

REINTERPRETING THE ISLAMIC SUFI CALENDAR: THE SCIENCE OF LETTERS IN THE HIJRI CALENDAR BETWEEN ṬARĪQAH QĀDIRIYAH AND ṬARĪQAH QĀDIRIYAH NAQSHBANDIYAH

Waryani Fajar Riyanto

Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought. Universitas
Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga. Depok, Sleman. 55281.
Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. Indonesia.

Email:
waryani.riyanto@uin-
suka.ac.id

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Abstract

There are twelve names of the months in the Islamic Hijrī Calendar, i.e., Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, Rabīʿ al-Ākhir, Jumād al-Ūlā, Jumād al-Ākhir, Rajab, Shaʿbān, Ramaḍān, Syawwāl, Dhū al-Qaiʿdah, and Dhū al-Hijjah. Although this is an exhaustively discussed topic, it is quite rare to analyze it using the perspective of the Science of Letters (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī*). Two reputable Sufi *ṭarīqah* that interpreted the meanings in Sufism of every letter composing the names of the *Hijrī* months are Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah (TQ) and Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah (TQN), respectively represented by Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (Jīlānī) and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Gaos Sayfullāh Maslūl (Gaos). In light of this, the current paper discusses the comparison between TQ and TQN by exploring Jīlānī and Gaos' thoughts on the Science of Letters in the Hijrī Calendar. This article employed a qualitative approach and utilised original data sources from the treatises of Jīlānī, titled *al-Ghunyah*, and from Gaos, titled *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr*. This study is distinctive as four methods were used in its analyses, i.e., comparison, the Science of Letters (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī*), mystical trio relations (Allāh-Muḥammad-

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Mu'min/Rajab-Sha'bān-Ramaḍān), and triangulation of experts in Sufi thoughts. This article proposes an Islamic Sufi Calendar based on the Science of Letters in the Hijrī Calendar. The findings of this study have implications for a deeper understanding of the Sufi meanings behind the names of Hijrī months.

Keywords: Jīlānī; Gaos; Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah (TQ); Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah Naqshbandiyah (TQN); Islamic Calendar (Hijrī Months); Science of Letters (*ʿIlm al-Hurūfī*).

Khulasah

Terdapat dua belas nama bulan dalam Kalendar Islam Hijrah, iaitu Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, Rabīʿ al-Ākhir, Jumād al-Ūlā, Jumād al-Ākhir, Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramaḍān, Syawwal, Dhū al-Qa'dah, dan Dhū al-Hijjah. Walaupun sering diperkatakan, topik ini jarang dipelajari dari sudut Ilmu Huruf (*ʿIlm al-Hurūfī*). Dua tarekat sufi terkenal yang telah menjelaskan makna sufi bagi setiap huruf yang membentuk nama bulan Hijrah ialah Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah (TQ) dan Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah Naqshbandiyah (TQN), masing-masing melalui Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (Jīlānī) dan Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Gaos Sayfullāh Maslūl (Gaos). Oleh itu, artikel ini membincangkan perbandingan antara TQ dan TQN, melalui pemikiran Jīlānī dan Gaos, mengenai Ilmu Huruf Hijriah. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, artikel ini menggunakan sumber data asli daripada buku Jīlānī bertajuk *al-Ghunyah* dan daripada Gaos bertajuk *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr*. Makalah ini berbeza kerana dianalisa menggunakan empat kaedah iaitu perbandingan, Ilmu Persuratan (*ʿIlm al-Hurūfī*), hubungan trilogi mistik (Allāh-Muḥammad-Mu'min/Rajab-Sha'bān-Ramaḍān), dan triangulasi pakar pemikiran sufi. Makalah ini mencadangkan Kalendar Sufi Islam berdasarkan Ilmu Huruf Hijriah. Dapatan kajian ini memberi implikasi kepada kajian sufi tentang pengertian nama-nama bulan Hijriah.

Kata kunci: Jilānī; Gaos; Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah (TQ); Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah (TQN); Kalendar Islam (*Hijrī* Months); Ilmu Huruf (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūf*).

Introduction

The names of the months in the Islamic Hijrī Calendar are widely known by the majority of Muslims throughout the world. There is even a discourse to develop a Hijrī Calendar unification.¹ Yet, very few know about the secrets behind the names of the months in the Islamic Hijrī Calendar, let alone the Sufi meanings of every letter that the names comprise.² The twelve names of the Hijrī months that are written using the unvoweled Arabic script (*ḥurūf hijāʾiyyah*) are Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, Rabīʿ al-Ākhir, Jumād al-Ūlā, Jumād al-Ākhir, Rajab, Shaʿbān, Ramaḍān, Syawwāl, Dhū al-Qaʿdah, and Dhū al-Ḥijjah.³ The naming of these months was based on the migration (*hijrah*) of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah.⁴ The origin of the names of Hijrī months is traced

¹ Abdul Mufid & Thomas Djamaluddin, "The Implementation of New Minister of Religion of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore Criteria Towards the *Hijri* Calendar Unification," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(1) (2023), 1-8; Syamsul Anwar, "Kalender Islam Global Sebagai Pemersatu Dunia Islam: Perspektif *Maqasid Shari'a*," Paper Presented at the Event MUDAI (Muslim Waseda Indonesia) Expert Talk, March 14, 2021, via zoom.

² Ibrahim Zein & Ahmed el-Wakil, "On the Origins of the *Hijri* Calendar: A Multi-Faceted Perspective Based on the Covenants of the Prophet and Specific Date Verification," *Religions* 12(42) (2021), 1-22.

³ David McNaughton, "A Universal Islamic Calendar," *Hamdrad Islamicus* 20(1) (1997), 77-85.

⁴ The Hijrī Calendar is said to have been adopted by ʿUmar bin al-Khaṭṭāb during his Caliphate despite evidence suggesting that it was instituted as soon as the Prophet emigrated to Madīnah. The Hijrī Calendar was adopted only six years after the death of the Prophet, as we shall see later. The Christian calendar began to be used among Christians some nine hundred years after the birth of Prophet ʿIsā, the date from which it is dated. See, A. Jusran Kasim et al.,

back to astronomy (science of *falak*) and the history of the Arabs.⁵ Indeed, each letter that makes up the names of the Hijrī months holds Sufism meanings that were revealed by Sufis.⁶ The Sufism revelation in the meaning of each letter in the names of the Hijrī months can serve as a spiritual basis for Muslims to better contemplate and internalise upon significant religious events they celebrate each month.⁷

Existing studies regarding the meaning of letters in the Sufi perspective can be categorised into three schools. First, the study of letters in the *ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī* initiated by Astarābādī and his successors, such as studies by Mir-Kasimov Orkhan (2015),⁸ Saadet Shikhiyeva (2021),⁹ and Khatira Guliyeva (2022).¹⁰ Second, the study of letters in the Science of Letters (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī*) school of thought brought by Sufis, like Annemarie Schimmel's study in

"Determination of *Hijri* Calendar in Islamic History and Its Criteria in Southeast Asia," *Journal of al-Tamaddun* 19(1) (2024), 247-259.

⁵ Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin & Ahmad Luqman Hakim, "NGOs Contestation on Islamic Hijri Calendar in Urban Muslim Society in Indonesia: From Authority to Identity," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 27(2) (2022), 171-181.

⁶ Abdul Mufid et al., "Interpretation of Yusuf al-Qaradawi Method's to the Crescent Hadith and Urgency of Calendar Unification: A Literature Review," *Solid State Technology* 63(2) (2020), 1-13.

⁷ Faiz Farichah, "The Java Calendar and Its Relevance with the Islamic Calendar," *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 2(2) (2020), 214-241.

⁸ Mir-Kasimov Orkhan, *Words of Power: Hurufi Teachings between Shi'ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam in the Original Doctrine of Fadlullah Astarabadi* (n.p: The Institute of Ismaili Studies & I.B. Tauris, 2015).

⁹ Saadet Shikhiyeva, "Ibn 'Arabi's Science of Letters and Differences of Ideas in *Hurufi* Order," *International Journal of Islamic Sufism* 2(1) (2021), 52-62.

¹⁰ Khatira Guliyeva, "The Principles of the Letter System of *Hurufism* and a Philosophical Look at the Regional Identity and Pseudonym of Imadeddin Nesimi," *Kaygi* 21(1) (2022), 432-447.

various letter symbolism in Sufi literature (1975),¹¹ Gerhard Böwering on Sulamī's science of the letters (2012),¹² Denis Gril (2004)¹³ and Dunja Rašić (2021)¹⁴ on Ibn 'Arabī's science of letters,¹⁵ Ahmad Shofi Muhyiddin (2015) on the theosophical perspective of letters,¹⁶ and Waryani Fajar Riyanto (2021) on *ta'wil* sufism perspective of letters.¹⁷

The third category proposes the study of letters in a new school of thought, i.e., the Science of Letters in the Hijrī Calendar, by comparing Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah (TQ) and Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah (TQN) via the thoughts of Jīlānī and Gaos. The reason is that the symbolic

¹¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 411-425.

¹² Gerhard Böwering, *Sulamī's Treatise on the Science of the Letters* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹³ Denis Gril, "The Science of Letters," in *The Meccan Revelations by Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz (New York: Pir Press, 2004), 105-220.

¹⁴ Dunja Rašić, *The Written World of God: The Cosmic Script and the Art of Ibn 'Arabi* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2021).

¹⁵ Muḥy al-Din Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2010), 2:198; Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitāb Mabādi' al-Ghāyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1990); Claude Addas & Michel Chodkiewicz, "On Two Books Attributed to Ibn 'Arabi: *Kitāb al-Mabādi' wa al-Ghāyāt li Ma'ānī al-Ḥurūf* and *Kitāb Māhiyat al-Qalb*," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 62(1) (2017), 1-8; Ibn 'Arabi, *The Book of Alif (Kitāb al-Alif)*, *The Book of the Letter Ba' (Kitāb al-Bā')*. See also Hülya Küçük & Stephen Hirtenstein, "Ibn 'Arabi's *Kitāb al-Ba'*: The Truth through Which the Heavens and the Earth were Created," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 65(1) (2019), 1-27--; *The Book of Mim, Waw and Nun (Kitāb al-Mīm wa al-Wāwu wa al-Nūn)*, and *The Book of Majesty (Kitāb al-Jalālah)*; Henri Corbin, "Imagination Creatrice et Priere Creatrice dans le Soufisme d'Ibn Arabi," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 2(5) (1965), 171-180.

¹⁶ Ahmad Shofi Muhyiddin, *Rahasia Huruf Hiji's'iyya: Membaca Huruf 'Arabiya dengan Kacamata Teosofi* (Yogyakarta: Lingkar Media, 2015).

¹⁷ Waryani Fajar Riyanto, *Takwil Huruf Perspektif Sufistik* (Yogyakarta: Laksbang Pustaka, 2021).

meanings of the letters in the names of the Hijrī months have received little scholarly attention, except by these two individuals, who are the *murshid* of TQ and TQN, respectively. As for existing studies on TQ and TQN, they only focused on topics such as history, education, Sufism healing, neo-Sufism, radicalism, politics, and regional studies.¹⁸ None has examined the Science of Letters in the *Hijrī* Calendar by comparing TQ and TQN. Accordingly, the current paper discusses the comparison between TQ and TQN by analysing the thoughts of Jīlānī and Gaos regarding the Science of Letters (*ʿIlm al-Ḥurūf*) in the *Hijrī* Calendar.

This paper employed the document study method in qualitative research.¹⁹ The research data are divided into primary and secondary data. There are two primary research data. First, two treatises by Jīlānī titled *al-*

¹⁸ See, Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqshbandiyya di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994); Sri Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat Qadiriyya Naqshbandiyya dengan Referensi Utama Suryalaya* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2010); Ihsan Kamaludin & Maya Najihatul Ula, "Sufism Healing Method for Drugs Rehabilitation: A Case Study in PP. Suryalaya Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 23(2) (2019), 384-401; Budi Rahman Hakim, "Actualization of Neo-Sufism: A Case Study of the *Tariqa Qadiriyya Naqshbandiyya* Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya" Doctoral Thesis, Tilburg University, 2020; Maghfur Ahmad et al., "The Sufi Order Against Religious Radicalism in Indonesia." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(4) (2021), 1-11; Mukhammad Zamzami et al., "*Tariqa* and Politics in Indonesia: Contested Authority between *Murshids* in the *Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* in East Java During the New Order Era," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 12(2) (2022), 187-208; Rubaidi et al., "Resisting the Surge of Salafism among Malay and Javanese Muslims: The Dynamics of the *Ṭarīqa Naqshbandiyya* and *Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* in Promoting Peaceful Islam in Riau Sumatera," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 13(1) (2023), 1-31.

¹⁹ Glenn Bowen, "Document Analysis as A Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9(2) (2009), 27-40.

*Ghunyah li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn*²⁰ and *Sirr al-Asrār wa Maẓhar al-Anwār fī mā Yaḥtāju Ilayhi al-Abrār*.²¹ The first treatise was translated and commented on in English by Holland under the title *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth and Religion*.²² As for the second treatise, it was translated and commented on by Halveti, titled *The Secret of Secrets*.²³ Second, treatises by Gaos titled *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr li Ṭālibī Riqā al-Rabb al-Ghaḥūr*²⁴ and *al-Fikrah al-Jadīdah fī Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr annahā min Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*.²⁵ The first treatise was translated into two Indonesian language versions by Alba and Mubarak, respectively. Mubarak named his translation *Bulan Hijri Dalam Bingkai Tasawuf (Hijri month in the frame of Sufism)*.²⁶

The secondary data in this research were obtained from authoritative, latest, and relevant literary sources. This paper employs four analytical methods: comparison, Science of Letters, mystical triological relations (Allah-Muhammad-Mu'min/Rajab-Sha'bān-Ramaḍān), and triangulation of experts in Sufi thought. The data were then categorized in a thematic and structured manner based on

²⁰ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunyah li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1905).

²¹ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār wa Maẓhar al-Anwār fī mā Yaḥtāju Ilayhi al-Abrār* (Cairo: Dār al-Sanābil, 1994).

²² 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth [al-Ghunyah li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn]* Vol. 1-5, trans. Muhtar Holland (Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc, 2008).

²³ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *The Secret of Secrets*, trans. Tosun Bairak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2014).

²⁴ Muḥammad 'Abd al-Gaos Sayfullāh al-Maslūl al-Qādirī al-Naqshabandī, *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr li Ṭālibī Riqā al-Rabb al-Ghaḥūr* (Ciamis: Maktabat Jagat 'Arsh, 2017).

²⁵ Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Gaos Sayfullāh al-Maslūl al-Qādirī al-Naqshabandī, *al-Fikrah al-Jadīdah fī Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr annahā min Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā* (Ciamis: Maktabat Jagat 'Arsh, 2020).

²⁶ Husni Nur Mubarak, *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr: Bulan Hijri Dalam Bingkai Tasawuf* (Ciamis: Sirnarasa Publishing, 2022).

the acquired information. This categorization was made to fulfil the study's objectives. Ultimately, the data are presented in conceptual themes as new research findings.

The Science of Letters ('*Ilm al-Ḥurūfī*') in the Sufis' Thoughts

At a very early stage of Sufism, the mystics detected the secret meaning hidden within the different letters, and the detached groups of letters found at the beginning of twenty-nine Quranic *sūras*²⁷ inspired them to produce symbolic allegorical explanations. Most prominent Sufis had discussed the topic extensively.²⁸ This trend in Sufism and early Shi'a was developed by a Shi'a group known as the *Ḥurūfism* (those who deal with the letters).²⁹ *Ḥurūfism* asserts that believes in the inner meanings of Arabic letters and connects the secrets of the world to these letters. *Ḥurūfism* can be divided into two main schools.³⁰ First, '*Ilm al-Ḥurūfī*' from Shi'ism and second, '*Ilm al-Ḥurūfī*' from Sufism.³¹

²⁷ Twenty-nine chapters (*surah*) of the Quran begin with the disjointed letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta'āt*). These fourteen letters of the Arabic alphabet thus became known as the "openers of the chapters" (*fawātiḥ al-suwar*). Dunja Rašić, "Summoned Letters: The Disjointed Letters and the Talisman of Ibn 'Arabi," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 12(2) (2023), 167-181.

²⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 411.

²⁹ Hellmut Ritter, "Studien zur Geschichte der Islamischen Frömmigkeit: Die Anfänge der Hurufisekte," *Oriens* 2(7) (1954), 1-54.

³⁰ In many contexts, the Arabic word *ḥarf* means 'a letter of the alphabet.'

³¹ The 'science of letters,' together with the 'science of numbers', constitutes one of the most fundamental aspects of the *Ḥurūfī* theory of metaphysical language. The science of letters occupies an important place in the medieval Islamic intellectual tradition, where it evolved along various lines and within various currents, such as practical magic, alchemy, philosophy, and mysticism. The medieval literature related to the science of letters is vast, and even a short mention of its central figures and tendencies would exceed the limits of this introduction. For a general outline and further references, see

The key figure and founder of the first school of thought, *ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī* in Shi'ism, was Astarābādī (1339-1394).³² His followers included Parsis and Turkish poets and writers, wherein one of the notable poets among them was Nasīmī (d. 1417).³³ Astarābādī was arguably one of the

the chapter of D. Gril, "Les Illuminations de la Mecque," in *Ibn 'Arabi*, ed. by M. Chodkiewicz (Paris: Sindbad, 1988), 385-438; P. Lory, *La Science des Lettres en Islam* (Paris: Dervy, 2004); K.M. al-Shaybī, *al-Ṣīlah bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyū'* (n.p.: Beirut, 1982), 2:165-174; M. Melvin Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Sa'in al-Din Turka Isfahani (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran" (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 2012), 171-314; M. Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn 'Arabi, and the Isma'ili Tradition* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 77-122.

³² Orkhan, *Words of Power*, 12-20; Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "Etude de Textes Hurufi Anciens: L'oeuvre Fondatrice de Fadlullah Astarabadi," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (2007), 247-260; Fatih Usluer, "Fadlullah al-Hurufi and His World: Power, Religion, and Sufism," *Belleten* 21(2) (2021), 463-505; Kazem Musavi Bojnurdi, "Fadlullah Hurufi Astarabadi," in *Encyclopedia Islamica* (London: Brill, 2018), 6: 636-646. The main modern sources on Faḍlullāh's early life are Ritter, "Studien zur Geschichte der Islamischen Frömmigkeit: Die Anfänge der Hurufisekte," *Oriens* 7(1) (1954), 1-54; Ṣādiq Kiyā, *Vāzhanāma yi Gurgānī: Dānishgāh-i Tehrān* (Tehran: n.pb., 1990); Shahzad Bashir, *Fadlullah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); Ya'qūb Āzhand, *Hurūfiya dar Tārīkh* (Tehran: n.pb., 2000); 'Abdulbāqī Golpınarlı, *Hurufilik Metinleri Katalogu* (Ankara: TTK, 1989); Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "Fadlullah Astarabadi: Unity in Diversity," in *Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Fatih Usluer, *Hurufilik: İlk Elden Kaynaklarla Doguşundan İtibaren* (Istanbul: Kbalci, 2009).

³³ Guliyeva, "The Principles of the Letter System of Hurufism," 432-447; Maryam Seyidbeyli & Roya Mirzabayova, "Fadlullah Nasimi (1339-1417): The Founder of Hurufi Movement," *Journal of History of Science and Science of Science* 2(6) (2023), 21-32; Nasimi (d. 1417), the famous poet and legendary figure, especially in the Turkic world was, during a certain period, one of the closest followers of Fadlullah Astarabadi, the founder of the Hurufi movement. For the general information about Nasimi, see F. Babinger, "Nesimi," *EI2*,

most influential messianic leaders to emerge in Iran, during a critical period between the disintegration of the Mongol Ilkhanate and the rise of the Safawid dynasty. The name *Hurūfiyah* is generally used in external sources for the followers of Astarābādī. However, at least in his major work, the *Jāwidān-nāma-yi kabīr* (The Great Book of Eternity),³⁴ Astarābādī does not seem to apply any specific name to his doctrine.³⁵

The second school, *ʿIlm al-Ḥurūfī*, in Sufism, comprised great Shaykhs such as Maʾrūf Karkhī (d. 815), Dhunnūn al-Miṣrī (d. 859), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896),³⁶

vol. 8, 8, and A. Gölpınarlı, "Nesīmī," in *İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1960), 9:206-207. A more detailed account on his life and works can be found in Zindagī A. Mirfetrus, *Ashʿār wa ʿAqāʾid al-Nasīmī: Shāʿir wa Mutafakkir al-Ḥurūfī* (Stockholm: I.B. Tauris, 1992); Kathleen R. F. Burrill, *The Quatrains of Nesimi: Fourteenth-Century Turkic Hurufi* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972); B. S. Amoretti, "Caratteristiche Hurufite del Divano Persiano di Nesimi," *Studi Iranici* 17(1) (1977), 267-285. For Nasīmī's influence in the Arab world, see H.T. Norris, "Aspects of the Influence of Nasimi's Hurufi Verse, and His Martyrdom in the Arab East between the 16th and 18th Centuries," in *Syncretismes et Hérésies dans L'Orient Seldjoukide et Ottoman (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle)*, ed. by G. Veinstein (Paris: Peeters Pub and Booksellers, 2005), 163-182, and see L. Massignon, *On Nasimi as a Figure of Hallajian Legend: La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallaj* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 2:261-268.

³⁴ Edward G. Browne, "Some Notes on the Literature and Doctrines of the Hurufi Sect," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1(1) (1898), 61-94.

³⁵ Astarābādī taught that Adam had been given nine letters; Abraham, fourteen; Muḥammad, twenty-eight; and that he himself was honored with the knowledge of 32 letters (the four additional letters of the Persian version of the Arabic alphabet). Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 412-413; Orkhan, *Words of Power*, 1.

³⁶ Sahl al-Tustarī, *Risālah al-Ḥurūf* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1974); See Michael Ebstein & Sara Sviri, "The So-Called *Risalat al-Huruf* (Epistle on Letters) Ascribed to Sahl al-Tustari and Letter Mysticism in Andalus," *Journal Asiatique* 299(1) (2011), 213-270.

Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 909), al-Ḥallāj (d. 922),³⁷ Ibn Masarra (d. 931),³⁸ Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 945), Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988),³⁹ Sulamī (d. 1021),⁴⁰ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), Abū Madyan (d. 1198), al-Būnī (d. 1225),⁴¹ Shahāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234), Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240),⁴² and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), who precise contributions to the spread of the Science of Letters. Ibn Khaldūn brought the Science of Letters to the world of Sufism and emphasised that it is a science based on the secrets of Asmā *al-Ḥusnā*. Explaining their close connection with the creation of man, he showed that letters,

³⁷ Ḥusayn bin Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, *The Tawasin*, trans. ‘Aishah ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: al-Tarjūmanā, 2010).

³⁸ Ibn Masarra, *Kitāb Khawāṣṣ al-Ḥurūf* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1975). See Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn ‘Arabi and the Sufis* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014), 100-1. For a fuller description of Ibn Masarra’s treatment of the letters and a comparison with the Shi’i tradition, see Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 77-122; See also Garrido-Clemente, *Pilar, El Inicio de La Ciencia de las Letras en el Islam: La Risala al-Ḥuruf del Sufi Sahl al-Tustari* (Madrid: Mandala Ediciones, 2010); Garrido-Clemente, “The Science of Letters in Ibn Masarra: Unified Word, Unified World,” *JMIAS* 47(2) (2010), 47-61.

³⁹ Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd & Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Baghdād: n.pb., 1960), 124-5.

⁴⁰ Gerhard Böwering, “The Interpretation of the Arabic Letters in Early Sufism: Sulamī’s *Sharh Ma‘ani al-Huruf*,” in *The Spirit and the Letter: Approaches to the Esoteric Interpretation of the Quran*, ed. Annabel Keeler & Sajjad H. Rizvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 372-5, 87-142, See Böwering, “Sulamī’s Treatise on the Science of the Letters,” 12-13.

⁴¹ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad bin ‘Alī al-Būnī, *Shamsh al-Ma‘ārif wa Laṭā‘if al-‘Awārif* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 2000).

⁴² See, Saadet Shikhiyeva, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Science of Letters and Hurufi Thought,” in *East and West: Common Spiritual Values, Scientific Cultural Link* (Istanbul: Insan Publications, 2009), 305-332; Shikhiyeva, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Science of Letters,” 52-62; Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, II: 131-33; Ibn ‘Arabī, “Kitāb al-Mīm wa al-Wāw wa al-Nūn,” in *Ibn ‘Arabi: Le Livre du Mim, du Waw et du Nun*, trans. and ed. by Charles-André Gilis (Beirut: Albouraq, 2022), 74-75.

like man, consist of four elements. That is, he divides the letters into four parts: fire, air, earth, and water letters.⁴³

The Science of Letters was then developed by figures in *Ṭarīqah* Sufi. For instance, Jilānī told the story about the time Prophet 'Īsā was sent by his mother to take lessons at the elementary school (*kuttāb*). When the teacher told him to say: "In the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate (*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*)," Prophet 'Īsā said: "Do you know what *Bismi* (*Allāh*) stands for?" "I have no idea," the teacher replied, so the child went on to explain: "The letter *bā'* stands for *Bahā Allāh* (the Beautiful Majesty of Allāh), the letter *sīn* stands for *Sanā Allāh* (the Splendid Exaltation of Allāh), and the letter *mīm* stands for *Mamlakatuhu* (His Mighty Kingdom)."⁴⁴

The Bektashi *Ṭarīqah* found secrets in the word *ṭarīqat* (mystical Path): *tā'* = *ṭalab al-ḥaqq al-ḥaqqīyat* (seeking of Reality and Truth), *rā'* = *riyāḍat* (ascetic discipline), *yā'*; *yal'ū al-dīn kardesi* (complete loyalty to a spiritual brother), *qāf* = *qanā'at* (contentment), and *tā'* = *taslīm al-tāmm* (complete submission).⁴⁵ When someone asked Jilānī about the meaning of the term '(spiritual) pauper' (*faqīr*), he said: "In the letters, it is written with the letters: *fā'*, *qāf*, *yā'*, *rā'*." The initial *fā'*, of the *faqīr* represents his absorption (*fanā'*) in his essence, and his detachment (*farāgh*) from his description and his attributes. The *qāf* represents the strength (*quwwah*) of his heart in (its dedication to) his Beloved, and his commitment (*qiyām*) to Allah for the sake of His good pleasure. The *yā'* shows that he pins his hope (*yarjū'*) on Him, and fears (*yakhāfu*) Him, and performs (*yaqūmu*) his duty as true devotion demands. The *rā'* represents the refinement (*riqqa*) of his heart and

⁴³ Zilola Amonova et al., "The Teachings of Hurufism and Nasimi's Poetic Skills," *E3S Web of Conferences* 538, (05037) (2024), 1-8.

⁴⁴ Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth*, 2:81.

⁴⁵ John K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Reprint, 1965), 100.

its purity, and its return (*rujū'*) to Allah from its carnal desires.⁴⁶

According to Jīlānī, in Arabic, the word *taṣawwuf* consists of four consonants: *tā'*, *ṣād*, *wāw*, and *fā'*. The first letter, *tā'*, symbolises *tawbah*, repentance. This is the first step to be taken by a disciple of *ṭarīqah*. The second stage is the state of peace and joy, *ṣafā'*. The letter *ṣād* is its symbol. In this stage, there are similarly two steps to take: the first is toward purity in heart and the second toward its secret centre. The third letter, *wāw*, symbolises *wilāyah*, which is the state of sanctity of the lovers and friends of Allah. The fourth letter, *fā'*, symbolises *fanā'*, the annihilation of self, the stage of nothingness. The false self subsequently melts and evaporates when divine attributes enter one's being. When the multiplicity of worldly attributes and personalities leaves, their place is taken by a single attribute of unity.⁴⁷ The Science of Letters used in names in this Sufism terminology was then used by Jīlānī as the *murshid* of Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah (TQ) and Gaos as the *murshid* of Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah (TQN) to explain the names of the months in the Islamic Calendar (*Hijrī* months).

Exploring Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah (Jīlānī) and Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah (Gaos)

The most elaborate life biography of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, which completely obscures his personality and presents him as a great miracle-monger, is *Bahjat al-Asrār*

⁴⁶ Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tadīfī, *Necklaces of Gems [Qalā'id al-Jawāhir]: A Biography of the Crown of the Saints of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, 2009), 319-320.

⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār wa Maḥzar al-Anwār fī mā Yaḥtāju ilayhi al-Abrār* (Cairo: Dār al-Sanābil, 1994), 76-79.

⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *The Secret of Secrets*, trans. Shaykh Tosun Bairak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2014), 40-44.

by al-Ṣaṭṭanawfī (d. 1314).⁴⁸ The shorter and still later notice of al-Dhahābī (d. 1348), edited and translated by Margoliouth,⁴⁹ is more valuable because he adopted a critical attitude and was sceptical of the more extravagant type of miracles ascribed to Jīlānī. Still later works include Yāfi'ī (d. 1367), *Khulaṣat al-Mafākhir fī Ikhtisār Manāqib al-Jīlānī*.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Gaos Sayfullāh Maslūl's life story was written by Amin and entitled *Suryalaya Bukan Panggung Sandiwara* (Suryalaya is not a stage for theatre play).⁵¹ Arguably, the most representative biography of Gaos is the work *Cahaya Medal ti Suku Syawal: Dari Sirnarasa untuk Peradaban Dunia* (From Sirnarasa for global civilisation).⁵²

Jīlānī was born in 1077 in Jīlān, Iran.⁵³ While Gaos was born in 1944 in Panjalu, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia.⁵⁴ There is a span of 867 years (nine centuries) between them. Muhammad 'Abd al-Gaos was the name given by his mother, whereas Sayf Allāh Maslūl was the name given by his teacher (Abah Anom) in 1980. Aos was a call name that Abah Anom had given him.⁵⁵ Jīlānī was

⁴⁸ Nūruddīn al-Ṣaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār wa Ma'dan al-Anwār* (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000); Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 320.

⁴⁹ D.S. Margoliouth, *Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani* (Paris: J.R.A.S. Press, 1907), 267-310.

⁵⁰ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 41.

⁵¹ Lidi Amin, *Suryalaya Bukan Panggung Sandiwara: Perjalanan Shaykh Muhammad 'Abd al-Gaos Sayfullah Maslul* (Semarang: Yayasan Lautan Tanpa Tepi, 2000).

⁵² Yusuf Abdushomad & Dadang Muliawan, *Cahaya Medal ti Suku Syawal: Dari Sirnarasa untuk Peradaban Dunia* (Ciamis: Yayasan Sirnarasa, 2018).

⁵³ John Renard, *The A to Z of Sufism* (Canada: Toronto the Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009).

⁵⁴ Hakim, "Actualization of Neo-Sufism," 232.

⁵⁵ Irfan Zidni Wahab, *al-Gauth al-Rabbānī fī al-Sulūk al-Ṣūfī* (Serpong: Maktabah Jagat 'Arsh, 2017), 151.

given two titles:⁵⁶ the Crown of Saints (*Ṣulṭān al-Awliyā'*) and the Pole of Poles (*Quṭb al-Aqtāb*).⁵⁷ Ibn 'Arabī holds Jīlānī in high esteem, because he regarded him as one of the Mounted Poles (*al-Aqtāb al-Rukbān*), the Leader of His Generation (*Imām al-'Aṣr*), and the Master of His Time (*Sayyid Waqtihi*), to whom he dedicated a whole 30 chapters in his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Gaos is recognized to bear nine titles, namely *Sayf Allāh al-Maslūl*, *al-Qādirī*, *al-Kāmil*, *al-Naqshabandī*, *al-Muwaffaq*, *al-Muttaqī*, *al-Mujaddid*, *al-Quṭb*, and *al-Ṣamadānī*.⁵⁹

Jīlānī's teachings, in the form of '*Qādiriyah* doctrine', were developed in *Tarīqah Qādiriyah*.⁶⁰ Shaykh 'Abd al-

⁵⁶ Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 19; Ibn Rajab, *al-Dayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanabilah* (Beirut: Dār Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 2; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimma al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Beirut: Dār Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000), 2:107; Khairuddīn al-Dharkalī, *al-'Ālam: Qāmīs Tarajīm li Ashhār al-Rijāl wa al-Nisā'* min al-'Arab wa al-Mustāribīn wa al-Mustashāriqīn (Beirut: Dār al-'Ulūm, 1970), 4:47.

⁵⁷ Pascal Held, *Baghdad During the Time of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani* (The United States of America: Gorgias Press LLC, 2022), 4-5.

⁵⁸ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, I:305, II:308, III:462; I:201, II:31-2, I:588, I:3, II:308, II:7-8; Abrahamov, *Ibn 'Arabī and the Sufis*, 151-155; William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn 'Arabi's Cosmology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 378.

⁵⁹ Maman Usman, "Komunikasi Spiritual Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Gaos Sayfullah Maslul al-Qadiri al-Naqshabandi al-Kamil," *Khazanah Sosial* 1(1) (2019), 61-69; Mubarak, *Bulan Hijri Dalam Bingkat Tasawuf*, xv-xvi.

⁶⁰ Held, *Baghdad During the Time of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani*, 3; Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), 255-276; Martin van Bruinessen, "Tarekat Qadiriya dan Ilmu Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani di India, Kurdistan, dan Indonesia," *Ulum al-Quran* 2(2) (1989), 66-77; Martin van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of Sufi Orders (*Tarekat*) in Southeast Asia," *Studia Islamika* 1(1) (1994), 1-23; Renard, *The A to Z of Sufism*, 19; A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2008), 85; Martin van Bruinessen, "Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the

Qādir al-Jīlānī (*Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah*), Shaykh Aḥmad al-Badawī (*Ṭarīqah Aḥmadiyah*), Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifāʾī (*Ṭarīqah Rifāʾiyah*), and Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Dusūqī (*Ṭarīqah Burhāmiyyah* / *Ṭarīqah Dusūqiyyah*) are the Four Mystical Poles (*al-Aqtāb al-Arbaʿah*).⁶¹ The concept of the spiritual pole (*al-quṭb*)⁶² already appeared in the formative period of Sufism,⁶³ as well as in classical Sufi texts such as Ḥujwīrī's (d. 1072) and the poetry and 'symbolic discourses' (*maqālāt ramziyyah*) attributed to Jīlānī.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Gaos is the current *murshid* of *Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah* Sirnarasa.⁶⁵ Gaos had studied under Abah Anom (Aḥmad Ṣāhib al-Wafā Taj al-ʿArifīn) (1956-2011).⁶⁶ Abah Anom was the direct pupil of Abah Sepuh (Ajengan Godebag) (1935-1956).⁶⁷ Abah Sepuh was the founder of the boarding school (*Pondok Pesantren* – PP) of Suryalaya, which incorporated teachings from the *Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah* (TQN), one of the

Qadiriya in Indonesia," *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1-2(1) (2000), 361-395; Imam Ghazali Said et al., "Venerating Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani in Indonesia and Turkiye," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 18(1) (2024), 1-26.

⁶¹ Rachida Chih & C. Mayeur-Jaouen, eds., *Sufism in the Ottoman Era* (Cairo: Institute Français d'archéologie Orientale, 2010), 19.

⁶² Manzoor Ahmad Bhat, "Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani: A Contemporaneous Appraisal," *Insight Islamicus* 2(2) (2007), 73-97.

⁶³ Fitzroy Morrissey, *Sufism and the Perfect Human: From Ibn 'Arabi to al-Jili* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 83.

⁶⁴ Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 30; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Dīwān 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, ed. Youssef Ziedan (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1920), 30; 'Alī al-Ḥujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Ṣūfism*, trans. R.A. Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1911), 438; Chih, *Sufism in Ottoman Egypt*, 112; 'Abdul 'Azīz Sukarnawadī, *al-Rudūd al-Marḍiyah 'alā Munkir al-Sādah al-Ṣūfiyyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah 'Ibād al-Raḥmān, 2011), 46-47; al-Tadīfī, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir*, 11-15.

⁶⁵ Ahmad Muchtar, "Pendidikan Tarekat Abah Gaos: Studi Pemikiran dan Karya Abah Gaos" (PhD Tesis, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019).

⁶⁶ Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat Qadiriya Naqshbandiya*, 44-46.

⁶⁷ Hakim, "Actualization of Neo-Sufism," 27-30.

most popular Sufi teachings in the Islamic world.⁶⁸ It was founded by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077-1166) — *Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah* — and Shaykh Bahā’uddīn Naqshaband (1318-1389) — *Ṭarīqah Naqshbandiyah* — in the 12th and 13th centuries.⁶⁹

Although Jīlānī had written numerous works, the five most prominent ones include *al-Ghunyāh li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn* (Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth and Religion),⁷⁰ *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī* (Jīlānī’s exegesis),⁷¹ *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* (Revelations of the Unseen),⁷² *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī* (The Sublime Revelation),⁷³ and *Sirr al-Asrār* (The Secret of Secrets).⁷⁴ Gaos is known as the most prolific author of works related to Abah Anom. He wrote his works in Arabic, and they have now been compiled in a single book entitled *Majmū’ah al-Rasā’il Sayf Allāh Maslūl* (The Collection of Sufi Matters) that incorporates three of Gaos’s works: *Faḍā’il al-Shuhūr li Ṭālib Riḍā al-Rabb al-Gafūr* (The Sufi Meaning of the Hijrī Months), *al-Fikrah al-Jadīdah fī Faḍā’il al-Shuhūr annahā*

⁶⁸ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqshbandiyya di Indonesia*, 20-21.

⁶⁹ Ranti Rachmawanti & Djarlis Gunawan, "Implementation of Cultural Products in Medical Practices at Pesantren Suryalaya, Tasikmalaya," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10 (2268389) (2023), 1-12.

⁷⁰ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunyāh li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1905); ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth [al-Ghunyā li al-Ṭālib Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn]* Vol. 1-5, trans. Muhtar Holland (Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc, 2008).

⁷¹ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī 30 Juz* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Ma’rūfiyāh, 2010).

⁷² Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-Gayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000).

⁷³ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī wa al-Fayḍ al-Raḥmānī* (Germany: Al-Kamel Verlag, 2007); ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *The Sublime Revelation [al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī]: A Collection of Sixty-Two Discourses*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, Inc, 2009).

⁷⁴ Al-Jīlānī, *The Secret of Secrets*.

min Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā (New Thoughts in the Virtues of the Month of the Good Names of Allah), *al-Sunan al-Marḍiyah fī al-'Amaliyah al-Murshidiyah* (The Traditions of the *Silsilah* of the *Qādiriyah Naqshbandiyah*), and *al-Faṭḥ al-Jalīl fī 'Alāmāt al-Murshid al-Kāmil* (The Criteria of a Perfect Shaykh).⁷⁵ Gaos also wrote non-classical books in Indonesian, such as *Menyambut Pecinta Kesucian Jiwa* (Welcome the Devotee of the Holiness of the Soul), *Lautan Tanpa Tepi* (Sea without Borders), and *Cintaku Hanya Untuk-Mu* (My Love is Only for You).⁷⁶

A Sufi Reinterpretation of the Twelve Hijrī Months: The *Ḥurūfī* Science of Time

From the perspective of Arabian history, the twelve names of the Hijrī months bear diverse profane meanings.⁷⁷ In the first month, Muḥarram means 'forbidden'; a sacred month in which war is prohibited. In the second month, Ṣafar refers to 'emptiness' or 'yellow', alluding to dry desert winds. The third month, Rabī' al-Awwal means 'first Spring'. The fourth month, Rabī' al-Ākhir means 'last Spring'. The fifth month, Jumād al-Ūlā refers to 'first freeze' or 'dry' or 'first Summer'. The sixth month, Jumād al-Ākhir refers to 'last freeze' or 'dry' or 'last Summer'. The seventh month, Rajab means 'to respect'. The Eighth month, Sha'bān means 'to spread and distribute' or 'undisturbed increase'. The ninth month, Ramaḍān means 'parched thirst'. The tenth month, Syawwāl means 'to be light and vigorous'. The eleventh month, Dhū al-Qa'dah

⁷⁵ The *Majmū'ah al-Rasā'il* is in the form of a *Kitāb Kuning* (yellow books used in *pesantrens*) and has been disseminated to traditional *pesantrens* all over Java.

⁷⁶ Hakim, "Actualization of Neo-Sufism," 144.

⁷⁷ Eugenio Garosi, "The Year According to the Arabs: The Rise of the Hijri-Era in the Context of the Administrative Structures in the Early Islamic Empire," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 34(4) (2023), 337-364.

means 'the month of rest'. Twelfth month, Dhū al-Hijjah means the 'month of Hajj'.⁷⁸

From the perspective of the Science of Letters, every letter that makes up the names of the Hijrī months has diverse spiritual meanings. Two *ṭarīqah* Sufis capable of explaining this in detail are Jīlānī and Gaos. However, Jīlānī only examined three names of the Hijrī months (*Rajab*, *Sha'bān*, *Ramaḍān*), while Gaos provided a detailed *hurūfī* interpretation of all twelve Hijrī month names, linking each letter to one of the *Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* and Sufi cosmology. Gaos correlated these letters with the 99 Names of Allah and the teachings of Sufism. According to a report (whose chain is debated among scholars), the Prophet reportedly explained to 'Uthmān bin 'Affān, the symbolic connections between Arabic letters and the Divine Names and when he was asked about *alif*, *bā'*, *tā'*, *thā'*, and so on,⁷⁹ through to the last of the letters: The letter *alif* comes from one of the Names of Allah, and the Name in question is Allah. The *bā'* comes from one of the Names of Allah, and the Name in question is *al-Bāri* (the Maker). The *tā'* comes from one of the Names of Allah, and the Name in question is *al-Mutakabbir* (the Majestic). The *thā'* comes from two of the Names of Allah, and the Names in

⁷⁸ Kathy Black et al., eds., "The Islamic Calendar," in *Rhythms of Religious Ritual: The Yearly Cycles of Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (Claremont: Claremont Press, 2024), 125-153.

⁷⁹ In this version of the Arabic alphabet, which is also the one most commonly used in modern times, the letters (after *alif*, which stands alone at the beginning) are grouped in sets according to the similarity of their written shape. Thus *bā'*, *tā'*, and *thā'*, are identical in their basic form, and are distinguished only by the addition of dots (one dot below the line for *bā'*, two dots above for *tā'*, and three dots above for *thā'*). The complete sequence of letters in this alphabet is as follows: *alif*, *bā'*, *tā'*, *thā'*, *jīm*, *hā'*, *khā'*, *dāl*, *dhāl*, *rā'*, *zā'*, *sīn*, *shīn*, *ṣād*, *ḍād*, *tā'*, *ẓā'*, *ʿayn*, *ghayn*, *fā'*, *qāf*, *kāf*, *lām*, *mīm*, *nūn*, *hā'*, *wāw*, *yā'*.

question are *al-Bā’ith* (the Resurrector) and *al-Wārith* (the Inheritor).⁸⁰

Table 1: The Science of Letters in the Hijrī Calendar by Jīlānī and Gaos

Hijrī Months	Jīlānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
(1) Muḥarram		<i>Mīm</i>	<i>Al-Muḥyī</i> (The Giver of Life)	<i>Mujāhadah al-naḥs</i>	Struggle against desires
		<i>Ḥā’</i>	<i>Al-Ḥayy</i> (The Living)	<i>Ḥifẓ al-ḥurmah</i>	Maintain honor
		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Rashīd</i> (The Right in Guidance)	<i>Riḍallāh</i>	Allah’s consent
		<i>Mīm</i>	<i>Al-Mujīb</i> (The Answerer of Prayers)	<i>Maḥabbatullāh</i>	Love of Allah
		4 Letters		<i>h</i>	
(2) Ṣafar		<i>Ṣād</i>	<i>Al-Ṣabūr</i> (The Patient)	<i>Ṣafā’ al-qalb</i>	Sanctity of the heart
		<i>Fā’</i>	<i>Al-Fattāḥ</i> (The Opener)	<i>Fanā’ al-naḥs</i>	Loss of desires
		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Ra’ūf</i> (The Kind)	<i>Riyāḍ al-naḥs</i>	Training of the soul
		3 Letters			
(3) Rabī’ al-Awwal		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm</i> (The Clement-The Merciful)	<i>Rabīṭah</i>	Mediator
		<i>Bā’</i>	<i>Al-Badī’</i> (The Incomparable)	<i>Baṣīra</i>	Conscience
		<i>Yā’</i>	<i>Yāsīn</i> (Ya-sin)	<i>Yusrullāh</i>	Ease given by Allah
		<i>‘Ayn</i>	<i>Al-‘Aḥw</i> (The Pardonner)	<i>‘Abd Allāh</i>	Servant of Allah
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Aḥad</i> (The One)	<i>Allāh</i>	Name of Substance
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i>	<i>Layl al-qadr</i>	Night of <i>qadar</i>

⁸⁰ Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 1:194-195.

Hijrī Months	Jilānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
		<i>Alif</i>	(The Subtle) <i>Al-Awwal</i>	<i>Ittibā’</i>	Follow
		<i>Wāw</i>	(The First) <i>Al-Wāḥid</i>	<i>Walī</i>	Saint
		<i>Lām</i>	(The One) <i>Al-Laṭīf</i>	<i>Liqāullāh</i>	Audience with Allah
		(The Subtle)			
		9 Letters			
(4) Rabī’ al-Ākhir		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Raḥī’</i> (The Exalter)	<i>Ra’yn</i>	Filth of the heart
		<i>Bā’</i>	<i>Al-Bāqī</i> (The Enduring)	<i>Birr al-wāḥidayn</i>	Piety to both parents
		<i>Yā’</i>	<i>Yāsīn</i> (Ya-sin)	<i>Yadullāh</i>	The hand of Allah
		<i>‘Ayn</i>	<i>Al-‘Azīm</i> (The Mighty)	<i>‘Ilm</i>	Knowledge
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Awwal</i> (The First)	<i>Inābah</i>	Return to Allah
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Laṭīf</i>	Gentleness
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Ākhir</i> (The Last)	<i>Īmān</i>	Faith
		<i>Khā’</i>	<i>Al-Khabīr</i> (The Aware)	<i>Khayr</i>	Goodness
		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>al-Razzāq</i> (The Provider)	<i>Raḥīqah</i>	Friendship
9 Letters					
(5) Jumād al-Ūlā		<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Al-Jalīl</i> (The Majestic)	<i>Jihād</i>	Earnest struggle
		<i>Mīm</i>	<i>Al-Mujīb</i> (The Answerer of Prayers)	<i>Maghfirah</i>	Forgiveness
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Awwal</i> (The First)	<i>Iḥsān</i>	Kindness
		<i>Dāl</i>	<i>Al-Dāfi’</i> (The Reject)	<i>Dīn</i>	Religion
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Ākhir</i> (The Last)	<i>Ikhlāṣ</i>	Sincere
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Lawḥ</i>	Holy tablet

Hijrī Months	Jīlānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
(6) Jumād al-Ākhir		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Ākhir</i> (The Last)	<i>Istiqāmah</i>	Consistent
		<i>Wāw</i>	<i>Al-Wārith</i> (The Inheritor)	<i>Wujūd</i>	Being
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Lubb</i>	Essence of the heart
		<i>Yā’</i>	<i>Yāsīn</i> (Ya-sin)	<i>Yawmiyah</i>	Daily deeds
	10 Letters				
		<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Al-Jāmi’</i> (The Gatherer Together)	<i>Jā’a</i>	Come
		<i>Mīm</i>	<i>Al-Mu’mīn</i> (The Faithful)	<i>Mau’izah</i>	Advice
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Awwal</i> (The First)	<i>Adab</i>	Good manners
		<i>Dāl</i>	<i>Al-Dāfi’</i> (The Reject)	<i>Da’wah</i>	Call upon
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Ākhir</i> (The Last)	<i>Athār</i>	Influence
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Lahwun</i>	Amusement
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Aḥad</i> (The One)	<i>Ilāhī</i>	Divinity
	9 Letters	<i>Khā’</i>	<i>Al-Khāliq</i> (The Creator)	<i>Khuluq</i>	Ethics
		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Rāfi’</i> (The Exalter)	<i>Risālah</i>	Teachings
(7) Rajab		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm</i> (The Clement-The Merciful)	<i>Riḍwān</i>	Acceptance
		<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Al-Jalīl</i> (The Majestic)	<i>Jūd</i>	Generous
		<i>Bā’</i>	<i>Al-Bā’ith</i> (The Resurrector)	<i>Bara’ah</i>	Free
	<i>Rā’</i> <i>Jīm</i>			<i>Raḥmatullāh</i> <i>Jūdullāh</i>	Allah’s mercy Allah’s generosity

Hijrī Months	Jīlānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
	<i>Bā’</i>			<i>Birrullāh</i>	Allah’s kindness
		3 Letters			
(8) Sha‘bān		<i>Shīn</i>	<i>Al-Shakūr</i> (The Grateful)	<i>Shukūr</i>	Be grateful
		<i>‘Ayn</i>	<i>Al-‘Alīm, Al-‘Azīm, Al-‘Alī</i> (The Knower, The Mighty, The Most High)	<i>‘Ahd</i>	Pledge
		<i>Bā’</i>	<i>Al-Badī’</i> (The Incomparable)	<i>Barzakh</i>	Intermediate world
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Awwal</i> (The First)	<i>Ithbāt</i>	Confirmation
		<i>Nūn</i>	<i>Al-Nūr</i> (The Light)	<i>Nūr</i>	Light
	<i>Shīn</i>			<i>Sharaf</i>	Nobility
	<i>‘Ayn</i>			<i>‘Uluww</i>	Sublimity
	<i>Bā’</i>			<i>Birr</i>	Piety
	<i>Alif</i>			<i>Ulfah</i>	Harmonious intimacy
	<i>Nūn</i>			<i>Nūr</i>	Radiant Light
		5 Letters			
(9) Ramaḍān		<i>Rā’</i>	<i>Al-Rabb</i> (The Lord)	<i>Raḥmah</i>	Mercy
		<i>Mīm</i>	<i>Al-Muntaqim</i> (The Avenger)	<i>Murāqabah</i>	Monitored
		<i>Ḍaḍ</i>	<i>Al-Ḍarr</i> (The Distresser)	<i>Ḍalla</i>	Search
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Ākhir</i> (The Last)	<i>Idhn</i>	Permission
		<i>Nūn</i>	<i>Al-Nūr</i> (The Light)	<i>Nashaṭ</i>	Diligent
	<i>Rā’</i>			<i>Riḍwānullāh</i>	Allah’s good pleasure
	<i>Mīm</i>			<i>Maḥābatullāh</i>	The considerate

Hijrī Months	Jīlānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
	<i>Ḍāḍ</i>			<i>Ḍamānullāh</i>	and favorable disposition of Allah
	<i>Alif</i>			<i>Uḷfatullāh</i>	Allah’s guarantee
	<i>Nūn</i>			<i>Nūrullāh</i>	Intimate affection and nearness of Allah
		5 Letters			Radiant light of Allah
(10) Shawwāl		<i>Shīn</i>	<i>Al-Shahīd</i> (The Witness)	<i>Shajarah</i>	Tree
		<i>Wāw</i>	<i>Al-Wakīl</i> (The Worthy of Trust)	<i>Wuṣūl</i>	Arrival
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Aḥad</i> (The One)	<i>Uṣūl</i>	Essence
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Liqā’</i>	Encounter
		4 Letters			
(11) Dhū al-Qa’dah		<i>Dhāl</i>	<i>Dhū al-Jalāl wa al-Ikrām</i> (Full of Majesty and Bounty)	<i>Dhawq</i>	Taste
		<i>Wāw</i>	<i>Al-Wāḥid</i> (The One)	<i>Wuqūf</i>	Keep still
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Allāh</i> (God)	<i>Akhlāq</i>	Morals
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Lahwun</i>	Amusement
		<i>Qāf</i>	<i>Al-Qayyūm</i> (The Self-Subsisting)	<i>Qanā’ah</i>	Contentment
		<i>‘Ayn</i>	<i>Al-‘Afū</i> (The Pardonner)	<i>‘Uzlah</i>	Remoteness
		<i>Dāl</i>	<i>Al-Dāfi’</i> (The Reject)	<i>Dalīl</i>	Evidence

Hijrī Months	Jīlānī	Gaos	Meaning in 99 Names of Allah	Meaning in Sufism	Translation
		<i>Hā’</i>	<i>Al-Hādī</i> (The Guide)	<i>Hijra</i>	Migration
		8 Letters			
(12) Dhū al-Ḥijjah		<i>Dhāl</i>	<i>Dhū al-Jalāl wa al-Ikrām</i> (Full of Majesty and Bounty)	<i>Dhikrullāh</i>	Remembrance of Allah
		<i>Wāw</i>	<i>Al-Wadūd</i> (The Loving)	<i>Wara’</i>	Prudence
		<i>Alif</i>	<i>Al-Aḥad</i> (The One)	<i>Islām</i>	Safety
		<i>Lām</i>	<i>Al-Laṭīf</i> (The Subtle)	<i>Lubb</i>	Innermost heart
		<i>Ḥā’</i>	<i>Al-Ḥakam</i> (The Judge)	<i>Ḥijj al-bayt</i>	Hajj to the House of Allah
		<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Al-Jalīl</i> (The Majestic)	<i>Jidāl aḥsan</i>	Good debate
		<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Al-Jabbār</i> (The Compeller)	<i>Jahwā</i>	Inner seclusion
		<i>Hā’</i>	<i>Al-Hādī</i> (The Guide)	<i>Hayba</i>	Glorification of Allah
		8 Letters			
Total number		77 Letters			

Jīlānī explained the meanings of letters in three of the names of Hijrī months, namely Rajab, Sha‘bān, and Ramaḍān. Gaos has explained twelve names of the Hijrī months as presented in Table 1. This section is, thus, focused on comparing the three names of the months interpreted by the two figures. The special relationship between these three months is emphasised in one of the Prophet’s ḥadīth⁸¹:

⁸¹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaghīr min Aḥādīth al-Bashīr al-Naẓīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1990), 13:109.

رَجَبُ شَهْرِ اللَّهِ، وَشَعْبَانُ شَهْرِي، وَرَمَضَانُ شَهْرُ أُمَّتِي

Translation: "Rajab is the month of Allah, Sha'bān is my month, and Ramaḍān is the month of my followers."⁸²

Rajab has been considered the "month of Allah" (*Shahr Allāh*)⁸³ because on the 12th of Rajab, the Light of Allah (*Nūr Allāh*) had moved from the House of Allah (*Bayt Allāh*) into the womb of Sīti Amīnah, who nine months later would give birth to a baby born on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal who would be named 'Muhammad'. Sha'bān is considered "my month" (*Shahr Muḥammad*) because during that month, Prophet Muhammad shared his experience undergoing *al-Isrā' wa al-Mi'rāj* (night journey and ascension).⁸⁴ Ramaḍān is considered the "month of my

⁸² It should also be noted that *Rajab* is Allah's month, while *Sha'bān* is my month, and *Ramaḍān* is the month of my Community [*Ummatī*]. The chain of transmission [*isnād*] cited by Imām Hibāt Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak al-Saqāṭī is as follows: al-A'mash—Ibrāhīm (al-Nakhā'ī)—'Alqamah—Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī—the Prophet. See, Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 3:11.

⁸³ The month of *Rajab* has several other names, including: *Rajab Muḍār* (The *Rajab* of the tribe of Muḍār); *Munṣil/Manṣal al-Asinnah* (The Remover of Arrowheads, Spearheads, etc.); *Shahr Allāh al-Aṣamm* (The Quiet Month of Allah); *Shahr Allāh al-Aṣabb* (The Bountiful Month of Allah); *al-Shahr al-Muṭahhir* (The Purifying Month); *al-Shahr al-Sābiq* (The Preeminent or Antecedent Month); *al-Shahr al-Fard* (The Solitary Month). Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 3:11.

⁸⁴ See, Ismail Lala, "Muhammad and Moses during the *Mi'rāj*: Metaphysical Mercy and Mundane Mediation," *The Maghreb Review* 45(4) (2020), 795-808; Ismail Lala, "Perceptual Transformation in Ibn 'Arabi's Philosophy: The Night Journey (*Isrā'*) and Ascension (*Mi'rāj*) of Prophet Muḥammad," *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Tradition of the East* 1(2) (2024), 1-24; Frederick S. Colby, "The Subtleties of the Ascension: al-Sulami on the *Mi'rāj* of the Prophet Muḥammad," *Studia Islamica* 1(94) (2002), 167-183; Al-Sulami, *The Subtleties of the Ascension: Early Mystical Sayings on Muhammad's Heavenly*

followers" (*Shahr Ummatī, Muḥammad*) because during that month, the believers (*mu'minin*) are instructed by God to hold back their carnal desires for an entire month, in the Quran *Surah* 2:183. Hence, the relationship between these three Hijrī months correlates with the trio-relation between Allah, Muhammad, and *mu'minin* (believers). The relationship between the three is emphasised in a *ḥadīth Qudsī*:

أَنَا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ مِنِّي

Translation: "I am from Allah and *mu'min* are from me."⁸⁵

According to Jīlānī, the word *Rajab* is spelt with three letters, namely, *rā'*, *jīm*, and *bā'*. The initial letter *rā'* signifies the *Raḥmah* (Mercy) of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He / *Raḥmatullāh*), while the middle letter *jīm* signifies the *Jūd* (Noble Generosity) of Allah (Exalted is He / *Jūdullāh*), and the final letter *bā'* signifies the *Birr* (Beneficent Kindness) of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He / *Birrullāh*). This indicates that three gifts from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) are available to His servants from the very beginning of this month right through to its very end, namely, the Mercy of Allah without any hint of punishment (*raḥmatullāh bi lā 'adhāb*), Noble Generosity without any hint of stinginess (*wujūdīn bi lā buḥl*), and Beneficent Kindness without any hint of harsh treatment (*birrun bi lā jufā*).⁸⁶

According to Gaos, the name of *Rajab*, the letter *rā'* means *riḍwān* (acceptance), *jīm* means *jūd* (generosity), and *bā'* means *bara'ah* (free from insincerity). The word *riḍwān* comes from the word *al-riḍā*, which means the joy

Journey, trans. Frederick S. Colby (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2006).

⁸⁵ Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 44-50; Sunan Abū Dāwūd, "Bab Qadr", 4700.

⁸⁶ Jīlānī, *al-Ghunyah*, 1:229; Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 3:9-10.

of the heart for the bitterness of God's decree. So, *riḍā* is to remove hatred from the heart. God's acceptance can be obtained through *bai'at* and *talqīn*. *Jūd* refers to a point in time when one no longer minds sacrificing for others. According to Sufism, there are three kinds of generosity, i.e., philanthropy (*al-sakhā'*), generosity (*al-jūd*), and prioritising others (*al-itthār*). As for *bara'ah*, this refers to being free from insincerity or hypocrisy.⁸⁷ Hypocrisy is a behaviour in which a person expresses his or her faith verbally, yet hides their disbelief within their heart.⁸⁸

Subsequently, Jīlānī explained that the word *Sha'bān* is spelt with five letters: *shīn*, '*ayn*, *bā'*, *alif*, and *nūn*. The *shīn* means *sharaf* (nobility), the '*ayn* for '*uluww* (sublimity), the *bā'* for *birr* (piety), the *alif* for *ulfa* (harmonious intimacy),⁸⁹ and the *nūn* for *nūr* (radiant light). These are the gifts from Allah (Exalted is He) to His servants in this month. It is a month in which treasures are laid open, in which blessings are sent down, in which faults are forsworn, in which sins are expiated, and in which benedictions are multiplied upon Muhammad, the best of human creatures. This is the month of blessings upon the Chosen Prophet, in the Quran *Surah* 33:56. The blessing from Allah is mercy; from the angels, intercession and petition for forgiveness; and the believers, supplication and appreciation.⁹⁰

Gaos has explained that five letters make up the word *Sha'bān*, namely *shīn*, '*ayn*, *bā'*, *alif*, and *nūn*. The letter

⁸⁷ Gaos, *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr*, 51-54.

⁸⁸ Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 235.

⁸⁹ In the *Hijā'īyyah* letters (Arabic alphabet), an initial letter *alif* merely serves to indicate that the word concerned begins with a vowel. An extra sign is sometimes added to indicate whether that vowel is *ā*, *ī*, or *ū*. When *alif* occurs between two consonants, however, (e.g., between the letters *bā'* and *nūn* in the word *Sha'bān*) it indicates the long vowel *ā*.

⁹⁰ Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya*, chapter 1, 246; Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 3:58.

shīn means *shukr* (to be grateful), *‘ayn* means *‘ahd* (pledge), *bā’* means *barzakh* (the intermediate world), *alif* means *ithbāt* (confirmation), and *nūn* means *nūr* (light). *Al-shukr* refers to using all of God’s favour for good. As for the pledge, this refers to fulfilling the pledge made in the statement of *Lā ilāha illa Allāh*.⁹¹ *Barzakh* refers to a realm or space between two worlds, specifically the spiritual and the physical.⁹² The word *ithbāt* means to confirm or determine. In the declaration of faith “*Lā ilāha illa Allāh*”, *‘illa’* means certitude and *‘Allāh’* the One ascertained. As for *nūn*, it means *nūr* (light). There are two kinds of light, i.e., the Light of Allah (*Nūr Allāh / Muḥammad*) and the Light of Muhammad (*Nūr Muḥammad / Mu’min*).⁹³

The word *Ramaḍān*, Jīlānī has stated, is made up of five letters, namely, *rā’*, *mīm*, *ḍād*, *alif*, and *nūn*. The initial letter *rā’* means *riḍwānullāh* (Allah’s good pleasure). The letter *mīm* means *muḥabbatullāh* (the considerate and favourable disposition of Allah). The letter *ḍād* means *ḍamānullāh* (Allah’s guarantee, meaning His assurance of spiritual reward). The letter *alif* means *ulḥafatu’llāh* (the intimate affection and nearness of Allah).⁹⁴ The final letter *nūn* means *nūrullāh* (the radiant light of Allah). This means that the month of *Ramaḍān* is the month of considerate behavior, the giving of assurance, the sharing of intimate affection, the shedding of light, the bestowal of benefits,

⁹¹ Gaos, *Faḍā’il al-Shuhūr*, 54-59.

⁹² William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: The Supreme of Barzakh [The Cloud]* (London: Bantam Books, 1997), 11; Sara Haq Hussaini, *Beyond Binary Barzakhs: Using the Theme of Liminality in Islamic Thought to Question the Gender Binary* (USA: George Mason University, 2012), 34.

⁹³ Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 44-50.

⁹⁴ In the *Hijā’īyya* letters, an initial letter *alif* merely serves to indicate that the word concerned begins with a vowel. An extra sign is sometimes added to indicate whether that vowel is *ā*, *ī*, or *ū*. When *alif* occurs between two consonants, however, (e.g., between the letters *ḍād* and *nūn* in the word *Ramaḍān*) it indicates the long vowel *ā*.

and generous respect for the saints (*awliyā'*) and the righteous (*abrār*). In comparison with the other months, the status of *Ramaḍān* is like that of the heart within the breast (*al-qalb fī al-ṣudūr*), like that of the Prophets (*al-anbiyā'*) within the human race (*al-anbiyā' fī al-anām*), and like that of the Sacred Territory of Mecca (*al-Ḥarām*) among the cities of the world (*al-ḥarām fī al-bilād*).⁹⁵

However, Jīlānī in *Jalā' al-Khāṭir* conveyed completely different meanings of the letters in the word *Ramaḍān* in *al-Ghunyah*. As written in the letters, the word *Ramaḍān* is made up of five letters, namely, *rā'*, *mīm*, *dāḍ*, *alif*, and *nūn*. The initial *rā'* connotes *rahmah* (mercy) and *ra'fa* (compassionate kindness). The *mīm* connotes *mujāzāt* (recompense), *maḥabbah* (loving affection) and *minnah* (gracious favour). The *dāḍ* connotes *ḍamān* (guarantee), meaning the assurance of spiritual reward. The *alif* is the first letter of the Arabic word *ulfah*, meaning intimate affection and nearness. The final *nūn* connotes *nūr* (light) and *nawāl* (the receiving of benefit).⁹⁶

Unlike Jīlānī, Gaos states that the meanings of the five letters making up the word *Ramaḍān* are as follows: *rā'* meaning *rahmah* (mercy), *mīm* is a sign of *murāqabah* (monitored by God), *dāḍ* means *ḍālla* (search), *alif* meaning *idhn* (permission), and *nūn* is a sign of *nashaṭ* (diligent). Mercy refers to love and affection for others. However, the true manifestation of mercy is that people are brought out of darkness (human nature) into light (believer nature), in the Quran *Surah* 21:107, 27:77 and 33:43. *Murāqabah* means to be monitored by God. As for *ḍālla*, which means search, it refers to the search for knowledge.

⁹⁵ Jīlānī, *al-Ghunyah*, chapter 2, 261; Holland, *Sufficient Provision for Seekers*, 3:96.

⁹⁶ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Jalā' al-Khāṭir* (Dimashq: Maktabah al-Jīlānī, 2000), 200; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *The Removal of Cares [Jalā' al-Khāṭir]*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Florida: Al-Baz Publishing, 2007), The Thirtieth Discourse, 170.

There are two types of knowledge, i.e., *zāhir* (*fiqh*) knowledge and *bāṭin* (sufism) knowledge. Knowledge is also categorized into two kinds, knowledge with God ('*ilm* 'ind Allāh), in the Quran *Surah* 67:26 and knowledge in the heart ('*ilm* fī al-ṣudūr), in the Quran *Surah* 29:49. Permission implies consent, which relates to the following statement: لَا يَتَحَرَّكُ الْجَسَدُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ الرُّوحِ، وَلَا يَتَحَرَّكُ الرُّوحُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (the body shall not move without consent of the *rūḥ* and the *rūḥ* shall not move without God's consent). Lastly, diligent is an antonym of indolent and sluggish.⁹⁷ Those are the Sufi meanings of the letters that make up the twelve names of the *Hijrī* months, particularly pertaining to the corresponding unity between the three months of Rajab, Sha'bān, and Ramaḍān.

Discussing Symbol of Oneness in Islamic Sufi Calendar: Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramaḍān

The mystical trio relationship between Allah, Muhammad and the *mu'minin* (believers) is related to the three *Hijrī* months of Rajab, Sha'bān, and Ramaḍān.⁹⁸ According to Jīlānī, these three relationships have been explained in several *ḥadīth Qudsī*:⁹⁹

خَلَقْتُ مُحَمَّدًا أَوَّلًا مِنْ نُورٍ وَجْهِي

Translation: "I have created Muḥammad from the light of My countenance."

أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ رُوحِي وَنُورِي

Translation: "What Allah initially created was My *rūḥ* and My light."

⁹⁷ Gaos, *Faḍā'il al-Shuhūr*, 59-64.

⁹⁸ See Hajja Amina Adil, *Ramaḍān. Über die heiligen Monate Rajab, Sha'bā, Ramaḍān, das Fasten, das Gebet und mancherlei mehr* (Berlin: Alfvöldi Printing House, 2016).

⁹⁹ Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 44-50; Sunan Abū Dāwūd, "Bab Qadr", 4700.

أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْقَلَمَ وَالْعَقْلَ

Translation: What Allah initially created *were* the *Qalam* and the '*Aql*.

The relationship between the three is also called: Allah, the Light of Allah (*Nūr Allāh*), and the Light of Muhammad (*Nūr Muḥammad*). The Light of Allah is named Muhammad, while the Light of Muhammad is named *al-mu'minin*. This is in line with the following *ḥadīth Qudsī*:

أَنَا أَبُو الْأَرْوَاحِ وَأَدَمُ أَبُو الْبَشَرِ

Translation: "I am the father of all *rūḥ*, and Ādam is the father of all mortal beings."¹⁰⁰

The place of *al-mu'minin* was initially in the Absolute Universe (*al-Ālam al-Lāhūt*) or Place of Origin (*al-Waṭan al-Aṣl*).¹⁰¹ The Place of Origin for *al-mu'minin* is mentioned in the Quran by using the terms House of God (*Bayt Allāh*),¹⁰² Holy Land (*al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasah*), in the Quran *Surah* 5:21 and Blessed Landing (*Munzalan Mubārakan*), in the Quran *Surah* 23:29.

¹⁰⁰ Jilānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 44-50.

¹⁰¹ Jilānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 44-50.

¹⁰² The 13 Developments of the House of God, which are: Throne of God ('*Arash/Kursī*'), in the Quran *Surah* 2:255; The Frequented House (*Bayt al-Ma'mūr*), in the Quran *Surah* 52:4; House of the Beneficent (*Bayt al-Raḥmān*), House of the Merciful (*Bayt al-Raḥīm*), The Ancient House (*Bayt al-Ātīq*), in the Quran *Surah* 22:29; The large stone where the She-Camel of God emerged during the time of Ṣāliḥ the prophet, in the Quran *Surah* 11:64; The gushing springs from three furnaces during Nūḥ's doomsday, in the Quran *Surah* 11:40; The wood where Mūsā made his supplication to Allah, in the Quran *Surah* 28:30; Heart of the Universe (the *Taurāt*), Center of the World (the *Zabūr*), Axis of Nature (the *Injīl*), House of God/*Bayt Allāh* (the Quran), in the Quran *Surah* 3:96; and The Palace of God (*Khazā'in 'ind Allāh*), in the Quran *Surah* 63:7.

Jīlānī explained that God first created the Light of Muhammad (*Nūr Muḥammadiyah*) from the Light of Allah (*Nūr Allāh / Ḥaqīqah Muḥammadiyah*), and this Muhammadan Reality is named a light because it is completely purified from the darkness (associated with) Majesty (*jalāl*). In the meantime, according to Ḥallāj, the universe originated from 'Mīm' (Muhammad = *Nūr Allāh*). Muhammad had two titles, 'The Last' (*Ākhir*) and 'The First' (*Awwal*), in the Quran *Surah* 57:3. The *Mīm* (Muḥammad) was designated 'The Last' and 'The First.' The first bow span is the Kingdom of Might (*jabarūt*) and the second is the Kingdom of Sovereignty (*malakūt*).¹⁰³ The Muhammadan Reality is the quintessence of all created things, the first of them and their origin from [his spirit] were created all the spirits in the realm of divine nature, in the true best of forms (*aḥsan al-taqwīm*), in the Quran *Surah* 95:4. After four thousand years had elapsed, God created the Throne (*ʿArash*) from the light of the essence of Muhammad, and from it the rest of creation; then the spirits were sent down to the lowest level of creation, i.e., the corporeal bodies.¹⁰⁴

The trio relationship between Allah, Muhammad, and *al-mu'minin* had subsequently inspired TQN Sirnarasa to create a spiritual symbol. The text is about the private spiritual experience one gains when following the *ṭarīqah* and contains an image that is now TQN Sirnarasa's symbol. It is explained in the manuscript that these three fish represent the concept of 'three in one': inside a man, there are three elements: Allah-ness (Allah), Muhammad-ness (the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad), and Ādam-ness (the physical body). These three elements must be equally present in order for a person to be able to achieve the state of 'Perfect Man.' This symbol is also often called 'The Sea

¹⁰³ Al-Ḥallāj, *The Tawasin*, trans. Aisha 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: al-Tarjumanā, 2010), 10-11.

¹⁰⁴ Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 69.

of Life’ (*Sagara Kahirupan* or *Lautan Kehidupan* or *Baḥr al-Ḥayāt*): a ‘manual’ to live life on this earth.¹⁰⁵

Figure 1: *Iwak telu sirah manunggal* (three one-headed fish); symbol of oneness; *Insān Kāmil*¹⁰⁶

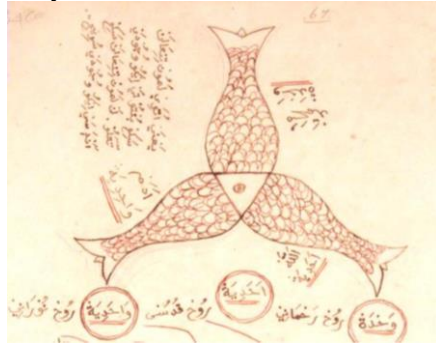


Figure 2 TQN Sirnarasa’s symbol



¹⁰⁵ Hakim, “Actualization of Neo-Sufism,” 100.

¹⁰⁶ Radèn Danoe Koesoema, *Sejatiné Manusa* (Lamongan: Koleksi Keluarga Sunan Drajat, 1960), 67. Manuscript pages from *Insān Kāmil* showing the pictures of the three fish. After initiation, the three fish share one head as on the page on the left but still have three separate heads before initiation, as on the right.

Figure 2 shows that the symbol of the three fish with one head in the manuscript is not the only one known.¹⁰⁷ The three fish with one head are on the flag of Keraton Kesultanan Kacirebonan (the Palace of the Sultanate of Cirebon).¹⁰⁸ This symbol, often called '*iwak*' (fish), is an abbreviation of "*ikhlas ing awak*", which means to be sincere to whatever God decides for a person's life. It also symbolises the unification with God, the One and Only. The single head of the three fish represents the Oneness of God, whereas their three bodies stand for *Dhāt*, *Şifāt*, *Af'āl* or the Essence, Attributes, and Works of the One Divinity.

Hamzah Fanşūrī, an early follower of *Ṭarīqa Qādiriyyah* in Indonesia, explained that the relationship between *Dhāt*, *Şifāt*, and *Af'āl* is aligned with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: "I am from God and all the Faithful are from me."¹⁰⁹ On the flag, the head is adorned with a crown, meaning that someone has reached the highest level of *ma'rifah*, which is often called *Tāj al-ʿArīfīn* (the crown of the people who intimately know Allah).¹¹⁰ The symbolism of this flag is related to the spiritual concept of the triangle between Allāh - Muḥammad - *al-mu'minin*.

The arrangement of the positions of the three fish images looks like a triangle shape. One fish is on top facing down, one fish is on the right facing the top left side, and one fish is on the left facing the top right side. The three fish are described as having similar body shape and size. Each fish has a tail that is split into two strands with a small tail decoration in the middle. Scaly body with red and black

¹⁰⁷ The picture of the three fish is widespread over Islamic Nusantara and found also in the Southern Philippines. See, Hakim, "Actualization of Neo-Sufism," 101.

¹⁰⁸ About this, see Bambang Irianto and Dyah Komala Laksmiwati, *Baluarti Keraton Kacirebonan* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2012), 6.

¹⁰⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, "The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri" (Master Diss., The University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1966), 610.

¹¹⁰ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqshbandiyya di Indonesia*, 95.

scales. The head is triangular in shape. Right in the middle, there is an eye point, which is the axis of the unity of the three fish bodies (See Figures 1 and 2). The following inscriptions can be found written on the side of each fish: fish at bottom right (*Aḥadiyah*: God); fish at the top (*Waḥdah*: Muḥammad); fish at bottom left (*Wāḥidiyah*: Ādam). Each of these terms is accompanied by a complementary explanation, as follows: *Aḥadiyah* (God), *Waḥdah* (Muḥammad), and *Wāḥidiyah* (Ādam).¹¹¹

Figure 3: Relationship between Allāh, Muḥammad, *Mu'minin*

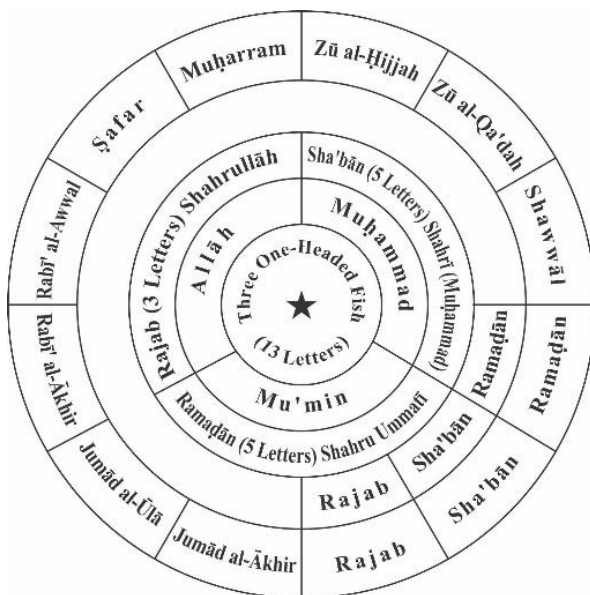


Figure 3 explains the relationships between the twelve names of the Hijrī months from Muḥarram to Dhū al-Ḥijjah. Of the twelve names of the months, three of them have significant spiritual interrelation, i.e., Rajab, Sha'ban,

¹¹¹ Bagus Purnomo & Afifah Dinar, "Islam at the Northern Coast of Java in the Sufistic Symbols *Sejatiné Manusa* Manuscript," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21(1) (2023), 157-188.

Ramaḍān. Each name of these months consists of three, five, and five letters, respectively, totalling thirteen letters. These thirteen letters correlate with the thirteen pillars of prayer for Muslims. Rajab explains the status of Allāh, Sha‘bān explains the status of Muḥammad, and Ramaḍān explains the status of *mu‘minin* within the body of Ādam.

The symbol of this trinity in the Javanese-Sundanese culture is called "*iwak telu sirah manunggal*" (three one-headed fish). The united place for the three is in the House of Allah (*Baytullāh*), in the Quran *Surah* 3:96, which is indicated by the Ka‘bah, in the Quran *Surah* 2:127. Three substantial essences between Allāh, Muḥammad, *mu‘minin*, can subsequently be correlated with the four inhibitors of Lust, Desire, World, and Satan, which are *Imān*, *Islām*, *Tawḥīd*, and *Ma‘rifah* ($3 \times 4 = 12$). The correlations entail that *Imān* is a mirror to Allāh, mandatory to Muḥammad, light to us. *Islām* is Allāh’s command, Muḥammad’s nature, mandatory for us. *Tawḥīd* is Allāh’s oneness, evident to Muḥammad, the ultimate truth to us. *Ma‘rifah* is evident in Allāh, it is clothing to Muḥammad, emulated by us. Hence, light is required to have the ultimate truth (about Muḥammad) to emulate his four natural characteristics, namely *ṣiddīq*, *amānah*, *tablīgh*, *faṭānah*.

Conclusions

This paper proposes an Islamic Sufi Calendar based on the Science of Letters (*‘Ilm al-Ḥurūfī*) in the Hijrī Calendar. This concept builds on two existing ideas, first, the *‘Ilm al-Ḥurūfī* influenced by Shi‘i ideas of Astārābadī and developed by his followers, and second, the Science of Letters influenced by Sufis like Jīlānī, Ibn ‘Arabī and further developed by their followers. Both explored the meanings of letters in the names of the Hijrī months from the perspective of Sufism. The two Sufi figures compared in this article, Jīlānī and Gaos, were influenced by their respective school of *ṭarīqah*. Jīlānī was a *murshid* of *Ṭarīqah Qādiriyyah* (TQ) while Gaos is still a *murshid* of

Ṭarīqah Qādiriyah Naqshbandiyah (TQN). However, they differ in that Jīlānī only focused on analysing the meaning of letters in three names of Hijrī months (Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramaḍān) while Gaos examined all of the names of Hijrī months by using a Sufi perspective and correlates them with the 99 Names of Allah.

The finding of this study has two implications: first, this study clarifies scholars' understanding of *ʿIlm al-Hurūfī*; second, an in-depth exploration of the Sufi meanings of the names of Hijrī months developed in the Science of Letters. An in-depth exploration and better understanding of the names of Hijrī months through the Sufi perspective can be used to uncover the essence of Islam's religious holiday commemoration celebrated in each of those months, particularly the mystical trio relationship between the months of Rajab, Sha'bān, and Ramaḍān. These three months symbolise the essential relationship between Allah, Muhammad, and *mu'minin*. This study recommends future studies to analyse the meanings of letters found in terms that have great significance to Islam.

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