**S̲h̲ayk̲h̲ Muḥammad Hās̲h̲im al-Bag̲h̲dādī (d. 1415/1995)**

**His Mystical Personality and Sufi Doctrine**

**Abstract**

Shaykh Muḥammad Hās̲h̲im Al-Baghdādī was born in 1905 in the old city of Jerusalem, where he received his primary and secondary education. He studied mainly with two teachers in Jerusalem: Islamic Sharīʿa with Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Al-Liftāwī, and Arabic Language with Shaykh Muḥammad Al-Tūnusī. In 1921, Al-Baghdādī married the Jerusalem-born Rifqa Qaḍamānī, and most of his children were born from this marriage. Together with Shaykh ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Qassām, Al-Baghdādī received the *Ijāzah* from the Mauritian *Muḥadith*, Muḥammad Ḥabīb Allāh al-S̲h̲inqīṭī, during his visit to Palestine in the year 1928/1347. In 1935/1353, the same al-S̲h̲inqīṭī sent a letter appointing Al-Baghdādī head of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem.

After actively participating in the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1939), al-Baghdādī left Jerusalem in the year 1937/1356 for Damascus. There he studied Qurʾān with the following Shaykhs: Aḥmad Al-Saṭl, Muḥammad ʿIzzū Al-Maydānī, Muḥammad al-Khabbāz, and [Muḥammad] Bas̲h̲īr al-Shallaḥ, who was proficient in the ten *Qirāʾāt* (recitation variants) of the Qurʾān. He studied *Ḥadīth* with Muḥammad Al-Dīrānī, the student of the great *Muḥadith*, Shaykh Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī. During this period, he maintained contact with the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem, and authored *Dīwān Bughyat Al-ʿAshiqīn fī Madḥ Sayyid al-Mursalīn* in the year 1939/1358.

In 1944, Al-Baghdādī returned from Syria and settled near Jerusalem, in ʿAqabat Al-Ṣuwwāna village, located on the slope of Mount of Olives. He worked as a shoemaker and even owned a small shoe workshop in al-Tūr village. Al-Baghdādī and his family fought in the 1948 War, and he even lost his cousin, Yūsuf, during the great attack on Yamīn Moshe neighborhood in Jerusalem. From the late 1960s and until 1990, he served as a *Māʾd̲h̲ūn* (marriage officiant), and as the *Imām* in Salmān al-Fārisī’s Mosque in Al-Tūr village. In 1972, Al-Baghdādī married his second wife, Jerusalem resident Zaynab Abū Ghanām, who gave birth to their daughter Laylā in 1973. Over the course of his life, Al-Baghdādī made several pilgrimages to Mecca. He died in Jerusalem in 1415/1995.

Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual career as a Ṣūfī Shaykh developed between 1944-1995. It was during this period, that he wrote the majority of his books, which reflect his Sufi heritage and his mystical biography: *Dustūr al-Wilāya wa-Marāqi al-ʿInāya* (1381/1961); *Sharḥ Ṣiyagh al-Ṣalawāt ‘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 ʿIṣmat Abī al-Bas̲h̲ar* and *Al-Nafaḥāt al-Qudsiyya fī al-Ṣalāt ʿalā Khayr al-Bariyya*.

A prominent part of his Sufi heritage is his tendency to reinforce tradition: Al-Baghdādī follows the system of *Maqāmāt* and *Aḥwāl*, organizing it in his book *Dustūr al-Wilāya*, and adding value to it by maintaining a number of rules. The biography of his mystical experiences – which I have gathered from his books and from interviews I conducted with his studentis – presented here for the first time. It reveals a fascinating image: A Shaykh who underwent an unconventional mentorship, that is, a mystical mentorship, through encounters with the souls of his spiritual teachers: Al-K̲h̲iḍr, Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ, Aḥmad Al-Badawī, and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḏj̲īlānī. He met the soul of the Prophet Muḥammad in his daydreams, and during that encounter was dubbed *al-Quṭb al-Ghawth* (the succour pole).

His mystical personality reached its spiritual zenith in his mystical experience of *Miʿrāj* ("heavenly journey"). In his book *Sharḥ Ṣiyagh al-Ṣalawāt,* Al-Baghdādī tells us that his soul reached *al-ʿArs̲h̲* (the Holy Throne), where he observed the angel entrusted with the task of guarding the Quran. At the end of this experience, Al-Baghdādī was given a throne of white light. During the same *miʿrāj*, he saw *al-Bayt al-Maʿmūr,* (the heavenly Kaʿba), and the angels surrounding it. Another aspect of his complex personality is his undertaking a spiritual *Jihād*—having already undertaken belligerent *Jihād* in his youth.

My research question focuses on Al-Baghdādī’s Ṣūfī doctrine and his mystical experiences.

The current study is composed of five chapters:

**The first chapter** discusses Al-Baghdādī’s attitude toward the Prophet Muhammad's family, of which he believed 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. The chapter then follows Al-Baghdādī’s appointment as the head of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Jerusalem in 1353/1935, his Ṣūfī mentorship by two teachers: Ḥāj Ṣāliḥ Al-Sarghīnī and the Shaykh *al-Muḥadith* Muḥammad Ḥabīb Allāh al-S̲h̲inqīṭī, his move to Syria in the year 1356/1937 (following his active participation in the Great Arab Revolt), and his studies with Islam Studies experts in Damascus.

His literary career: The chapter studies Al-Baghdādī’s letters, which reflect his Sufi heritage. Reviewing the book *Al-Wird al-Qādirī,* we will prove that it was not written by Al-Baghdādī, but rather by Shaykh al-S̲h̲inqīṭī, Al-Baghdādī only making 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 Ṣūfism. In her important book, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine*, Dafna Efrat reviews Ṣūfī practices, social relations, and the connection between Ṣūfīs and the community. Efrat’s book does not focus on Ṣūfism’s spiritual aspects, or the theological heritage of key Ṣūfī figures in Medieval Palestine.

De Jong, in his comprehensive paper “The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine” for some reason omits mention of the *Qādiriyya* Order led by Al-Baghdādī, even though it was published in 1983, at the height of Al-Baghdādī’s career, and before his death in 1995.

The Jordanian scholar Wafāʾ al-Sawāfṭa writes about the *S̲h̲ād̲h̲ilī-Yas̲h̲ruṭī* order and its founder, Shaykh ̕Alī Al-Yashrutī. Al-Sawāfṭa never mentions Al-Baghdādī as a key figure in Palestinian Ṣūfism.

The scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Zuʿbī has written two studies: the first focuses on *Al-Khalwatiyya Al-Jāmi’a Al-Raḥmāniyya* Order in Palestine and in Israel. His second study, which was also his Ph.D. dissertation, focuses on the Ṣūfī activity and the religious life of Muslims in eighteenth century Jerusalem. Zuʿbī describes the foundations of Ṣūfī life in eighteenth century Jerusalem, offering a significant contribution to our understanding of Ṣūfī life in Jerusalem in the pre-Al-Baghdādī era.

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

Ḥusayn al-Darāwīs̲h̲ wrote a short biography of Al-Baghdādī entitled *Al-Wajīz fī Sīrat S̲h̲ayk̲h̲ina al-’Azīz: Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Hāshim Al-Baghdādi*̄, which only includes a brief mention of his mystical biography. A review of the book suggests that he did not make extensive use of Al-Baghdādī’s writings.

ʿUmar al-Ṣāliḥī, Al-Darāwīs̲h̲’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-Ṣāliḥī does not analyze Al-Baghdādī’s mystical personality, and his book contains many errors regarding Al-Baghdādī’s Ṣūfī thought—the result of a superficial study of his writings.

Muḥammad 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 presumes to explore Al-Baghdādī’s mystical personality. Abū Al-Rub does dedicate a sub-section to Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual thought, which mainly discusses Al-Baghdādī’s life and Sufi thought from a *Sharīʿa* perspective, but without mentioning modern relevant literature.

Mashhūr al-Ḥabbāzī’s paper is primarily based on Al-Darāwīsh book and al-Ṣāliḥī’s work, and does not mention Al-Baghdādī’s printed and published works.

Besides the aforementioned studies, we should also mention ʿIṣām K̲h̲aṭīb’s study, which mentions Al-Baghdādī only briefly. K̲h̲aṭīb writes about the Ṣūfī arena of the *Qādiriyya* Order in the Galilee after Al-Baghdādī’s death.

The chapter ends with an important conclusion: namely, that there is currently no comprehensive, updated study about Shaykh Muḥammad Hās̲h̲im Al-Baghdādī, based on a thorough investigation and exploration of all his testimonies, as they appear in his writings.

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

1. The significance of mentoring and the importance of spiritual guidance in Sufi pedagogy based on Al-Baghdādī’s *Dustūr Al-Wilāya*, and the story of Al-Baghdādī’s mentoring by Ḥāj Ṣāliḥ Al-Sarghīnī.
2. The meaning of *Siyaḥa* (spiritual journey) and *Jadhb* (mystical attraction) according to Al-Baghdādī, and his spiritual journey to the Shaykh *al-Majdhūb* ʿĀlī S̲h̲beyr in the city of K̲h̲ān Yūnus, and the Shaykh *al-Majdhūb* ʿĀlī Manṣūr from the village of Abū Kbīr.
3. Al-Baghdādī’s mentoring by mystical figures like Al-K̲h̲iḍr, Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ, Aḥmad Al-Badawī, and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḏj̲īlānī.
4. Al-Baghdādī’s contribution to the understanding of the Prophet Muḥammad’s role in the day of Judgment according to Muslim tradition – the hell-fire correction. We will also review his vision of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is described by Al-Baghdādī in his books *Dustūr Al-Wilāya* and *Dīwān Bughyat Al-ʿAshiqīn*.

This chapter suggests that Al-Baghdādī did not achieve his status of a special Ṣūfī Shaykh through a long and strenuous process. Al-Baghdādī’s spiritual perfection was the product of unconventional mentoring as reported in his writings. By encountering 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*, discussing the dispute between *Ḥadīth* scholars concerning the *Ḥadīth* of “returning from the Lesser *Jihād* to the Greater *Jihād*.” It also offers a Modern-Western discussion concerning the tendency to view Ṣūfism as a pacifist movement, and the contemporary Muslim attempts to reject this notion and to emphasize belligerent aspect of *Jihād* in Ṣūfism 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 complexity of Lesser *Jihād*. The chapter suggests that while many studies have been written about inner-spiritual *Jihād*, there is no comprehensive study about belligerent *Jihād* in Ṣūfism. The chapter is intended to fill some lacuna in the study of militant *Jihād* in modern Ṣūfism, focusing on Al-Baghdādī as an example.

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**The fourth chapter** analyzes Al-Baghdādī’s approach to the *S̲h̲arīʿa*, particularly his approach to the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunna*. In addition, this chapter focuses on Al-Baghdādī’s attempt to emphasize the orthodox aspect of Ṣūfism, his tolerant approach to S̲h̲aṭaḥāt (ecstatic utterances), and his intolerance toward critics of *S̲h̲aṭaḥāt* practitioners. Al-Baghdādī rejects the story of *Al-Gharānīq*—arguing that it lacks any historical basis, as it hinders the Prophet Muḥammad’s*ʿIṣma* (immunity from error). This chapter portrays Al-Baghdādī as an expert of *Tafsīr*. He used his expertise to analyze the *Gharānīq* story, proposing a new meaning for the term *Naskh* – presenting the infidels, hostile to the Prophet Muḥammad, as his believers and followers.

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**The fifth and final chapter** follows Shaykh Al-Baghdādī’s *Miʿrāj* (ascension) experience using a philological, historical and comparative analysis. Shaykh Al-Baghdādī’s *Miʿrāj* experience will be discussed while conducting a historical and phenomenological comparison with the idea in Islam at large, particularly in Ṣūfism.

Al-Baghdādī’s *Miʿrāj* experience teaches us that he considered himself as one of Prophet Muhammad’s heirs. He was granted a divine gift when his soul ascended to Heaven, watched the angels, reached al-ʿArs̲h̲ (the holy throne), and was given a number of gifts: He was crowned as al-Quṭb al- G̲h̲awt̲h̲ – the leader of the *Awliyāʾ* (friends of God), and was given the capability of *Istinbāṭ* (to extract meanings of the Qurʾānic verses).

This experience took him through the last phase of his spiritual perfection: *Iṣlāḥ* (amendment) and *Ikmāl Al-ʿAql* (perfection of the mind), and he became what Ṣūfīs describe as *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Man).

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In conclusion, my study is a significant chapter in the study of Palestinian Ṣūfism in the twentieth century, demonstrating the lacuna in the field. Out of a long list of studies dedicated to the various branches of Ṣūfism, only a handful of works are dedicated to Palestinian Ṣūfism. The writings of S̲h̲ayk̲h̲ Muḥammad Hās̲h̲im al-Bag̲h̲dādī, leader of the *Qādiriyya* Order in Palestine and in Israel, suggest that he was greatest *Walī* of our time. My study also traces Al-Baghdādī’s unique Ṣūfī positions, which were affected by his mystical endeavors.