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The Shaykh Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî and his book "Removing the Seals"<sup>1</sup> (*Kitâb al-Fukûk*)

Those who read or study the **Fusûs al-Hikam** of Ibn Arabî may be classified into three categories:

- 1). Those who undertake to study alone the **Fusûs al-hikam** like any other book, hoping in good faith, to be able to understand it or who even think that they have understood it quite well. This is what happened to the modern publisher of the **Fusûs al-Hikam**, abû al-A'îlâ al-'Afîfî who recognizes it honestly.
- 2). Those whom the personal intellectual journey has led to perplexity, to a state of thirst which does not find refreshing water and who when discovering the **Fusûs** read it in one breath and see it as a remedy for their thirst. These include cases of 'Abd al-Razzâq Kâshânî and recently that of Henry Corbin in France.
- 3). Those who study under the watchful eye of a master who has achieved some or all truths through experience of the intuitive unveiling, *kashf*.

Qûnawî himself tells us that he has heard from the Shaykh only the explanation of the *khutba* of the **Fusûs**, which was enough for him to understand all the rest, as if when slightly opening the door to him, his master had given him access to understanding the whole text.

The *Khutba* is the short introduction which Ibn 'Arabî has written before addressing the various chapters. It serves as an explanatory statement. It is on the Prophet's order that he will transcribe what he conveys to us. The figure of the Prophet is present from the beginning, as it will in the end, in the closing chapter of the **Fusûs al-Hikam**. There is also Ibn 'Arabî who, invested with the quality of Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood, will always be present in the book, since he is the pen of the Prophet and his spokesman. It is implicitly the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter guessed to be present in all others.

Later it will be the turn of Mu'ayyad al-Dîn Jandî, a disciple of Qûnawî and first full commentator of the **Fusûs**, to tell us that he too, like his master, needed only an explanation of the brief introduction of the **Fusûs** to be able to understand the rest, in a miraculous way, because the presence with the master (= Qûnawî) operates more deeply than the text that one has before his eyes.

The **Fusûs al-Hikam** has a door. We open it with keys.

The fact is that the **Fusûs al-Hikam** contains some clear passages, easily understandable, and others which are placed there as challenges to be taken up, or treasures that require a prior test before letting themselves be approached. Some have compared them to a dagger<sup>2</sup> (*mighwâl*) under the sleeve which Ibn Arabî suddenly exhibits to repel and discourage the students not yet ready or ill-intentioned. You will be driven back by its difficulty and you will give up if you are not a man of spiritual ambition (*Himmat*).

Qûnawî was aware of that. In the introduction of **Fukûk**, he talks about the complaints he received every day about the difficulties of **Fusûs**: "Please, explain us the difficulties, give us the keys to reading this book which is seemingly easy, but which slips away as soon as we try to grasp it as a whole."

Because of the insistence of these beloved personalities known to him for their merit, competence and capacity, Qûnawî decided to remove the seals (*Fakk al-khutûm*) to reveal the secrets they contain, to give them secret codes that will allow them to enter later, alone, in this book which is a divine pasture where minds in search of higher knowledge come to feed on.

Qûnawî wrote his book as a gift to posterity. He has a lot of personal writings, dealing with his own spiritual experience (such as *al-Nafahât al-ilâhiyya*, Divine Inspirations) or dealing with higher metaphysical questions (such as *Miftâh al-Ghayb*, the key to the Invisible) but in fact this part of his work however important and fundamental it is, serves the **Kitâb al-Fukûk**. All his work, whether personal or doctrinal, serves a single and same cause: to extend the impact, ensure survival of Ibn 'Arabî's work.

With **Fukûk**, or *Fakk al-Khutûm*, he will provide global guidance for the understanding of Ibn 'Arabî's book. Without going into details, he will initiate and make possible a practice that will be repeated for centuries after him, that of *Sharh al-Fusûs*. The commentary on the **Fusûs** has become something which many gnostics are still trying today to take up with more or less success.

1 This text is a contribution to the International Symposium on Sadr al-Dîn Qûnawî, held in Konya, Turkey, 6 – 8 October, 2011.

2 The *Rawdât al-jinân* of Ibn al-Karbâlâ'î, (Volume II, page 152), reports a judgment of Turka-Isfahânî concerning some difficulties of the **Fusûs** that the author, Ibn Arabî, has deliberately left as is: « They are secret weapons (*meghvalhâ*, plural of *meghval*, dagger which is borne under the clothes) of the Shaykh (Ibn 'Arabî), and we cannot undertake to solve them.» This image reminds us of that of Epictetus's *Enkheiridion*, this "dagger we have to hand for facing any contingency" and which serves as a metaphor to his *Manual* of wisdom.

Starting with translators, in particular, into what has become the new languages of Islam, namely western languages (English, German, French, etc.). Because translating is interpreting, trying to make clear in the target language a text (supposedly) clear in the source language.

Presentation of **Fakk al-Khutûm**:

*The Kitâb al-Fukûk*, or *Fakk al-khutûm* (the Book of the Removing of the Seals) is a brief and very concise re-writing of each chapter of the *Fusûs al-Hikam*. It is the essential key to have access to the meanings of Ibn 'Arabi's classic ... when it is studied under the guidance of a master. It was published in 1992 in Tehran, with a Persian translation, based on the lithographed edition of 1898 and three other manuscripts, all of them in Iran libraries. The edition was made by Muhammad Khwâjavi who, unfortunately, has not, in his introduction, taken into account the works which have been done to date (more particularly those of W. Chittick) and it contains some errors and confusions made by his predecessors. This book, probably the last of our Shaykh, was written at the same time as the *Sharh al-Arba'in Hadith*<sup>3</sup> (unfinished commentary of 40 Hadiths) and the *Nafahât al-ilâhiya* in which he includes some personal experiences that illuminate even more his holy figure. In Chapter 25 of *Fukûk*, he warns his reader that he will come back to the treated topic after his commentary on the hadith of the meeting between Moses and Kheẓr. But the commentary on the hadith in question is not included, as the Shaykh has probably been prevented by illness that preceded his death, even if orally, he continued the commentary until the last days of his life. The Shaykh, who obviously was also completing the writing of *Nafahât al-ilâhiya*, has inserted a note about this meeting between Moses and Khizr<sup>3</sup>. Out of these last three works, only the *Fukûk* was thoroughly finished.

The day when Bagdad was taken ...

In this book *al-Fukûk*, the problem arises to Qūnawī: how to ensure the transmission of this new knowledge, how to ensure its survival, because he knows that this task lies with him.

He already knows that the knowledge he is going to expose on is intended for the elite. He defines it. He knows the science of divine things is not within the reach of all minds. He knows that it is not only governed by the uneven distribution of intelligence among men, but is also determined by the levels and the functions of the spiritual hierarchy headed by God Himself. He states that a degree of knowledge is already closed to men. There is no demagoguery. He is a man of faith who expects everything from God and nothing from men.

In explaining his method, he conveys knowledge and its divine conditions.

He does not target the popular masses. He is not a propagandist measuring his impact by the number, nor a man lamenting for the blows of fate. In the *Sharh al-Arba'in Hadith*<sup>4</sup>, he learns from a vision that Baghdad has fallen into the hands of the Mongols<sup>4</sup>. He is not touched by it to the point of making it a matter of mobilization. In his view, the intellectual work is a priority. Nothing shall drive him away from the sole urgency that matters to him: to make known the new doctrine. He knows that without knowledge any action would be futile.

"As for me<sup>5</sup>, I saw in the night when Bagdad was taken, at dawn, the Prophet, peace be upon him, covered with a shroud, placed on a coffin, and people attaching him to the coffin. His head was bare, his hair almost touching the ground.

Then I said to these people: what are you doing here? They said he died, and we are going to take him and bury him. Then my heart told me that he was not dead and I told them: I do not think his face is that of a dead man. Wait until this is confirmed.

I moved closer to his mouth and his nose, and I realized that he was breathing faintly. I yelled at the people, and I prevented them from doing what they were determined to do. Then I woke up terrified and distressed. So I deduced, based on what I knew of the repeated experiences, that this dream is a premonition of a major event that occurred in Islam. As we had information that the Mongols were heading for Bagdad, I was convinced that Bagdad was taken. I then noted the date of my vision. Later on, many people who witnessed the event confirmed me that it was on that day that Bagdad was taken<sup>6</sup> ..."

For him the fall of Bagdad did only confirm a "spiritual event" announced to *awliya* many years before: the end of the caliphal period, originating from the State of Medina and the beginning of the *walâya*.

3 Page 148 of the edition of *Nafahât al-ilâhiya* by Mohammad Khwâjavi.

4 Bagdad fell into the hands of the Mongol Hulagu, son of Gengis Khân, on 10 February 1258 (26 Muharram 656).

5 Qūnawī is commenting on the hadith concerning the vision of the Prophet (S) in dreams and is giving examples of that vision.

6 *Sharh al-Arba'in hadith*<sup>6</sup>, edition of Hasan Kamil YILMAZ, pages 127 and 128 of the Arab text. Qūnawī comments on the hadith number 22, where he states the different interpretations of the appearance of the Prophet (S) in dreams.

Today's Muslims have not yet understood that a new world is to be build, instead of dreaming of the old one. They continue to fool themselves.

Qūnawī's faith is based on divine science.

Qūnawī thinks to arm the spiritual hierarchy governing this world, by commenting on a text that they will certainly have to comment in their turn for the benefit of other initiated people. And they will have to convey knowledge confirmed by sources, because it is a traditional knowledge which is transmitted from heart to heart. It is according to the degree of knowledge that we shall have achieved in this world, when we die, that depends the form in which God will resuscitate us. In other words, this world exists only to earn points in order to have access to a more stable and more luminous place in the next world. Qūnawī often recalls a golden principle: that of union of the knower and the known<sup>7</sup>. What we have realized is added to us, raises us even more.

In the *Fukūk*, the Shaykh al-Kabīr (= Qūnawī) undertakes a work of explanation, clarification, and also a work of suggestion and allusion, intended for those who are more advanced, with a capacity of quick understanding and assimilation. It would be too complicated to explain here this second dimension, because it would not be sufficient to illustrate it with some examples. One should just know that these difficult passages are characterized by a specific vocabulary.

The *Fukūk* is written by a man who knows that explaining is also veiling. He does it intentionally, not by trickery, but because divine science uses a process of allusion (*ishāra*), and cannot be contained or stated directly by direct expression, *'thara*. To understand this text thoroughly, a sustained attention is required from beginning to end, and one should not fall asleep just at the time when the allusion should be grasped.

So we keep to the work of explanation and clarification intended to give the keys to reading the **Fusūs**.

The first thing to do in this case is of course the definition of the notions, concepts, and all the technical vocabulary (terminology, *istilāh*). We must say that sometimes the definition is so laconic, so specialized itself that we need further explanation to understand ... the explanation.

The fact is that Qūnawī has worked so hard on this text, he has studied it so closely that he continually refines its expression. In the short introduction he wrote to *Fukūk* (about six pages in the edition of my friend Mohammad Khajavi), he defines in a very dense way, what the bezel (*fass*) is, what wisdom (*hikma*) is and what the word or the verb (*al-Kalima*) is. The akbarian vocabulary is set from the start, made readable and comprehensible.

Ibn 'Arabī, writes a text which is dictated and inspired to him by the Prophet (S). Haydar Amoli has a beautiful expression of this situation: God has revealed the Quran to His Messenger and the Messenger has revealed the **Fusūs** to Ibn Arabī.

I would also add that the **Fusūs al-Hikam** is the last production of Ibn 'Arabī, and the *Fukūk* is the last production of Qūnawī.

The **Fusūs** serves the Quran, like all the work of Ibn 'Arabī, Qūnawī or Rūmī. It introduces to a hitherto neglected dimension of the teaching of the Quran, the spiritual dimension which consists in the esoteric meanings that were to complete the exoteric dimensions of the Law.

Historically, this "revelation" of the **Fusūs** has come at a time when the Muslim State born in Medina has completed its cycle, when the Muslim society has become vulnerable: less than twenty years after the death of Ibn 'Arabī, the Mongols took Baghdad.

With the end of the cycle, we may think that the **Fusūs** has come to bring a little balm in the heart of Muslims, to help them start the new phase they will have to cross within a condition which Malik Bennabi<sup>8</sup> has called the post-almohadinity. Phase in which Islam will no longer have the absolute temporal power.

This is, apparently, a difficult and negative situation, but in reality, it announces that Islam will return to its initial phase, that in which it had no other weapon than the one it has brought: faith in God and in His Prophet.

It is with this objective in mind that Qūnawī writes and will write all masters of the akbarian school who will occupy the intellectual scene of the first two centuries following the fall of Baghdad, and who are in reality, the only thinkers who still have something original to teach us.

<sup>7</sup> *Ittihād al-ālim wa-l-ma'lūm*

<sup>8</sup> Algerian thinker, 1905 – 1973. Author of *Vocation de l'Islam*. Almohad is the French writing for al-Muwahhidūn, the last dynasty to succeed in unifying the Maghreb and Andalus. The period which follows is that of the decline in the western part of Islam, as the fall of Bagdad is the decline in the Eastern parts. In Ibn Arabī's time, the Maghreb was under the reign of the Almuwahhidūn.



He writes about the *Fusūs al-Hikam* :

"Without doubt, the knowledge of the secrets of a book of such rank, of a source of knowledge claiming to be of such title, is dependent on spiritual realization (*tahaqquq*) which will leave everything to anyone who has "tasted" everything in it, to anyone who has been given the opportunity to conquer the content in a spiritual way, to anyone to whom the content of the book has been revealed, and to whom it shall have been intended to understand it." (*Fukūk*, pages 180-181, paragraph 5).

Qūnawī is convinced, and history seems to agree with him, that the sainthood of the Shaykh al-Akbar is the peak and nothing as high will be granted to any man except of course the Mahdi (AS) who falls within the Law.

Therefore he has no illusion. If he writes it is because the world will never be lacking men and women who will defend the truth and find encouragement in his books. He writes : "God made me know that none of my companions will inherit my station of synthetic unity of consciousness (*jami'ya*<sup>9</sup>), otherwise my Lord, I was distressed to see this space, which is the pillar, bent, and this tent raised. I was also informed that to carry a part of what this synthetic unity embraces, there will always be men of future generations, as the Messenger (S) said: "In every generation, there will be just people (*'udūl*) to carry this knowledge (*'ilm*), who will push away of it the falsifications of extremists, and the deviations of deniers (*al-mubtilūn*)" (*al-Fukūk*, page 181, paragraph 6).

The disciples of Qūnawī were all men and women able to take over that thought which all of them strived to spread with fervor and confidence. It is not for them that Qūnawī writes. All of them have already received from him this teaching, and all have become masters in this new thought. They are the main vectors on which Qūnawī bases his strategy. Some have already produced a work, such as al-Farghānī, commentator of the *Tā'iyya* of ibn al-Fāriz, in Persian and in Arabic or such as 'Affī al-Dīn Tilimsānī, commentator of the *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* of Khwāje Abdullāh Ansārī. Other akbarians will comment later Ibn Fāriz and Ansārī.

With each of these stars, Qūnawī was able to launch a conquest. He maintained relations with the representatives of each form of Muslim intellectuality. With Abū Hāmid Turka Isfahānī, Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mowsili, he will start the rally of the last defenders of avicennism, which he undertook with his correspondence with the avicennan, notorious in his time, the famous Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī<sup>10</sup>.

For the moment, he writes for future readers. And his writing is self-evident as it transcribes a teaching which has been repeated, mastered, meditated hundred times. He writes for Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, for Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd Qayserī, for Shams al-Dīn Fanārī, and all those who for centuries after him, may wish to comment on this book which is probably the most famous title. He writes for Jamī who will recognize that: "Without the writings of Qūnawī, I could not have solved the difficulties of the *Fusūs*."

The disciples of Qūnawī had the faith of one who works for a "new idea" to paraphrase the word of the French revolutionary, Saint-Just<sup>11</sup>. There was talk of Islam in a different way, the depth of the meanings of Islam was freely explored. The atmosphere was favorable for hope, and many are working to seat it firmly.

In the followings two chapters, we'll deal with two examples of Qūnawī's influence on Ishrāq and the Akhī movement.

Qūnawī and the Ishrāq

According to an autograph published in the review *Oriens*<sup>12</sup> by H. Ritter (d. 1971), the famous polygraph Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī has reportedly studied the *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, a collection of prophetic traditions compiled by Muhammad b. al-Athīr, who died in 606/1210, with Qūnawī in the year 673, the study ending in early Dhul qi'da which is the 11th month of the Arab lunar year. But Qutb al-Dīn who got the wrong year, corrected his text in 675. This suggests us at least that in Dhū l-qi'da 672, Qūnawī was still teaching. Ritter points out, in the same article (page 78) the existence of another copy of *jāmi' al-Uṣūl* which was read before Qūnawī (and commented by the latter), which confirms the competence as *muhaddīth* of our Shaykh. Qūnawī himself had studied it (and obtained an *ijaza* to teach it) with a direct disciple of the author, a certain emir Sharaf al-dīn Ya'qūb al-Hadhbānī<sup>13</sup>. The entry concerning this person in the work of Safadī<sup>14</sup> inform us that he was a Shāfi'ī native of Irbil, east of Mosul, in Iraq, and that he died in 653/1225. It is likely therefore

9 The term *jami'iyya* is used as synonym of *jam'*. The presence of the totality (*al-jam'*), the word *jam'* is used in the sense of concentration of the spiritual energy (*al-tawajjuh*).

10 Schubert Gudrun, *al-murāsālāt bayn Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī*, Beirut, 1416/1995

11 Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, 1767 - 1794. "Le bonheur est une idée neuve", happiness is a new idea in Europe.

12 Hellmut Ritter, *Autographs in Turkish Libraries*, in *Oriens*, 1953, no.1, pp. 63-90

13 Safadī, Salāh al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Ajbak, *al-Wāfi bi l-Wafayāt*, vol. II, page 200, entry 572, edition Sven Dedring, Istanbul, 1949..

14 Idem, vol. V, page 146, entry 938.

that Qûnawî has spent some time in this region of Iraq where the stays of Ibn 'Arabî have left traces, with the *Tanazzulât al-Mowsiliya*.

The teaching of the hadith by Qûnawî might be selective, because the modern edition of an abridged version of the *Jâmi' al-usûl*, entitled *taysîr al-wusûl ilâ jâmi' al-usûl min ahâdîth al-Rasûl*, made by Ibn al-Rabî al-Shaybânî, and equivalent to one third of the entire original text, already includes no less than 1350 pages (Cairo edition, 1346). The whole *Jâmi' al-usûl* was published in Beirut in 1950, in 12 volumes.

This teaching of the hadith was naturally as part of the tradition of the masters of Islamic mysticism, who have always claimed that their doctrine was consistent with the Book and the Sunnah. We only note that thanks to this teaching Qûnawî has exerted an unexpected influence on Ishrâqism, the doctrine of Suhrawardî.

We have the strong feeling that the Shaykh Qûnawî played a significant role in the rescue of the "Oriental theosophy" of Suhrawardî.

1 - The known commentaries on the *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, those of Qutb al-Dîn Shirâzî and Shams al-Dîn Shahrazûrî, have begun to emerge only after the establishment and anchoring of the akbarian doctrine in the intellectual circles of the time. This doctrine has contributed to the resurgence and maintenance of the Neo-Platonic philosophy that could have been ignored for a longer period and even completely forgotten.

2 - In this work, we notice "backcrossing with many pages of the work of Ibn 'Arabî"<sup>15</sup>. For example, the procession of light from its maximum intensity with the Light of lights up to the regent lights governing the individual obscure bodies passing through archangel lights, and the lords of icons (*arbâb al-asnâm*), presents a striking parallelism with the procession of being in Ibn 'Arabî and his school, procession which is sometimes referred to as degrees of being, *marâtib al-wujûd* or in a more synthetic way, as the five divine presences. But the work of Suhrawardî did not arouse the same interest to philosophers who ignored it for nearly a century. The language of light, in the procession of its different intensities, was considered too metaphoric to found seriously a philosophical system. It could have been considered as an aberration in the eyes of a traditional philosopher for whom only the language of being and essences deserves respect.

This is the case of Ibn Sîna (Avicenna) and all the old philosophers to whom Suhrawardî himself claims to belong.

It should also be noted that the expression *ishrâqiyyun* or that of *mashriqiyyûn* are found in the writings of the early commentators of Ibn 'Arabî such as Jandî and Kâshânî, but do not refer explicitly to Suhrawardî; it could have been generally used to refer to a school of thought among the "people of *tasawwuf*". Jandî uses it to explain a sentence of Ibn 'Arabî, in the commentary on Job's section of *Fusûs al-Hikam*. As for Kâshânî, he uses the expression *ishrâqiyyûn* at the beginning of his commentary on *Fusûs*, in a meaning that would include Suhrawardî. Sharîf Jurjânî will extend this meaning to the Ismailis in his *Ta'rifât*.

As for the term *ishrâq*, it is also found in Qûnawî in a technical meaning close to that found in Suhrawardî. But it is also found in the title of a contemporary author of Qûnawî and Jandî, the famous Nâsirî, alive in 696, author of the *futuwwat-nâme* and a *kitâb al-ishrâq* edited by F. Taeschner. This Nâsirî also does not refer to Suhrawardî, and is of qalandarie tendency, rather than neoplatonic.

It is a fact attested by sources that Qutb al-Dîn Shirâzî attended lectures of commentaries on the Hadîth given by Qûnawî. We give below a translation of a passage of a commentary on the prophetic tradition by Qûnawî, passage on which Shirâzî has certainly pondered before writing his commentary on the *hikmat al-ishrâq*, twenty years after the death of the one who was his teacher for a few months, in 686/1287.

"The world of spirits precedes the world of bodies (*âlam al-ajsam*) in both the coming into being and the ontological status. The divine help that reaches the bodies depends on the mediation of minds between the physical bodies and God. In addition the direction of human bodies is entrusted to spirits, but there can be no mutual relationship between the two because of the inherent disparity between what is composed and what is simple: all physical bodies are composed, while spirits are simple substances, not composed. Therefore, there is no reciprocal relationship. But without mutual relationship, it is not possible for one or the other to exercise or suffer effects (*ta'thîr wa ta'aththûr*), nor to receive help or to help (*imdâd wa istimdâd*). For this reason, God created the imaginal world as an isthmus gathering the world of spirits and the world of physical bodies, so that each of these two worlds can communicate with each other.

Thanks to the imaginal world and to its properties, the spirits take body shapes in their places of imaginal manifestation (*mazâhiriḥâ al-mithâliyya*), to which refers the divine word: "He (the angel Gabriel) appeared to

15 H. Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabî*, page 17.

her (Mary) in an imaginal form, as a perfect man"<sup>16</sup> (Qur'an, 19:17).

This is an example of the role played by Qunawî in rallying to the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi Muslim minds still under the influence of the *falsafa*.

Defectors of philosophy who joined the ranks of supporters of *Wahdat al-wujûd* are numerous. In any case they are such to the point that it will be noted<sup>17</sup> by Haydar Amoli, died in 1385, as an argument to win the hearts of the "resisting ones" by encouraging them to follow their example.

This movement which may have started with the correspondence exchanged between Sadr al-Din al-Qunawî and Nasir al-Din Tusî will continue until 'Abd al-Razzâq Kâshânî who will write to 'Alâ al-Dawla Semnânî, that at the beginning of his quest, he was engaged in the path of philosophy. It is Mowlâna Shams al-Din Kishî who reassured him about the Absolute Being, by revealing him that he had experienced the same perplexity "until the *Fusûs* (al-hikam) arrived here, *tâ fusûs injâ resid*". The *Fusûs* was increasingly spreading. Copies of it were made. But the surely considerable number of masters who were teaching it orally could, in itself explain its rapid spread. It is relatively easy to draw-up a list of the commentators of the *Fusûs* either because their work has reached us, or their names have been communicated to us as such. But the masters who have remained anonymous are numerous. I have in mind the name of Al-Nu'mân al-Khawârizmî<sup>18</sup> but there are many others.

This is a good topic of thesis for those students of Konya who wish to work in the field. All masters have not necessarily written.

The fact is that the *Fusûs* was widely publicized and we can even think that those who worked as copyist have certainly neglected other classical works for this book of Ibn 'Arabi, who was most sought. There was a lot of money to earn the more so as there was no copyright.

Velâyat dar ânjà

Qunawî was surrounded by great personalities. His time was one of the best in moslem history. The ambiance is that we almost live today ... Except that it was much happier. He was surrounded by rare competencies : there was Sa'd al-Din Farghânî, there was Mu'ayyad al-Din Jandî, there was Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqî, there was Shams al-din Ijî, 'Afif al-Din Tilimsânî my compatriot from Algeria, there was Sharaf al-Din al-Mowsili<sup>19</sup>, there was Abû Hamid Turka Isfahânî (the author of *Qawâ'id al-Tawhid*). There were also scholars who have come from far to get answers to questions before which have been worrying them for a long time, such as Qutb al-Din Shîrazî, who will later pride himself on having been his student, in the commentary of the Hadith. And of course, in Konya, there was the great Mowlânâ Jalâl al-Din Rûmî and the luminous shadow of Shams Tabrizî, with his troop of Great Minds. God had gathered in Konya all the holiness, all the spiritual power of Islam. Sainthood was there. *Velâyat dar ânjà*...

The Bektashiyya (see this word in EI2), pays, to our surprise, so great attention to the personality of Shaykh Qunawî that we should perhaps think that we are in the presence of a side, till then unsuspected of the activity of our Shaykh as a man invested with the charge of the *futuwwa*. The *Velâyat-Nâme*<sup>20</sup> informs us that one of the five main spiritual heirs of Hajjî Bektâsh Velî, Pirâb Sultan<sup>21</sup>, has said that the sainthood is in Konya (*Velâyat dar ânjà*). Under this title, the *velâyat-nâme* explains the meaning of these words by the presence of our Shaykh of whom he develops the spiritual qualities. Whatever the historical reality of the relationships of Qunawî with Hajjî Bektâsh Velî, it is remarkable that our Shaykh had been considered as an *akhi*, a *qalandar*, a great master of the *futuwwa* by a popular hagiography. According to a recent research of A. Yasar Ocak, a Turkish researcher, this Pirâb Sultan "has reportedly settled in Konya, at the request of Sadru'd-Din Konevî. He had a zâwiya in Konya, in which he was buried after his death"<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, this fact is confirmed by the *Velâyat-nâme* who adds that it is Qunawî who has sent a messenger to Hajjî Bektâsh asking him to

16 Page 143 of *Sharh al-arba'in hadithan*, edition of H. K. Yilmaz

17 In his commentary of *Fusûs*, *Nass al-Nusûs*, Le Texte des Textes, edited in France by Henry Corbin, the French philosopher.

18 This akbarian master was alive in 739. He is referred to by Rukn al-Din Shîrazî in his comment of the *Fusûs* in Persian, as one of the masters with whom he has studied the akbarian doctrine. When we know that Rukn al-Din Shîrazî had previously had as masters Kâshânî and Qaysarî, we can consider that the teaching of Khwârezmî may have been if not of higher quality, at least equal to that of his two first masters. It is to him that Rukn al-Din Shîrazî shall read out the first pages of his comment.

19 I think that I have identified this person as Hasan ibn Hamza Palâsi-Shîrazî. Although quite unknown today, yet he was read by Abd al-Ghanî Nâbulî (see his *al-Wujûd al-Haqq* edited by Bekri Aladdin).

20 See *Haci Bektas Velâyatnâmesi (ilk velâyatnâme)*, edition of Bedri Noyan, Aydin, 1986, pp. 338, 339, 340

21 See concerning him, Erich Gross, *Das Vilâjet-Nâme des Haggi Bektasch*, Leipzig, 1927

22 *The revolt of Baba Resûl or the formation of Muslim heterodoxy in Anatolia in XIII<sup>th</sup> century*, Ankara, 1989, page 94



send to Konya one of his *murīds* "so that we can at all times enjoy the fragrance of your presence"<sup>23</sup>.

The Work of QŪnawī

In the *Fukūk*, QŪnawī refers<sup>24</sup> in different places to his major writings : *I'jâz al-bayân fi ta'wīl Umm al-Qor'ân*, *Miftâh al-ghayb*, *al-Nafahât al-ilâhiya*.

The *Fukūk* is a necessary book because it tells how to understand correctly *Fusus*. The keys to reading it provides are an indispensable tool for intelligence to be fitted with, to reach an understanding that is as close as possible to the intention of its author. While a testimony, it is therefore a legacy, a favor that the Shaykh QŪnawī, an authorized disciple of Ibn 'Arabī, has kindly left to his posterity. It can be used today as criterion and reference in the assessment of any commentary on the famous work of Ibn 'Arabī. Because QŪnawī has attended the courses of Shaykh al-Akbar for a long time, has grown up in his shade, is his stepson, and especially because he has received from him the *ijâzas* which are a pledge of fidelity and trust. You can read a book and understand it adequately, but if you have not studied it with the author or an authorized disciple of its author, your interpretation will be open to doubt. The oral teaching brings something which reading with the eyes does not guarantee. This is why the ancients used to grant licenses to teach whole or part of their work to their deserving students<sup>25</sup> who have listened to the master.

QŪnawī has produced a work which, at first glance, appears as an autonomous work, totally independent of his master's. Explicit references to the master's works are very rare indeed. The *Fukūk* is among his writings, the only book entirely devoted to a commentary on another book, the *Fusus al-hikam*. But even there, one quickly realizes that it is not a commentary strictly speaking, deepening the meaning of a text, passage by passage. Such a commentary would require a minimum of four hundred pages. No, this will be done later, beginning by Jandī. No, it is not a commentary, but a sequence of keys to reading without which an attempt to comment would be quite risky. It is therefore an essential complement to the text of *Fusus*. That's why we say that this book provides guidance to understand correctly the *Fusus*.

Besides, the full title of the book leaves no doubt about it : *Kitâb al-Fukūk fi asrâr mustanadât hikam al-Fusus*, The Book of Removing the Seals of secrets of the referents of the Bezels of Wisdom.

This book is one of the last productions of QŪnawī, and may be the last, knowing that, sometimes, QŪnawī used to write his books at the same time. This means that it closes a life of study and meditation of Shaykh al-Akbar's work, and as digest of several years of study and then of teaching of the *Fusus*, it contains clarifications most urgently required by those who undertake its study, and who have requested QŪnawī to write them, as he states it in his introduction.

The method of the commentary used by QŪnawī reveals that, as he used to do, he will not repeat what the author said. He will say what his long experience in the Path allows him to understand and reveal. It is the method of his other works, method which according to him, was the "method of the Ancients until Aristotle"<sup>26</sup> as he writes it in *I'jâz al-bayân*, to the point that it can be said that the *Fukūk* is the book where the two thoughts, that of the master and that of the disciple join or meet.

All the work of Ibn Arabī is concentrated in the *Fusus*, and the whole thought of QŪnawī is invested in the *Fukūk*. This meeting of the two minds transcends, however the duality: we are filled with wonder before the genius of QŪnawī revealing us the genius of his master; with his own power. We then realize that between the two men, there is more than a relationship of master to disciple, but a complicity in the *himma*, that spiritual ambition that makes men arrange to meet in the highest peaks of the mind, and take the oath to gather there. It is in fact, only there that the men have serious things to say to each other and Ibn Arabī was there long before. QŪnawī joined him with the *Kitâb al-Fukūk* as pass and evidence of his merit.

<sup>23</sup> Page 209 of the French translation by K. Ergüner, under the title *Le livre des derviches bektashi, Villayet name*, in editions le Bois d'Orion, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, the end of the first chapter that of Adam, page 191 or in the comment of Loth's chapter, page 255.

<sup>25</sup> The word *Ijâza*, means license and has given its name to the diploma issued by the modern universities.

<sup>26</sup> *I'jâz al-bayân*, page 20, of the Tehran edition by S. Jalâl al-Dîn Ashtiyânî.