

SUHRAWARDĪ AL-MAQTŪL, THE MARTYR OF ALEPPO¹

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On Friday, the 29th of *dhū al-hijjah*, 587 [January 17, 1192] after the hour of prayer, the corpse of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī was carried out of the prison of Aleppo, and all the partisans of that man dispersed and left him.²

This is an excerpt of how, more than a century after the tragic event, Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Abnā' al-Zamān* registers the day of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's death – the *shaykh al-maqtūl*. Biographers are, however, at odds regarding the exact course of events that led to al-Suhrawardī's tragic death. Can a coherent course of events be reconstructed

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² Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Abnā' al-Zamān*, 8 vols., ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 6, 268-74, esp. 273. For a trans., cf. Idem, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary (Wafiyāt al-A'iyān)*, 4 vols., trans. Bn Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), 4, 153-9, esp. 157-8. [Translations are mentioned in parentheses]. Ibn Khallikān began to write this work in 1256 in Cairo, interrupted his work for some time, continued it in 1271, and finished it in 1274, cf. Fück, J. W., «Ibn Khallikān», *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 832b-833a.

One edition omits «29th», cf. *Ibid.*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, 6 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1948-9), 5, 312-317, esp. 317. The same date is found in De Slane's translation and the year 1192 also occurs in a biographical work contemporary of al-Suhrawardī's death, written in 1195-6, cf. 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Bustān al-Jāmi' li-Jamā' Tawārikh al-Zamān*, ed. Claude Cahen, «Une chronique syrienne du vie/xii^e siècle: le 'Bustān al-Jāmi'», *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 7-8 (1937-38), 113-58. The *Bustān al-Jāmi'* was used by Ibn Khallikān, cf. Idem, 114. This is not 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1201) who wrote the *al-Fatḥ al-Qudsī fī al-Fatḥ al-Qudsī* (London: Brill, 1888) and (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Mawsū'āt, 1321/1903). For a French trans. cf. Idem, *Conquête de la Syrie et de la Palestine par Saladdin*, trans. Henri Massé (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1972); and for an English trans., cf. Gibb, H. A., *The Life of Saladin: from the Works of 'Imād al-Dīn* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). [No mention is made of al-Suhrawardī].

Eddé considers the *Bustān al-Jāmi'* to be an anonymous work without explaining why, although she notes «... its value, since it was most probably written around 592-593/1196-7. One can note, especially the original information about the execution of al-Suhrawardī, the mystic...», cf. Eddé, A.-M., *La principauté Ayyoubide d'Alep (579/1183-658/1260)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), 19. She prefers the date provided by Ibn Khallikān as the accurate one, as biographers in general do not agree over the exact date of al-Suhrawardī's death. This introduces a difficulty of historical importance as is reflected by Eddé acceptance of the date (taken from Corbin and Jambet rather than Ibn Khallikān), 5 rajab 587/29 July 1191 (using the same edition of the *Wafayāt*?),

with the various accounts provided by biographers?³ More importantly, however, is the significance —both religious and sociopolitical— of the events that led to the trial and execution of al-Suhrawardī.

Others have suffered similar fate, the most famous being al-Ḥallāj who was executed for heresy in 310/922 against a background of religious and political intrigues.⁴ In 7th/13th century Syria, politically and religiously motivated trials occurred periodically: Sayf al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) was dismissed from the chair he held at the *madrassa* al-‘Azīziyya by al-Malik al-Ashraf, the Ayyūbid ruler of Damascus, for having taught philosophy and theology (*kalām*), having been equally suspected of political treason;⁵ and during the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā‘īl, ruler of Damascus, the Shāfi‘ī Grand Qādī, Rafī‘ al-Dīn al-Jīlī was accused of professing suspicious doctrines in the midst of a financial scandal⁶ and suffered an end no less tragic than that of al-Ḥallāj, ‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī,⁷ or al-Suhrawardī. These trials illustrate, albeit in their extreme tragic outcome, the ties that often linked the religious milieus to the sultan, the ultimate power of the sultan to decide of the course of events and, finally, the sultan’s interference in religious matters —such as in these religious trials— to maintain order and stability.⁸

which she then uses to corroborate her argument about the precarious political situation of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in the region (242), cf. Eddé, A.-M., «Hérésie et pouvoir politique en Syrie au xii^e siècle: l’exécution d’al-Suhrawardī en 1991», in André Vauchez, ed., *La Religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne (chrétienté et islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche «Histoire sociale et culturelle de l’Occident. xii^e-xiii^e siècle» de l’Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l’Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993), Extrait (Rome: A. Vauchez, 1995), 235-44, esp. 238, 238 n. 7 and 242; cf. Corbin, H., *En Islam iranien* —2— *Sohrawardī et les Platoniciens de Perse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 17 and Jambet’s, C., «Introduction», in Sohrawardī, *La Sagesse orientale. Kitāb Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (with) Commentaires de Qoṭboddīn Shīrāzī et Mollā Ṣadrā, trans. and notes Henry Corbin, ed. and intro. Christian Jambet (Paris: Verdier, 1986), 54.*

³ For the historiography of 12th/13th century Syria, cf. Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d’Alepp*, 18-30; cf. Idem, «Sources arabes des xii^e et xiii^e siècles d’après le dictionnaire biographique d’Ibn al-‘Adīm (*Buḡyat al-Ṭalab fi Ta’riḥ*)», *Res Orientales* 6 (1994), 293-307.

⁴ Massignon, L. and Gardet, L., «al-Ḥallāj», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 99b-104b, esp. 101b-102a.

⁵ Brockelmann, C. and Sourdél, D., «al-Āmidī», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1 (1960), 434b; cf. Pouzet, L., *Damas au vii^e/xiii^e siècle. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dār el-Machreq, 1988), 36.

⁶ Pouzet, *Damas*, 122-3. Like al-Āmidī, Rafī‘ al-Dīn al-Jīlī was also a physician and a theologian.

⁷ Dabashi, H., *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999).

⁸ Eddé, «Hérésie et pouvoir», 244.

FORMATIVE YEARS

Yahyā Ibn Ḥabash Ibn Amīrak Abū al-Futūḥ Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī was born in 549/1154, in the village of Suhraward near the modern city of Zanjān, in what is now northwestern Iran. His early studies in philosophy and jurisprudence —he was said to have followed the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*⁹— were undertaken in Marāgha with shaykh Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī, a teacher of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.¹⁰ Marāgha was, at that time, a center of learning which was to become famous after Hulagu, the Mongol conqueror, had an observatory built near it and assembled the greatest astronomers of the day under the direction of Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 673/1274).

After some time spent in Marāgha, he is reported to have left in search of isolation. According to al-Shahrazūrī (d. after 687/1288), he went to Iṣfahān to pursue his education. There he continued and completed his formal training with Ṣāḥib al-Fārisī,¹¹ a logician with whom he read the *Kitāb al-Baṣā’ir al-Nāṣiriyya fī al-Manṭiq*¹² of the logician Zayn al-Dīn ‘Umar Ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī or al-Sāwajī (d. ca. 463/1170),¹³ a work which, according to al-Suhrawardī’s own account,

⁹ Yāqūt (Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Hamawī), *Mu‘jam al-Udabā’ li-l-Yāqūt*, 20 vols., ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifā‘ī Bak (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’mūn, 1936-8), 19, 314-20, esp. 314. The Arabic translation is by Yahyā Ibn Khālīd Ibn Barmak; cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 272 (*Ibn Khallikan’s*, 4, 156).

¹⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, 314-5; cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 269 (*Ibn Khallikan’s*, 4, 154).

¹¹ Ṣāḥib al-Fārisī is, perhaps, Ṣāḥib al-Dīn al-Qārī, cf. Nasr, S. H., *Three Muslim Sages. Avicenna—Suhrawardī—Ibn ‘Arabi* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1969), 56. The account of al-Suhrawardī’s stay in Iṣfahān is absent from Yāqūt’s *Mu‘jam*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a’s *‘Uyūn* and Ibn Khallikān’s *Wafayāt*, cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, *‘Uyūn al-Anbā’ fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā’*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1965), 642-6; cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 267, 268 (*Ibn Khallikan’s*, 4, 153); cf. al-Shahrazūrī, Spies, O. and Khatak, S. K., eds., *Three Treatises on Mysticism* (Suttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935), 1. For the Arabic edition, cf. Spies and Khatak, eds., *Three Treatises*, 90-121, esp. 94. This edition is superior to Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā’* «*Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ*», ed. Abū Shuwīrab ([no date]: Jam‘iyyat al-Da‘wa al-Islāmiyya, 1397/1988), 375-96, esp. 378.

There are discrepancies between the Arabic and the Persian translations, e.g., the Arabic text reports that the death of al-Suhrawardī occurred at the age of 36, while the Persian translation mentions that there are reports that he was 88, or 50. Moreover, the Persian text contains the most extensive bibliography of al-Suhrawardī’s works, cf. al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ* «*Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā’*», Persian trans. Maḥmūd ‘Alī Tabrizī, intr. Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-Pazhūh and Muḥammad Surūr Mawlā’ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī va Farhangī, 1366/1987), 454-74, esp. 458. Another Persian translation, made by Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn Durī (Tehran, 1317/1938), is reported by Nasr, who used the latter for his study, cf. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 150 n.13.

¹² Al-Sāwī, *Kitāb al-Baṣā’ir al-Nāṣiriyya fī al-Manṭiq* (1897; Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣabīh, 19—). He also wrote a Persian treatise on logic entitled *Tabṣāra*, cf. Rescher, N., *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), 57, 175. It is perhaps a Persian translation of his Arabic work.

¹³ Al-Sāwī defended Avicenna’s theses, especially against Ibn Malkā (Hibat Allāh) Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s (d. ca. 1170) criticism. He wrote glosses (extant but unpublished) on

greatly influenced him.¹⁴ Once his formal training was completed, he set out to travel in pursuit of knowledge.

The next period of his life was marked by his acquaintance with a number of Sufi masters from whom he sought to acquire new knowledge. Al-Shahrazūrī, the disciple, mentions how al-Suhrawardī would practice spiritual exercises (*riyāḍāt*), harsh (even if they were brief) retreats (*khalwā rashīqa*), and meditation. He set out to live the life of a true ascetic, as one biographer notes, «emaciated as Christ, as an itinerant mystic» (*masīḥ al-shakl qalandar al-ṣīfa*), engaging in severe and extreme ascetic exercises, at times fasting up to a week.¹⁵ After having traveled all over Iran (from Marāgha to Iṣfahān), he then set out for Anatolia – the then Bilād al-Rūm and Diyār Bakr (north of Māridīn and present day Turko-Syrian borders). He then went to Syria where a number of religious scholars like him of Iranian origin immigrated, from the end of the 5th/11th century till the 9th/13th century.¹⁶ Al-Suhrawardī ended his travels in Aleppo.¹⁷ He mentions that this life of wandering in search of knowledge had led him, when he was about 30 (lunar) years old, to find no one to teach him something new.¹⁸ It had, on the one hand, prepared the young al-Suhrawardī to be an independent thinker; on the other hand, it gave him the self-assurance that was to blind him to the true consequence of the events that were to lead to his death.

Avicenna's *al-Najāt*, responding to al-Shahrastanī's (d. 1153) criticisms (especially of logic). He is said to have written a Persian commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *Risālat al-Ṭayr*, cf. Corbin, H., *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire: étude sur le cycle des récits avicenniens* (Paris: Berg International, 1979), 201; cf. Ziai, «Ebn Sahlān Sāvājī», *Encyclopedia Iranica* 8 (1997), 52a-53a; cf. Ṣāḥīb Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Ṣiḥwān al-Ḥikmat* (Lahore: no place, 1351/1932), 127-9.

¹⁴ Al-Suhrawardī, *Muqāwamāt*, in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 1, édités avec prolégomènes en français par Henry Corbin (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1945; 1976; Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Muṭālī'āt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1372/1993), 146; cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Mashāri'*, in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 1, 278, 352. In Iṣfahān, he would have studied with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), the great adversary of philosophy, cf. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 57. This information, however, is nowhere to be found in the biographical sources.

¹⁵ Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 94-5; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 378; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 458-9. Jesus represents the prototype of the ascetic, while the Qalandar represents a type of Sufi mystic who abandons everything and wanders in the world in search of spiritual nourishment.

¹⁶ Cahen, C., «L'émigration persane des origines aux Mongols», in *id.*, *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1977), 439-56; cf. Mouton, J.-M., *Damas et sa principauté sous les Saljoukides et les Bourides (468-549/1076-1154): vie politique et religieuse* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1994), 318-326.

¹⁷ Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 97; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 379; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 460. Diyār Bakr was, at that time, controlled by the Artukids, cf. Humphreys, R. S., *From Saladin to the Mongols. The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1250* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977), 73; cf. Cahen, C., «Le Diyār Bakr du temps des premiers Urtukides», *Journal Asiatique* 227 (1935), 219-76.

¹⁸ In the last part of the *al-Mashāri' wa-l-Muṭāraḥāt* in *id.*, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 1 § 225, 505. 10-11; cf. al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 94; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 379; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 460.

It was most probably during this period of wandering that he met many Sufi masters such as shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn al-Māridīnī (d. 595/1198) in the city of the same name¹⁹ and who seems to have had great respect for the lad whom he befriended.²⁰ The *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ* of al-Shahrazūrī, a later source, reports many anecdotes about al-Suhrawardī's total detachment of worldly affairs.²¹ It is also during this period—before reaching Aleppo—that al-Suhrawardī would have met such individuals as 'Imād al-Dīn Abū Bakr, the son of (Fakhr al-Dīn) Qarā Arslān (r. 436/460/1144-1167) (a descendant of Artuq Ibn Ekseb) and prince (*amīr*) of Khartpūt (Khartpert) after the death of his father,²² and for whom he appears to have written his Arabic *al-Alwāḥ al-'Imādiyya*.²³

Shaykh Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaqar is said to have reported that when al-Suhrawardī returned from Anatolia in 579/1183, he went to Aleppo²⁴ at the time when al-Zāhir (Ghiyāth al-Dīn) al-Ghāzī Ibn Ayyūb (d. 407/1216)—the son of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin) (d. 589/1193) who ruled over Egypt, Yemen and Shām (roughly present day Lebanon, Syria and the whole of Palestine)—had just been assigned the governorship of Aleppo.²⁵

Upon his arrival, al-Suhrawardī went to the religious school, al-Madrasa al-Ḥalāwiyya²⁶ where he attended the lessons of Iftikhār al-Dīn (al-Hāshimī) (d. 616/1219), the head of the Ḥanafīyya school.²⁷ Although belonging to the

¹⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315.

²⁰ Māridīn is located in present day Turkish Kurdistan, cf. Muḥammad Mu'in, *Farhang-i Fārsi*, 6 vols., 8th ed. (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1371/1992), sv Māridīn. Ziai reads it to be Iṣfahān (although he alludes to the fact that it might be Mardin), cf., Ziai, H., «Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī: Founder of the Illuminationist School», in Nasr, S. H. and Leaman, O., eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 1, 434-64, esp. 434. The Persian Māridīn becomes al-Māridīnī once arabized, cf. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315.

²¹ al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 95; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 378; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 459.

²² He was most probably amīr of Kharpūt in 567-570/1171-1174 and established himself independently in 580-581/1184-1185, cf. Cahen, «Le Diyār Bakr», 261 and 265 [see also the genealogical chart appended to Cahen's article].

²³ Pūrjavādī, N. A., «Shaykh-i Ishrāq va Ta'līf *Alwāḥ-i 'Imādī*», in Sayyid 'Alī Āl-i Dāvūd, ed., *Nāma-yi Iqbal. Yādnāma-yi Iqbal Ya'mānī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hirmand, 1377/1997), 1-11, esp. 2-8; cf. Elisséeff, N., *Nūr ad-Dīn. Un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des croisades (511-569 H./1118-1174)*, 3 vols. (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1967), 1, 133 and 2, 378, 398, 617.

²⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 19, 315; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 643.

²⁵ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1137-93), born of Kurdish descent (Tikrit, Mesopotamia), was the first Ayyūbid sultan of Egypt (1175). He entered the army of Nūr al-Dīn, working under the service of his uncle (Asad al-Dīn Ibn Shadhī) Shirkuh, later became vizier in Egypt after the death of Nūr al-Dīn (d. 1174) and then proclaimed himself sultan; fighting the Crusaders, he was able to capture Jerusalem in 1187.

²⁶ The edition of the *'Uyūn* has *al-jalāwiyya* which is most probably a typographical error, cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 643.

²⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 19, 315; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 643. According to Ibn Shaddād, however, Iftikhār al-Dīn replaced 'Alā' al-Kāsānī (or perhaps al-Kāshānī) upon his death in

Shāfi'ite rite, al-Suhrawardī opted for al-Madrasa al-Ḥalāwiyya where the teaching staff included many Iranians since its foundation by Nūr al-Dīn in 544/1149.²⁸ At al-Madrasa al-Ḥalāwiyya, he debated with the jurists (*fuqahā'*) and their students and was able to gain respect from Iftikhār al-Dīn. It is reported that al-Suhrawardī:

Attended the lesson of its shaykh, the distinguished Iftikhār al-Dīn [Ḥalāwiyya school]. He discussed with the jurists amongst his students and others, and debated with them on a number of questions. None of them were able to keep up [intellectually] with him; he thus gained the upper hand over them. His superiority became manifest to the shaykh Iftikhār al-Dīn. He became part of his gathering, grew close [to him] and came to find his place amongst the people [of these gatherings].²⁹

It is most probably in Aleppo that al-Suhrawardī wrote his *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* which he completed in 582/1186,³⁰ a year before Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn liberated Jerusalem from the Franks and which, according to al-Shahrazūrī, corresponded to the time when he would also have finished writing his *al-Mashārī' wa al-Mutārahāt*, at the age of nearly thirty years old (ca. 581/1185).³¹

Al-Suhrawardī's stay in Aleppo —and his association with its local indigenous religious class— would prove to be fatal. The growing discontent of the local indigenous religious class towards this young and intelligent «Easterner» was, most probably, fuelled by al-Suhrawardī's own self-assurance. Indication of this is found in the notices on al-Suhrawardī where biographers have recorded that he was a man who would always come out victorious from a debate, on account of his ability at expressing his thought in the most eloquent fashion. Unfortunately, he also seems to have behaved in such a manner as to display a condescending arrogance for the scholars of Aleppo.³² Could it be that

587/1191, a position he occupied till his death, cf. Ibn Shaddād, *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṣira fī Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa al-Jazīra*, 1st section, 1st part, ed. D. Sourdel (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1953), 112.

²⁸ Sourdel, D., «Les professeurs de madrasa à Alep aux XI^e-XIII^e siècles d'après Ibn Šaddād», *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 13 (1949-51), 85-115, esp. 92-3.

²⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 19, 315.

³⁰ Al-Shahrazūrī was probably the first commentator of this work, cf. Corbin, H., *Histoire de la philosophie* (1st part, 1964, 2nd part, 1974; Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 302; cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, in *id.*, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 2, § 279, 258.4-5; cf. *id.*, *La Sagesse orientale*, 231.

³¹ Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 96-7; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 379; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 460.

³² Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642, 644.

al-Suhrawardī's own behavior exasperated the religious leaders of Aleppo who, in retaliation, sought to have him accused and then condemned? Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (d. 667/1268) notes, reporting from shaykh Sadīd al-Dīn Ibn 'Umar, that a friendship had developed between al-Suhrawardī and the shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn al-Māridīnī whom he would often visit. The shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn was in a habit of telling his disciples that there was no one more intelligent (*adhkā*) than this youth, or more eloquent (*afṣaḥ*) and unequalled. Shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn, however, exhibited real concern for the lad, whose carelessness, rashness and unrestricted recklessness would—one day—be the cause of his downfall.³³ This latter aspect of al-Suhrawardī's personality found its way into biographical works that note both aspects of al-Suhrawardī's character. Anecdotes in which al-Suhrawardī is described as often going about dressed as a poor man³⁴ and without any pretension are noted, together with reports about his heedlessness, which could easily account for the fact that, with the passing of time, the anger of his adversaries mounted to the point of causing his downfall.³⁵

SOCIOPOLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

A conjunction of religious and political factors led to al-Suhrawardī's execution that can only be understood with regards to the sociopolitical and religious context of the time. Aleppo was conquered by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 579/1183, the same year al-Suhrawardī would have reached the city. According to Humphreys, «Aleppo had always resisted Saladin more strongly than any other place. It was far more closely tied to the Zangid dynasty than the other Syrian towns, and both its amīrs and religious notables had a clear sense of cohesion and local identity. In addition its urban militia was still a lively organization...». ³⁶ It is, therefore, not surprising that once the city was conquered, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn tried to win the notables and religious people of Aleppo by extending favors to this group.³⁷

Conquered, Aleppo was given in the form of a land grant (*iqṭā'*) to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's fourth son al-Zāhir who was made sultan, although, at that time, he was

³³ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, 642.

³⁴ Ifṭikhār al-Dīn al-Ḥāshimī tried in vain to offer to al-Suhrawardī beautiful clothes to replace his rags; while in the company of al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Raḳīqa, the physician, was asked what he was doing with a caretaker of mules, cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, 644.

³⁵ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, 644.

³⁶ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 55.

³⁷ cf. Lyons, M. C. and Jackson, D. E. P., *Saladin. The politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 173-200.

only eleven years old.³⁸ In the same year, but six month later, the land grant was transferred to one of his brothers, al-‘Ādil (d. 615/1218). By 581/1185, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was still trying to curtail the power of the Zangid and Artuqid princes and attempting to reduce them to vassaldom.³⁹ A year later, al-‘Ādil forfeited his possession and control of Aleppo and, in what appears to have been a politically motivated move, exchanged it for territories in Egypt. In 582/1186, al-Zāḥir, now fourteen years of age, was sent back to Aleppo as al-Malik al-Zāḥir, the ruler of Aleppo accompanied by two experienced commanders (*amir*) who were to be in charge of administrative and military matters.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was still trying to consolidate his power over the region.

It has been suggested that al-Suhrawardī might have unwillingly exacerbated the animosity against him by writing a work dedicated to ‘Imād al-Dīn Artuqid, ruler in Kharpūt (Khartpert) who established in 581/1185 a collateral branch of the Artuqids (he died around 601/1204).⁴¹ The Artuqids, a Turkish dynasty, had settled in Diyār Bakr, North of Māridīn and the Syro-Turkish border, around Ḥiṣn Kayfā and Āmid; a collateral branch had settled around Māridīn and Mayāfāriqīn. They ruled over some territories, often as vassals, for almost three centuries until the Ayyūbid conquest in 630/1232.

The rise of the Zangids halted the expansion of the Artuqids who became the vassals of Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zangī.⁴² Humphreys mentions that the Artuqids «represented more the Türkmen than the Great Saljuqid tradition and hence were even more clearly oriented toward the political value of the steppe...»; hence, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had to reconcile the guiding principles of «shared authority and local autonomy» with these local rulers in order «to balance the ultimately irreconcilable claims of the absolutist sultanate and collective sovereignty».⁴³ The Zangids ruled over a century in Mosul and, at times, in Aleppo with a collateral branch in Damascus.⁴⁴ They

³⁸ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 54-5.

³⁹ *Id.*, 56.

⁴⁰ *Id.*, 61-2. For the political implications this had on strengthening Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s position in Cairo and Aleppo through the nominal sovereignty of al-Zāḥir and the rule of al-‘Ādil, cf. *Idem*, 62-3.

⁴¹ Bosworth, C. E., *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 194; cf. *id.*, «Saldjūkids», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8 (1995), 936a-978b, esp. 946b-950a.

⁴² Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 195; cf. Cahen, «Artukids», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1 (1960), 662b-667b, esp. 665a.

⁴³ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 73.

⁴⁴ Gibb, H. A. R., «Zengi and the Fall of Edessa», in Setton, K. M. and Baldwin, M. W. eds., *A History of the Crusades*, 6 vols. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 1 [entitled *the First Hundred Years*], 449-62, esp. 515-6.

were also of Turkish origin like the Artuqids, while the Ayyūbids were of Kurdish origin.

Inevitably, however, their expansionist policy in Diyār Bakr and al-Jazīra resulted in clashes with the Ayyūbids. Twice Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn failed to capture Mosul (in 578/1182 and 581/1185); eventually, however, they had to give way under his might.⁴⁵ By this time, the Zangids and the Artuqids were client states to the Ayyūbids, and the undeniable jealousy between the two was still at work at the political level.⁴⁶ A further element of discontent between the two political powers was the territorial expansion of the Ayyūbids, at the expense of the neighboring ruling dynasties, in particular the Zangids of Aleppo and Mosul, as well as the Artuqids of Diyār Bakr.⁴⁷

The political stability of Aleppo and its surroundings was equally threatened by another bastion of dissension. The stronghold of the Ismā'īlīs (the Assassins) was in Jabal Anṣāriyya, between Antioch and Hamāh (southwest of Aleppo). Although, in some sense, they were vassals of al-Malik al-Zāhir, they were not entirely submitted to his control.⁴⁸ The Ismā'īlīs of Jabal Anṣāriyya, belonging to the Nizārī branch, were often suspected of being at the origin of many of the outbreaks of social and political discontent. In Persia and Syria, they often resorted to spectacular religious assassination —the one of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092)— and launched raids from their mountain fortresses. Moreover, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was to be object of two attempts of assassination (570/1174 and 572/1176) at the hands of the Ismā'īlīs.⁴⁹ Any accusations of Ismā'īlī tendencies or affinities were, therefore, viewed as serious cause for concern by the ruling power.

In Syria, Ismā'īlī presence lasted from about 494/1100 to 672/1273.⁵⁰ In Aleppo, the fire that damaged the Great Mosque in 563/1167-8 had been attributed, by some, to the Ismā'īlīs.⁵¹ Still, in 572/1176-7, Ismā'īlī Nizārītes mounted a military expedition in the southwest of Aleppo.⁵² In 575/1179-80,

⁴⁵ Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 191.

⁴⁶ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 18, 29-30.

⁴⁷ *Id.*, 45.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, 81.

⁴⁹ Daftārī, F., *The Ismā'īlīs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 399.

⁵⁰ Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, 68-9; cf. Lewis, B., «The Ismā'īlites and the Assassins», in Setton and Baldwin, eds., *A History of the Crusades*, 1, 99-132. For the intellectual history of the Ismā'īlīs, especially of the doctrine of the *qiyāma*, cf. Hodgson, M. G. S., *The Order of the Assassins. The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1955), 160-209.

⁵¹ Elisséeff, N., «Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn. Inventaire, notes archéologiques et bibliographiques», *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 13 (1949-51), 5-43, esp. 14.

⁵² Headed by Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, cf. Eddé, A. M., «Une grande famille de shafiites alépins. Les Banū al-'Agami aux XIIIe-XIIIe siècles», *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 62 (1991), 61-71, esp. 64.

three years before al-Suhrawardī was to arrive in Aleppo, after the seizure of one of their fortresses, Nizārī agents were sent to Aleppo where they set fire to several locations in the city's market place.

The religious context and, more specifically, the relation that existed between the religious milieus and the sultan can account for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's acquiescence to the wishes of the indigenous religious elite of Aleppo. Their involvement with the political power aimed at maintaining the existing local social and religious power they enjoyed. The newly established Ayyūbid rulers in the region of Aleppo and Damascus were well aware of the potential threats that these different political aspirations represented. The political order and stability of Aleppo and of its surroundings rested on a balance of power that the ruling Ayyūbids —especially at the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn— were trying to achieve with a long-established indigenous aristocracy, or, as Humphreys has labeled them, the «turbaned» class (*muta'ammimīn*) «whose power was based on its religious leadership and its large scale mercantile and landowning interests». ⁵³

It was at the hands of this indigenous «aristocracy» that al-Suhrawardī was to perish. Its members engaged in the construction of public (mosques and schools) and private (baths and houses) buildings that were to earn them the «propinquity to God» which issued from good deeds (*qurba*). ⁵⁴ Their leadership was exercised by means of their moral authority. Moreover, they usually held important political positions and often received stipends. Professors of *madrasas* to which they were associated and judges of major towns, who for the most part constituted the upper layer of the learned class, belonged to this religious class. ⁵⁵

During this period, religious schools become indispensable tools of propaganda for the ruling political powers. Initially, this institution developed to counter Fāṭimid propagation of Shī'ī (Ismā'īlī) thought through their own *House of Knowledge* (*dār al-'ilm*). The Saljuq vizier Nizām al-Mulk succeeded in establishing these institutions of learning by means of which he tried to foster the instruction of Ash'arīte *kalām* and Shāfi'ī jurisprudence. His name remains associated with these Sunnī centers of learning – the Nizāmiyya schools, first in Khurāsān (Nishāpūr, Balkh, Harat and Marv), then in Iraq (Baghdād and Mosul) and in Jazīra. ⁵⁶

⁵³ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 25.

⁵⁴ Morray, D., *An Ayyubid Notable and His Work. Ibn al-'Adīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 128-9.

⁵⁵ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 23-4.

⁵⁶ On the creation of a network of *madrasas* by Nizām al-Mulk, cf. Makdisi, G., «Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad», *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24 (1961), 1-56. For a good introduction on the institution of the *madrasa*, its

Chamberlain and Makdisi, however, argue that *madrasas* were «private» religious endowments (*waqf*). They were not part of the activities of the state, although these private religious endowments had social, ideological and political functions. Generally, the «turbaned» class was, indeed, closely related to the rulers. Chamberlain writes that «rulers supported the elites upon whom they depended directly... By founding madrasas, powerful households could insert themselves into the cultural, political, and social life of the city, and turn existing practices and relationships to their own benefit. This is how charitable foundations became instruments of politics».⁵⁷

The Shī'a activities in the city of Aleppo and its vicinities, which lasted till the middle of the 6th/12th century, were another cause of concern for rulers of the region. The city had once been dominated by the most celebrated of all the city's ruling dynasties, the Ḥamdānids with a branch in Mosul (293-381/905-991) and another in Aleppo (334-395/945-1004). They ruled Aleppo for over half a century (with the capture of Aleppo by Sayf al-Dawla) until it fell into the hands of the Fāṭimids.⁵⁸

The introduction of religious schools in Aleppo served as a means to counter the religious influence of a number of non Sunnī Muslim traditions such as Twelver Shī'ism or Nizārī Ismā'īlism in a similar fashion as what had been done in the eastern part of the Muslim empire. The first religious school in the city was the al-Zajjājiyya school (begun in 515/1121 or 516/1122). It was founded by 'Abd al-Rahmān of the Banū al-'Ajamī who was encouraged to do so by the governor of Aleppo (Badr al-Dawla Sulaymān). At first, the opening of these Sunnī religious institutions was met with fierce objection from the Shī'ī community which then represented a large portion of the population. They considered this new institution to be a threat to the growth and the survival of their own religious community (this Shī'ī opposition had almost disappeared by the beginning of the rule of Zangī [r. 522-541/1128-1146]).⁵⁹

Nūr al-Dīn Ibn Zangī (Sunnī) (r. 541-572/1146-1176) endeavored to establish further religious schools. At the beginning of his reign, Nūr al-Dīn was tolerant

origin, its development, and its methods of instruction, cf. Idem, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); cf. Sourdél, «Les professeurs de madrasa», 113-5.

⁵⁷ Chamberlain, M., *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52.

⁵⁸ Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 85-6; cf. Canard, M., *Histoire de la dynastie des Ḥamdānides de Jazīra et de Syrie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), 1, 579-712. In 1001, a peace treaty was signed between the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim and the amir of Aleppo, cf. Idem, «Ḥamdānids», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 125a-131a, esp. 130b.

⁵⁹ Eddé, «Une grande famille», 63.

of Shī'ism, but later, in an attempt to counter unorthodox beliefs, he established both *madrasas* and a *Dār al-Ḥadīth* in the Grand Mosque of Aleppo, with the help of religious endowments.⁶⁰ He thus greatly encouraged the revival of Sunnism by establishing at least three Shāfi'ī *madrasas*, one Ḥanbalite and one Malikiite religious hospices (*zāwiya*) during his reign.⁶¹ In 542/1148, he abolished Shī'ī forms of prayer that were previously used in Aleppo.⁶² During the same period, he also established a few convents (*khānqāh* or *ribāṭ*) such as the Khānqāh al-Qadīm, the Khānqāh al-Qaṣr which was build under the citadel, and a *khānqāh* exclusively for women.⁶³

The al-Ḥalāwiyya religious school where al-Suhrawardī first introduced himself upon his arrival in Aleppo was, at that time, the leading Ḥanafī school in the city. In 518/1124, Muḥammad Ibn al-Khashshāb transformed one (Saint Helen) of the four churches of the city into a mosque. Muḥammad Ibn al-Khashshāb was a member of a prominent Shī'ī family of the city⁶⁴ with whose family a member of the Banū al-'Ajamī (who died in 562/1166) was constantly in conflict.⁶⁵ In 542/1147-8, the mosque was restored and transformed into a school (most probably Sunnī) where Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Balkhī was appointed.⁶⁶ Later, Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 662/1262), having the directorship (*walāya*) of the school, became one of its teachers.⁶⁷ Between ca. 550/1155 and 650/1252, more than fifty percent of all the professors of Shāfi'īte religious schools in Aleppo and more than a third of the Ḥanafīte schools were «Easterners» like al-Suhrawardī, coming from such locations as Kurdistan, upper Mesopotamia, and Iran.⁶⁸ The bulk of the new arrivals entered Syria during the reign of Nūr al-Dīn (r. 541-570/1146-1174) prince (*amīr*) of Aleppo and Damascus and the defender of Sunnī Islam against the Fāṭimids and the Crusaders.⁶⁹

Periodical strife between the two main religious communities disturbed public order and threatened the political authority of rulers. Until 570/1174,

⁶⁰ Elisséeff, «Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn», 5-6, 15.

⁶¹ Gibb, H. A. R., «The Career of Nūr al-Dīn», in Setton and Baldwin, eds., *A History of the Crusades*, 1, 513-27; cf. Elisséeff, «Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn», 9-11, 15.

⁶² Daftari, *The Ismā'ilis*, 380.

⁶³ Elisséeff, «Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn», 9, 12, 13. He restored the first convent for dervishes, established by Shams al-Hawāṣṣ Lū'lū' in 1115, cf. *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁴ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 128.

⁶⁵ Eddé, «Une grande famille», 63-4.

⁶⁶ Elisséeff, «Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn», 8.

⁶⁷ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 41-2.

⁶⁸ Sourdél, «Les professeurs de madrasa à Alep», 113-4.

⁶⁹ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 26.

conflicts in which were engaged the Shī'īs (essentially the Banū al-Khashshāb) and the Sunnīs of Aleppo still occurred. Less than nine years before al-Suhrawardī arrived in Aleppo, the city was the scene of sectarian riots:

«Sauvaget has suggested that proof of the efficacy of what he terms the 'Sunnī propaganda machine,' is contained in the failure of the attempted coup by Shī'ī elements in 552/1157. It also enabled the city to survive the sectarian riots of 570/1174.⁷⁰ By al-Malik al-Zāhir's time, relations between the Sunnī and Shī'ī communities were good».⁷¹

The policy of al-Malik al-Zāhir (who took over the city in 582/1186) towards the Shī'īs of Aleppo illustrates the need for any political authority to minimize causes of friction between the different religious communities in order to ensure both social and political stability. His position seems to have been to try to win them over. He is known to have extended the distribution of patronage between the four Sunnī schools of jurisprudence, amongst which the Shāfi'ī and the Ḥanbalī predominated; his patronage extended to the Imāmī —or Twelver— Shī'ī school of jurisprudence which, with its long history of quietism, was an officially tolerated schism.⁷² According to Ibn 'Adīm, al-Malik al-Zāhir settled a generous religious endowment on the newly completed Mashhad al-Ḥusayn in order «to win the hearts of the Shī'ah of Aleppo... Lesser gestures included interceding with the ruler of Āmid for the release of a Shī'ī genealogist».⁷³

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn gave preeminence to the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence over the Ḥanafī, the two dominating Sunnī schools in the region of Aleppo. This created further religious friction, but now between Sunnī schools of jurisprudence. Did the fact that al-Suhrawardī belonged to the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* cause greater animosity amongst the local Ḥanafīyya jurists who might have felt threatened by the new wave of Shāfi'ī nominations? Historical facts do not provide much clue that might corroborate such an hypothesis. We only know that once Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn took over Aleppo (in 579/1183), he removed from office people who were not Shāfi'ī, like the father of Ibn 'Adīm (Aḥmad Ibn Hibat Allāh), a Ḥanafī judge and that from then on, the grand *qāḍī* becomes a Shāfi'ī.

⁷⁰ The Shī'ī Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Yahyā Ibn al-Khashshāb was executed as the leader of the revolt, cf. Eddé, «Une grande famille», 64.

⁷¹ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 131; cf. Sauvaget, «Ḥalab», *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1970), 85a-90a, esp. 87a-b.

⁷² Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 148.

⁷³ *Id.*, 132.

Al-Suhrawardī, coming to Aleppo, was entering the domain of this indigenous aristocracy, the «turbaned» class whose members were judges, teachers, and Imams of Aleppo still negotiating with the new Ayyūbid rulers their religious authority in the city. The Ayyūbid rulers, however, in taking over the control of the city, had their own agenda. They needed the legitimizing acquiescence of this indigenous aristocracy⁷⁴ who occupied important functions, in particular, in religious schools teaching Islamic jurisprudence. These were the positions where the interests of the ruler and those of the leading Sunnī families merged.⁷⁵

The nature of the religious class in Aleppo could certainly account for the dislike they took of al-Suhrawardī. The jurists, the bulk of the teachers of Aleppo, were deeply conservative as a whole.⁷⁶ More importantly, they could, through their religious moral authority, present a threat to the political authority of the ruler. In spite of the Ayyūbid rule and control over the city, the «men of the turban» did remain an indirect threat – albeit lacking in military forces:

The men of the Turban... in the religious establishment could seriously embarrass Saladin by publicly calling him to account for his actions; they could also undercut his claim to be the true spiritual heir of Nūr al-Dīn [d. 570/1174] by refusing him moral and propaganda support.⁷⁷

The situation in Aleppo was not exceptional nor different from any other important city such as Baghdad, but it was here that al-Suhrawardī was to fall prey to its religious class. The social climate commanded by this indigenous aristocracy of «men of the turban,» the orthodox religious class, did not allow much freedom for dissenting voices, no matter how well thought out any new idea might have been. Any «deviant» belief which might be aired in the religious hospices (*zāwiya*) of different orders, could be viewed by the orthodox religious class as a threat to its religious authority. The popularity of individual shaykhs could also be seen as a threat that could lead —fostered by resentment and jealousy on the behalf of the indigenous religious class— to agitation requiring a response by the ruler.⁷⁸ One such tragic case appears to have been that of al-Suhrawardī.

⁷⁴ *Id.*, 123, 124.

⁷⁵ *Id.*, 130.

⁷⁶ *Id.*, 136.

⁷⁷ Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 29.

⁷⁸ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 142.

ACCUSATION, TRIAL AND EXECUTION

At al-Halāwiyya religious school, al-Suhrawardī who had by now become a close friend of Iftikhār al-Dīn was gradually fostering the animosity of the local and indigenous jurists. He who had come as a stranger to Aleppo and in the garb of a wandering mystic was surpassing all those that were present. Yāqūt reports that from that time on, «the jurists colluded against him, such that their slanders against him increased». ⁷⁹ Having had wind of al-Suhrawardī's intellectual abilities at disputation, al-Malik al-Zāhir is said to have convened a gathering of jurists and theologians of all schools of jurisprudence in the citadel. ⁸⁰ It would be there that:

They discussed and debated with him, and [again] he gained the upper hand over them with his proofs (*ḥujaj*) and his logical demonstrations (*barāhīn*). His superiority became manifest to al-Malik al-Zāhir. He then became close to him, took interest in him, and devoted his attention to him. ⁸¹

As a result of his ability at defeating his opponents in disputation (*baḥṭh*) and debate (*munāẓara*), al-Malik al-Zāhir took a liking to him and invited him at his court in the citadel of Aleppo. ⁸² Al-Malik al-Zāhir was acting only as a patron of the arts. Had he not given a land grant to Abū Ghānim al-Sharaf, an Aleppine literary figure? ⁸³ At the court of al-Malik al-Zāhir, al-Suhrawardī made further enemies for himself, especially amongst the jurists and the theologians with whom he used to debate, most probably even those who were Shāfi'ī. The wrath of those who had disputed with him was not long to come; and al-Shahrazūrī does not exclude the possibility that the religious leaders of Aleppo fostered such a resentment that it led to their collusion in arranging for his death.

The procedures of al-Suhrawardī's condemnation did not differ from similar cases. Jealous and envious of this stranger who had gained access so quickly to the ruler of Aleppo, they were preparing to seal al-Suhrawardī's fate with a religious decree demanding his death. The names of the jurists who were responsible for initiating these procedures, or the juridical school to which they might have belonged are not known. In the biographical sources, only two names have been associated with the incident:

⁷⁹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642.

⁸⁰ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 644.

⁸¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315.

⁸² al-Iṣfahānī, *Bustān al-Jāmi'*, 150.

⁸³ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 126.

The jurists of Aleppo colluded against him, with the exception of two jurists, sons of Ḥamīl. They both said: «This man is a jurist and it is not suitable that his debates in the citadel be brought to the mosque». ⁸⁴

In this account of the *Bustān al-Jāmi'*, the two sons of Ḥamīl would have attempted to temper the wrath of the jurists and preferred to keep him at bay from any religious circles. In Ibn Khallikān's later version, the brothers, identified as the most staunch opponents to al-Suhrawardī, are shaykhs Zayn al-Dīn (d. 590/1194) and Majd al-Dīn (d. 597/1200), sons of Jahbal. ⁸⁵ If, indeed, the brothers were not instrumental in al-Suhrawardī's execution—as suggested by the *Bustān al-Jāmi'*—then, it would have been Shāfi'ī jurists who would have attempted to prevent al-Suhrawardī from mingling with the local religious class, predominantly Ḥanafī. Even the good favors that Majd al-Dīn seems to have enjoyed from Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn could not counterbalance the enormous power that the indigenous religious class exerted on the sultan. ⁸⁶

The jurists of Aleppo did succeed in bringing against al-Suhrawardī charges of irreligiosity which were to find their way into Ibn Shaddād's (c. 684/1285) biography of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as being the real cause of al-Suhrawardī's execution. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, very observant of the precepts of religion, a sincere believer in the teachings of the Divine Law and the defender of the faith, a fact his biographer emphasized by noting that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn:

Detested philosophers, atheists (*mu'aṭṭila*), materialists (*dahriyya*) and all adversaries of Islamic law (*man yu'āmid al-sharī'a*). He even ordered his son al-Malik al-Zāhir, Prince of Aleppo... to put to death a young man named al-Suhrawardī. It is said that he had been accused of not recognizing the ordinances of Islamic laws (*mu'ānid-an li-l-sharā'i' mubṭil-an*), and of paying no regard to the doctrines of the faith. ⁸⁷

Ibn Shaddād is not, however, preoccupied with details regarding the true nature of the accusations that were brought against al-Suhrawardī. He is

⁸⁴ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Bustān al-Jāmi'*, 150-1.

⁸⁵ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 272 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 156-7).

⁸⁶ In 1183, Majd al-Dīn had predicted Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's conquest of Jerusalem. He was later honored with the direction of his own *madrasa* in Jerusalem, after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had conquered it in 1187, cf. Eddé, «Hérésie et pouvoir», 243, 243 n.23.

⁸⁷ Ibn Shaddād (Bahā' al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Rāfi'), *Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyya wa al-Maḥāsīn al-Yūsufiyya* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li-l-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjuma, 1964), 10; cf. *id.*, 'Saladin': or, *What Befell Sultan Yūsuf (Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn). (1137-1193 A.D.)*, trans. Sir Charles Williams Wilson, compared with the original Arabic and annotated by Conder (London: Committee of the

primarily concerned with the portrayal of the moral character of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his «real» concern for defending the faith. The only work that contains, in some details, an account of the course of the trial is the *Bustān al-Jāmi'* of 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī —written only a few years after the event— who writes:

And all the jurists gathered and had an assembly convened for him. Amongst all of his works, there was an exegetical work of the Qur'ān based on his own opinion (*ra'y*), a book which he entitled *al-Raḡm al-Qudsī*, and another book which was said to belong to him, the *al-Alwāḥ al-'Imādiyya* that were used against him in the dispute.⁸⁸ They did not know, however, what to say to him regarding jurisprudence (*'ilm al-uṣūl*). They said to him, «You said in your works that God is able to create a Prophet, whereas this is impossible». Then, he said to them, «There is no limit to His divine foreordination. Isn't He the All-mighty? If He wills something, it cannot be impossible». They said, «Indeed». He said, «So, God is capable of all things». They said, «Except the creation of a Prophet, since it is impossible». He said, «So, is it impossible absolutely or not?» They said, «You have indeed become an infidel (*kaffarta*)». They construed grounds [for his condemnation], because, on the whole, he was lacking in reason – though not in knowledge,⁸⁹ and amongst this [i.e., all the signs of his lack of reason] was that he called his [own] soul 'inspired by the world of Malakūt' (*rūḥ al-mu'ayyad bi-l-malakūt*).⁹⁰

After the trial, whether or not it actually occurred as the *Bustān al-Jāmi'* reports it, the orthodox religious class, most of whom were jurists, agreed upon issuing a legal decree (*fatwā*) against al-Suhrawardī, accusing him of «apostasy [heresy] (*ilḥād*) and of professing un-Islamic beliefs (*zandaqa*)»⁹¹ and demanding his execution. Once more, biographers do not agree on the exact course of events. According to Yāqūt, the religious leaders of Aleppo informed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn:

Palestine Exploration Fund, 1897), 10-1. [There is a reprint made in Lahore, Islamic Book Service, 1976]; cf. Gamal el-Dīn el-Shayyal, «Ibn Ṣhaddād», *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 933b-934b.

⁸⁸ The Qur'ānic exegetical work is mentioned in the bibliography of al-Shahrazūrī, while Corbin proposes that the *Risālat al-Raḡi al-Qudsī* may be the *Wāridāt*, cf. Corbin, H., «Prolégomènes», in Suhrawardī, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 1, I-LXXXI, esp. VI n.9.

⁸⁹ He had a lack of «practical» wisdom, not being able to defend himself without jeopardizing his security.

⁹⁰ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Bustān al-Jāmi'*, 150-1.

⁹¹ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315.

They then wrote about this to al-Malik al-Nāṣir, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and warned him against the corruption of the [right] beliefs of his son through his friendship with Shihāb [al-Dīn] al-Suhrawardī, as well as the [right] beliefs of the people, if [al-Suhrawardī] were to remain amongst them. Hence, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wrote to his son al-Zāhir and ordered him to kill him, pressured him into [executing al-Suhrawardī], and insisted. The jurists of Aleppo issued a religious decree (*aftā*) for his execution.⁹²

According to this narrative, the jurists would have written the religious decree once Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had agreed to their request. Ibn Shaddād, however, reports that it was al-Malik al-Zāhir, the ruler of Aleppo, who had al-Suhrawardī arrested, because he had been accused by the religious leaders of holding tenets that were contrary to Islam: «al-Zāhir, having sent this man to prison, reported what had occurred to his father, the sultan, who ordered his son to have him killed».⁹³ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a reports that al-Suhrawardī had been accused of being an infidel (*kaffara-hu*), and that «Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn sent a letter to his son al-Malik al-Zāhir who was in Aleppo, which contained a decree by the hand of the judge al-Faḍl which read as follows: "It is necessary that this Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī be killed, and there is no possibility for him to be let free, or that he continue to exist"».⁹⁴ It is, therefore, not surprising that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, grappling with the jurists' discontent, so readily acquiesced to the wishes of this «turbaned» class, in order not to irritate this very influential group of people whose support he needed to avoid any possible social unrest in Aleppo.

More than half a century after Yāqūt, Ibn Khallikān acknowledges that conflicting reports existed regarding the exact nature of the accusations against al-Suhrawardī: disbelieving in God, following the system professed by philosophers of ancient times, speaking his mind, heretical beliefs (*zandaqa*) and heresy (*ilhād*); while others took him for a saint and capable of miracles (some occurring after his death).⁹⁵ This latter information is mentioned by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a who reports what he heard from al-Ḥakīm Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī al-Faḍl Ibn Ṣadaqa who retold one such occasion when al-Suhrawardī would have performed some sort of wondrous deed.⁹⁶ The latter were often attributed to the friends of God (*awliyā'*) who were reported capable of a number of feats: reading minds, fortune telling, doing wondrous things with bodies or objects.⁹⁷ Al-

⁹² Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 315-6.

⁹³ Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir*, 10 ('Saladin', 10-1).

⁹⁴ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642.

⁹⁵ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 272 and 273 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 156 and 158).

⁹⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642.

⁹⁷ Louis Gardet, «Karāma», *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 4 (1978), 615a-616b, esp. 614a.

Suhrawardī would have detached his left arm from his body, leaving it in the hands of a Turk who was attempting to hold him back and then to have reattached it to his body; he would have also transformed a stone into a ruby.⁹⁸ Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī mentions al-Suhrawardī's professed knowledge of future events.⁹⁹ Some even reported that he had been involved with alchemy or magic. One explanation for these reports is the dynamic process that hagiographic literature undergoes, a process that accounts for the transmission of reports about the lives of the shaykhs whose memory it purports to preserve. Their degree of veracity is, therefore, impossible to ascertain.

The accusation of holding heretical beliefs (*zandaqa*) is, however, most revealing. A vague term, *zandaqa* could encompass any type of irreligiosity and thus include unorthodox beliefs like the ones, which are easily identifiable in a number of al-Suhrawardī's philosophical works, that incorporate mysticism and often refer to the teachings of ancient pre-Islamic Iranian religious traditions. A wave of *zandaqa* accusations had previously occurred during the rule of the caliph al-Mahdī (between 166/782 to 170/786) when a great number of secretaries of Persian descent were condemned for what might have been their Manichean beliefs and their ascetic practices.¹⁰⁰ By the 6th/12th and 7th/13th century, the term was applied to unorthodox beliefs that minimized revelation and the prophetic role of Muḥammad.¹⁰¹ Al-Suhrawardī certainly qualified as a *zindīq* with his works inspired by the philosophical traditions of the ancients. Philosophy was a discipline that was viewed, indeed, with utmost suspicion by theologians, especially since al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) attacks against it in his *al-Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (especially against Avicenna and al-Fārābī). Al-Suhrawardī's works certainly did not qualify as exponents of strict Sunnī orthodoxy.

In addition to these vague charges of *zandaqa*, the *Bustān al-Jāmi'* alludes to an even more serious charge. Al-Suhrawardī was accused of attributing to himself an inspiration of divine nature, calling his soul «inspired by the world of *Malakūt*» and thus of claiming some type of prophetic revelation.¹⁰² Al-Shahrazūrī refutes this claim to prophecy,¹⁰³ although he was told that one of al-Suhrawardī's companion

⁹⁸ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, 'Uyūn, 643-4.

⁹⁹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 272 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 157).

¹⁰⁰ Montgomery Watt, W., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973; Oxford, UK: Oneworld Pub., 1998), 171-2.

¹⁰¹ Pouzet, *Damas*, 255-60. Similar accusations of *zandaqa* occurred for suspicious doctrines in Damascus at the beginning of the 14th century, cf. *Ibid.*, 122-3.

¹⁰² Corbin, *En Islam iranien* —2— *Sohrawardī et les Platoniciens de Perse*, 15-6.

¹⁰³ Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 97-8; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 379; cf. Persian trans. Tabrīzī, 461. This is absent from Yāqūt's *Mu'jam*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's 'Uyūn, and Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt*.

«used to call Abū al-Futūḥ the messenger of God (*rasūl Allāh*)». ¹⁰⁴ Al-Suhrawardī did reply affirmatively to the jurists regarding the possibility of another prophet. On the doctrinal level, the consequence of his answer was a rejection of the absolute character of Muḥammad's prophetic revelation. Moreover, his reply may have been interpreted as an indication of crypto-Shī'ism or worst of crypto-Ismā'ilism. ¹⁰⁵ In his *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, al-Suhrawardī prays for the coming of a «king (*sulṭān*), a defender (*nāṣir*), an illuminator (*munir*)» to guide the believers. ¹⁰⁶ In the political context that prevailed in Aleppo and its surroundings at the end of the 6th/12th century, any crypto-Shī'ī tendencies —easily interpreted as, or confused with Ismā'ilism— were of great consequence. For the religious leaders of Aleppo, it could imply the coming of another prophet. Although the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* is not one of the works for which he appears to have been incriminated, this could have easily been interpreted as an allusion to the hidden Imam of the Shī'īs. ¹⁰⁷

The religious nature of the accusations brought against al-Suhrawardī certainly exhibited sufficient threat to strict orthodox Sunnism to have him accused of *zandaqa*. Nonetheless, the sociopolitical context of Aleppo at this particular time had a definite impact on the outcome of the trial. It equally demonstrates the clout the religious class enjoyed in the political arena at defending Sunnī orthodoxy. ¹⁰⁸ Al-Suhrawardī's death served —in one way— to appease the religious class of Aleppo on whom the Ayyūbids depended for the legitimacy of their rule over the city, and whom al-Suhrawardī had —perhaps inadvertently— infuriated. Socially, debates were of the utmost importance for the learned elite as «the most purely agonistic form of interaction», in which the «honor» of individuals could be affirmed, strengthened or ruined. Furthermore, it was one of the ways for any newcomer to gain a good reputation. ¹⁰⁹ It had given al-Suhrawardī access to the Ayyūbid court.

¹⁰⁴ Landolt, H., «Suhrawardī's Tales of Initiation. Review Article», *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987), 475-86, esp. 481b-482a. Ibn Khallikān reports, on the basis of what said the theologian Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī who knew al-Suhrawardī, that the latter would have stated that, one-day, he would become the master of the world. This had become obvious to him from a dream, in which he saw himself drinking from the water of the oceans. Told that the dream might mean that he would be celebrated for his knowledge, al-Suhrawardī refused al-Āmidī's interpretation, cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 272 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 157).

¹⁰⁵ Many analogies can be traced between Ismā'ilī thought and al-Suhrawardī's views, cf. Landolt, «Suhrawardī's Tales of Initiation», 482 —a claim that al-Suhrawardī's own texts appear to disclaim, cf. *Ibid.*, 482b-483a.

¹⁰⁶ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, § 269, 251.3-8 (*Livre de la Sagesse*, 226-7).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Jambet's «Introduction» in Suhrawardī, *Le livre de la Sagesse*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Eddé, A.-M., «Les 'ulemas d'Alep de la fin du XIIe au milieu du XIIIe siècle», *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 37 (1988): 131-59, esp., 148; cf. Laoust, H., *Les schismes dans l'Islam* (Paris: Payot, 1965), 230-1.

¹⁰⁹ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 164, 164 n. 83.

More importantly, since there was no state or corporate bodies that promulgated correct doctrines, there always existed «struggles» over the capacity to define correct belief.¹¹⁰ As Chamberlain has tried to show, there were shaykhs who would «approach rulers especially to silence others through violence», and one such example of this type of social struggle amongst the learned elite are the accusations that were laid against al-Suhrawardī.¹¹¹

This tragic event may illustrate the balance of power that was struck between the ruling Ayyūbids, namely Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and the «turbaned» class of Aleppo, in spite of the relationship that was established between al-Suhrawardī and al-Malik al-Zāhir. Al-Suhrawardī having made mostly enemies for himself could not count on the intercession of powerful men or rulers who could, in some instances, make it possible to escape from a condemnation of death.¹¹² It seems that the «raison d'état» of the Ayyūbids was, in the end, mightier.

It is not improbable that al-Suhrawardī's end was precipitated by his involvement in political circles. Ziai argues that al-Suhrawardī tried to put into practice the political side of his «illuminative» philosophy which he is said «to have taught» to many leaders of the region.¹¹³ It is one thing to be commissioned to write a work for a ruler who would act as a patron, and it is quite another to actually engage in an overt political program of propagation of one's own political philosophy. The difficulty with Ziai's thesis lies mainly with the historical data that have survived and which do not corroborate such claims, in spite of the fact that al-Suhrawardī did associate with men of power and influence.¹¹⁴ This does not, however, preclude the existence of political implications of al-Suhrawardī's philosophy, as Ziai rightly points out.

¹¹⁰ Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 167-8, 171.

¹¹¹ A state of collusion can thus be instated between the learned elite (*a'yān*) and the members of the ruling groups, cf. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 172-3, 172 n. 132, 174-5.

¹¹² Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 173.

¹¹³ Ziai, «The Source and Nature of Authority», 322 n. 48; cf. Idem, «The Source and Nature of Authority: A Study of al-Suhrawardī's Illuminationist Political Doctrine», in Butterworth, C. E., ed., *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy. Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 294-334. [Cf. id., «The Source and Nature of Political Authority in Suhrawardī's Philosophy of Illumination», in *Proceedings of the Conference on the Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy* (1988)]; cf. Hossein Ziai, «al-Suhrawardī», *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 9 (1997), 782a-784b, esp. 782a.

¹¹⁴ Mashkūr's introduction to (Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad) Ibn Bībī's (d. ca. 1285) work does not provide any hard fact about the claims that Ziai makes. The Sufi mentioned in this work is not al-Suhrawardī, Shaykh al-Ishrāq, but rather al-Suhrawardī, a later mystic, cf. Ibn Bībī, *Akhbār-i Salājiqa-yi Rūm of Abi Bībī al-Munjama. With the Complete Text of Mukhtaṣar-i Saljūq-nāma-yi Ibn Bībī*, ed. and intr. Muḥammad Javād Mushktūr (Tehran: Kitāb Furūshī-yi Tihārān, 1350/1971), 93. The latter edition contains the text of the anonymous *Tārīkh Āl-i Saljūq dar Ānāṭūlī* and the *Musāmarat al-Akhbār*. No information is found in the primary sources such as the *Tārīkh Āl-i Saljūq dar Ānāṭūlī*, cf.

The only facts that can be corroborated are that al-Suhrawardī was requested to write a summary of the thought of the theosophers (*ḥukamā-i ilāhiyāt* or *fuḍalā-i ḥikmat*) for someone «deserving» named 'Imād, most probably Artuqid 'Imād al-Dīn, the son of Qarā Arslān.¹¹⁵ This certainly incriminated further al-Suhrawardī, as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had recently fought against the Artuqids before their submission into vassaldom. Biographers mention that al-Suhrawardī befriended al-Malik al-Zāhir, even being invited to the citadel, but nothing more regarding his political philosophy or his involvement in political intrigues.

There exists no historical data to corroborate the claim that Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymān Shāh, Saljuq of Anatolia, befriended al-Suhrawardī and commissioned him to write his *Partū-nāma*.¹¹⁶ In fact, this would be impossible if it were Ghiyāth al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Sulaymān Shāh who died in 557/1161, as al-Suhrawardī would have been but six years old,¹¹⁷ and still quite impossible if it were Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymān Shāh, in Anatolia, since he ruled after al-Suhrawardī's death, from 594/1197 to 601/1204.¹¹⁸ Neither is there any historical fact to claim that al-Suhrawardī was at the court of the Saljuq 'Alā al-Dīn Kay-Qubād.¹¹⁹ This would again be impossible as he ruled in Anatolia between 617/1220 and 635/1237.¹²⁰ Furthermore, biographical sources do not warrant the claim that al-Suhrawardī was, in fact, and «advisor» of al-Malik al-Zāhir.¹²¹ It is perhaps more prudent to only affirm, as Morray does, that:

«Given the connections between at least the Banū al-'Adīm and the Ṣūfīs, the appearance of controversial thinkers like al-Suhrawardī could test the partnership of the ruler and the *muta'ammimūn* [i.e., the «turbaned» class]. But, while a wariness probably remained, there are no reports of any more confrontations like that between al-Suhrawardī and al-Zāhir. One of the reasons for this may have been a dearth of thinkers like al-Suhrawardī».¹²²

Ibid., 345 or the *Musāmarat al-Akhbār*, cf. *Ibid.*, 402-3. A translation of the *Mukhtaṣar* was made by H. W. Duda, *Die Seltschukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi* (Copenhagen, 1959). There is no mention of al-Suhrawardī in Talbot Rice's work on which depends M. J. Mushkūr's introduction, cf. Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), 61-4; cf. H. W. Duda, «Ibn Bibi», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 760a-761a.

¹¹⁵ Al-Suhrawardī, *Alwāḥ-i 'Imādī*, in *id.*, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 3, ed. S. H. Nasr (1970; 1977; Tehran: Mu'assasah-yi Muṭālī'āt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1372/1993), § 1, 110.12-111.1. This is absent of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *Uyūn*, 646.

¹¹⁶ Ziai, «The Source and Nature of Authority», 322 n. 48.

¹¹⁷ Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 186.

¹¹⁸ *Id.*, 213.

¹¹⁹ Ziai, «The Source and Nature of Authority», 322 n. 48.

¹²⁰ Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 213.

¹²¹ Ziai, «The Source and Nature of Authority», 338.

¹²² Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 142.

Furthermore, one report mentions that he had disciples or partisans whom, upon his death, «dispersed, and left him». ¹²³ Although the report is of a later date, it would, in a way, corroborate the fact that al-Suhrawardī with either his own disciples —i.e., as a Sufi shaykh— or his students —i.e., as a teacher of philosophy, jurisprudence, or theology— would have started to represent a threat to the religious class of Aleppo. According to Sbath, the works of al-Suhrawardī were still read in Aleppo, at the end of the 7th/13th century. ¹²⁴ There was no way the religious leaders of Aleppo would let al-Suhrawardī remain amongst them.

THE FINAL MOMENTS

In the end, al-Suhrawardī is said to have learned from al-Malik al-Zāhir that he would be imprisoned, deprived of food and drink until death arrives. Some accounts report that this is what occurred. Yāqūt, however, reports that al-Zāhir ordered his execution by strangulation, at the age of 38 (36 solar years) lunar years:

This [news] reached al-Shihāb, and he asked al-Zāhir to be imprisoned and be deprived of food and drink till he dies. So, this is what was done. However, it is said that al-Zāhir ordered him to be strangled in his cell. He was strangled in the year 587/1191. ¹²⁵

Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a omits al-Zāhir's order for his strangulation, and adds a report by the shaykh Sadīd al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar who said, «when the news of his execution reached our shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn al-Māridīnī, he said to us, "Didn't I use to say that to you about him before"», having ominous foresight about al-Suhrawardī's tragic end. ¹²⁶ Ibn Khallikān reports, that based on the historical work of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), ¹²⁷ Ibn Shaddād had said that:

¹²³ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 273 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 157-8).

¹²⁴ Sbath, P., «Choix de livres qui se trouvaient dans les bibliothèques d'Alep (au XIII^e siècle)», *Mémoires présentés à l'Institut d'Égypte* 49 (1946): IX-XI, 1-123, esp. 69, 71, 88, 93, 101.

¹²⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19, 316. Al-Shahrazūrī establishes that the date of his death was in 1190, cf. al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, 463. Amin Razavi reports wrongly that al-Suhrawardī was killed in 1178, 1181, or, according to Ibn Taghrībirdī (in his *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*) in 1208, cf. Razavi, M. A., «Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge» (Ph. D. Diss., Temple University, 1989), 11, 46 and Idem, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination* (London: Curzon, 1996), 2, 7.

¹²⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642.

¹²⁷ Cahen, C., «Ibn al-Djawzī», *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3 (1971), 752b-753a.

On Friday, the 29th of *dhū al-hijjah*, 587 [January 17, 1192]¹²⁸ after prayer time, the corpse of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī was carried out of the prison of Aleppo, and all the partisans of that man dispersed and left him.¹²⁹

In fact, Ibn Shaddād actually wrote that al-Suhrawardī, like al-Ḥallāj, was «hung upon a cross for several days; then, he was killed».¹³⁰ This is yet another instance where biographical reports differ regarding similar historical facts. Al-Shahrazūrī writes that the real cause of his death is not certain, since some sources say that he died of deprivation of food, others that he starved himself to death, still others that he was strangled, and others that he was killed with a sword; moreover, it is even reported that he was thrown off the walls of the citadel and set on fire.¹³¹

Reports of al-Malik al-Zāhir's reaction, however, might be indicative of the real tragedy of these events. Soon after the death of al-Suhrawardī, al-Zāhir regretted the fact that he had been forced into having al-Suhrawardī executed. He took revenge on those who had issued the decree for al-Suhrawardī's death, apprehended them, arrested them, made their lives miserable, and confiscated from them a great sum of money.¹³² Al-Malik al-Zāhir, although a young ruler, might have come to understand the real motives behind the religious class' accusations, and to which he had been the instrumental hand that sealed al-Suhrawardī's fate. It might have been al-Malik al-Zāhir's religious inclinations and his sympathy for religious men that motivated his later reaction. According to Morray:

The Suhrawardī affair had been at the beginning of his rule, when he [al-Malik al-Zāhir] was young and inexperienced enough to be in awe of the orthodox '*ulamā*'. By the summer of 1201, though, as we have seen, when he thought he was dying, he summoned a group of the '*awliyā*' to the citadel to obtain their blessing.¹³³

This, however, could in no way change the course of things past.

¹²⁸ This is not reported in Ibn Shaddād's *Nawādir*. Ibn Khallikān also rejects the reports which place the date of his death in 1163 or after January 1192.

¹²⁹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 273 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 157-8).

¹³⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, 10 ('*Saladīn*', 11); cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 273 (*Ibn Khallikan's*, 4, 158).

¹³¹ Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat*, ed. Spies, 98; cf. ed. Shuwayrib, 380; cf. Persian trans. Tabrizī, 461.

¹³² Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 19, 316; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, '*Uyūn*', 644.

¹³³ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 142.

ABSTRACT

Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's life is obscure. Some clues regarding his studies, travels and encounters are found in short biographical notices of the 12th and 13th centuries. These notices can provide the means to sketch al-Suhrawardī's biography: his early life, his coming to Aleppo, the mounting opposition of the ulemas of Aleppo, and the final moments that led to his tragic death. The sociopolitical context of Aleppo provides a good framework for the interpretation of the data provided by the biographers. All these biographical works are, however, of relative reliability. Even the most contemporary texts are in fact not devoid of erroneous elements.

RESUMEN

La vida de Šihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī es oscura. Datos aislados referentes a sus estudios, viajes y contactos se encuentran en breves noticias de los diccionarios biográficos de los siglos XII y XIII. Estas noticias permiten esbozar una biografía de al-Suhrawardī desde sus comienzos hasta la oposición de que fue objeto por parte de los ulemas de Alepo y su trágica muerte, interpretada en el marco y el contexto de la ciudad. Todo este material de los diccionarios biográficos es sólo relativamente fidedigno e incluso los textos contemporáneos incluyen datos erróneos.