

# Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī

## Notes on his Life, Influence and Reflections on the Muḥammadan Reality\*

*Mohammed Rustom*

Dāwūd b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Qayṣarī was most likely born in the central Anatolian town of Qayṣariyya,<sup>1</sup> which is the Arabicized version of the Roman Caesarea.<sup>2</sup> Although the date of Qayṣarī's birth is surmised by one scholar to have been around 1260 CE,<sup>3</sup> the exact date of his birth is not known.<sup>4</sup> However, the authorities are unanimous that he died in the year 751/1350<sup>5</sup> or 751/1351.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to what one would expect, the influential

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1. Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La Philosophie Mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri* (Ankara, 1990), pp. 11–13.

2. See "Qayṣariyya" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, vol. 4, pp. 842–3.

3. See Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality" in *Knowledge is Light: Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Zailan Morris (Chicago, 1999), p. 235.

4. Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La Philosophie Mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri*, p. 11.

5. Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge, 1993), p. 76; Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshṭiyānī, *Sharḥ-i Muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Mashhad, 1385/1966), p. 15; Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La Philosophie Mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri*, p. 15; William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabi" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman (New York, 1996), p. 518; Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality", p. 236 and Alexander Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy", *The Middle East Journal*, 46:4 (1992), p. 631.

6. James Morris, "Ibn 'Arabi and His Interpreters, Part II: Influences and

fifteenth-century Persian scholar, saint and devotee of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d.898/1492), does not have an entry on Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī in his *Nafaḥāt al-uns*. But we do find an entry on Qayṣarī in Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī's (d.1031/1621) *Irghām awliyā' al-shayṭān bi dhikr manāqib awliyā' al-Raḥmān* (also known as the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣughrā*), which is a summary of his well-known biographical compendium *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim al-sādāt al-ṣūfiyya*.<sup>7</sup> Munāwī's note reads as follows:

[Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī was] the scholar given to religious devotion (*al-'ālim al-'ābid*), the ascetic Sufi who used to partake in spiritual struggle (*al-zāhid al-ṣūfī al-mujāhid*). He studied the religious sciences in his home town and then went to Egypt and studied the three religious sciences with the scholars versed in them. He studied intensely and became accomplished in the intellectual sciences (*wa bara'a fī'l-funūn al-'aqliyyah*). Then he occupied himself with Sufism, excelling in and mastering it and devoting himself to writing about it. He commented upon the *Fuṣūṣ* and attached an introduction to it in which he finely explains the principles of Sufism. Sulṭān Awrkhān b. 'Uthmān [Orhan Ghāzī] built a religious school for him in the town of Iznik, which was the first one built in the Ottoman empire. He died in the eighth century [AH].<sup>8</sup>

This biographical account, while accurate, has nothing to say about Qayṣarī's intellectual activities in Iznik upon his return from Egypt. Turning to Mehmet Bayrakdar's monograph devoted to Qayṣarī, we notice that he divides Qayṣarī's life into three phases, which correspond to three important political periods in the history of Anatolia: (1) his childhood, which was spent in

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Interpretations", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106.4 (1986), p.756.

7. See "Al-Munāwī" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, vol. 7, p.565.

8. Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī, *Irghām awliyā' al-shayṭān bi dhikr awliyā' al-Raḥmān (al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣughrā)*, ed. Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir, vol. 4 (Beirut, 1999), p.284. All translations from the Arabic are my own.

Anatolia under the Rum Seljuks, whose power by this point had seriously waned, signalling their demise; (2) his adult life under the Anatolian Turkish dynasties; and (3) his old age under the nascent Ottoman empire.<sup>9</sup> It was in this final phase of his life that Qayṣarī's most advanced works on Sufi metaphysical doctrines were written and it was therefore also during this period that he emerged as a key figure in disseminating the teachings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī in Anatolia.<sup>10</sup>

Munāwī does state that Qayṣarī wrote a commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ* with a very important introduction, but he does not mention the fact that this commentary of his belonged to a wider tradition of *Fuṣūṣ* commentaries, mostly written in Arabic.<sup>11</sup> The first member of the school of Ibn 'Arabī to have written a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* was 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d.690/1291), who, upon Ibn 'Arabī's death, became the student of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.673/1274), Ibn 'Arabī's step-son and foremost disciple.<sup>12</sup> Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's own teacher, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kashānī (d.c.730/1330), had also written a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-*

9. Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La Philosophie Mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri*, pp.15–16. Also see Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality", p.356, n.12.

10. Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality", p.236.

11. The first Persian *Fuṣūṣ* commentary was most likely written by Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's student, Rukn al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d.769/1367). See William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī", p.518. This commentary has been published under the title, *Nuṣūṣ al-khuṣūṣ fī tarjamat al-fuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1980).

12. William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī", pp.511–17. It has not been confirmed beyond doubt that Qūnawī was Ibn 'Arabī's step-son, although the evidence strongly suggests that this was the case. See William Chittick, "The Central Point: Qūnawī's Role in the School of Ibn 'Arabī", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXXV (2004), pp.25–6, n.1. A number of excellent articles devoted to aspects of Qūnawī's thought have been written in English. See the aforementioned article by Chittick as well as his "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabī's foremost disciple and some notes on its author", in *Sophia Perennis*, 4:1 (1978), pp.43–58; "Commentary on a *ḥadīth* by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī", *Alserat*, 6:1 (1980), pp.23–30; "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the Tūsī-Qūnawī Correspondence", *Religious Studies*, 17 (1981), pp.87–104; "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī on the Oneness of Being",

*ḥikam* which was preceded by the commentary of his teacher and student of Qūnawī, Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d.700/1300). The *Fuṣūṣ* commentary tradition has continued up to our times, and is still very much alive in certain intellectual circles in Turkey, Iran and, in some instances, Damascus.<sup>13</sup> One of the most noteworthy *Fuṣūṣ* commentaries written in the twentieth century was penned by none other than Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>14</sup> Khomeini was an heir to the tradition of *Fuṣūṣ* commentaries which had filtered into Shī'ī intellectual circles through such figures as the Shī'ī philosopher and mystic Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d.787/1385).<sup>15</sup>

Where Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī fits into the equation of the *Fuṣūṣ* commentary tradition, then, is in his role in helping popularize

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*International Philosophical Quarterly*, 21 (1981), pp.171–84; “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī”, *Muslim World*, 72/2 (1982), pp.107–28; and “The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to Al-Qūnawī” in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, 1992), pp.179–209; and “Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, vol. 8 (Leiden, 1997) pp.753–55. See also Jane Clark, “Early Best-sellers in the Akbarian Tradition: The Dissemination of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Teaching through Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī”, *JMIAS*, Vol. XXXIII (2003), pp.22–53; and Gerald Elmore, “Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī’s personal study-list of books by Ibn al-‘Arabī”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 56:3 (1997), pp.161–81. For translated passages from Qūnawī’s major works, see Sachiko Murata’s *The Tao of Islam* (New York, 1992), pp.82–4; 92–3; 101–4; 107; 134; 149–51; 159; 164–5; 206–8; 214–15; 219–22; 251 and 314–16.

13. The most noteworthy contemporary commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Arab world is the Damascene scholar, Maḥmūd Ghurāb, who has devoted a number of studies to Ibn ‘Arabī in Arabic. See his *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Damascus, 1985), as well as Michel Chodkiewicz’s review of this book in *Studia Islamica*, 63 (1986), pp.179–82.

14. See Alexander Knysh’s, “Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy”, *The Middle East Journal*, 46:4 (1992), pp.631–53. For Khomeini’s relationship to doctrinal Sufism see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and their Significance Today”, *Transcendent Philosophy* 6 (2005), pp.1–36 (particularly pp.18–20 and their accompanying notes). For Khomeini’s glosses on the *Fuṣūṣ* and Mullā Fanārī’s commentary on Qūnawī’s *Miftāh al-ghayb*, see his *Ta’līqāt ‘alā sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam wa miṣbāḥ al-uns* (Tehran, 1986). Shiraz Sheikh is currently writing a PhD dissertation at the University of Toronto on Mullā Fanārī’s life and thought.

and disseminate some of the more difficult teachings of the *Fuṣūṣ* commentators who preceded him. As William Chittick notes, of all the *Fuṣūṣ* commentaries, Qayṣarī's commentary seems to have been the most influential in the eastern lands of Islam from the fourteenth century onwards.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, a cursory reading of the commentaries by Qayṣarī and Jandī, for example, reveals that the commentary of the former, although often synthesizing or summarizing what the latter has to say in his commentary,<sup>17</sup> is in fact more accessible in both its style and terminology. Therefore, what Qayṣarī's *Fuṣūṣ* commentary was able to do was explain Ibn 'Arabī's teachings – albeit in keeping with the increased tendency by this period to speak philosophically about mysticism – in such a way as to render Akbarian ideas more accessible to the Turkish, Persian and Indian 'ulamā'. Qayṣarī's work had also been influential on certain of the Arab 'ulamā', as is evidenced in the work of the important defender of Akbarian doctrines, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d.1143/1730).<sup>18</sup> What also makes Qayṣarī an

15. William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī", p. 518. Āmulī's introduction to his commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ* has been published. See *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahya (Tehran and Paris, 1974).

16. William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī", p. 518 and his earlier article, "Ibn 'Arabī and His School", in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (New York, 1991), p. 53. For a comprehensive survey of the influence of Ibn 'Arabī and his school upon theoretical Sufism from the thirteenth century to the present, see Nasr, "Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and their Significance Today".

17. William Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī", p. 518.

18. See Ibrahim Kalin's "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality", p. 355, n.7, where he notes that according to Mehmet Bayrakdar ("Davud-i Kayseri", *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9 (Istanbul, 1994), p. 34), Qayṣarī's commentary upon the *Fuṣūṣ* was itself the subject of a commentary by al-Nābulusī.

Elizabeth Sirriyeh, author of the excellent study, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: the Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, 1999), has recently published a monograph on al-Nābulusī entitled *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: Abd Al-Ghanī Al-Nābulusī (1641–1731)* (Abingdon and New York, 2005). This study on al-Nābulusī looks at his mystical travel writings, his ties with the Naqshbandiyyah and Qādiriyyah, highlights some of the major conflicts which arose between him and the Turkish 'ulamā', and devotes a good deal of attention to his writings on

important figure in the history of Islamic philosophy and mysticism is the aforementioned introduction to his commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, known as the *Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena). This text summarizes Akbarian teachings with the utmost precision and clarity. The *Muqaddimah* was often studied as a separate treatise and has been the subject of numerous commentaries as well, the most recent of which being the commentary in Persian by the late Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī.<sup>19</sup>

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dream interpretation. This work does not, however, attempt to establish al-Nābulusī's role vis-à-vis the school of Ibn 'Arabī and the *Fuṣūṣ* commentary tradition. But it does discuss some of al-Nābulusī's mystical and theological views. Pp. 30–31 clearly show Ibn 'Arabī's influence upon al-Nābulusī's thought, but it also demonstrates how it is that al-Nābulusī attempted to Ash'arize or theologize Ibn 'Arabī's teachings (witness his assigning actual ontological reality to the Divine Names, which runs contrary to Ibn 'Arabī's position on this issue).

19. See his *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī* (cited in n.5). For three of Qayṣarī's important *Rasā'il*, see Āshtiyānī's edition, *Rasā'il-i Qayṣarī* (Tehran, 1979). To the best of my knowledge the only monograph devoted to Qayṣarī's thought is the study written in French by Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La Philosophie Mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri* (cited in n.1). See also the collected volume, *Papers of the International Symposium on Islamic Thought in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī*, ed. Turan Koç (Kayseri, 1998). A web version of James Morris' article in this volume ("The Continuing Relevance of Qayṣarī's Thought: Divine Imagination and the Foundations of Natural Spirituality", pp. 161–171) can be viewed at the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society website: [http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/hi\\_premodern.pdf](http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/hi_premodern.pdf), pp. 13–19. For articles in English on aspects of his thought, see William Chittick's "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī" (cited in n.12); Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality" (cited in n.3); Turan Koç, "All-Comprehensiveness According to Daud al-Qaysari, and its Implications", *JMIAS*, Vol. XXVII (2000), pp. 53–62; and Akiro Matsumoto, "Unity of Ontology and Epistemology in Qayṣarī's Philosophy" in *Consciousness and Reality: Studies in Memory of Toshihiko Izutsu*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, Hideichi Matsubara, Takashi Iwami and Akiro Matsumoto (Leiden, 2000), pp. 367–86. For some important translated passages from Qayṣarī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, see Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, 1977), pp. 144–7; and Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany, 1992), pp. 99–101 and 189–196. Caner Daglı's Princeton University doctoral

I would now like to turn my attention to an important part of Qayṣarī's commentary upon chapter XXVII of the *Fuṣūṣ*, dealing, as it does, with the Prophet Muḥammad, who, for Ibn 'Arabī and his school, as well as every other Muslim, is the physical manifestation of the culmination of the spiritual life in Islam.<sup>20</sup> For the remaining part of this paper I will discuss Qayṣarī's statements concerning the cosmological function of the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyyah*) in the context of his comments upon Ibn 'Arabī's profound discussions in this chapter. It is hoped that the findings below will help contribute to our understanding of how an important *Fuṣūṣ* commentator belonging to the school of Ibn 'Arabī is not only able to exposit the teachings of this school, but how he also reveals himself to be a highly original thinker in the process.

#### QAYṢARĪ ON THE MUḤAMMADAN REALITY

Ibn 'Arabī begins chapter XXVII of the *Fuṣūṣ* by saying that the Prophet possesses the wisdom of singularity since he is the most perfect being in existence. It is through the Prophet that the matter of creation began and ended. We are here reminded of the famous *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says that he was a Prophet while Adam was still between clay and water:

His is the wisdom of singularity because he is the most perfect existent of this human species, which is why the matter begins

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dissertation looks at the development of ontology in Islamic thought (up to and including Qayṣarī). Dagli has recently published what I consider to be the best available translation of Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*The Ringstones of Wisdom* [Chicago, 2004]). This translation comes with useful annotations, many of which draw upon Qayṣarī's commentary, and, to a lesser extent, that of Kāshānī's as well.

20. On pp. 188–99 of *The Tao of Islam* (cited in n.19) Sachiko Murata translates and analyzes a number of passages from Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's commentary, along with Jandī and Kāshānī's commentaries on this same chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, paying particular attention to the themes related to gender cosmology.

and ends with him, for he was a Prophet while Adam was between clay and water. Then, in his elemental form, he became the Seal of Prophets.<sup>21</sup>

Qayṣarī's comments before this passage are important, since he provides an explanation as to why the Prophet is the bezel pre-disposed to receiving this wisdom of singularity:

It is the wisdom of singularity because of his singularity in the station of Divine Comprehensiveness, above which is nothing except the level of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyyah*). This is because it [the station of Divine Comprehensiveness] is the locus of the Name Allāh, which is the greatest, All-Comprehensive Name amongst all the Names and qualities.<sup>22</sup>

In the station of Divine Comprehensiveness, as Qayṣarī calls it, the Prophet is the receptacle for all the Divine Names, since he receives the Name Allāh, which is the Name which brings all the other Names together. Thus, the Prophet possesses the

21. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A.A. Afifi (Beirut, 1966), p. 214.

22. Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ 'alā fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, lithographed edition (Tehran(?), 1984), p. 471:1 (p. 471, col. 1). Compare this to Jandī's comments on these same lines by Ibn 'Arabī, "He (may God be pleased with him) points to the fact that solitariness belongs to him [the Prophet], because of his being the most perfect type of human perfection, for solitariness is, as we have mentioned, specific to the Perfect Man. And there is none more perfect than Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). So to him belongs the aforementioned solitary reality of the unseen entity (*al-fardiyyah al-ḥaqīqiyah al-ghaybiyyah al-'ayniyya*) with respect to [both] his meaning and reality. [He was the] first in the world of meanings (*'ālam al-ma'ānī*). Then, by his spiritual makeup, he was a Prophet sent to the rest of the Prophetic spirits, and by his elemental makeup, he was the Seal of Prophets", Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad, 1982), p. 671. For Kāshānī's comments on this same passage, see Toshihiko Izutsu's *Sufism and Taoism* (Berkeley, 1984), p. 237. It should be noted that apart from the lithographed editions of Qayṣarī's *Fuṣūṣ* commentary there are two modern editions as well (neither of which I was able to obtain for this study), *Maṭla' khuṣūṣ al-kilam fī ma'ānī fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Sa'īdī (Tehran(?), 1995) and Āshtiyānī's *Sharḥ-i fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Tehran, 1996).

wisdom of singularity because he is the being who best embodies the Name Allāh – which is at once the All-Comprehensive Name (*al-ism al-jāmi‘*) and the Solitary Name (*al-ism al-mufrad*) – but also because, in the descent of Being, he stands alone at the very top of the cosmic hierarchy of God’s Self-Disclosures. In order to illustrate this point further, Qayṣarī goes on to quote a well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is reported to have said, “The first thing God created was my light.”<sup>23</sup> Qayṣarī employs this *ḥadīth* to explain Ibn ‘Arabī’s point about the Prophet’s being the first thing created by God:

The first thing that came about by the most holy effusion from amongst the entities was his immutable entity and the first thing that came to exist through the holy effusion in its outward aspect from amongst the existent things was his sanctified spirit, just as he said, “The first thing God created was my light.” So he came about through the Exclusive Essence, the Divine level and his immutable entity [which was] the first singularity.<sup>24</sup>

Here, Qayṣarī identifies the singularity which brought about the Prophet’s existence with the Prophet’s immutable entity. So the Prophet’s singularity came about in the Divine level, which is where his immutable entity was brought into existence. And, since the Prophets are the loci of manifestation of a Universal Name (*ism kullī*), all of which are subsumed under the Divine Name for which the Prophet Muḥammad is the locus of manifestation, Qayṣarī goes on to conclude that the Prophet is the most perfect solitary being, which is why he says that it was the

23. I have not been able to locate this tradition. Gerhard Böwering’s, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Qur’anic hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl at-Tustarī (d. 283/896)* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 149–57 is a very good resource for early Sufi discussions on the primal Muḥammadan light. There is another famous version of this tradition in which the Prophet says, “The first thing God created was the Intellect.” At pp. 483:2–484:1 of his commentary Qayṣarī cites a version of this tradition and relates it to the primal light tradition (see n.28 below). For Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of this tradition in his monumental *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, see William Chittick’s *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany, 1998), p. 273.

24. Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, p. 471:1; cf. pp. 483:2 and 484:1.

spirit of the Prophet which became existentiated, which then later came to exist as the Seal of Prophets in the person of the Prophet.<sup>25</sup> Of course, this is none other than the Muḥammadan Reality which runs across the generations of all the Prophets and Saints, a point which Ibn ‘Arabī is very adamant about, as is shown by his writings.<sup>26</sup> The Prophet is the prototype of God’s own Self reflection in the phenomenal world with respect to His Names. It is his reality which manifests itself in every Prophet and becomes actualized in the physical person of the Prophet himself. The Muḥammadan Reality marks the beginning of existence and is brought to its completion and its totality in the Prophet, who is the best example of the Perfect Man. It is for this reason that Ibn ‘Arabī states that “the matter begins and ends with him”.<sup>27</sup> This is why the Prophet is both singular with respect to his being one of the three solitaries, and is also characterized by triplicity, since through him multiplicity arises. Qayṣarī also states that the first singularity is “the Reality of the Muḥammadan Spirit (*al-ḥaqīqah al-rūḥāniyyah al-Muḥammadiyyah*), referred to as the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*).”<sup>28</sup> As is seen elsewhere in Islamic thought both before Ibn ‘Arabī and after him, the Muḥammadan Reality is directly identified with the First Intellect.<sup>29</sup> This is indeed a significant point, because the First Intellect in Neoplatonic Islamic philosophy, as articulated by Muslim philosophers such as Fārābī and Ibn Sīna, is the first existentiated entity from the Godhead, allowing for the world of multiplicity to come about (albeit through a string of emanations, each producing an intellect

25. Ibid., p.471:2.

26. For detailed discussions on this topic, see Michel Chodkiewicz’s, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge, 1993), chapter 3 and passim.

27. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p.214. See also Ronald Nettle’s *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Cambridge, 2003), p.177.

28. Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, p.471:2; cf. Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, p.189.

29. See *The Tao of Islam*, p.166, where Qūnawī’s student and major figure in the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, Sa‘īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d.695/1296), identifies the Muḥammadan Light or the Muḥammadan Soul with the Pen and the Intellect. The Muḥammadan Light, Spirit and Reality are synonymous.

and heavenly body in Fārābī's dyadic emanative metaphysical scheme, with the added element of a string of emanations of corresponding souls in Ibn Sīna's triadic scheme). It is with the emanation of the tenth intellect, the active or agent intellect, that the world of generation and corruption comes about. Needless to say, Qayṣarī does not adhere entirely to this Neoplatonic model, not for the least reason that it entails a different anthropology and psychology. But the identification of the First Intellect with the Muḥammadan Reality allows Qayṣarī to maintain that creation begins and ends with the Prophet. Indeed, the Divine Essence cannot be diffuse throughout the cosmos, and, in its manifest aspect, it requires an intermediary of some sort, who is none other than the Prophet. This is why the Prophet is the primal Perfect Man, since he manifests the Name Allāh, and through whom the Names become diffuse throughout the cosmos to their loci of manifestation.<sup>30</sup> It is with this point in mind that the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* "If it were not for you, I would not have created the cosmos",<sup>31</sup> although not cited by Qayṣarī, can be understood.

In his commentary on this chapter Qayṣarī introduces a discussion in which he attempts to explain how the ranks of Divinity (*al-darajāt al-ilāhiyyah*) bring about the cosmos.<sup>32</sup> The context

30. In his earthly form, Ibn 'Arabī states that the Prophet is the best proof for his Lord because he was given all of the words which were the referents of the names taught to Adam. Commenting on this, Qayṣarī states that this is so because the Prophet was given all the Names, which he refers to as "the Mothers of the Divine Realities and the existential totalities in their particularities (*ummahāt al-ḥaqā'iq al-ilāhiyyah wa' l-kawniyyah al-jām'iah li-juz'iyyātihā*)." (*Sharḥ*, p. 472:1) In other words, since the Prophet is the locus of manifestation of the Name Allāh, and all the other Divine Names are subsumed under this Name, the Prophet therefore actualizes all the Divine Names in his person, which is why Ibn 'Arabī says that the Prophet is the greatest proof for his Lord, since his very being itself points to the name Allāh, accounting for all the Divine Self-Disclosures as mediated by the Divine Names and marking the limit of human knowledge of the manifest aspect of the Divine Essence (pp. 471:2–472:1). Then Qayṣarī goes on to say that the Muḥammadan Spirit (*al-Rūḥ al-Muḥammadī*), which is nothing other than the aforementioned Spiritual Reality or the First Intellect, is a proof for

for these comments is the following statement made by Ibn 'Arabī:

He observes the ranks (*darajāt*) which are with the Real when He says, *Exalted in rank, Possessor of the Throne* [40: 15], because of His establishing Himself upon it with the Name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*). So there is no-one under the Throne whom the Divine Mercy shall not reach, which is why He said, *My Mercy encompasses all things* [7: 156]. The Throne encompasses everything, and the One established upon it is the All-Merciful. Through its reality does the cosmos receive the outpouring of mercy (*sarayān al-rahmah*), as we have elucidated elsewhere, both in this book and in the *Meccan Revelations*.<sup>33</sup>

According to Qayṣarī, from these ranks of Divinity, the First Intellect is brought about and from it, the Universal Soul is existentiated. From the Universal soul comes about all of the rational souls, bodily matter, universal substance and the starless heaven (*falak al-aṭlas*), which Qayṣarī identifies with the Throne ('*arsh*).<sup>34</sup> Then the Footstool (*kursī*) is existentiated, followed by the elements from the heavens and the earth. This process therefore accounts for the intermediate world or the world of imagination (*malakūt*) as well as the phenomenal world (*mulk*).<sup>35</sup> Particularly noteworthy here is what Qayṣarī has to say about the Throne itself. As Ibn 'Arabī stated, the Name the All-Merciful established itself on the Throne. God says in the Qur'ān that His mercy encompasses all things, since the Throne itself encompasses all things. As the Occupant on the Throne which encompasses all things, the Name the All-Merciful is therefore responsible for diffusing mercy throughout the cosmos. Qayṣarī certainly agrees

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itself because "there is no distinction between him and between His Lord, except from the standpoint of entification" (p. 472:1).

31. *Law lāk mā khalaqtu'l-aflāk*. This *ḥadīth* is not to be found in the standard sources, although it is frequently cited in the Sufi tradition.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 484:1.

33. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 220.

34. Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, p. 484:1–2.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 484:2.

with Ibn ‘Arabī’s description of the Throne and more or less summarizes the Shaykh’s comments in this way:

The Name that presides over the Throne is the name the “All-Merciful”, and the Throne is the locus of manifestation for it, and through it, the effusion effuses to whatever of the existent things are under it. For the Names, insofar as they are relations of the Essence, cannot be a source for the lights effusing from It, except with spiritual and bodily loci of manifestation.<sup>36</sup>

But Qayṣarī’s understanding of the Throne is slightly more nuanced than this. In the following passage he says that the Throne has two realities: there is the spiritual Throne, and then there is the bodily Throne:

Since the Throne encompasses all of the existent things under it, as has already been discussed, the spiritual Throne, which is the First Intellect, encompasses all the spiritual and corporeal realities, while the bodily Throne encompasses all the bodies.<sup>37</sup>

Qayṣarī explicitly states that the Throne is the First Intellect in this passage, but we have also noted that he identifies the Throne with the starless heaven. The spiritual Throne is identified with the First Intellect, which Qayṣarī says is the Muḥammadan Spirit. The bodily Throne, identified with the starless heaven, is what distributes mercy to the rest of the cosmos. Ibn ‘Arabī said that the Name the All-Merciful presides over the Throne. But how is the First Intellect or the Muḥammadan Spirit related to the All-Merciful? Fortunately, this question is not left unanswered. Qayṣarī offers his solution in the following passage:

And through the descent to the ranks of matter, the establishment of mercy comes about. So the Muḥammadan Spirit, which is the locus of manifestation of God’s mercy, establishes itself upon the Throne so that His mercy may permeate the worlds, just as He said, *And we did not send you, except as a mercy to the worlds* [21: 107].<sup>38</sup>

In other words, the Muḥammadan Spirit or the First Intellect,

36. Ibid., p.485:1.

37. Ibid., p.484:2.

insofar as it is the first entification from the Divine Level, is the locus of manifestation for all of the Names, one of which is the All-Merciful. As a locus for the name the All-Merciful, the spiritual Throne or the Muḥammadan Reality establishes itself on the bodily Throne so that mercy may be distributed throughout the cosmos. This point is clarified in one more passage where Qayṣarī states the following:

And if you want, you can say that, through the reality of the Throne, this permeating [of mercy] exists in the world. And it is the fixed entity through which the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*) is manifest in the world, just as He is manifest through the First Intellect in the world of spirits and through the outermost sphere in the world of bodies.<sup>39</sup>

With the foregoing discussion in mind it becomes clear how Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī was able to explain Ibn 'Arabī's opening statement in this chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. It will be recalled that Ibn 'Arabī said that the matter began and ended with the Prophet, drawing upon a very well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is reported to have said that he was a Prophet when Adam was still between clay and water. By placing the Muḥammadan Reality, which is the locus of manifestation for the Name the All-Merciful on the bodily Throne, Qayṣarī was able to explicate both how the Muḥammadan Reality is the first entification from the level of Divinity and how it is also responsible for distributing God's mercy throughout the cosmos.

38. Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ*, p.484:2.

39. *Ibid.*, p.485:1.