q
د	=	d	ك	=	k
ذ	=	dh	ل	=	l
ر	=	r	م	=	m
ز	=	z	ن	=	n
س	=	s	هـ	=	h
ش	=	sh	و	=	w
ص	=	ṣ	ي	=	y

<u>Vowel</u>	<u>Long Vowel</u>	<u>Examples</u>
اَ = a	اَ = ā	أَرْكَانٌ = <i>arkān</i>
اِ = i	اِ = ī	سَبِيلٌ = <i>sabīl</i>
اُ = u	اُ = ū	بُيُوتٌ = <i>buyūt</i>

All the rules related to Arabic transliteration entertained in this study referred to *The IIUM Thesis/Dissertation Manual* published in 2011 by Centre for Postgraduate Studies, International Islamic University of Malaysia.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The belief that there are in the world a number of selected people called *awliyā'* (sing. *walī*) who are close to God and capable of miraculous acts is deeply rooted in the religiosity of Muslim communities, and is justified by the two fundamental sources of Islam, the Qur'an and prophetic *aḥādīth*. This belief already captured the minds of early Sufi generations as depicted in their works and discourses on spiritual experiences and noble characters. The notion of *walāyah*, the spiritual office through which the *awliyā'* derive their charisma, gradually turned into a formal doctrine and gained nomenclature in the spiritual sciences at the hand of the prolific third century Hijra author, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥasan (d. 320)-popularly known as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī-through his controversial work entitled *Kitāb Khatm al-Awliyā'*, or as suggested by Radtke, *Kitāb Sīrat al-Awliyā'*.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding that Islam carries in itself the notion of *awliyā'*, for which all Muslims find no reluctance to believe in their existence, one notices that the same idea brought by the Sufis does not flow easily from one generation to another without serious challenge and severe criticism. There are two primary reasons for this. Firstly, the leaning attitude of some Sufis was considered as having provoked the idea of superiority of *walī* over *nabī* (*tafḍīl al-walī 'alā al-nabī*). Secondly, the absence of scriptural supports (the Qur'an and prophetic *aḥādīth*) on the Sufi's excessive perception on the

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<sup>1</sup> This work included in the *Thalāthat Muṣannaḡāt li al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* edited by Bernt Radtke (Bayrūt: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kātūlīkiyyah, 1992). This edition also contains two other writings of al-Tirmidhī, namely, *al-Masā'il allatī Sa'alahu Ahl Sarakhs 'anhā* and *Jawāb Kitāb min al-Rayy*.

extraordinary acts (*karāmāt*; sing. *karāmah*) of *awliyā'*, were to some extent perceived as interceding or even partaking in Divine Administration (*al-tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyyah*) over created beings. Under these circumstances, this notion of the Sufis was considered innovative (*bid'ah*) and blasphemous.

Between the two, it is the first reason triggers the most controversy. In his celebrated *Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Massignon pointed out that the first critique of it began as early as the third century Islam. The subject was about the superiority of the Prophet Yaḥya (the biblical 'John the Baptist'), the *walī*, over the Prophet 'Īsā, the law giver Messenger of God, spoken out in public by an influential Syrian Sufi in the line of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), and his foremost disciple, Aḥmad bin Abī al-Ḥawārī (d. 246/860)<sup>2</sup>, the companion of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907).<sup>3</sup> Although this assessment of Massignon contains some dubious facts, especially if one evaluates it in light of appreciation recorded about al-Dārānī and al-Ḥawārī by early Sufi biographers, the history does mention the uneasy life experienced by both the Shaykh and his disciple.

The same was also true of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, whose contemporaries charged him with heresy for pretending to have prophetic functions (*al-mutanabbī*) and speaking of forbidden love. However, as pointed out by Elmore, it was the former that really caused him trouble.<sup>4</sup> There are two hypothetical reasons for this. The first is his *Kitāb Khatm al-Awliyā'*, which generates an idea that there exists in the world the Seal of the Friends of God (*khātam al-awliyā'*) and, hence, resembles the status of the Prophet

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<sup>2</sup> Massignon, later on confirmed by Elmore, suggested another spelling for his name, i.e. al-Ḥawwārī or al-Ḥuwwārī. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. H. Mason (Princeton, 1982), 3:208—209n. 236 and Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn 'Arabī's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 132n. 9. However, the name al-Ḥawārī is still preserved in this study due to its possible derivation from the Qur'anic *al-ḥawāriyyūn* (those with white dress), attributed to the disciples of the prophet 'Īsā.

<sup>3</sup> Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, 3:208—209n. 236.

<sup>4</sup> Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, 138.

Muḥammad (pbuh) in his capacity as the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-anbiyā'*). The second is the contents of the work which portrays the spiritual conditions, knowledge and personal characteristics of the *awliyā'* in such a high status as to challenge those of the Legislative Prophets (as). As a consequence of this, al-Tirmidhī was put on trial in the court of the governor of Balkh, who then banned him from teaching the subject and expelled him out of Tirmīdhī.<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say, the campaign against this notion of the Sufis still flourishes today in any part of Muslim world. However, this is not the whole story we have at hand. History also witnesses that as Sufism grows bigger, the doctrine of *walāyah* becomes more attractive to its adherents whose numbers increase significantly from time to time. This fact is really surprising since one scarcely finds a novice in the spiritual path at any *langgar* or *surau* (a place smaller than mosque used for prayer, called in Arabic *muṣallā*) in the province of West Sumatera or in the *Negeri Seribu Suluk* (Land of One Thousand Sufi Lodges) of Riau province<sup>6</sup> who does not dream to be a *walī* of God.

It is in the context of disseminating the idea of *walāyah* and in the personalization of the characteristics of *awliyā'* that the role of great Sufi *mashāyikh* (sing. *shaykh*, master) is worth mentioning. Just like a light in the middle of the night, these Sufi masters, who patiently observe their hearts and sincerity towards God, continuously nourish and lead their novices to consciously open themselves to the sound reason and truth contained in this notion of the *awliyā'* of God. They also wrote a number of works

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<sup>5</sup> See also Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. from French by Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 27 and Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, 138 and notes 45 and 46 of the same page.

<sup>6</sup> Both provinces are located in the island of Sumatera, Indonesia.



which gave meticulous details on spiritual exercises through which one may sincerely disclose him/herself to the obedience, love and favors of God.

The literary output in the Sufi tradition records that as early as the third century Hijra, works on this genre—written by celebrated figures like al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243),<sup>7</sup> Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281),<sup>8</sup> Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286),<sup>9</sup> and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī—were being read in Sufi circles and *khāniqāh* (place for spiritual retreat). The fourth and fifth century Hijra also witnesses the same tendency, executed by illustrious *mashāyikh* like Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988),<sup>10</sup> al-Kalābadhī (d. 380/990),<sup>11</sup> al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021),<sup>12</sup> al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072),<sup>13</sup> and al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1072 and 469/1077).<sup>14</sup> However, it is in the sixth century Hijra, precisely at the hand of the *Shaykh al-Akbar* (Doctor Maximus), Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā‘ī, popularly known as Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī or simply Ibn ‘Arabī (560-638/1165-1249), that the idea of *awliyā’* finds its full exposition.

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<sup>7</sup> He wrote many works, five of them—namely, *al-Naṣā’ih*, *al-Qaṣd wa al-Rujū’ ilā Allāh*, *Bad’ man Anāba ilā Allāh*, *Fahm al-Ṣalāh* and *al-Tawahhum*—are compiled in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1<sup>st</sup> Printing, 1406/1986). See also his *al-Makāsib*, ed. Sa‘ad Karīm al-Faqqī (al-Iskandariyyah: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, n.d.) and *Ādāb al-Nufūs* together with *Bad’ man Anāba ilā Allāh*, ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayd (al-Azhar: Dār al-Salām, 1<sup>st</sup> Printing, 1412/1991).

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh bin Muḥammad bin ‘Ubayd bin Sufyān al-Qurashī), *Mawsū‘at Rasā’il Ibn Abī al-Dunyā*, 5 vols. (Bayrūt: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1993), which comprises of twenty letters.

<sup>9</sup> Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness (Kitāb al-Ṣidq)*, edited and translated from Arabic by Arthur John Arberry (Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press, 1937).

<sup>10</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *al-Luma’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāha ‘Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthiyyah and Baghdād: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1380/1960).

<sup>11</sup> Al-Kalābadhī, *Kitāb al-Ta‘arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. M. A. al-Nawawī (al-Qāhirah, 1969). See also the English translation of the work entitled *The Doctrine of the Ṣufīs* by Arthur John Arberry (Cambridge, 1935).

<sup>12</sup> Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddimah fī al-Taṣawwuf wa Ḥaqīqatihi*, ed. Yūsuf Zīdān (al-Azhar: Maktabat al-Kutubiyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1986) and *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* together with *Dhikr al-Niswah al-Muta‘abbidāt al-Ṣūfiyyāt*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> Printing, 1424/2003).

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 2 vols., ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Muḥammad ibn al-Sharīf (al-Qāhirah, 1966). See also its English translation by Alexander Knysh, *al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub: A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 2001).

With regard to Ibn ‘Arabī, one should bear in mind that all the intrinsic discourse of *walāyah* in his thought lies in his perspective of the hierarchy of *awliyā’*, a doctrine which teaches that there exists a structural hierarchy of the friends of God who do not only execute the Divine Power on the cosmic level but also intercede within daily human affairs. It is no secret that he was not the first to talk about this hierarchy. However, his contribution to this notion finds no competitors. Here the combination of spiritual inspiration and genius in this presumable self-proclaimed Seal of Muḥammadan *Walāyah* (*khātam al-walāyah al-Muḥamma-diyyah*) did not only made him incapable of clarifying the subtle problems pertaining to the issues of *awliyā’*, but also allowed him to deepen and expand the doctrinal base of this hierarchy to a level that had not been discussed before.

A preliminary reading over Sufī works prior to Ibn ‘Arabī reveals that his writings on the hierarchy of *awliyā’* have a special place in the whole structure of Sufi doctrines for the following reasons. Firstly, his discussion on the subject was the first comprehensive account of the idea, which so far remained obscure and to some extent overlapped from one Sufi to another for almost four centuries since the beginning of the Sufi movement in the second century Hijra. Meaning, despite the fact that the names of the *awliyā’* of this hierarchy were widely known in any Sufi discourse in the eastern and western Islamic kingdoms, a comprehensive explanation of these names and their related issues still had to await explication by the Shaykh. Secondly, Ibn ‘Arabī’s exposition of this hierarchy also clarifies a number of enigmatic problems that had not been properly addressed by his predecessors. They are, to mention but few, the number of *awliyā’*, their knowledge and specific characteristics, their relation to the Divine Names (*al-Asmā’ al-Ḥusnā*), as well as their similarities and differences from the Prophets (*anbiyā’*; sing. *nabī*). Here, again, Ibn ‘Arabī appeared as the foremost Sufi

master who settled these problems and put them in harmony with the teachings and doctrines of Islam. Finally, and as a consequence of the above two points, his perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā'* soon become the main reference for those who came after him, for which a quick survey on websites, blogs, facebook and twitters regarding this matter does not seem to betray this assessment.

While much attention has been given to Ibn 'Arabī's thought over the years, there has been no critical analysis of his perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā'*. The existing works on his notion of *walāyah*, from which such an analysis can be expected, only give preliminary information on the subject. In addition, their exposition of some basic conceptions related to this hierarchy still needs to be revised especially given additional findings from Ibn 'Arabī's own writings. Given the importance of Ibn 'Arabī's position in shifting the Sufi doctrine of hierarchy of *awliyā'*, to an orthodox understanding and the unavailability of works on this subject in contemporary Ibn 'Arabī studies, it is the purpose of this dissertation to critically analyse his perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā'* as it appears in his works.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS**

In the absence of *awliyā'* there would be no *walāyah*. This statement finds its value in Ibn 'Arabī whose doctrine on *walāyah* rests in his exposition of the *awliyā'*. Realizing the position he accorded to these spiritual elite, there are five major problems that this study attempts to investigate. First of all, his perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā'* would not be that important unless he set up the meanings of *walāyah* in advance and divided it into certain categories from which one can see foundational relational factors between them, hence, unifying principles that establish the significance of their

hierarchy. Under these circumstances, what did he say about the meanings, divisions, and unifying principles of *walāyah*?

Secondly, an analysis on Ibn ‘Arabī’s notion on the hierarchy of *awliyā’* will end in vain without taking into consideration his perspective on the position and relation of the *awliyā’* with the Legislative Prophets. It is worth noting that one of the critiques addressed against the Shaykh rests on his standpoint regarding this issue, suspected by his adversaries as means to nominate the *awliyā’* above those Legislative Prophets. Contemporary scholars like Chodkiewicz and Chittcik negate this charge. However, Elmore cannot resist the temptation to list the Shaykh among those who believe in the superiority of *awliyā’* over the Prophets. In this regard, what is Ibn ‘Arabī’s perception on the similarities and differences between the *awliyā’* and the Legislative Prophets? What did he say about their position and relation to the latter?

Thirdly, it deals with scriptural justification of the idea from both the Qur’an and prophetic *aḥādīth*. As commonly known, one of the reasons articulated by those who repudiate the Sufi notion of the hierarchy of *awliyā’* lies in the point where it is claimed to be baseless of Qur’anic and prophetic *aḥādīth* legitimation. Among the orientalist, Goldziher later on followed by Carra de Vaux, rejected the scriptural foundation of the Sufi notion of *walāyah*.<sup>15</sup> Prior to them, the idea was also vetoed by Wahhabi adherents. For them, as expressed by ‘Abd al-Khāliq and al-Rīsūnī, it is simply a result of Sufi imagination and fantasy, influenced either by Greek philosophy, Judaic and Christian doctrines,<sup>16</sup> or even, if one considers Landolt’s exposition, by the Shi‘ite conception of *imāmah*.<sup>17</sup> However, the Sufis are also experts in religious sciences, so much so that it

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<sup>15</sup> Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, 126; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, “Walī,” 11:109-110.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Khāliq, *Faḍā’ih al-Şūfiyyah* (Kuwayt: n.p., 1404/1983), 45-6 and Muḥammad al-Muntaşir al-Rīsūnī, *Wa Kull Bid‘ah Ḍalālah* (Riyād: Maktabah Dār al-Minhāj, 1426/2005), 54-5.

<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, “Walāyah,” especially 14: 9658-9660.

is almost impossible to think of them as ignorant of the Qur'anic and prophetic *ḥadīth* foundation of the idea. Posited as such, how are we to picture this idea in light of Qur'anic verses and prophetic *aḥādīth*?

Fourthly, Ibn 'Arabī was not the first to speak of the hierarchy of *awliyā'*. Reliable information at our hand does not seem to betray this for his predecessors already initiated and discussed this idea in their works. However, it is most likely that he was the first to explain such a hierarchy in its most comprehensive manner. Under these circumstances, a historical survey should be done in order to get a clear picture on the account. What did his forerunners say about such a hierarchy? How did Ibn 'Arabī benefit from their perspectives and where did he part company with them?

Fifthly, concerning the very idea of this study, i.e., to investigate and then to construct Ibn 'Arabī's hierarchy of *awliyā'* as depicted in chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt*. Being the first to articulate such a hierarchy in the history of Sufism, the Shaykh took the opportunity to list all group names of *awliyā'* which he divided into two main categories, the *awliyā'* whose numbers are fixed (*maḥṣūr bi al-'adad*) and not fixed (*ghayr maḥṣūr bi al-'adad*) at any given epoch. The idea of the hierarchy of *awliyā'* is quite visible in this list. However, one cannot deny the fact that these are only raw materials that hardly appear as the hierarchy of *awliyā'*. So, how to extract both categories so that the hierarchy under concerned yields itself? How many hierarchies were presented? If they are more than one, what are their specific features?

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This dissertation is a library based research which employs the method of critical analysis in studying Ibn 'Arabī's perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā'* as depicted in his scattered works. Based on the previous statement of the problems, this study will

run a careful examination on Ibn ‘Arabī’s works in order to answer the following questions:

1. What are the meanings and divisions of *walāyah* according to Ibn ‘Arabī, and how did he establish the significance of the hierarchy of *awliyā’* in relation to them?
2. What are Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspectives on the differences between the *awliyā’* and both the Legislative Prophets and Messengers?
3. What is Ibn ‘Arabī’s position regarding the issue of superiority of *awliyā’* above the Legislative Prophets?
4. What is the position of the notion of hierarchy of *awliyā’* in light of the Qur’anic verses and prophetic *ahādīth*?
5. How did Ibn ‘Arabī’s predecessors explain the notion of hierarchy of *awliyā’* and where did the Shaykh differ and part company with them?
6. What are the sources of Ibn ‘Arabī’s hierarchy of *awliyā’*?
7. What is the construction of Ibn ‘Arabī’s hierarchy of *awliyā’*?
8. What are their specific features of the *awliyā’* in his hierarchy, especially in their relation to the Divine Names and status as the true heirs to the Legislative Prophets and Messengers?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Based on the above research questions, the main objectives of this research are therefore directed to the following matters:

1. To figure out the meanings and divisions of *walāyah* according to Ibn ‘Arabī, and the means through which he established the significance of the hierarchy of *awliyā’* in relation to them.

2. To highlight Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspectives on the differences between the *awliyā’* and both the Legislative Prophets and Messengers.
3. To discern Ibn ‘Arabī’s position regarding the issue of superiority of *awliyā’* above the Legislative Prophets.
4. To examine the position of the idea of hierarchy of *awliyā’* in light of the Qur’anic verses and prophetic *aḥādīth*.
5. To run historical survey on the explanation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s predecessors on the hierarchy of *awliyā’*, and to figure out where the Shaykh differed and parted company with them.
6. To assess Ibn ‘Arabī’s sources regarding his perspective on the hierarchy of *awliyā’*.
7. To figure out the construction Ibn ‘Arabī’s hierarchy of *awliyā’*?
8. To run a descriptive analysis on Ibn ‘Arabī’s perspective regarding the specific features of of the *awliyā’* in his hierarchy, especially in their relation to the Divine Names and status as the true heirs to the Legislative Prophets and Messengers.

### **1.5 DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS**

There are two terms from the title of the present study that need to be defined, namely, hierarchy and *awliyā’*. With regard to the former, a proposition by John Renard could be used in its general sense, that is, “an organizational feature both on the level of cosmological structures and in the institutional frameworks of many orders and, in a broader way, within Muslim religious communities in general.”<sup>18</sup> In relation to the

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<sup>18</sup> John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 108.

present study, however, the connotation of the term hierarchy is best understood as a top-down, pyramidal order of authority entrusted to the *awliyā'* in the structures of *walāyah*. It is worth noting that such a hierarchy does not necessarily indicate a chain of command, as it usually does, from a higher plane to the one below it because the hierarchy in point just alludes to the existing different levels, ranks or grades of the *awliyā'*, i.e., the spiritual elite from among human beings known in the doctrine of Sufism as the friends of God, to execute specific tasks or missions.

The *awliyā'* generally understood by the common folks of Muslim communities as those who are close to God and observe religious teachings as prescribed by His Legislative Messengers that come one after the other in the history of human beings until the time of the last Legislative Prophet and Messenger, Muḥammad (pbuh). It can be verified from the beginning that Ibn 'Arabī seemed to have no objection of this perception. However, in him the meaning of *walāyah* and, hence, *walī* is explained in its two deepest contexts, i.e., God's assistance for His creatures and the latter's assistance to God. The *awliyā'* as illustrated by Ibn 'Arabī, therefore, have many different faces, so much so that one can even say that God and all created beings for him are counted among the *awliyā'*.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The twentieth Century marks the growing interest in the study and publication of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. Despite this, however, there are only few studies on his perspective of the hierarchy of *awliyā'*, and these too are not properly addressed. In Affifi ('Affifi), for example, one finds him treating this subject in his pioneering yet instrumental work