

The Mystical Thought of Ibn ‘Arabī in the Time of the Ottoman Empire: Focusing on ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī

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● Research Background

My research topic is an Islamic mystical idea called “Oneness of Being,” which was introduced by Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). Ibn ‘Arabī was born in Andalus in the thirteenth century. The school of Ibn ‘Arabī is an intellectual group that follows his thought. Followers of this school believe that all creatures have come from one absolute being, Allah. It is believed that the holy book of Islam—the Quran—is a guide for those who fear Allah and believe in the unseen. Followers of Ibn ‘Arabī argue that visible beings are signs of the unseen God, and a means to lead us to the core of Islamic belief.

● Research Purpose and Aim

My research will mainly focus on the thought of ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1730–1), the Syrian visionary of Ottoman Damascus. In particular, it will investigate how followers of Ibn ‘Arabī interpreted the notion of Naqshbandi, a mystical section of Islam, in the Ottoman Empire. Discussions of the worldwide influence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school often limit their focus to early scholars. This limitation further separates followers of Ibn ‘Arabī in the time of the Ottoman Empire from contemporary religious studies. Studies on Naqshbandi also face a similar challenge.

● Results and Achieved of the Fieldwork

I have learned that it is necessary to conduct research in the School of Ibn ‘Arabī and Ṭarīqa on a global scale but through studies of specific areas. I have collected a range of classical Islamic books in order to meet the need for primary sources for my research. Spending much of my research period in Jordan with Turkish scholars belonging to the Naqshbandi order, I explored the process of the Islamic knowledge revival and the rule of Islamic law in Turkey. The Turkish Naqshbandi order has a close relationship with the Shadhili order in Jordan. They keep their global network separate from the idea of the territorial nation state.

● Implications and Impacts on Future Research

I am confident that this research can have a global impact on future research as the Ṭarīqa moves beyond territorial nation states. In the minds of the Naqshbandi order, there are no borders between the Arabs, Turkey, and other Islamic nations. This also proves that the members of the Ṭarīqa still have an intellectual network with an Ottoman Empire mentality.