**Shaykh Muhammad Hashīm Al-Baghdādī (d. 1995/1415):**

**His Mystical Personality and His Sufi Teachings**

**Abstract**

Shaykh Muhammad Hashīm Al-Baghdādī was born in 1905 in the old city of Jerusalem, where he got his primary and secondary education. He studied mainly with two educators in Jerusalem: Islamic Shari'a with Shaykh Salih Al-Liftawi, and Arabic Language with Shaykh Muhammad Al-Tūnusī. In 1921, Al-Baghdādī married the Jerusalem-born Rifkah Kachamānī, and most of his children were born as part of this marriage. Together with Shaykh ̕Iz Al-Dīn Al-Qassām, Al-Baghdādī received the *Ijāzah* from the hands of the Mauritian *Muhadith*, Muhammad Habīb Allah Al-Shinqity, during his visit to Palestine in the year 1928/1347. In 1935/1353, the same Al-Shinqītī sent a letter appointing Al-Baghdādī to be the head of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem.

Following to his active participation in the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1937), Al-Baghdādī left Jerusalem in the year 1937/1356 on his way to Damascus, where he studied Qur'ān Science with the following Shaykhs: Ahmad Al-Satl, Muhammad ̕Izū Al-Maydānī, Muhammad Al-Khabbāz, and [Muhammad] Bashīr Al-Shalah, who was proficient in the ten *Qira’āt* (recitation styles) of the Qur'ān. He studied *Hadith* with Muhammad Al-Dirānī, the student of the great *Muhadith*, Shaykh Badr Al-Dīn Al-Hasanī. Throughout this period, he kept in touch with the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem, and authored *Dīwān Bughyat Al-’Ashiqīn fī Madh Sayd Al-Mursalīn* in the year 1939/1358.

In 1944, Al-Baghdādī returned from Syria and settled in Jerusalem, in ̕Aqabat Al-Suwānah neighborhood, on the way to the Olive Mount. He worked as a shoemaker and even owned a small shoe workshop in Al-Tūr neighborhood. Al-Baghdādī and his family fought in 1948 War, and he even lost his cousin, Yousef, during the great attack of Yemin Moshe neighborhood in Jerusalem. From the late 1960s and until 1990, he served as a *Ma'dhūn* (marriage officiant), and as the *Im’am* in Salman Al-Farsi’s Mosque in Al-Tur neighborhood. In 1972, Al-Baghdādī married a second wife, Zaynab Abu Ghanām from Jerusalem, and their daughter Layla was born in 1973. Al-Baghdādī made several pilgrimage trips to Mecca. He died in Jerusalem in 1995/1415.

Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual career as a Sufi Shaykh developed between the years 1944-1995. During this period, he wrote most of his book, which reflect his Sufi heritage and his mystical diary: *Dustūr al-Wilāya wa-Marāqi al-’Ināya* (1961/1381); *Sharh Siya’ al-Salawāt ‘alā Sayd al-Sādāt* (1968/1388); *Al-Dur al-Maknūn fī Sharh Fawātih Suwar al-Qur’ān al-Masūn* (1977/1397); *Al-Tibyān aw al-Durar fī ‘Ismat Abī al-Bashar* and *Al-Nafahāt al-Qudsiyya fī al-Sallah ‘alā Khayr al-Bariyya*.

His Sufi heritage emphasizes his tendency of reinforcing tradition: Al-Baghdādī followed the system of *Maqāmāt* and *Ahwāl*. He retained the system of *Maqāmāt* and *Ahwāl* in his book *Dustūr al-Wilāya*, and added value to it by maintaining a number of rules. His diary of mystical experiences, which I gathered from Al-Baghdādī’s books and from interviews I conducted with his student, and which is presented here for the first time, reveals a fascinating image. One of a Shaykh who went through an unconventional mentoring process, or rather a mystical mentoring process, through meeting the souls of his spiritual mentors: Al-Khidir, Fātima Al-Zahrāa, Ahmad Al-Badawī, and Abdul Qādir al-Jīlanī. He met Prophet Muhammad’s soul in his daydreams, and at that meeting, he was appointed as *Al-Qutb al-Ghawth* ("the redeeming pole”).

His mystical personality reaches its spiritual perfection in the mystical experience of *Mi’rāj* ("heavenly journey"). In his book *Sharh Siya’ al-Salawāt*, Al-Baghdādī tells us that his sole reached *Al-̕Arsh* (the Holly Throne), where he observed the angel responsible for guarding the Quran. At the end of this experience, Al-Baghdādī was given a throne of white light. During the same *Mi’raj*, he saw *Al-Bayt Al-Ma’mūr* (the heavenly Ka’aba), and the angels surrounding it. Another aspect representing the complexity of his personality is his venture of spiritual *Jihād* after the warfare Jihad he led as a young man.

My research question focuses on Al-Baghdādī’s Sufi doctrine on the one hand, and the exploration of his mystical experiences on the other.

The study is composed of five chapters:

**The first chapter** discusses Al-Baghdādī’s attitude toward Prophet Muhammad's family, of which he believes himself to be a descendant. The chapter explores Al-Baghdādī’s life in Jerusalem: his primary and secondary education and his studies with Shaykh Al-Liftāwī and Shaykh Al-Tūnusī. This chapter later follows Al-Baghdādī’s appointment as the head of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem in the year 1935/1353, his Sufi mentoring by two teachers: Haj Salih Al-Sar'ghīnī and the Shaykh *al-Muhadith* Muhammad Habīb Allah Al-Shinqītī, his transition to Syria in the year 1937/1356 following his active participation in the Great Arab Revolt, and his studies with Islam Studies experts in Damascus.

His work: The chapter follows his letters, which reflect his Sufi heritage. Reviewing the book *Al-Wird al-Qādiry,* we will prove that it was not written by Al-Baghdādī, but rather but Shaykh Al-Shinqītī. Al-Baghdādī only made a few changes in it. The chapter reviews the history and principle ideas of the *Qādiriyya* Order.

This chapter also includes a literary review of Palestinian Sufism. Dafna Efrat wrote an important book, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine*, in which she reviewed the Sufi practices, social relations, and the connections between the Sufis and the community. Efrat’s book does not focus on Sufism’s spiritual aspects, or the theological heritage of key Sufi figures in Medieval Palestine.

De Jong, in his comprehensive paper *The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine* refrains, for some unknown reason, from mentioning the *Qādiriyya* Order led by Al-Baghdādī, although the paper was published in 1983, at the height of Al-Baghdādī’s career, before his death in 1995.

The Jordanian scholar Wafāa al-Sawāfta wrote about the *Shadhilī-Yashruti*̄ order and its founder, Shaykh ̕Alī Al-Yashrutī. Al-Sawāfta never mentioned Al-Baghdādī as a key figure in Palestinian Sufism.

The scholar ‘Abdel Rahmān Zu’abī has written two of studies: the first focused on *Al-Khalwatiyya Al-Jāmi’a Al-Rahmāniyya* Order in Palestine and in Israel. His second study, which was also his Ph.D. dissertation, focused on the Sufi activity and religious life of Muslims in eighteenth century Jerusalem. Zu’abī described the foundations of Sufi existence in eighteenth century Jerusalem, and thus offered a significant contribution to the understanding of the Sufi arena in Jerusalem in the pre-Al-Baghdādī era.

Al-Baghdādī’s figure attracted the attention of a number of scholars:

Husein al-Darāwīsh wrote Al-Baghdādī’s short biography titled *Al-Wajīz fī Sirat Shaykhna al-’Azīz: Al-Shaykh Muhammad Hāshim Al-Baghdādi*̄, but included only a brief mention of his mystical biography. His book suggests that he didn't use most of Al-Baghdādī’s own writings.

̕Umar Al-Salhī, Al-Darāwīsh’s student, wrote his MA thesis about the *Qādiriyya* Order in Palestine in the fifteenth/twentieth century, and about Al-Baghdādī himself. The thesis was published as a book in 2001. Al-Salhī didn’t analyze Al-Baghdādī’s mystical personality, and his book contains many errors regarding Al-Baghdādī’s Sufi thought, due to a superficial examination of his writings.

Muhammad Abū Al-Rub wrote his MA thesis about the *Qādiriyya* and *Khalwatiyya* Orders in the vicinity of Jenin in the West Bank. Despite its methodical and thorough nature, his research never presumed to explore Al-Baghdādī’s mystical personality. Abū Al-Rub did dedicate a sub-section to Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual thought, which mainly discussed Al-Baghdādī’s life and Sufi thought from the *Sharī’a* point of view, without mentioning modern relevant literature.

Mashhūr Al-Khabāzī’s paper is primarily based on Al-Darāwīsh' book and Al-Salhī’s work, and does not mention Al-Baghdādī's printed and published books.

Beyond the studies mentioned so far, we should also mention ‘Isām Khatīb’s study, which mentioned Al-Baghdādī only briefly. Khatib wrote about the Sufi arena of the *Qādiriyya* Order in the Galilee after Al-Baghdādī’s demise.

The chapter ends with an important conclusion: namely, that there is currently no comprehensive, updated study about Shaykh Muhammad Hāshim Al-Baghdādī, based on a thorough investigation and exploration of the entire testimonies in his writings.

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**The second chapter** follows Al-Baghdādī’s mystical biography:

1. The meaning of mentoring and the importance of spiritual mentoring in Sufi pedagogy based on Al-Baghdādī’s *Dustūr Al-Wilāya*, and the story of Al-Baghdādī’s mentoring by Haj Salih Al-Sar'ghīnī.
2. The meaning of *Siyaha* (spiritual journey) and *Jadhb* (mystical attraction) according to Al-Baghdādī, and his spiritual journey to the Shaykh *al-Majdhūb* ̕Ali Shbeyr in the city of Khān Yūnus, and the Shaykh *al-Majdhūb* ̕Ali Mansūr from the village of Abū Kbir.
3. Al-Baghdādī’s mystical mentoring by mystical figures like Al-Khidir, Fātima Al-Zahrāa, Ahmad Al-Badawī, and Abdul Qādir Al-Jīlanī.
4. Al-Baghdādī’s contribution to the understanding of Prophet Muhammad’s status in the Armageddon of the Muslim tradition – the hell-fire amendment. We will also review the experience of seeing Prophet Muhammad, which is described by Al-Baghdādī in his books *Dustūr Al-Wilāya* and *Diwān Bughyat al-̕Ashiqīn*.

This chapter suggests that Al-Baghdadi [didn’t reach] reached the position of a special Sufi Shaykh due to long and stressful path. Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual perfection was reached through his unconventional mentoring as reported in his writings. Due to meeting the souls of his spiritual mentors, he was able to climb the *Wilāya*’s hierarchy.

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**The third chapter** offers a review of the semantic field of the term *Jihād*, and discusses the dispute between *Hadīth* scholars concerning the *Hadīth* of returning from the Lesser *Jihād* to the Greater *Jihād*. It also offers a modern-Western discussion concerning the tendency to view Sufism as a pacifist movement, and the contemporary Muslim attempts to reject this notion and highlight Sufism’s aspect of warfare *Jihād*. Additionally, it presents Al-Baghdādī’s position concerning Greater *Jihād* as reflected in his book *Dustūr Al-Wilāya*. The chapter follows Al-Baghdādī’s acts of *Jihād*, based on the understanding of the complex concept of Lesser *Jihād*. The chapter suggests that while many studies have been written about internal *Jihād*, there is no comprehensive study about warfare *Jihād* in Sufism. The chapter is designed to fill some of the lacuna in the study of warfare *Jihād* in modern Sufism, focusing on Al-Baghdādī’s example.

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**The fourth chapter** analyzes Al-Baghdādī’s approach to the *Sharī’a*, and particularly the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunnah*. Furthermore, the discussion in this chapter focuses on Al-Baghdādī’s attempt to emphasize the orthodox aspect of Sufism, his tolerant approach to *Shatahāt* (divinely inspired statements), and his intolerance toward the *Shatahāt* criticizers. Al-Baghdādī rejected the story of *Al-Gharānīq* arguing that it lacks any historical basis, since it hinders Prophet Muhammad’s ̕*Isma* (power/immunity). This chapter portrays Al-Baghdadi as a *Tafsir* expert. He used this expertise in researching the *Gharānīq* story and in giving a new meaning to the term *Naskh* – presenting the infidels, who were hostile toward Prophet Muhammad, as his believers and followers.

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**The fifth and final chapter** follows Shaykh Al-Baghdādī’s *Mi’rāj* experience using a philological, historical and comparative analysis. Shaykh Al-Baghdādī’s *Mi’rāj* experience will be discussed while conducting a historic and phenomenological comparison with this idea in Islam at large, and particularly in Sufism.

Al-Baghdādī’s *Mi’rāj* experience teaches us that he perceived himself as one of Prophet Muhammad’s predecessors. He was granted a divine gift when his soul went to Heaven, watched the angels, reached the Holly Throne and was given a number of gifts: He was crowned as *Qutb Ghawth* – the leader of the *Awliyyā’* (friends of Allah), and was given the capability of *Istibnāt* (interpretive insight). This experience took him through the last phase of his spiritual perfection: *Islāh* (amendment) and *Ikmāl Al-’Aql* (perfection of the mind), and he became what Sufis describe as *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the complete person).

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To conclude, my study is a significant chapter in understanding Palestinian Sufism in the twentieth century, demonstrating the lacuna in this field of research. Out of a long list of studies dedicated to the various branches of Sufism, only a handful of partial works are dedicated to Palestinian Sufism. Shaykh Muhammad Hāshim Al-Baghdādī, leader of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Palestine and in Israel, traced through his mystical experiences the image of the greatest *Wilāya* of our time, as suggested in his writings. My study also traced Al-Baghdādī’s unique Sufi positions, which were affected by his mystical endeavors.