



## Intoxicated or Sober Gnostic? Examining Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī and His Controversial Role in Islamic Mysticism

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### Article History:

Received: 6 April 2024

Accepted: 25 Sept 2024

Published: 30 Sept 2024

### How to cite this article:

Yousefi, Amir, and Ali Ashrafimami "Intoxicated or Sober Gnostic?

Examining Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī and His Controversial Role in Islamic Mysticism"

*Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic*

*Mysticism* 13, no 1 (2024): 161-186

<https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v13i1.21988>

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**Abstract:** This article examines Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī's reputation as a mystic of intoxication. In his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Al-Hujwīrī labelled Bāyazīd as the 'Pioneer of Intoxicated,' whereas Ibn 'Arabī described him as a 'sober gnostic.' The central aim of this paper is to determine whether Al-Hujwīrī correctly attributed the 'Path of Intoxication' to Bāyazīd or Ibn 'Arabī was justified in praising the accomplishments of Bāyazīd. To explore this issue, this study critically examines Al-Hujwīrī's writings, employing an analytical-descriptive approach to classical texts on Islamic mysticism, in view of the opinions of modern thinkers such as Ernst and Mojaddedi. The study finds that Al-Hujwīrī's main reason for attributing intoxication to Bāyazīd lies in his ecstatic utterances, meaning that his claim is unjustified. Therefore, his classification of Sufis as either being 'Intoxicated Sufis' or 'Sober Sufis' seems questionable. This perspective is supported by Ibn Arabī's positive appraisal of Bāyazīd, whose original teachings are evidence of his sobriety.

**Contribution:** This paper contributes to the study of Islamic mysticism and its underlying concepts. It also explores the origins of the intoxication vs. sobriety debate, illustrating the reason for the emergence of these labels, which were not challenged or critically examined by later generations of scholars.

**Keywords:** Bāyazīd; intoxication; sobriety; Al-Hujwīrī; Ibn 'Arabī.

## Introduction

The controversy over the labels ‘intoxication’ (*sukr*) and ‘sobriety’ (*ṣaḥw*) used to characterize the leanings of major Sufi mystics is a salient feature of classical Sufi historiography. This rigid system of classification emerged in the fifth/eleventh century. Abū Yazīd Ṭayfūr al-Bisṭāmī (136/754–261/875) is probably the most prominent and inspiring Persian mystic. He held such an exalted place among his Ṣūfī contemporaries that Dhū al-Nūn al-Maṣrī (180/796–245/859), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810), Ahmad Khadrūya and his wife, Fātīma Umm ‘Alī had nothing but praise for him.<sup>1</sup> Bāyazīd’s fame as a Sufi mystic spread after his death. Abū al-Hasan Kharāqānī (d. 425/1033) reportedly said to his disciple, “I wish the world were full of men like Bāyazīd.”<sup>2</sup> Centuries after his death, the title “Bāyazīd of his time” was used in veneration of other mystics who came after him.<sup>3</sup> However, two centuries later, he was portrayed as the epitome of ‘Intoxicated Sufis,’ and debates ensued whether he had been leaning towards *sukr* or *ṣaḥw*, the latter being considered the superior state.

According to the testimony of Ibn ‘Arabī (560/1165–638/1240), Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī is part of the spiritual axis of the Muhammadan Path (*quṭb al-Muḥammadīya*), who has surpassed all mystical states and stations and sits with God in a circle of awe (*hayba*) and intimacy (*uns*). Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī regarded Bāyazīd as a companion of equilibrium, stability, repose in the presence of God, someone who journeyed to the “place of no attributes.”<sup>4</sup> In this context, the word ‘place’ is a Divine utterance adapted from the Qur’anic verse, “We raised him to a high place” (QS. Maryam (19):57) and is comparable to the notion of ‘being without attribute’ mentioned in the introduction to Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s (ca. 540/1145–618/1221) hagiography, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’* [Memorial of the Saints].<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the author of *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Abū al-Ḥassan ‘Alī al-Hujwīrī (400/1009–470/1077), considered Bāyazīd and his followers (whom he

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Ibn Alī Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, trans. Muhammad-Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī (Tehran: Sukhan, 2005), 88, 120, N 27; 122, N 63.

<sup>2</sup> Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, ed. Reynold Nicholson (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1994), 741.

<sup>3</sup> Fereidūn Sepahsālār, *Risāla-i Sepahsālār Dar Manāqib-i Ḥaẓrat-i Parvardgār*, ed. Mohammad Afshīn Vafāi (Tehran: Sokhan, 2009), 118; Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Aflāki, *Manāqib Ul-‘Arifīn*, ed. Tahseen Yāzījī (Tehran: Donyā-i Ketāb, 1996), 2: 737.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, ed. Ahmad Shams Al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1999), 4: 23.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 68.

called the Ṭayfūrīya Sect, referring to him by his given name, Ṭayfūr), people of rapture and intoxication. He described him as the ‘Pioneer of the Intoxicated,’ in stark opposition to Junayd al-Baghdādī (ca.210/830–297/910), who praised him as the ‘Pioneer of the Sober.’<sup>6</sup>

The debate has attracted wide attention from many scholars, including Annabel Keeler, who explores the sayings attributed to Bāyazīd and anecdotes from some of the earliest sources. The essay examines his interactions with contemporaries and explores reasons for conflicts with specific community groups. It highlights the significance of some of his most controversial and paradoxical statements, as well as the contradictions in his self-portrayal—boastful and self-critical simultaneously. Finally, it discusses the concept of *shatḥ* (or *shaṭaḥāt/shaṭḥiyyāt*), its definition by Sufīs, and whether the French scholars, beginning with Henri Corbin, appropriately translate it as “paradox.”<sup>7</sup> Further, Jawid Mojaddedi outlined the evolution of the terms spiritual intoxication and sobriety from Abū Naṣr ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭūsī’s *Kitāb al-Luma’ Fī al-Taṣawwuf* [The Book of Light Flashes on Sufism] to Al-Hujwārī’s *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* [Unveiling the Hidden One]. Al-Hujwārī expands on the debate about the value of these two experiences, linking them to Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī and Junayd al-Baghdādī. While these associations may seem novel, the study argues that Al-Hujwārī’s choices arise from the dynamic nature of Sufī biographies and the development of technical terms within their traditions.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Eyüp İnce employed the Qur’an and Sunnah perspectives to demonstrate that *sukr* and *ṣaḥw* acquired new connotations in Sufism, extending beyond their original definitions. According to the study, these concepts are most employed to convey spiritual intoxication and awareness. The notions of *sukr* and *ṣaḥw* are neither explicitly addressed in the Islamic source texts nor are their meanings elucidated in Sufism. Sufī interpretations created new meanings for these themes. Furthermore, Sufīs seem to prefer the state of sobriety, as it does not interfere with their state of servitude.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Alī bin ‘Uthmān Al-Hujwārī, *Kashf Al-Maḥjūb*, ed. Mahmood ‘Abedī (Tehran: Soroush, 2004), 280.

<sup>7</sup> Annabel Keeler, “Wisdom in Controversy: Paradox and the Paradoxical in Sayings of Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875),” *Journal of Sufī Studies* 7, no. 1–2 (2018): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341305>.

<sup>8</sup> Jawid A Mojaddedi, “Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 66, no. 1 (February 3, 2003): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X03000016>.

<sup>9</sup> Eyüp İnce, “Tasavvufta Sekr Ve Sahv Kavramları,” *Turkish Academic Research Review*

The validity of these two labels has yet to be assessed based on primary sources. This article, therefore, aims to fill this gap in the literature by providing a more in-depth analysis and critically examining Al-Hujwīrī's works, including *Kashf al-Mahjūb*. This article attempts to determine whether Al-Hujwīrī was justified in attributing the 'Path of Intoxication' to Bāyazīd or Ibn 'Arabī was right in praising Bāyazīd's eminence among the mystics and his stability or fixity (*tamkīn*). In other words, the question is whether Bāyazīd was an intoxicated gnostic or a sober gnostic. The main hypothesis put forward in this article is that the intoxication and rapture attributed to Bāyazīd by Al-Hujwīrī is in stark contrast with Ibn 'Arabī's admiration of his authority and steadfastness. The misclassification of mystics into 'intoxicated' ones and 'sober' ones was first introduced by Al-Hujwīrī and never questioned by later scholars, who accepted his interpretation without criticism.

## Literature Review

*Sukr* and *ṣaḥw* are two important concepts in early Sufi tradition used to identify the spiritual state of a Sufi traveler (*sālik*) on the Path. Furthermore, both concepts are used to describe his state before God. A *sālik* may become intoxicated and overpowered by God's disclosed presence, caused by their intimacy (*uns*) and closeness. Meanwhile, a *sālik* may retain his sober state through his sense of fear (*khawf*) and respect (*hayba*) of God's majesty and greatness. Genealogically, the concept of intoxication is based on the first 'drunken Sufi' Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī from Khorasan. while the concept of sobriety is based on the first 'sober Sufi' Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd.<sup>10</sup>

Sufi biographies from the fourth-century/tenth-century onwards, such as *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīya* [Generations of Sufis] by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad al-Sulamī (335/947–412/1034) and *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya Fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf* [Epistle on Sufism] by Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (378/986–467/1072) are among those that construct a conceptual framework that places Sufi figures into specific categories based on their spiritual experiences,

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8, no. 1 (2023): 157–70, <https://doi.org/10.30622/tarr.1225432>; Eyyup Akdağ, "Sûfilere İsim Arayışları ve Tasavvuf Kelimesinin Menşei Meselesi," *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 23, no. 2 (2019): 715–37, <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.620070>.

<sup>10</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension in Islam* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 58.

expressions, and behaviors as reported by their students.<sup>11</sup> Both scholars depicted Bāyazīd as a mystic who experienced spiritual ecstasy, as well as a disciplined Sufi master. His state of spiritual intoxication is based on his famous ecstatic utterance (*shaḥḥ*), “Glory to me! How great is my majesty!” (*Ṣubḥānī! Mā a‘ẓama sha’nī!*), but other narrations demonstrate his composure, clarity of thought, and commitment to strict spiritual discipline. Thus, Al-Sulamī and Al-Qushayrī did not provide an adequate theoretical basis for assigning exclusive labels to Sufi figures, including Bāyazīd.<sup>12</sup>

One generation later, Al-Hujwīrī wrote his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, presenting an authoritative classification and systematic framework of the various orientations within Sufism. He paid considerable attention to the spiritual categories (*maqāmāt*) and the development of early Sufism, while differentiating between ‘intoxicated Sufis’ and ‘sober Sufis.’ Within this framework, he positioned Bāyazīd as the central figure of the ‘intoxicated Sufis,’ based on his ecstatic utterances. His assessment appears to be based on the premise that his *shaḥḥāt* is a direct indicator of his complete loss of self-awareness. However, this approach neglects other important considerations, such as the spiritual context, ascetic depth, pedagogical purpose of these utterances, as well as the complexity of each spiritual experience. Al-Hujwīrī went even further by giving a distinct name to Bayazid’s followers as the sect of ‘drunken Sufis’ called the Ṭayfurīya, which had no historical basis.<sup>13</sup>

In the seventh/thirteenth century, the Andalusian Sufi mystic, poet, and philosopher Ibn ‘Arabī offered his own expert opinion, which stood in stark contrast with that of Al-Hujwīrī. Rather than taking a literal approach to Bāyazīd’s utterances, he offered a symbolic reading, following a more metaphysical approach to understanding his position. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, a Sufi’s experience of spontaneous ecstasy cannot be used as a benchmark for his spiritual heights. He emphasized that a Sufi’s worth is reflected in his level of fixity (*tamkīn*): his inner steadfastness, stability of consciousness, and consistency in observing spiritual etiquette, even when in a state of supreme

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<sup>11</sup> Kamal Gasimov, “Muslim Saints Contested: Ibn Taymiyya’s Critique of Al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 34, no. 2 (2022): 153–211, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etac045>.

<sup>12</sup> Annabel Keeler, “Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī and Discussions about Intoxicated Sufism,” in *Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (London: Routledge, 2020), 46–62.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Colby, “Otherworldly Journeys in Pre-Modern Sufism,” in *Sufi Cosmology*, ed. Christian Lange and Alexander Knysh (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2022), 377–398, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392618>.

closeness to God. Ibn ‘Arabi concluded that Bāyazīd’s ecstatic utterances are a symbolic expression of his stable Divine knowledge, not a reflection of a state of spiritual intoxication. He asserted that a ‘drunken Sufi’ would not be able to express his spiritual experiences with such meaningful expressions. Therefore, he argued, Bāyazīd was a ‘sober Sufi,’ someone who had attained a spiritual depth that was both guarded and structured.<sup>14</sup>

Considering this debate, Carl W. Ernst concluded that the intoxication and sobriety of Bāyazīd are not the question; rather, the meaning underlying these ecstatic utterances is worth exploring.<sup>15</sup> Concerning Al-Hujwīrī’s division into ‘intoxicated Sufis’ and ‘sober Sufis,’ he considered this division as being forced and artificial, without offering more details on Bāyazīd’s position. However, it is noted here that ‘intoxication’ and ‘sobriety’ are artificial constructs, establishing clear demarcation lines between the school of Bāyazīd and the school of Junayd. The position of annihilation in God (*al-fanā’ fī ‘llāh*), subsistence in God (*al-baqā’ bi-‘llāh*), and ecstatic utterances cannot be considered artificial. In fact, Sufi mystics seem to occupy a spectrum between ‘intoxication’ and ‘sobriety’ and are positioned closer to either of them, according to their behavior (*sulūk*) and their words. Employing Ernst’s approach, Bāyazīd is more related to intoxication.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Jawid Mojaddedi did not consider Bāyazīd’s intoxication to be compatible with his behavior. He argued that Al-Hujwīrī’s classification was his own invention, not justified by the historical record, and later accepted as fact by the generations of scholars who came after him.<sup>17</sup> Based on their established biographies, neither Junayd nor Bāyazīd can be characterized

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<sup>14</sup> Fateh Saeidi, “Yahya Ibn Mu’adh Al-Razi and His Disciples: Their Influence on Early Sufism,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 42–61, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v8i1.513>; Eyyüp Tuncer, “Malay Dünyasının İlk Mutasavvıf Şairi Hamza Fansûrî’nin İkan Tungal Şiiri Bağlamında Vahdet-i Vücûd Anlayışı,” *Journal of Islamic Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 267–90, <https://doi.org/10.26650/iuitd.2021.853369>.

<sup>15</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 50.

<sup>16</sup> Carl W. Ernst, “The Man Without Attributes: Ibn ‘Arabi’s Interpretation of Bāyazīd Al-Bistami,” Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 2019, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/the-man-without-attributes-carl-ernst/>.

<sup>17</sup> Jawid A Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 134.

as ‘sober’ and ‘intoxicated’ respectively.<sup>18</sup> Mojaddedi argued further that Al-Hujwīrī failed to make a meaningful distinction between intoxication and sobriety by placing intoxication on the path of truth, and sobriety and subsistence as the last destination.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Hujwīrī may have been aware of the inherent faults in his oversimplified classification and its lack of inner logic; however, he insisted on identifying Bāyazīd as the first of the ‘intoxicated Sufis.’ Notwithstanding, he chose to ignore the salient fact that ‘intoxication’ is related to annihilation, while ‘sobriety’ is related to subsistence.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, when positioning Bāyazīd closer to ‘sobriety,’ the aspect of subsistence is given a higher position reached at the peak of his *sulūk*.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, Mojaddedi does not present Bāyazīd as a perfect mystic based on Junayd’s testimony, even though the latter considered Bāyazīd as the leader of the ‘sober Sufis,’ “like Gabriel among the angels.”<sup>22</sup> From this point of view, Bāyazīd’s position of subsistence and sobriety is more compatible with his biography, while annihilation is part of his conduct.

## Method

This article employed an analytical-descriptive approach to classical Islamic mysticism. It focused on the works of contemporary thinkers such as Ernst and Mojaddedi, while verifying these attributions through earlier texts, particularly those concerning Bāyazīd. It also traces the changing connotations of *sukr* and *ṣaḥw* in tenth-century and eleventh-century Sufi works. Historical hermeneutics was employed to understand how each author interpreted Bāyazīd, considering their experience and understanding in the historical context. A

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<sup>18</sup> Mojaddedi, “Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism.”

<sup>19</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 284; Hazrat Ali bin Usman Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 2001), 188.

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd Ridgeon, *Routledge Handbook on Sufism* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Dheen Mohamed Mohamed Meerasahibu, “Some Early Definitions of Taṣawwuf: Exploring the Centrality of Abū Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī in Its History,” *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah Dan Pemikiran Islam* 23, no. 1 (2021): 197–250, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol23no1.6>.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 162; Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 106.

comparative analysis was used to examine the differences in judgments between Al-Hujwīrī, Ibn ‘Arabi, and modern scholars of Islamic mysticism.

## Results and Discussion

### Critique of *Kashf al-Mahjūb*

Before criticizing Al-Hujwīrī's depiction of Bāyazīd as the ‘Pioneer of the Intoxicated,’ the singular style and content of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* must be pointed out. Al-Hujwīrī's scholarly style differed considerably from that of his famous contemporary Al-Qushayrī, whose treatise on Sufism served as one of Al-Hujwīrī's primary sources, as he employed a theologically critical approach to the views and sayings of his predecessors.<sup>23</sup> Al-Qushayrī tended to avoid points of disagreement among the Sufis and passed over controversial figures like Ḥusayn ibn Mansūr al-Ḥallāj (c. 244/858–309/922), while Al-Hujwīrī liked to challenge controversial subjects and highlight the more extreme examples, unashamedly juxtaposing opposite beliefs and teachings. He discussed the different Sufi sects and their views in separate chapters and openly criticized them.<sup>24</sup>

In his preface to his translation of *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, R. A. Nicholson raised doubts about the existence of all the Sufi schools mentioned by Al-Hujwīrī, wondering whether some of them had really existed or had been invented by the author to embellish his work.<sup>25</sup> This skepticism towards Al-Hujwīrī's classification of the different Sufi schools grew even more pronounced among modern Iranian researchers, who examined this issue and concluded that some of Al-Hujwīrī's Sufi sects were pure fabrications with no historical basis. Shafi‘ee Kadkanī, for instance, argued that there was no evidence of the Ṭayfūrīya, Sahliya, and Khafīfiya sects in the biographies of the Sufi masters, even though Al-Hujwīrī claimed that they had founded them.<sup>26</sup>

When comparing Al-Hujwīrī's approach to Sufism with that of his predecessor, Al-Sulamī, it becomes evident that he had a different objective in mind when compiling his work: he wanted to present Sufi scholars as trustworthy and acceptable transmitters of hadith. In the sciences of hadith, the chain of transmission indicates the authenticity of a transmitter; likewise, the

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Abedī's introduction to his edition of Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson's preface to his translation of ‘Ali B. ‘Uthman al-Jullabī Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb* (New Delhi: Taj Company, 1982), xxii.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

<sup>26</sup> Such as *Maqāmāt-i Bāyazīd*, *Maqāmāt-i Sahl Tustarī*, *Sra-i Abu Abd Allah Khafīf*; see Shafi‘ee Kadkanī's introduction to Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 16–17.



generational rank (*ṭabaqa*) of a particular Sufi scholar indicated his level of authenticity. Acknowledging this, Al-Sulamī applied the concept of *ṭabaqāt* to Sufi scholars, tracing each scholar's relation to his predecessors up to the time of the Prophet's immediate successors.<sup>27</sup> The application of this ranking system to the Sufi orders led to the formation of the 'chain of transmission' (*silsila*) among later Sufis, rather than 'sect' (*tā'ifa*). Thus, Al-Hujwīrī's chapter "On the differences among Sufi sects and schools"<sup>28</sup> contradicted the very spirit of Sufism, which emphasized spiritual unity and shared spiritual legacy.

Nicholson further suggested that Al-Hujwīrī might have added his own preconceived ideas and prejudices to certain teachings, which he then attributed to a certain sect.<sup>29</sup> This high level of bias and subjectivity is evident in several instances of fictional accounts. For instance, he summarized and compared the views of Sufi groups in Khorasan and Iraq, identifying the so-called *Muḥāsibīya* as the followers of Ḥārith Ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī (ca. 165/781–243/857), who formed the first known Sufi sect:

The peculiarity of Al-Muḥāsibī's doctrine is that he does not mention satisfaction (*riḍā*) among the stations but includes it among the states. He was the first to hold this view, which was adopted by the people of Khorasan. The people of Iraq, on the contrary, assert that satisfaction is one of the stations, and it is extreme quietism. The controversy between them has gone on to the present day.<sup>30</sup>

As indicated in the quotation above, Al-Hujwīrī's main aim in writing the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* was to highlight the different and often opposing views of the Sufi groups. Supporting this point is his quote of Bāyazīd, who was reported to have said, "The disagreement of the divines is a mercy save on the point of unification (*tawḥīd*)."<sup>31</sup> It suggests that this attributed statement seemed to justify Al-Hujwīrī's love of controversy and harsh polemics, rather than defending the shared principles of mysticism. When discussing the controversial figure of Al-Ḥallāj, he presents the various views of the Sufi masters, then proceeds to classify all Sufi masters into those who condemn Al-Ḥallāj and those who revere him. He also identifies those Sufi masters who suspend their

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<sup>27</sup> Sulamī's similar approach to Sufism is best represented in his *Al-Arba'īn Fī al-Taṣawwuf* and *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīya*.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 267.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 268; Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 176–77.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 267; Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 176; Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 185.

judgment about him, among them being Al-Qushayrī.<sup>32</sup> He remarks sharply, “If Al-Ḥallāj was a genuine mystic, he is not to be banned on the grounds of popular condemnation, and if he was condemned by Ṣūfism and rejected by the Truth, he is not to be approved on the grounds of popular approval.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, he offers his own view of Al-Ḥallāj as follows:

In conclusion, you must know that the sayings of Al-Ḥallāj should not be taken as a model, inasmuch as he was ecstatic, not firmly settled, and a man needs to be firmly settled before his sayings can be considered authoritative.<sup>34</sup>

Al-Hujwīrī also gives his own opinion about Bāyazīd when discussing the so-called Ṭayfūrīya. Describing the teachings of Bāyazīd as the product of rapture and intoxication, he comments, “The intoxicated man is enraptured and pays no heed to created things...” and that “Sufi Shaykhs believe that no one is a proper model for others unless he is steadfast and free from the circle of states.”<sup>35</sup>

Considering these and other remarks, one can discern a certain level of contradiction in Al-Hujwīrī’s classification of truthful and misguided Sufi sects. Although he rejects the ‘intoxicated Sufi’ as a spiritual authority, he nevertheless regards the Ṭayfūrīya as an approved sect.<sup>36</sup> However, what distinguishes Bāyazīd’s doctrine from that of Al-Ḥallāj? He claims that both mystics were intoxicated and enraptured. Therefore, it is plausible that Al-Hujwīrī exaggerated when he described Bāyazīd’s path as intoxication and rapture. On the other hand, maybe he was wrong in classifying both mystics as ‘intoxicated Sufis’?

One reason for his classification of Bāyazīd as an ‘intoxicated Sufi’ might be due to his ecstatic utterances. Since Al-Ḥallāj was also reported to have made such utterances, for which he was condemned as a heretic, it is plausible that Al-Hujwīrī thought of them as two sides of the same coin. He might have formulated the following syllogism: A Sufi who makes ecstatic utterance is intoxicated; Bāyazīd and Al-Ḥallāj both made such utterances; therefore, they are both intoxicated. However, the major premise is likely to be false, since the reports on Bāyazīd are questionable.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Al-Hujwīrī claims to have read fifty

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<sup>32</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 229–30.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, 150; Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 232.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 152.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, 184.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, 176, 184.

<sup>37</sup> Keeler, “Wisdom in Controversy.”

fragments written by al-Ḥallāj<sup>38</sup> but did not refer to the works of Bāyazīd.<sup>39</sup> Instead, he simply states that contrary to the Ṭayfūrīya, the Junaydīya preferred sobriety over intoxication.<sup>40</sup> As discussed in the section below, Ibn ‘Arabī and other Sufi masters did not subscribe to Al-Hujwīrī’s views and did not support his classification.

### **Paradoxical Utterances as a Measure of Intoxication and Sobriety**

We start our exploration by examining some of the famous *shaṭaḥāt* reported of Bāyazīd. One such utterance reads: “Glory be to me! How great is my majesty!” (*Ṣubḥānī, mā a’ẓama sha’nī*). This bewildering exclamation has been much commented upon by scholars such as Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, the author of *Kitāb al-Luma’*. In response to Ibn Sālim, who had denounced Bāyazīd for this heretical utterance, al-Sarrāj defended the latter by arguing that it was part of God’s own words in the Qur’an, referring to Himself.<sup>41</sup>

Almost the same assumption has been suggested by two other famous Ṣūfis, Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī [d.606/1209] and Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d.618/1221) about other ecstatic utterances of Bāyazīd. Rūzbihān quotes through Abū Mūsā, a disciple of Bāyazīd, that once on a trip with his master, while they were staying in Samarqand, people were coming to receive his blessings. As they were leaving the city, a large crowd came to escort them. Bāyazīd asked Abū Mūsā: “Who are these?” He replied: “They are the blessed.” Bāyazīd climbed a hill and shouted to the crowd: “O people! I am your Lord, the Most High!”<sup>42</sup> The crowd said: “Bāyazīd has gone insane,” and turned their faces away from him.<sup>43</sup> Rūzbihān attributes this odd conduct of Bāyazīd to his *malāmaṭī* (blame) attitude; he writes: “O friend! This is the act of the *malāmaṭī*, not whoever recites the Qur’an is mad.”<sup>44</sup> ‘Aṭṭār mentions a similar story in *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, according to which Bāyazīd, in order to expel the love of him from the hearts of the crowd who wished to keep him company, turned to them and said: “Verily I am God; there is no God but I; therefore serve Me.”<sup>45</sup> ‘Aṭṭār,

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<sup>38</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 231.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, 280.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, 281.

<sup>41</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭusī, *Al-Luma’ Fī Al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, Vol. XXII (London: Luzac and Co. LTD, 1963), 391.

<sup>42</sup> *Ana rabbukum al-a’lā*

<sup>43</sup> Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyyāt*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institute of Iranist for France Publications, 1995), 99.

<sup>44</sup> Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyyāt*.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 137.; translation of the quotation from Farid al-Din ‘Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, trans. A. J. Arberry (Iowa: Omphaloskepsis, 2000), 124.

too, considers this utterance to be simply a recitation of a Qur'anic verse<sup>46</sup> and says: "The Shaikh was talking on behalf of God, the Exalted, as people say, "as a narration from his God." <sup>47</sup>

The remarkable result of the argument put forward by Al-Sarrāj, Rūzbihān, and 'Aṭṭār is that some of these reported utterances are not in any way ecstatic but rather the words of a sober *malāmatī* Sufi,<sup>48</sup> focusing on self-blame and spiritual concealment. His acts are conscious and deliberate rather than rapturous and ecstatic. Ibn 'Arabī also characterized Bāyazīd as a *malāmatī* Sufi, thus affirming this notion.<sup>49</sup> The biographical literature on the state and station of Bāyazīd also suggests that he used these words to disperse people in a *malāmatī* manner.

Another point of the argument is that even if some of Bāyazīd's utterances were indeed ecstatic, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that his state of intoxication was dominant enough to justify his classification as an 'intoxicated Sufi.' In this respect, Al-Qushayrī noted that intoxication and sobriety should be understood as alternating rather than opposing states. In the case of Bāyazīd, there are many stories recounted about his ecstatic sayings. 'Aṭṭār, for example, mentions in his *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*<sup>50</sup> an occasion where Bāyazīd experienced a state of ecstasy. After regaining his consciousness, he was told that he had uttered the words, "Glory be to me! How great is my dignity!" He then told his disciples to cut him into pieces if he spoke such words again.<sup>51</sup> Implicitly, he thus concedes that such utterances are heretical. Bāyazīd's regained consciousness refers to his state of sobriety after a state of intoxication. Further, Junayd admits in his work that different accounts of Bāyazīd's experiences indicate that he would frequently experience various states and stations, reflected in the words

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<sup>46</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā'*. This utterance of Bāyazīd is identical to QS. Ṭā Hā (20):14: "Verily, I am your Lord! There is no god but I: So, serve you Me (only) and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise."

<sup>47</sup> 'Aṭṭār, 163.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, however, expresses doubts as to the truth of the outpouring of the utterance 'Glory be to Me!' by Bāyazīd, His descendants were unaware of this utterance, but it was widely known among the people of his time and recorded in the works of his contemporaries. See Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma' Fī Al-Taṣawwuf*, 391.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Denise Aigle, "'Aṭṭār's Tadhkirat Al-Awliyā' and Jāmī's Nafahāt Al-Uns: Two Visions of Sainthood," in *Oriente Moderno*, vol. 96 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 271–315, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22138617-12340106>.

<sup>51</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā'*, 140; 'Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, 141.

he used to describe them.<sup>52</sup> However, whatever is uttered in such states is difficult for observers to understand; therefore, they should refrain from judging them. Junayd illustrated this by stating, “One, being in the ocean of unity, said: ‘I am God,’ the other, being in proximity or distance, spoke of sailing.”<sup>53</sup>

Considering the arguments given above, it can be concluded that a Sufi who makes ecstatic utterances is not necessarily intoxicated. The literal meaning of *shaṭḥ* is to ‘get moving.’ According to Rūzbihān, this phrase refers to “the disclosure of the secrets and their involuntary outpouring from the heart onto the tongue at the time of delighted ecstasy.”<sup>54</sup> Although intoxication is an important factor, it ultimately relates to the audience rather than the ecstatic Sufi. The listener of the *shaṭḥ* is faced with a seemingly paradoxical and absurd statement and given the choice of deferring judgment or reproach. Rūzbihān lists the Qur’an, hadith, and Divine inspirations in the hearts of the *awliyā’* as three possible sources.<sup>55</sup> Taken out of context, he argues, the words of God and His Prophet may at times appear to be paradoxical or ambiguous, but they in fact unveil the secrets of the Divine manifestations. Likewise, the *shaṭḥāt* of the Sufis only seems to be paradoxical from the perspective of the listener, who does not share the same inner experience. Further, Rūzbihān argues, the term ‘intoxication’ is certainly not applicable to the Prophet.<sup>56</sup> To further illustrate his point, he quotes the statement made by ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, who exclaimed when interrupted in his famous Al-Shahshaqīya Sermon, “Alas, Ibn Abbās! That was the roar of a camel stallion that burst out then subsided” (*Hay’āt yā Ibn ‘Abbās, tilka al-shaqshaqa, hadarat thumma istaqarrat*), referring to his return to a state of sobriety after intense emotion.<sup>57</sup> Another example is Junayd, who himself made a seemingly paradoxical statement: “Wealth fits lordship, and mendacity suits servitude.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, a seemingly paradoxical statement from a friend of God does not necessarily reflect his state of spiritual drunkenness. In conclusion,

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<sup>52</sup> Al-Ṭusī, *Al-Luma’ Fī Al-Taṣawwuf*, 380.

<sup>53</sup> Mahmood Ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shabistary, *Golshan-i Rāz*, ed. Kazim Dezfoolīan (Tehran: Talāyeh, 2003), 74.

<sup>54</sup> Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyyāt*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> Shīrāzī, 58.

<sup>56</sup> Shīrāzī, 62.

<sup>57</sup> Shīrāzī, 71–72; Al-Sharīf Al-Raḍī, *Nahj Al-Balāghah: The Wisdom and Eloquence of ‘Aḥī: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. Tahera Qutbuddin (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 1010.

<sup>58</sup> Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyyāt*, 158.

labeling Bāyazīd's path as a path of intoxication is far too simplistic and reductionist to do him justice.

### Evidence for the Sobriety of Bāyazīd

As discussed earlier, Ibn 'Arabī considered Bāyazīd as a *malāmatī* Sufi. Moreover, some ecstatic utterances attributed to Bāyazīd were intentionally made by him to repel his audience and redirect their attention. The renowned ninth-century Sufi Abū Ḥafṣ 'Amr al-Ḥaddād described this practice as 'observing their times with God' and keeping their Divine secrets by denouncing their own acts of worship and other acts of proximity to God to stifle their ego.<sup>59</sup> On this behavior, Bāyazīd wrote:

Repent of the sin once; repent of the worship a thousand times. Laymen repent of sins, and I repent of uttering '*lā ilāha illā Allāh*' [there is no god but God], for I utter this with letters and [speech] organs, while God is beyond such letters and organs.<sup>60</sup> There are harms in worship, so there is no need to search for sins.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, even the pleasure of worship might be an obstacle on the mystical path, because the believer might become self-indulgent and proud of performing these acts of worship: "The seeker is given the pleasure of worship, and once he is gratified, he will be veiled from proximity [to God]."<sup>62</sup> Another *malāmatī* principle is the concealment of one's worship, which was so evidently observed in Bāyazīd's practice that he was told: "You call us to asceticism and worship, but you yourself do not adhere to these!" He angrily replied, "Asceticism and worship have departed from me!"<sup>63</sup>

The first evidence for Bāyazīd's sobriety consists in his own statements cited as poems or prose in the classical hagiographies. His recorded utterances comprise explicit references to sobriety, sometimes implying his tendency toward sobriety. The following utterance, which explicitly refers to sobriety, is included in the compilation of *Kitāb al-Nūr* [The Book of Light]:

He [God] covered me with me, and I died; he then covered me with Himself, and I came to life. He then concealed me from Himself and me, and I vanished. Then, he kept me in the station of sobriety and asked about

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<sup>59</sup> Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Sulamī, *Collection of Works of Abū 'Abd Al-Raḥmān Al-Sulamī*, ed. Nasrollāh Pourjavādī (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dāneshgāhī, 1993), ii, 405.

<sup>60</sup> Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mirās-i 'Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 175, 153.

<sup>61</sup> Sahlagī, 185, 188.

<sup>62</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 238.

<sup>63</sup> 'Aṭṭār, 198.

my whereabouts. I said: “Hiding in me is my annihilation, and hiding in You is subsistence, and hiding from both me and You is light, and You are prior to us in any case.”<sup>64</sup>

In these remarks, Bāyazīd makes it explicit that he was experiencing the station of sobriety rather than intoxication. Moreover, it implies that, as a result, he was in the state of subsistence after annihilation (*al-baqā’ ba’d al-fanā*), which means subsistence through God and not subsistence through the self. Similarly, sobriety after intoxication is sobriety through God and not through the self. Intoxication is present in this kind of sobriety, but the seeker is not dominated by it. In the words of the Sufi mystic Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (604/1207–672/1273), “the wine became intoxicated with us, not we with it.”<sup>65</sup> Al-Qurshayrī referred to the three stages of being seemingly intoxicated (*mutasākir*), intoxicated (*sukrān*), and sober (*ṣāḥī*) as follows:

One who tastes is a pretender to intoxication; one who drinks is intoxicated, and one who has judgement is sober. If the attribute persists in him, then the drink will not induce intoxication in him. And he is sober through God and negligent of any pleasure, not affected by whatever comes to him.<sup>66</sup>

In his exposition of these three terms, the early eighth-century Sufi scholar ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Kāshānī (d. 735/1334) characterized the semi-intoxicated *dhā’iq* (taster) as an ecstatic (*wājid*), the fire of whose ecstasy evaporates soon, just like a person who tastes wine mixed with water. He characterized the intoxicated *sakīr* (drinker) as an ecstatic whose reason is dominated by his frequent raptures, like the one who drinks many glasses of wine and then passes out. Finally, the one capable of judgment (*al-sāḥī*) is an ecstatic who is no longer affected by his frequent raptures and has a strong spirit, like a tippler who has become immune to the effects of alcohol.<sup>67</sup> Al-Qushayrī and Al-Kāshānī cite the following verse to illustrate the meaning of judgement (*ray*): “I drank the love, glass after glass; neither did the wine run out, nor was I satiated.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 316, 530.

<sup>65</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Mowlawī Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma’nawī*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1984), 1812.

<sup>66</sup> Abu al-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla Al-Qushayriyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 2007), 107–8.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Homāyī (Tehran, n.d.), 137.

<sup>68</sup> Kāshānī, 137; Abul Qosim Qusyairī, *Al-Risālah Al-Qushairiyah*, (Cairo: Darus Salam, 1989), 108.

The Egyptian jurist, theologian, and linguist Ibn al-Mulaqqin (723/1323–804/1401) attributed this verse of poetry to Bāyazīd, after referring to a correspondence between Bāyazīd and a fellow Sufi master in Central Asia, Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī.<sup>69</sup> The same correspondence is reported by Al-Qushayrī in his *Epistle on Sufism*, where he writes:

It is reported that Yaḥyā Mu‘ādh wrote a letter to Bāyazīd, inquiring about someone who drinks a cup and becomes intoxicated for eternity. Bāyazīd replied: “There is a man here who drinks the sea of eternity day and night and then cries, ‘Is there more?’”<sup>70</sup>

In this particular context, it is implied that Bāyazīd was *rayyān* (discerning) and sober, since he was not intoxicated by the Divine presence, an observation also made by Ibn ‘Arabī. He wonders if there is discernment after intoxication: one person said that he drank and was satiated, but Bāyazīd said that no one is ever satiated.<sup>71</sup>

### Al-Hujwīrī’s Portrayal of Bāyazīd as an ‘Intoxicated Sufi’

The author of *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, who had access to the *Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, also refers to the correspondence between Bāyazīd and Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī, following a discussion on the superiority of intoxication over sobriety. He writes:

A fabricated story is reported about Abū Yazīd—may God be satisfied with him—according to which, in reply to the question, “What do you say of one who drinks a single drop of the ocean of love and becomes intoxicated?” Bāyazīd wrote: “What do you say of one who, if all the oceans in the world were filled with the wine of love, would drink them all and still cry for more to slake his thirst?”<sup>72</sup>

Al-Hujwīrī claimed that the story was fabricated, suggesting that he was aware of its implication for Bāyazīd’s sobriety. In fact, the story is counterevidence for his claim that Bāyazīd was an ‘intoxicated Sufi.’ Being

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<sup>69</sup> Sirāj al-Dīn Abi Ḥaḥṣ Umar Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Awliyā*, ed. Mustafā ‘Abd Alqāder ‘Aṭa’ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2006), 280–81.

<sup>70</sup> Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 292, 490; Ahmad Ibn Hussain Ibn al-Kharaqānī, *Dastūr Al-Jumhūr Fī Manāqib-i Sultān Al-Ārifīn, Bāyazīd Ṭayfūr*, ed. Mohammad Taghī Dāneshpazhooh and Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Research Institute of Written Heritage, 2009), 118–19; Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla Al-Qushayrīya*, 108; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Awliyā*, 280–81.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 265.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Maḥjūb*, 283; Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Maḥjūb*, 187.



aware of this contradiction, he makes the effort to prove his claim by reinterpreting the story:

People imagine that Yaḥyā was speaking of intoxication and Bāyazīd of sobriety, but the opposite is the case. The man of sobriety is he who is unable to drink even one drop, and the man of intoxication is he who drinks all and still desires more. Wine, being the instrument of intoxication, but the enemy of sobriety, intoxication demands what is homogeneous with itself, whereas sobriety takes no pleasure in drinking.<sup>73</sup>

Al-Hujwīrī's claim that the sober person cannot stand a drop of wine suggests that he equates mystical sobriety with sobriety before intoxication. Also, he overlooks the notion of discernment by Al-Qushayrī, who argued that the mystical traveler regains his sobriety after intoxication. The tenth-century early Sufi mystic and theologian Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī categorized the four stages of ecstasy (*wajḍ*) as follows: (1) bewilderment (*dhuhūl*) like someone who hears the sound of the sea; (2) wonder (*ḥayrat*) like someone who comes close to the sea; (3) intoxication (*sukr*) like someone who enters into the sea; (4) sobriety (*saḥw*) like someone who is carried by the sea waves.<sup>74</sup>

Based on this analogy, a sober person has no will of his own, despite his sobriety. Complete abandonment of will is observed in Bāyazīd's experience of meeting with God. Bāyazīd said, "The Exalted God stopped me in one thousand stations before Him. In each station, He presented me with a kingdom, and I said, 'I do not want this.' In the last station, He asked me, 'O Bāyazīd! What do you want?' I replied, 'I want not to want.'"<sup>75</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī comments that Bāyazīd considered will to mean abandoning one's will.<sup>76</sup> In other words, he wanted to abandon all selfish desires and want nothing but God's pleasure.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Bāyazīd reached the station of satisfaction, which is compatible with sobriety and stability.

### **Compatibility of Sobriety with Bāyazīd's Mysticism**

In his exposition of the section on fasting in *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (Stations of the Travelers), Al-Kāshānī identifies Bāyazīd's abandonment of will with the highest mystical station: the station of satisfaction (*maqām al-riḍā*):

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<sup>73</sup> Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

<sup>74</sup> Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya wa Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 137.

<sup>75</sup> Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i 'Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 244–45, 349.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 225.

<sup>77</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, 473.

... when he was entering this station, Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī—may God sanctify his soul—was asked: “What do you want?” He replied: “I want not to want” and this is the station of satisfaction.<sup>78</sup>

At the station of satisfaction, which is the final point of *tamkīn*, the mystical traveler sacrifices his will before God. This is the ultimate stance towards God, which the eleventh-century Sufi mystic and poet Khwāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī defined as *riḍā*: “Satisfaction refers to a true stance.”<sup>79</sup> His commentator, Al-Kāshānī, believed this was exemplified by Bāyazīd, who desired no longer to desire anything but God’s pleasure.<sup>80</sup>

Bāyazīd’s sobriety before God led him to the ‘station of no attributes’ (*lā maqām*), which could not be ignored by Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī. Upon receiving Bāyazīd’s reply, he was determined to meet him in person. Yaḥyā finally met Bāyazīd while he was worshipping God and uttering, “I seek refuge in You from asking this station.” Bāyazīd later explained, “I was presented with twenty-some stations, but I said that I did not want any of them since [all] stations are veils.”<sup>81</sup> Yaḥyā wondered why Bāyazīd did not ask for gnosis when God Himself would grant him whatever he wanted. ‘Aṭṭār commented on Yaḥyā’s remark by saying, “Yaḥyā was a novice, and Bāyazīd was a master.”<sup>82</sup> In the station of satisfaction, gnosis is no longer relevant since satisfaction is the ultimate goal.<sup>83</sup> Gnosis is the third of the seven mystical stages recounted by ‘Aṭṭār.<sup>84</sup> Once the spiritual traveler has crossed this station, there is no other station left for him to attain.<sup>85</sup> Also, it would be a sign of disrespect towards God to ask for more. Bāyazīd explained that the mystic’s gnosis fades out in comparison with God’s knowledge, and a mystical traveler must not seek the position of the most revered Prophets and Messengers of God (*ūlū al-‘azm*):

If you are given the attributes of Adam, the sanctity of Gabriel, the seclusion of Abraham, the passion of Moses, the purity of Jesus, and the love of Muhammad—peace be upon him—be cautious not to be content

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<sup>78</sup> Kamāl al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *Exposition of Manāzil Al-Sāyerīn of Khwāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī*, ed. Mohsen Bīdārfar (Qum: Bīdār, 1993), 80.

<sup>79</sup> Kāshānī, 204.

<sup>80</sup> Kāshānī, 205.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 220.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Ṭusī, *Al-Luma’ Fī Al-Taṣawwuf*, 54.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 393.

<sup>85</sup> Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 403.

and ask for more, which is not feasible. Be resolute! Do not be content with anything! You will be veiled by what you contend.<sup>86</sup>

### **Bāyazīd's Manner and Fixity**

The above remark implies that one should not be content with any mystical station, since every station has its requirements and limitations.<sup>87</sup> Thus, Bāyazīd encourages Yaḥyā to abandon all stations. Ibn 'Arabī refers to the "station of being without attributes," which is a characteristic of all mystical masters on the Muḥammadan Path exemplified by Bāyazīd:

For mystics, place [*makān*] is a station in the circle; it belongs to the people of perfection who have surpassed stations and states and Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*). They have no qualities, attributes, or stations like Abū Yazīd. Beware that going beyond stations and states is characteristic of the Muḥammadans and is only possessed by people of fixity, who are companions of God in the circle of awe together with intimacy.<sup>88</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī states emphatically that the 'Muḥammadan Poles' or highest-ranking saints (including Bāyazīd) have traveled beyond all stations and states and reached the innermost circle as companions of God. Thus, they are people of fixity, and their states do not alter. Further, it follows that only people of sobriety can observe their manners before God. As described by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, "In such intoxication, observance of due respect will not be there at all; or if it be, it is a wonder. To observe humility in independence is to combine two opposites, like round and long."<sup>89</sup>

### **Bāyazīd's Sublime Aspiration**

In his discussion on the station of truthfulness (*maqām al-ṣidq*) and its mysteries, Ibn 'Arabī provides a unified definition of truthfulness and aspiration (*himma*): truth is intensity and steadfastness in religion, enthusiasm for the Exalted God, and the person of truth acts with his aspiration, which is the power of faith. He immediately refers to a statement by Bāyazīd when asked about the Greatest Name (*al-ism al-a'ẓam*): "Show me the smallest name, and I will show you the greatest! What is required is truthfulness. Be truthful, and you will find all names to be the greatest."<sup>90</sup> According to Ibn 'Arabī, this statement shows the importance of truthfulness before God, as well as its effect on one's aspiration.

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<sup>86</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*.

<sup>87</sup> Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma'nawī*, 1394–95.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iii, 335.

In his conversation with Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh, Bāyazīd points out the necessity of having a high aspiration. To reach the station of no attributes, it is necessary to have a high aspiration. If “the position of one who goes from intoxication to sobriety is higher than that of the intoxicated,”<sup>91</sup> Bāyazīd’s sublime aspiration (*al-himma al-‘arshīya*) demands the abandonment of intoxication and the regaining of sobriety. Ibn ‘Arabī characterizes Bāyazīd as having such a sublime aspiration not qualified by any attributes. People of such resolution are placed at the interior of the heights (*al-‘rāf*), and their gnosis is *rahmānī*, since the Sublime Throne (*al-‘arsh*) is close to The Gracious (*al-Rahman*). He states,

The aspiration of this person was sublime. As in the case of the heights of The Gracious, the aspiration for such gnosis was a stand. Thus, it is said that his aspiration was sublime. The station of such a person is the interior of the heights, which separates the people of happiness and the people of misery. There are men in the heights, who will praise [God], and their sublime aspirations do not limit them, for the Sublime Throne is the stance of the gracious.<sup>92</sup>

God, because of His graciousness (*Ra‘niya*), bestows His general grace on every being. Likewise, humans with sublime aspirations show a general mercy to all beings. An example of such a general mercy was Prophet Muḥammad, who was sent as “a mercy for all creatures.” (QS. al-Anbiyā’ (21):107). He prayed for those who showed contempt for his message, saying, “O God! Guide my people, for they do not know.”<sup>93</sup> His household (*ahl al-bayt*)<sup>94</sup> can remove punishments from his people, as he said: “My household are sanctuaries for my people.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, the Household of Muhammad is characterized in Shiite traditions as *‘rāf*, referring to those loved by God, who stay between Heaven and Hell. By knowing them, recognizing their status, obeying them, and loving them, people will go to Heaven.

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<sup>91</sup> Sayf al-Dīn Bākhazī, *Awrād Al-Aḥbāb Wa Fusūs Al-Ādāb*, ed. Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Dāneshgāh-e Tehran Publications, 2004), 241.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, 325.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, 458; Badī’ al-Zamān Forūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1991), 60.

<sup>94</sup> Including ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, his wife Fāṭima bint Muḥammad, and their sons al-Ḥassan and al-Ḥusayn, the People of the Cloak (*ahl al-kisā*).

<sup>95</sup> Ḥakīm Muhammad Ibn Alī Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir Ul-Usūl Fi Akhbār Al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), 2: 61.

## Compassion towards People

An indication that a mystic is sober is his care for the people. An ‘intoxicated Sufi’ is most frequently in a state where he is absent from himself, thus being unable to discern good from bad.<sup>96</sup> Such a lack of discernment can cause him to be inattentive to himself and others. However, in Bāyazīd’s statements, there is ample evidence of his compassion towards others. In support of this perspective, Ibn ‘Arabī saw himself and Bāyazīd as treading on the Muhammadu Path. He writes,

The first people they [the Poles] intercede for on the Day of Resurrection before the [Divine] interrogation are those who had hurt them, and this is made explicit by Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, who is on our path, too.<sup>97</sup>

This benevolent attitude is reminiscent of the Prophet Muhammad and his reaction to aggressive behavior towards his own person. After he had been assaulted by his people, he wiped the blood off his face with his hand and said, “O Lord! Forgive my people” or “O God! Guide my people; they do not know.”<sup>98</sup> In the words of Jalal al-Din Rūmī, “While thy heart was roasted by the fire of these unrighteous men / [yet] all thy appeal [to God] was: ‘Guide my people!’”<sup>99</sup>

In this regard, Muhammad ibn ‘Alī Sahlagī’s study contains a noteworthy utterance, where Junayd is included in the chain of transmitters:

I heard Abu ‘Abd Allāh from Junayd, who was told by Sirry Saqṭī that he heard Bāyazīd Ṭayfūr b. ‘Isa say: “If one looks at people with the eye of knowledge, he will be angered and will escape to God, and if one looks at them with the eye of truth, he will excuse them and will become their path [or guide] towards God.”<sup>100</sup>

Among God’s favors to Bāyazīd, the most salient feature was his compassion towards the people. When he was asked how he had reached such an exalted position, he replied: “Forget about the position! The Exalted God bestowed eight endowments on me. They are:

1. I saw my soul lagging behind and saw people ahead of me.
2. I was happy to go to Hell on behalf of all people because of my extreme compassion for them.
3. I intended to give joy to the heart of the faithful.

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<sup>96</sup> Isma‘il Ibn Mohammad Al-Mustamlī al-Bukhārī, *Sharh Al-Ta‘arruf Li Madhhab Al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Mohammad Rowshan (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1984), 1487.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, ii, 350.

<sup>98</sup> Forūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*.

<sup>99</sup> Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma‘nawī*, ii, 1872.

<sup>100</sup> Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 176, 159.

4. I did not store anything for my tomorrow.
5. I wanted God's mercy more for people than for me.
6. I tried my best to give joy to the faithful and banish remorse from their hearts.
7. Out of an abundance of compassion for the faithful, whenever I met them, I would be the first to greet them.
8. If, on the Day of Resurrection, God forgives me and gives me permission for intercession, I will first intercede for those who have hurt me.”<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

This article explores the mystical concepts of intoxication and sobriety within Islamic mysticism, emphasizing that sobriety tends to be regarded as a higher spiritual state than intoxication. Unlike other pairs of mystical terms, such as fear and hope, intoxication and sobriety are akin to *fanā* ' and *baqā* ', the latter being the ultimate goal.

Arguably, perfect mystics can move from a state of intoxication to a state of sobriety, thus enabling them to guide others on the path to spiritual perfection. The discussion compares the figure of Al-Ḥallāj, who was condemned for his state of intoxication, with the figure of Bāyazīd, who achieved a state of sobriety and is known as the 'King of Gnostics.' On the other hand, Al-Hujwīrī's labeling of Bāyazīd as the 'Pioneer of Intoxicated Sufis' seems biased and inaccurate, because there is sufficient and convincing evidence of his spiritual stability and clear tendency towards sobriety. Upon close examination of the relevant source texts and literature, it is concluded that Al-Hujwīrī's classification of mystics into 'Intoxicated Sufis' and 'Sober Sufis' is unjustified and a product of his own preconceptions rather than critical analysis.

This study focused on discourse analysis; therefore, it has not employed a more rigorous philological approach to examining the textual variations in the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* manuscripts. An interdisciplinary study combining philology, historiography, and the anthropology of contemporary Sufism may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the constructs of *sukr* and *ṣaḥw* were developed and passed on to the next generation of Sufi scholars.

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<sup>101</sup> Sahlagī, 149, 86.

## **Acknowledgment**

I am grateful to the editors and reviewers of Teosofia for providing valuable feedback.

## **Funding**

This research did not receive any grant.

## **Author Contributions:**

All authors contributed equally.

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