

# Rûmî and Sultân Walad's Way of Understanding Hallāj

*Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî ve Sultân Veled'in Hallâc-ı Mansûr'a Dâir*

*Görüşleri*

Kie INOUE\*

## Abstract

In this article, the way of understanding of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 1273) and his son Sultân Walad (or Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Walad d. 1312) on Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), who was a unique figure in the history of Sufism and who continued to attract the attention of Sufis after him will be discussed.

**Keywords:** Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, Sultân Walad, Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Sufism, intoxication.

## Özet

Bu makalede, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî (ö. 1273) ve oğlu Sultân Veled'in (Bahâeddîn Muhammed Veled ö. 1312), tasavvuf tarihinde nev'i şahsına münhasır bir isim ve haleflerinin her zaman ilgisine mazhar olan Hüseyin b. Mansûr el-Hallâc (ö. 922) hakkındaki düşünceleri ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, Sultân Veled, Hüseyin b. Mansûr el-Hallâc, tasavvuf, sekr.

---

\* Senior Assistant Professor, Meiji University School of Arts and Letters Department of Psycho-Social Studies, E-mail: inouekie@meiji.ac.jp.

---

**Received :** 28.03.2024


**Accepted :** 25.04.2024

**Published:** 31.05.2024

---

**Cite as:** Kie Inoue, "Rûmî and Sultân Walad's Way of Understanding Hallāj", *Journal of the Institute for Sufi Studies* 3, 1 (2024): pp.

---

 This article is distributed under license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

## Introduction

Rūmī, like Ḥallāj, is normally classified as a sufi of the “intoxicated” type. However, Sultān Walad, son of Rūmī and founder of the Mevlevī order, was clearly a different type of Sufi from Rūmī. Sultān Walad’s fame was not limited to his religious talents. Rather, in the case of Sultān Walad, we should also focus on his talents as an administrator of the order. In the forty-plus years since Rūmī’s death, he painstakingly organized and wrote the family history, preserved and spread his father’s legends, and contributed to the management, order administration, and development of the Mevlevī order’s genealogy based on the family lineage.<sup>1</sup> Sultān Walad’s reputation among his disciples was so high that the number of members of the Mevlevī Order continued to grow steadily during his time.<sup>2</sup> In response to requests for his teachings not only in Konya, but also from distant regions, he sent representatives to various places.<sup>3</sup> Lewis points out the differences of their roles are “If Rūmī spent his life in words, expounding a set of teachings, Sultān Walad spent his life in deeds, assisting his father, helping strengthen the unity of the order and spreading it far and wide.”<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the relationship between Sultān Walad and Rūmī, biographers who belong to the order tend to emphasize the likeness of the father and the son. For example, Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī (d. 1360), a biographer belonging to the Mevlevī Order<sup>5</sup>, describes their

---

<sup>1</sup> Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 23. Küçük and Gamard summarizes the following seven points in a nutshell as the legacy of Sultān Walad: 1) Establishing the history of Mawlawism, 2) Commenting on his father in a different style, and spreading his teaching, 3) Establishing the authority of Chalabism, 4) Helping to establish the Mawlawī sufi order and basic Mawlawī principles, 5) Teaching and spreading Mawlawism through his disciples and successors, 6) Writing verses in Turkish, 7) Sultān Walad’s reputation today (Hülya Küçük and Ibrahim Gamard, *Sultan Walad: In the footsteps of Rumi and Shams: A study based on the main Mawlawī sources*, (Louisville: Fons Vitae 2022), 107-124). The fact that many of the things they summarize as Sultān Walad’s contributions are related to the management of the order would suggest that we should also focus on Sultān Walad’s character as the manager of the order.

<sup>2</sup> His disciples marveled at the excellence of Sultān Walad’s teachings, which were no less than those of his father Rūmī and threw in their praise that he was a great king, as his teachings turned the ignorant into the knowledgeable (Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Muwaḥḥid and ‘Alī Rizā Ḥaydarī, (Tihārān: Khwārizmī, 2010), 133). In particular, he seems to have played a role in facilitating human relations within the order, as the following words of a disciple are recorded in Walad’s *Ibtidā-nama*:  
(Sultān Walad) Has solved a difficult problem.

No shaikh has ever given us such a gift.

All adversaries have become his friends.

All hatred and enmity have vanished (Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 133-134).

<sup>3</sup> Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 158. After Rūmī’s death in 1273, Ḥusām al-Dīn, who had the trust of Rūmī among the members of the order at that time, temporarily became the head of the order. Upon Ḥusām al-Dīn’s death, Sultān Walad became the head of the order from 1284 (Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 231-232).

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 235.

<sup>5</sup> These are three representative Rūmī hagiographers: 1) Sultān Walad, 2) Sipāhsālār (d. ca. 1319), 3) Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī. According to Lewis, each of them has characteristic points; Sultān Walad’s descriptions go into detail about the Mevlevi order’s life and sometimes contain very personal stories that indicate Sultān Walad’s intimate interaction with Mevlevi shaykhs. Since Sultān Walad is Rūmī’s son, all the Mevlevi shaykhs seem to pay respect to him. His writings focus on real stories that help readers understand the Mevlevi order’s

relationship by saying that Rūmī had a son besides Sulṭān Walad, but that Sulṭān Walad in particular was “more like me [Rūmī] than anyone else, both in physique (khalq) and character (khulq)” and was very adored him.<sup>6</sup> And Sulṭān Walad himself has made it his lifework to follow in the footsteps of his father Rūmī, as follows:

My father took care of me more than my brothers, disciples, and acquaintances bestowing me a cloth and a crown of “You are more like me [Rūmī] than anyone else, both in physique and character.” And I, the insignificant, also tried my best to follow the instructions of that great one [Rūmī] to the best of my ability. For “Our Lord, impose not upon us that which we have not the strength to bear,” (Q 2:286) and he who is most like his father is not at all the opposite. I have tried to follow, obey and resemble him.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, however, Sulṭān Walad also states, “I can never reach his mystical stations (maqāmāt)”.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, he try to follow in his father’s footsteps being fully aware of the difference between his father and himself as a Sufi. The following poem by Sulṭān Walad may also be of interest in this awareness of the difference between himself and his father:

The son (Walad) has no intellect (‘ilm) or saintship (walāyat)  
Except the intellect and saintship his father gave him<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Sulṭān Walad himself seems to strongly believe that his position as a scholar, *shaykh*, and saint was established through his father Rūmī, rather than being an endowment given directly by God, and that he would never reach the rank of his father.<sup>10</sup>

---

history rather than miraculous stories of Rūmī. Sipāhsālār, who was an influential man in the Mevlevi order, started writing Rūmī’s hagiography half a century after Rūmī’s death. Sipāhsālār’s hagiography is distinguished by its realistic descriptions that are based on historical facts and fewer miraculous stories (Lewis 2008, 243, 249). The third hagiographer, Aflākī, belongs to the second generation of the family and had not met Rūmī directly. Naturally, his hagiography includes many miraculous stories of the Mevlevi order shaykhs. In addition to Rūmī’s stories, Aflākī reports stories about the second generation’s Mevlevi shaykhs (Lewis 2008, 250-251).

<sup>6</sup> Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī, *Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn*, (Tihārān: Dunyā-i kitab, 1983/1984), 785.

<sup>7</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>9</sup> Aflākī, *Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn*, 816; Aflākī, *The feats of the knowers of God: Manāqeb al-‘arefīn*, trans. John O’Kane, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 570. The English translation by O’Kane was also consulted for *Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn* by Afrāqī, with some corrections made by the author.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, Sulṭān Walad’s own Sufi or saintly ranks are often read as being granted not directly by God *a priori*, but indirectly through saints of the order that Sulṭān Walad considers to be of higher rank than himself. In his own *Ibtidā-nāma*, he says that Rūmī recognized the excellence of *Ibtidā-nāma* through his visions (Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma* 376-377). In contrast, he uses the word “sent-down” for his father Rūmī’s work, suggesting that he considers it a divinely inspired poem (Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 239). Regarding the divine aspect that Rūmī’s work possesses, it is also noted that at the beginning of the *Rabāb-nāma*, “according to the rhyme scheme of Mawlānā’s divine *Mathnawī*” (Mathnawī-i khudāwandigār-i Mawlānā) (Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, ed. Gird Farāmarzī and ‘Alī Sulṭānī, (Tihārān: Mu’assasa-i Muṭāla‘āt-i Islāmī-i Dānishgāh-i Makgīl 1980), 1). Therefore, it is possible that the divine verses of Rūmī was a common perception not only for Sulṭān Walad,

Based on the above premise, it is rather natural that Sultān Walad would have a high regard for Sufis of the “intoxicated” type. For Sultān Walad, drunkenness is an evidence that promises direct contact with God and divine intuitive knowledge.

As if to support Sultān Walad’s view, intoxicated Sufis often appear in his texts in addition to Rūmī. Especially, it should be noted that there are many references to Ḥallāj. Sultān Walad’s evaluations of Ḥallāj are often high and positive, so much so that some scholars have suggested that Sultan Walad included Ḥallāj in the Mevlevī order’s lineage.<sup>11</sup> If the name of Ḥallāj is included in the *silsila* of the order, it is unusual compared to the inclusion of the names of Junayd, Bastāmī, and others.<sup>12</sup> In any case, I could say that Sultān Walad’s high evaluation and many descriptions of Ḥallāj is noteworthy. Based on the above background, this paper will discuss how Sultān Walad describes Ḥallāj in his writings. After introducing Rūmī’s view of Ḥallāj, which Sultān Walad seems to follow first and foremost, I will analyze the actual view of Ḥallāj in Sultān Walad’s works.

## **I. How Rūmī Describes Ḥallāj**

### **1) Traditional Understanding of Ḥallāj**

First, let us extract the image of Ḥallāj from Rūmī’s texts. Najjārī and Aḥmad-nezhād points out that Rūmī mentions Ḥallāj many times in his own work, and his statements indicate that Rūmī is a “big fan” (Ḥallājī-mashrab) of Ḥallāj.<sup>13</sup> Schimmel also referring to the importance<sup>14</sup> of Ḥallāj in Rūmī’s works, points out that Rūmī uses expressions such as “intoxication” and “wine,” which were traditional expressions used by past Sufis for describing Ḥallāj.<sup>15</sup> This tendency is particularly evident in *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, as follows

---

but also for the people around Rūmī. Lewis specifically mentions about the difference in their positions that Rūmī was a hidden saint as a spiritual *axis mundi*, whereas Sultān Walad was a public saint as a representative of the order (Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 235). In other words, Rūmī was a God’s secret man, whereas Sultān Walad was placed in a more public position as a saint affiliated with the order. This difference in their positions may have influenced Sultān Walad’s view of saints.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 241. There will be a difference of opinion as to whether or not to include Ḥallāj in the *silsila* of the Order. For example, the name of Ḥallāj is not included in the *silsila* of the Mevlevī order offered by Ambrosio (Alberto Fabio Ambrosio, *Vie d’un Derviche Tourneur: Doctrine et Rituels du Soufisme au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: CNRS Editions 2010), 377-378).

<sup>12</sup> J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Muḥammad Najjārī and Kāmel Aḥmad-nezhād, “Ḥallāj dar āsār-i Maulānā,” in *Adabiyāt-i erfānī wa Osṭūre shenākhtī (Mytho-Mystic Literature)* 9, 32(2013): 2.

<sup>14</sup> Schimmel also notes that in Rūmī’s works, Bastāmī is also often cited in conjunction with Ḥallāj (Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 201). While Schimmel makes a point about the critical importance of Ḥallāj in Rūmī thought, she notes that Shams ultimately eclipsed Ḥallāj’s role (Ibid., 209).

<sup>15</sup> Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, 204. For Schimmel’s examination on the Ḥallāj’s image in Rūmī’s works, see ibid., 201-209.

I want the wine of the grape residue  
I want a drunk, fuddled friend.  
A smell came to me from Ḥallāj  
I want the wine of Manṣūr (bāda-i Manṣūr) from the cupbearer<sup>16</sup>

The smell of red wine is bringing good news  
For me, the goblet is coming  
With the soul of “I am the Truth (anā al-Ḥaqq),” you became Manṣūr  
His God’s light is coming to you<sup>17</sup>

In addition to “wine” and “drunkenness,” Rūmī also speaks of the image of Ḥallāj as an “Absolute surrender” to God.<sup>18</sup> The image of Ḥallāj as a martyr to “cruel death”<sup>19</sup> for the sake of God is mentioned with words such as “gallows” that are clearly reminiscent of him.<sup>20</sup>

I will show your liberty though you were hunged  
See the dead on the gallows whose soul is lively  
It is like young Manṣūr who was hung in content<sup>21</sup>

However, in addition to the traditional depiction of “drunken” Ḥallāj by Sufis, it is important to note that in Rūmī’s works Ḥallāj is depicted as a symbol of “sacrifice which led him to a higher union”.<sup>22</sup>

## 2) A Man of Oneness Who Has Surpassed Duality

In examining Schimmel’s point more concretely, the following may be pointed out. When Rūmī cites Ḥallāj in his *Mathnawī*, he often treats Ḥallāj as a man of “Oneness” who surpassed the world of “duality.” In *Mathnawī*, Rūmī depicts Ḥallāj as a being who breaks free from the dichotomy and dwells in the divine Oneness as follows:

---

<sup>16</sup> Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams wā Dīwān-i kabīr*, ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Furūzānfar, (Tih-rān: Amīr Kabīr, 1999), ghazal nr: 1545; idem. *Dīwān-i kabīr*, trans. Nevit Oguz Ergin, (Walla Walla: Current / Turkish Republic, 1995), 11: 87.

<sup>17</sup> The numbering of *Diwan-i Shams* follows the numbering of the Furūzānfar edition, and the number of pages in the Ergin edition is also given if the English translation of the Nevit O. Ergin edition was consulted with some modifications by the author.

<sup>18</sup> Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>20</sup> However, the direct cause of Ḥallāj’s execution is not limited to his statement “I am the Truth (ana al-ḥaqq).” It should be noted that Ḥallāj was executed due to a combination of factors, including the political situation at the time. For more information, see Louis Massignon, *La passion de Husayn ibn Manṣūr Ḥallāj*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 1: 386-696.

<sup>21</sup> Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams wā Dīwān-i kabīr*, ghazal nr: 2275.

<sup>22</sup> Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, 209.

Every expression (‘ibārat) is the sign of a state (ḥālātī)  
     That state is a hand, the expression an instrument (ālat)  
 A goldsmith’s instruments in the hand of a cobbler  
     Are as grains of wheat sown on sand.  
 The tools of a cobbler in the hand of a orderivator  
     Are as grass before a dog or bones before a donkey.  
 The words, “I am the Truth” were light (nūr) in Maṣṣūr’s mouth,  
     In the mouth of Pharaoh “I am Lord Supreme” was blasphemy.(...)  
 Hand and instrument resemble flint and steel;  
     You must have a pair (juft); a pair is needed to generate.  
 He who has no peer or member is the “One,”  
     An uneven number, One without dispute!  
 Whoso says “one” and “two,” and so on,  
     Confesses thereby the existence of the “One.”  
 When the illusion of seeing double is swept away,  
     They who say “one” and “two” are even as they who say One.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Rūmī explains that in every linguistic expression, there is a corresponding correct situation or states. This can be compared to a hand and a tool. The “tool” (word) could be useful only by the “hand” (body) that is able to use the tool correctly. For example, grass in front of a dog and a bone in front of a donkey are meaningless, but they are useful if they are used in the opposite way.

In addition to above mentioned example, Rūmī shows similar situation quoting two very similar words used by different “hands”: “I am the Truth” by Ḥallāj and “I am Lord Supreme” by Pharaoh. Both words are meant to position oneself as the supreme being, but when Ḥallāj uses this expression, he is “light,” or God, while when Pharaoh uses this expression, he is “blaspheming” against God.

What is important in this quotation, says Rūmī, is the correct “pairing” of the instrument or the word, and the one who uses it. Since the correct combination of the two things become one. This is because the correct pairing ultimately converges to the correct one, i.e., God. Ḥallāj is depicted as the convergence of the two natures, I and Thou (God), into the One (God).

---

<sup>23</sup> Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Maṣṣawī-i ma‘nawī*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, (Tihṣrān: Hirmis, 2011), 193; idem. *Masnavii Manavi: Teachings of Rumi: The Spiritual Couplets of Maulanajalalu-‘d-din Muhammad i Rumi*, trans. E. H. Whinfield, (Ames: Omphaloskepsis, 2001), 96-97. As for the *Mathnawī*’s English translation I consulted Whinfield’s translation.

As for the process of dissolution of the two natures realized by Ḥallāj and their eventual unification is explained using the analogy of the “drowned man” by Rūmī as follows:

To be immersed (istighrāq)<sup>24</sup> is to cease to be oneself, and to cease to strive to do something from oneself, to do [one’s] own thing, to move [oneself]. It is like drowning (gharaq-i āb). Everything he does [at that time] is not his doing. The water is doing it. Just dipping one’s hands and feet in the water does not mean that one has drowned in the water, and someone says, “Oh, I’ve drowned!” is also not immersion. Indeed, the end result is [Ḥallāj’s] “I am the Truth” statement. Everyone thinks this is an arrogant statement, but “I am the Truth” is a sign of deep humility. Because the person who says, “I am God’s servant” (‘abd-i khudā) acknowledges two existences (hastī): one is God, and one is himself. The person who says, “I am the Truth,” however, has completely reduced the self to nothingness (‘adam); the self has disappeared. “I am the Truth” means that there is no “I.” All is He (God). There is no existence other than God.<sup>25</sup>

Rūmī says that Ḥallāj’s statement, “I am the Truth,” is the utterance of a person who has completely drowned. Since a person who is completely drowned is “dead,” the dead person’s act, i.e., Ḥallāj’s utterance, did not emanate from Ḥallāj. Everything is considered an act performed by water, i.e., by God. At first glance, the statement “I am God’s servant” seems to be a more pious statement than “I am the Truth,” but since the speaker of “I am God’s servant” is not yet “dead,” we can see the dual nature of God and his servant. In this sense, the statement “I am the Truth” can be seen as a statement indicating that the duality of the drowned person and the water has disappeared, and there just remains the water that including drowned person.<sup>26</sup>

What is important here is the process of unification of the drowned person and the water. At the very outset, there were two different existences: man and water. However, they are united through the drowning of the person in the water.

Besides, the other point of Ḥallāj’s statement that this parable illustrates is that the person who utters such a statement is already “dead.”

A drowned person is one who is at the mercy of the water and has no control over it by himself. The swimmer (sabbāḥ), like the drowned person, is also in the water, but

---

<sup>24</sup> Najjārī and Aḥmad-nezhād state the word “istighrāq” is the key term in Rūmī’s understanding of Ḥallāj. They explain that Rūmī avoids using the word “ḥulūl” for Ḥallāj and uses this word instead (Najjārī and Aḥmad-nezhād, “Ḥallāj dar āṣār-i Maulānā,” 2).

<sup>25</sup> Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīḥ mā fīḥ*, ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Frūzānfar, (Tīhrān: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 2008), 56.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding Ḥallāj’s leap from two natures to one, Rūmī notes “Expressing union with the Light, not mere incarnation (ḥulūl)” (Rūmī, *Masnawī-i ma‘nawī*, 810; idem., *Masnawī Manavī: Teachings of Rumi*, 364). He notes and emphasizes that it is a union that is distinct from the heretical concept of “incarnation.”

the drowned person is exposed to the water and is moved by it, while the swimmer [moves] by his own power and will. Therefore, any movement from the drowned man, any action, any utterance from him, is [done] from the water, not from him. He is a pretense (bahāna) there. (...) The saints (awliyā') are just such people, who are already dead before [ordinary] death (marg).<sup>27</sup>

Rūmī often points out that a special person like Ḥallāj is the embodiment of “Die before ye die” (mūtū qabla an tamūtū).<sup>28</sup> In other words, Ḥallāj is like a person drowned in water, who has already given up his ego and is “dead,” and although he exists, indeed he is empty inside.

For the being who has thus reached Oneness through the dissolution and melting of the duality, the opposite does not become the opposite but becomes one, just as he himself is “alive and dead.” For in the world of Oneness they inhabit, everything will integrate one.

Even poison is drinkable when received from the hand of the beautiful lover (yār-i sīmar).

Bitter and harsh words can be drunk as if they were sugar  
What a tasteful (bā-namak), what a tempting (bā-namak) lover too!  
As long as there is salt, even the bitter liver can be eaten<sup>29</sup>

For God’s chosen one like Ḥallāj, who transcends duality, even “poison” and “harsh words,” which are undesirable to those of us who live in the world of duality, become as sweet as sugar. For if we believe that the poison is from the hand of the “Lover,” that is, the One God after all, then poison is not poison at all. According to Rūmī, “Both unbelief and faith are devotees of God (musabbih).” Since both unbelief and faith are in accordance with God’s intention, even unbelief follows God in reality.<sup>30</sup>

### 3) Emphasis on the Secrecy of the World of Oneness

Thus, those who love God who live in the world of Oneness have a different world. Their world cannot be understood by ordinary people. They are only God’s “hidden people,” and ordinary people cannot truly “see” them through ordinary eyes.

Rather, in the world of duality, or the world of the ordinary man, the actions of such special persons are sometimes seen as unbelief, as if they were evil:

---

<sup>27</sup> Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> It is a hadīth favored by Rūmī and other sufīs (Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīs-i Maṣnavī*, (Tih-rān: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān 1956), 116).

<sup>29</sup> Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 199.



Similarly, a virtuous man of noble character chastises a certain person and inflicts wounds on the man's head, nose, and mouth. Everyone would say that he [who is hit] is the victim (*mazlūm*). But the real victim is the one who hit him, and the assailant (*zālim*) is the man who was hit. Because he does not do anything beneficial (*maṣlaḥat*) for the other. The man who is beaten and has his head broken is rather the aggressor. But this beaten man is intuitively considered the victim. Because this [the one who hit him] is of a noble nature and has exhausted (*mustahlak*) his ego in God. [Therefore,] what he does is God's doing. God is not considered to be the aggressor [just as this person who hit him is not the aggressor].<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Rūmī admonishes that the discourses and deeds of God's elect, who live and die in the world of true Oneness, should not be spoken or heard by the general public because they cannot be misunderstood by the general public.<sup>32</sup> Rūmī also points out that these Saints are usually invisible to the public in the first place.

There are Saints in this world whose spiritual eyes have been opened and who have attained enlightenment. There are other saints who are higher than these saints. These [higher] saints are called God's hidden persons (*mastūrān-i Ḥaqq*). No one can see or approach them unless they are willing to do so.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Rūmī emphasizes the seclusion and invisibility of the saints who live in the world of Oneness. Such elect can be truly "seen" only when the thoughts and spiritual ranks of both the seer and the seen (the saint) coincide. That is, only when there is an invisible "sameness" (*jinsīyat*)<sup>34</sup> between them. In the case of Ḥallāj, his own spiritual rank was so far removed from that of those around him who hanged him that the true meaning of "I am the Truth" remained unknown to ordinary people and he could not escape execution.

As a result of the above discussion, I would like to point out several important aspects of the Ḥallāj understanding in Rūmī. First, Rūmī basically follows the traditional Sufi method of depicting Ḥallāj, which evokes images of "drunkenness" and "martyrdom." More important, however, is to break away from the duality and reach the transcendent Oneness that Ḥallāj's "drunkenness" and "crucial death" made possible. For the inhabitants of the world of Oneness who are "living but already dead," since they have broken free of the duality, so then everything is centralized to God. As if they enjoy poison like sugar. The discourse and actions of such people may appear to be "evil" for ordinary people, however it leads to faith in reality. But to the inhabitants of the world of duality, they simply appear evil and are not understood. For this reason, Rūmī admonishes the inhabitants of the world of God's Oneness to be "invisible" to the inhabitants of the world of duality and not to reveal the secrets of the

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>34</sup> Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 22.

world of Oneness.

## II. Sulṭān Walad's understanding of Ḥallāj

### 1) Reinventing the Image of Ḥallāj

To begin with the conclusion, what is most distinctive in Sulṭān Walad's depiction of Ḥallāj is that he does not perceive Ḥallāj in terms of typical images such as "drunkenness" or "wine," unlike his father Rūmī. Yet Sulṭān Walad deals with typical Ḥallāj themes such as "The Gallows"<sup>35</sup> and "I am the Truth," he does not interpret them in an intoxicating way. The following verses are written by Sulṭān Walad as if he were expressing Ḥallāj's opinion on his behalf, recounting the episode of Ḥallāj's execution. Here, Sulṭān Walad is not haunted by Ḥallāj, but only expository, telling Ḥallāj's position using the parable of the house.

Have you not heard Manṣūr's (Ḥallāj) story?  
The banner of the valiant and victorious.  
He said to the people clearly,  
"I am the Truth, in this ill-robed body."  
People said, leave these words alone for now  
Don't fly into disaster yourself. (...)  
He replied: "I have told the truth. I will not change (my opinion)."  
He who has faith does not disbelieve. (...)  
Although these pure words are never exhausted  
Let me excuse my external words ("I am the Truth").  
Consider my existence as a house.  
It is always visited by a variety of guests (mihmān).  
Every moment the creatures of the invisible world,  
From the eternal world, they come like rain.  
Sometimes even a king (God) comes in secret,  
As if there is a chief in his soul.  
He said ("I am the Truth") by God.  
Please tell me if I am at fault.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Ḥallāj's narrative on the gallows includes the following:

Finally, regarding Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Junayd and Shiblī, the scholars and saints of that time denied him with his external parts, tried to kill him, and all agreed to hang him, and issued a fatwā and hanged such a gifted man. When they took [him] down from the gallows, they set him on fire, burned him, and poured his ashes into the river so that there would be no trace of him. It is said as follows. In all that they did, "I am the Truth" [was written] in the fire and in the water. When his ashes were picked up again from the river, they were again inscribed with the words "I am the Truth." Seeing this miracle [karāmāt], all regretted this past (Sulṭān Walad, *Ma'ārif*, ed. Najīb Māyil Harawī, (Tih-rān: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 2020), 10-11).

Sulṭān Walad here touches on the image of Ḥallāj as a martyr, but ultimately draws attention to the "miracles" he performed, thereby creating an image of Ḥallāj as a saint.

<sup>36</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ma'ārif*, 163.

In the above quoted section, Sultān Walad explains the drunken words of “I am the Truth” as if he himself were Ḥallāj and speaking to those around him. If “I am the Truth” is an external phrase, its internal meaning is that the existence of Ḥallāj is like a house, which is constantly full of guests. Important guests, like a king, may descend from the invisible world, and that king may become the head and ruler of his soul. “I am the Truth” is exactly what “he”(God and he) says at such times.

In addition to this, another feature of Sultān Walad’s method of portraying Ḥallāj is that he portrays Ḥallāj as a “saint.” Sultān Walad treats Ḥallāj’s ecstatic utterances as the distinctive proof of a saint, and endeavors to re-position Ḥallāj as a saint.

Therefore, my son, Maṣṣūr is in such a [enlightened] state.

He sacrificed his body and soul [to God] and said, “I am the Truth.”

Bāyazīd said, “There is none other than God within my garments.”

He said that he was filled [with God].

Such are the words of the saints.

For from them flows “knowledge of the Essence” (‘ilm-i ladun).<sup>37</sup>

In the above quoted section, Sultān Walad also clarifies the true meaning of Ḥallāj’s “I am the Truth” statement as a “commentator” on the drunken discourse, while providing an objective commentary. According to Sultān Walad, Ḥallāj’s drunken words are not his own words, but God’s words. The way in which he attributes Ḥallāj’s drunken words to God rather than to him is consistent with Rūmī. Sultān Walad, however, says that such drunken speech is a knowledge peculiar to the “saints” and strongly links the saints to God through the intoxicated utterances.

Furthermore, Sultān Walad attempts to classify Ḥallāj as saints in a specific domain by placing them in the hierarchy of saints.

The reason why some saints are considered “*abdāl*” is

They are so called because of their transformed spiritual state.

Their own “I” was there, but it perished

in the *fanā*, they took on a different form (...).

Some say on earth, “I am the Truth,”

One said, “I am the Mystery of God.”

---

<sup>37</sup> Sultān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 454.

And another said, “I am the Mystery within the Mystery, I am hidden within the body.”

For this reason Maṣṣūr said, “I am the Truth.”<sup>38</sup>

For the same reason (the ego is extinguished and remains with the lover), the saints are called *abdāl*. Because they have changed while their essence remains the same. Such people are saints and achievers of God. Their ladder is higher than that of the people of heaven. The people of heaven are more distant from God and more ignorant of God than they are. When they reach the end of the ladder, it is an audience with God, an attainment to God. This is the end of the ladder, and there is no ladder after this. For this same [reason] Maṣṣūr (Ḥallāj) also said, “I am the Truth.”<sup>39</sup>

From the quotations, we can see that Sulṭān Walad is trying to place Ḥallāj in the rank of *abdāl* among the hierarchy of saints. Sulṭān Walad states that there are three levels<sup>40</sup> of the hierarchy of saints who are lovers of God, and that Ḥallāj belongs to the lowest first of these three levels.<sup>41</sup>

## 2) Intoxicated Saints Are “People of the Oneness”

While Rūmī preferred to interpret Ḥallāj in the traditional style, or assimilate Ḥallāj with himself and interpret it ecstatically, Sulṭān Walad saw “drunkenness” as a sign of Ḥallāj’s saintness and defended Ḥallāj as a saint from a third-party perspective. However, as to why he should defend Ḥallāj, he emphasized, as did his father, that he was a people of the Oneness of God, which transcends the duality, as follows:

Search for existence (*hastī*) in the path of non-existence (*nīstī*).

When you reach this existence [in non-existence], you will be autonomous.

The first existence is extinction (*fanā’*) in certainty.

---

<sup>38</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 284.

<sup>39</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Intihā-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Khazānadarlū, (Tihārān: Intishārāt-i Rawzana, 1997), 10

<sup>40</sup> In the hierarchy of saints with *qutb* at the top, *abdāl* is generally considered to belong to the fifth stage (see Ignaz Goldziher and Hans Joachim Kissling, “Abdāl,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 20 February 2024 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_0132](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0132)). Sulṭān Walad also elaborates on these three stages of sainthood in *Ma’ārif*. According to him, the first stage of saints are those who practice asceticism and whose mental state is like that of a clear mirror. The second stage of saints are those who convey messages from the invisible world to this world. Saints belonging to the highest stage are completely in the divine world, and nothing worldly is included here (Sulṭān Walad, *Ma’ārif*, 289-290). The view is also expressed that the highest stage is that of the “attainers of perfection” (*waṣl-i kāmilān*) (Idem., *Ibtidā-nāma*, 285), but in the *Intihā-nāma*, those who love God, including Ḥallāj, are “the attainers of perfection” (Idem., *Intihā-nāma*, 10). So then, there is some ambiguity as to where Ḥallāj should be placed on the three rungs of the saintly ladder. However, since he then states that Shams and Rūmī are “lovers of God among the elect” (*ma’shūqān-i khāṣṣ-i khāṣṣ*) (Idem., *Ibtidā-nāma*, 10-11), it is likely that with regard to Shams and Rūmī, Sulṭān Walad would be expected to classify them in the highest stage. In any case, it should be noted that intoxicated Sufīs occupy the three rungs of the saintly ladder in Sulṭān Walad’s structure of saints.

<sup>41</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 285.

The second existence (existence in non-existence) is unshakable faith.  
 All first existences are ignorant and blind.  
 All second existences are the light of the saints.  
 The existence after annihilation (the second existence) is the remainder  
 His soul is intoxicated by that cupbearer  
 Such existence exists because of God  
 Such existence exists in eternal intoxication, without any sorrow (...)  
 The existence becomes like an instrument of God  
 No one regards him as apart from God.  
 Do not think that everything that comes from him is from himself  
 For he is dead by himself, but by the work of the Living One (God)  
 Two is not included in Him, because He is One.  
 How could anyone ever understand this mystery?  
 He obviously said it correctly when he said, "I am the Truth."  
 Because God wanted him to say it through him.  
 He had every reason to do so.  
 Everything came from God, the breath of God, the breath of life.  
 The seeker is never separated from what is sought himself  
 The saint is connected to God.<sup>42</sup>

Sulṭān Walad exalts the being in non-existence, the being that is dead and yet alive, living and yet already dead. Such a saint is a person of Oneness, because his ego has died and lives in the oneness of God. The simple statement of this is considered to be Ḥallāj's words, "I am the Truth." Like Rūmī, Sulṭān Walad also believes that people of Oneness like Ḥallāj is one who has "already died in love for God while living," and his acts lead directly to God.

And like his father Rūmī, Sulṭān Walad also defends the actions of the saints who dwell in the Oneness of God, saying that the actions of the saints sometimes seem like "evil deeds" to ordinary people, but in fact they are righteous deeds.

Drunkenness with God, all that is right in his way  
 What is right to do is right, and not wrong in his ways.

Then a certain man asked. "Then is it permissible (ravā) whatever [God's elect, such as saints and prophets] do? Should we say and think that it is right even when [the elect] do perverse things (kazh)?" I answered, "A man of God (mard-i khudā) is righteous in whatever he does. Even if it appears unjust to the ignorant. It is the same

---

<sup>42</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 95.

[with the following]. A person in the Ka'ba may turn his face in any direction and worship (namāz), since that direction is the qibla. Whether he turns his face to the east or to the west, to the left or to the right, in front or behind, it is all qibla, and his worship will be accepted by God. In the Ka'ba, no direction is different from any other direction.”<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Sulṭān Walad agrees with Rūmī that Ḥallāj is a saint who dwells in the world of one nature, and that the acts of such a saint can sometimes seem like evil deeds to ordinary people. However, Sulṭān Walad is unique in that he explicitly states that it is “saints, prophets, and *shaykhs* are completely dead before death,”<sup>44</sup> thus extending the scope of his adaptation to *shaykhs*. In the next section, I will explain what effect Sulṭān Walad is aiming for by adding the role of “*shaykh*” to the saints and prophets.

### 3) The Guidance of the *Shaykh*

In the previous section, we have seen that both Rūmī and Sulṭān Walad mention the incomprehensibility of the discourses and actions of God's saint and refer to the distinction between ordinary people and the elect.

Thus Rūmī, the father, spoke of the secrecy of the divine elect, and so did Sulṭān Walad by claiming that

The inhabitants of the earth cannot see the moon when it has been hidden by the black clouds. But those in the heavens can find it. (...) He acknowledges the difference between the worlds inhabited by ordinary people and saints as the saint knows the saint, but the enemy never knows the friend of God.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike Rūmī, however, Sulṭān Walad, while agreeing with the secrecy of God's elect, states that with the guidance of a proper leader, or *shaykh*, it is possible to finally understand the true intentions of the saints, and bridges the worlds inhabited by ordinary people and the saints through the presence of the *shaykh*.

But know also the following. It is not that all creatures in general lack the [prophetic] substance (jawhar). Everyone has the [prophetic] light and the [prophetic] substance.(...) By the ordinary man is meant one who is imprisoned in the ego (hastī) and pride, but there are some, however, for whom the light and essence of the Divine Source has increased, or for whom the powerful Divine Source has been encountered, the veil of pride and ego has been torn away and removed, and without the veil of ego they have seen the Divine Source and kneel down to worship.(...) Those who are weak, who have little [divine] light and ability, will not have the power to tear the veil as they [of the divine source] do, but will be overcome by the veil. (...) They who have

---

<sup>43</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ma'ārīf*, 35-36.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>45</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 206.

received weak light by divine predestination, if the Most High is gracious to them, He will place near them a shaykh appointed by the Faithful God so that they will believe in Him. If not, they will be the ones who will be tested [by God]. By talking with the truthful [shaykh], they will gradually become sincere disciples (*murīd*) of their shaykh. From that perspective, it is possible for a sincere shaikh to develop a weak light and eventually increase [it]. And when that light increases, the veil of the ego decreases. This is the infinite revelation (*tafāṣīl*). That is, there are infinite ways and duties (*kār*) [to reach God], and what is infinite cannot be explained. For explanation and commentary are finite, and the infinite cannot be included among the finite. But the wise hear one and know ten, and the fool hears ten and understands none.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, Sulṭān Walad, while acknowledging the absolute difference between God's elect and ordinary people, presents the Mahayana interpretation that in fact everyone potentially has a share in the prophetic light, and that even ordinary people can ultimately understand the saint's true intentions if they are guided by a superior *shaykh*. He acknowledges the possibility that, with the right guidance of the *shaykh*, unbelief can turn into faith and ultimately merge into the One God.

## Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the attitudes of Rūmī and Sulṭān Walad toward “intoxicated” Sufis and intoxicated thought by comparing their understanding of Ḥallāj. The results of the study revealed the following:

First, Rūmī portrayed Ḥallāj in the traditional Sufi image of the intoxicated martyr. Ḥallāj is a man who was so intoxicated with God that he was “dead while living” in the duality of this world, and yet he had destroyed his ego by uniting with God. The evil deeds of the inhabitants of the world of God's oneness are incomprehensible to the inhabitants of the world of duality, but they are, in fact, true believers. However, Rūmī emphasized the secrecy of God's elect, who are invisible and incomprehensible to the inhabitants of the world of duality.

How, on the other hand, did Sulṭān Walad understand Ḥallāj? Let us examine the similarities and differences between Sulṭān Walad's understanding and that of Rūmī:

First of all, Sulṭān Walad also sees Ḥallāj as a special being, a hidden or chosen one of God, who has left the world of duality (this world) and lives in the Oneness of God, a person who lived and died. Furthermore, he agrees with his father Rūmī that such a discourse of divine election is not understood and that such a person is “invisible” in the ordinary sense.

---

<sup>46</sup> Sulṭān Walad, *Ma'ārif*, 27-28.

Sulṭān Walad, however, refrains from emphasizing that Ḥallāj is a “drunken” martyr. Rather, he is concerned to place Ḥallāj precisely in the lineage of saints and the hierarchy of saints, as “drunkenness” with God is the mark of a special saint. Since Rūmī and Shams are considered to be included in this hierarchy of saints, it is clear that he considers the lineage of intoxicated saints, including Ḥallāj, as the spiritual history of his own order, the Mevlevī Order. Furthermore, while acknowledging the secrecy of the saints, Sulṭān Walad also points out the importance of the role of the *shaikh*, saying that it is possible to approach the hidden saints with the proper guidance of the *shaikh*, the leader of the order. Thus, Sulṭān Walad, while appreciating Ḥallāj, adopts a method of branding it as a “saint” by drawing away from the conventional image of the “drunken” Ḥallāj. By emphasizing the intoxicated type of Sufi as an accepted “saint.” Including his own father, Sulṭān Walad has solidified the foothold of intoxicated Sufis which is not easily understood by everyone in this world. Furthermore, by bridging the gap between the hidden saints and the normal people through the existence of the *shaikh* or order, Sulṭān Walad dissolves the distinction between the saints and the ordinary people and emphasizes the significance of the order’s existence. Sulṭān Walad’s portrayal of the Ḥallāj weakens the excessively “drunken” component of the intoxicated Sufi and places him in his proper position as a saint, bringing him into the spiritual history of the Order and having the effect of keeping him connected to the present members of the Order, thus successfully keeping him in this world and giving him an appealing saintly character in the hereafter. This is his exquisite balancing act of keeping the intoxicated Sufi in this world while also retaining his transcendent character as an attractive saint.

## Bibliography

- Aflākī, Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad. *Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn*. Tihrān: Dunyā-i kitab, 1983-1984.
- . *The Feats of the Knowers of God: Manāqeb al-‘arefīn*. trans. by John O’Kane, Leiden: Brill, 2002..
- Ambrosio, Alberto Fabio. *Vie d’un Derviche Tourneur: Doctrine et Rituels du Soufisme au XVII siècle*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010..
- Furūzānfar, Badī‘ al-Zamān. *Aḥādīs-i Maṣnavī*. Tihrān: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1956.
- Goldziher, Ignaz and Kissling, Hans Joachim. “Abdāl”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 20 February 2024 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_0132](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0132).
- Küçük, Hülya and Gamard, Ibrahim. *Sultan Walad: In the Footsteps of Rumi and Shams: A Study Based on the Main Mawlawi Sources*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2022.



- Lewis, Franklin. *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rumi*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2008.
- Massignon, Louis. *La passion de Husayn ibn Mansûr Hallâj*. 4vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Najjārī, Muḥammad and Aḥmad-nezhād, Kāmel. “Ḥallāj dar āsār-i Maulānā,” in *Adabiyāt-i erfānī wa Oṣṭure shenākhtī (Mytho-Mystic Literature)* 32, 9(2013): 1-10.
- Rūmī, Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn.
- Dīvān-i kebîr*. 22vols. trans. by Nevit Oguz Ergin. Walla Walla: Current/Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture, 1995.
- , *Kullīyāt-i Shams wā Dīwān-i kabîr*. 9vols. ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Furūzānfar. Tihrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1999-2000.
- *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*. ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Furūzānfar. Tihrān: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 2008.
- , *Masnavii Manavi: Teachings of Rumi: The Spiritual Couplets of Maulanajalalu-‘d-din Muhammad i Rumi*. trans. E.H. Whinfield. Ames: Omphaloskepsis, 2001.
- , *Maṣnawī-i ma‘nawī*. ed. R. A. Nicholson. Tihrān: Hirmis, 2011.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Sulṭān Walad. *Ibtidā-nāma*. ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Muwaḥḥid and ‘Alī Rizā Ḥaydarī. Tihrān: Khwārizmī, 2010.
- , *Intihā-nāma*, ed. by Muḥammad ‘Alī Khazānadarlū, [Tihrān]: Intishārāt-i Rawzana, 1997.
- , *Ma‘ārif*, ed. Najīb Māyil Harawī. Tihrān: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 2020.
- , *Rabāb-nāma*. ed. Gird Farāmarzī and ‘Alī Sulṭānī. Tihrān: Mu‘assasa-i Muṭāla‘āt-i Islāmī-i Dānishgāh-i Makgīl, 1980.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. London: Oxford University Press, 1998.