

University of Toronto  
Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Graduate Scholarship

Mojtaba Shahsavariavijeh

Dear Admissions Committee,

I hope this message finds you well. I am an Iranian MA student in the History program, and it is my honor to do my thesis about a part of Iran's history and literature, titled "The History of Divine Authority (*Walāyah*) in the Writings of the Early Kubrawī Masters." I am writing this letter to apply for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Graduate Scholarship at the University of Toronto. I am enthusiastic about the prospect of making a meaningful contribution to promoting academic studies through scholarly investigation and active involvement.

The table of contents and pages below will contain a list of my documents.

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I express my gratitude for your consideration of my application. I am eager to engage in a discussion regarding the further exploration of my qualifications. I will be available via email or phone call for more information and detailed documents.

Sincerely,  
Mojtaba Shahsavariavijeh

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Phone number: 4376635787

## The Description of the Project

### The Concept of Divine Authority (*walāyah*) in the Writings of Early Kubrawī Masters (Historical Dynamics in Pre-Shaping Early Modern Societies)

Mojtaba Shahsavariavijeh

Studying the historical development of intellectual ideas in medieval Iran can elucidate Iran's role in the generation of global ideas. Persian Sufis in the middle periods of Iran played a crucial role in compiling and expanding significant ideas about human cultural life, with a focus on human-centered (anthropocentric) perspectives. Recognizing their contributions can greatly aid in analyzing the various layers of thought within the Iranian social structure.

The concept of *walāyah* (divine-human authority), as practiced in its Sufi historical context, has played a significant role in Iran's social, political, and spiritual history. This research explores the various aspects of *walāyah*, focusing on the Kubrawī Sufi order (Est. since 1221), one of the most influential in Iranian intellectual history. This study will analyze Sufi writings and historical contexts to examine how Kubrawī Sufi masters used *walāyah* to legitimize governmental authority, promote social cohesiveness, and improve spiritual life as well.

In the historical context of Iran, rulers frequently sought supernatural sanction to maintain their legitimacy and support within the social order. Sufi masters, considered real successors of the Prophet's spirituality, were commonly sought for divine approval, known as *walāyah*. Sufi masters, notably from the Kubrawī order, had significant influence and could legitimize kings and elevate kingdoms. The Kubrawī Sufi masters were not only spiritual guides but also played active roles in political and social realms, engaging in diplomatic missions, settling conflicts, and contributing to public welfare by building schools, bathhouses, and other public amenities.

In the mystical view of Sufism, especially in the Kubrawī order, the idea of *walāyah* is very different from how it is used in Iran and Islam for legal, political, and social issues. Many mystics, especially those in the Kubrawī order, think that everyone can reach *walāyah* by following a clear spiritual path. This process gives each person their own unique identity (and agency as well) and empowers them to make their own decisions, demonstrating that attaining God is a goal accessible to all. Islamic jurisprudence, on the other hand, has a legal, social, and political system that says *walāyah*, or supreme religious power, can only be held by one person. People who reach this level are viewed as leaders, whereas others must follow their lead and look to them for advice. This system takes away people's freedom and spiritual growth potential, putting more emphasis on following rules and being obedient than on spiritual growth for each person.

This study looks at the idea of divine-human authority in the writings of the Kubrawī Sufi masters and challenges the primitive roots of the idea of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist (*wilāyat-i faqīh*) that modern Iranian clergy support. The study will show big differences in how people think about and use divine authority by looking at the philosophical and theological bases of *walāyah* as understood by Sufi scholars. On the other hand, the Sufi idea

of walāyah emphasizes personal spiritual growth, mystical experience, and a direct, personal connection with the divine. This is very different from Wilayat-i Faqih, which is based on the authority of a single religious figure over social and political issues. In addition to this fundamental distinction, the two systems differ in their perceptions and applications of divine authority and government.

Accordingly, it will study the religious and cultural legitimacy of Iran's current leaders by examining their claims to power within a historical context. The study will question the power of today's clerics' rule over the people by comparing the spiritual and mystical interpretations of walāyah with the political-religious philosophy of Wilayat-i Faqih. It will go into detail about how these ideas have changed over time and look at how the teachings of the Sufi masters set up a framework for individual divine authority that is different from the centralized control that modern Iranian clerics support in modern-day Iran.

This study will use a combination of intertextual analysis and sociohistorical methodologies. The socio-historical technique contextualizes significant Sufi writings within their historical and cultural contexts, while intertextual analysis provides deep readings of walāyah. Primary sources will include writings attributed to Najm al-dīn al-Rāzī and his writings, such as *Mirṣād al-'ibād min al-mabda' ilā al-ma'ād*. The texts will include comparative studies with other Sufi orders.

Moreover, by analyzing the primary sources, this project will help us understand how the Kubrawī Sufi order used the term walāyah to navigate and affect the socio-political landscape at the time. The research on walāyah in the Kubrawī tradition sheds light on the role of spiritual authority in Islamic history. The study intends to fill a gap in scholarly research by focusing on the interdisciplinary features of Kubrawī walāyah, incorporating insights from literary studies, sociology, psychology, history, and religion.

This research will provide complete knowledge of the transformational potential of walāyah in the Kubrawī Sufi tradition, as well as its continuing impact on Iran's sociopolitical and spiritual life. This research examines the historical development and practical implementation of walāyah, shedding light on the relationship between spirituality and governance. It provides a deep view of the dynamic interactions between religion and politics throughout Islamic history.

## Budget Summary

My project's budgetary requirements include tuition, research materials, and living expenses. I pay CAD 36,000 a year for my studies at the University of Toronto. The budget summary is as follows:

- **Tuition Fees**

University of Toronto tuition: \$36,260.70 CAD per year

(As an international student, I must pay the tuition fee for my one-year MA program.)

- **Research Expenses**

- Books and journals: \$1,500 CAD
- Manuscript access fees: \$2,000 CAD
- Photocopying and printing: \$500 CAD
- Software and databases: \$1,000 CAD
- Conference fees: \$1,500 CAD

• Research expenses include the cost of manuscripts, lithographs, rare books, photocopying, and printing. Since many of the Kubrawi Sufi order's works are unpublished, I need to obtain their microfilms, or digitized versions, from international and national libraries around the world, particularly those in the Middle East. Investing in these one-of-a-kind and rare materials provides invaluable insights into my research, enhancing its depth and credibility. Moreover, I will need to participate in the conferences and workshops to exchange knowledge, network with similar professionals, and keep abreast of recent advancements in the field. In 2024, I plan to attend the Religion in Transformation conference at Central European University in Vienna, as well as another one in Sabzevar, Iran. Furthermore, it will contain the costs associated with scanning, typing manuscripts, copying, and printing.

- **Living Expenses**

- Rent and utilities: \$12,000 CAD per year
- Food and miscellaneous: \$6,000 CAD per year
- Health insurance: \$765 CAD per year
- Public transportation: \$1,200 CAD per year

### **Total Estimated Budget**

**Total:** \$62,725.70 CAD

This budget will ensure that the research proceeds correctly by covering all costs associated with accessing resources, performing fieldwork, attending conferences, and maintaining a standard living environment suitable for academic work.

## ■ Education

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- 2023- MA Student in History, University of Toronto, Canada.  
1999-2003 B.A. in Ḥadīth Sciences, The University of Quran and Hadith, Tehran, Iran.

## ■ International Conference Participation

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- 2024 “The Historical Concept of Divine Authority (*walāyah*) As perceived by Najm al-Din al-Rāzī (d. 654/ 1256) according to his Sufi commentary of Qur’an *Baḥr al-ḥaqā’iq wa al-ma’ānī*.” *Identity and change, Annual history graduate symposium*, 27-28 May 2024, University of Toronto, Canada (in English).
- 2024 “Tracing an esoteric allegory on the religious concept of a good death Skinning the Serpent: Annihilation of Self-hood according to Najm al-Din al-Razi’s (d. 654/1256) Sufi commentary on the Qur’an.” *The seventh Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion*, 20-23 May 2024, Palermo, Italy (in English).
- 2019 “The Replica of the Higher World: The Human Body in Kubrawī Teachings According to Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Dāya (d. 654/1256).” *International Conference on Sufism and the Body*, 12-13 September 2019, Utrecht University, Netherlands (in English).
- 2016 “Khanqāhs as Centres for Manuscript Production and Distribution: Sufi Contributions to the Spread of Non-Sufi Islamic Intellectual Heritage.” *The Eleventh Islamic Manuscript Association Conference on Sufism and Islamic Manuscript Culture*, 13-15 September 2016, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom (in English).
- 2009 “Dīdgāh-i Kubrawiyya Darbāra-yi ‘Ilm al-a’dād [onomatomanacy] az Khilāl-i Kitāb al-Ḥurūf wa-l-Nuḡṭa-yi Sa’d al-Dīn Hammūya (d. 658/1260).” *The Fourth Conference of the Iranian Society for the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature*, 21-23 Mordād 1388/12-14 July 2009, University of Tabriz, Iran (in Persian).

## ■ Languages

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Native	Persian, Arabic
Highly advanced	English, Middle Persian
Advanced	German, Urdu
Intermediate	Turkish, Kurdish, Hebrew (Tanakh)
Reading proficiency	French

## ■ Work Experiences

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- 2022-2024 Independent scholar, The European Academy of Religion (EuARE), Italy.
- 2013- 2023 Research Associate, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, the University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
- 2022-2022 Independent scholar, Jum’a al-Majid Centre for Culture and Heritage, Dubai, UAE.
- 2017-2022 Research associate, *Kursi* of Persian Literature and Quranic Studies, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.
- 2015-2021 Research Collaborator, the University of Tehran, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, the research group of Prof. Shahryar Niazi, Tehran, Iran.

- 2017-2021 The instructor of the workshop, “History of Intellectual Thought in the Islamic World (with a focus on Sufism),” Rhagae Publishing House, Tehran, Iran.
- 2019-2021 Independent Cataloger and Islamic manuscripts expert, National library, Tehran, Iran.
- 2017-2019 Independent scholar and Cataloger, Majlis Library, Tehran, Iran.

## ■ Others

- 2022- Chair of the “Razi Award in Islamic and Iranian Studies,” Palermo-Bologna, Italy.

## ■ Publications

### I. Books

*Taṣḥīḥ-i Intiqādī wa Tarjuma-yi Fārsī-yi Athar-i Nawyāfta az Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī: Kitāb al-Ādāb.* Tehran: Rāzīyāneh Publication, 2022. [210 Pp, ISBN 978-622-95848-1-1].

The first critical edition of the Arabic text and the first Persian translation of al-Qushayrī's (d. 465/1072) newly identified work, *Kitāb al-Ādāb* based on two manuscripts in Turkey and Azerbaijan with an introduction.

*Taṣḥīḥ-i Intiqādī-yi Tafsīr-i Sūra-yi Insān az Mutikallim-i Mashhūr-i Shī'ī, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1529).* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 2021. [247 Pp, ISBN 978-600-7517-12-3].

The first edition to be published of the Quran commentary by the Shiite theologian, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1529/436) based on a unique manuscript in Cairo, likely to originate from an actual majlis (gathering) of Egyptian Shiites in the 5th/11th century.

*Catalogue of Islamic Medical Manuscripts on Prophylaxis.* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 2018. [83 Pages, ISBN 978-600-94584-8-6]

A descriptive catalogue of medical manuscripts on prophylaxis (*ḥifẓ al-ṣiḥḥa*) in Arabic and Persian.

*Guzīda-yi Kitāb “al-Irshād dar Ma’rifat wa-Wa’z wa-Akhlāq.”* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 2017. [78 Pages, ISBN 978-600-7517-00-0]

A handbook prepared for teaching a course on “History of Kalām in Iran: Khurāsān,” containing excerpts from a Persian work by ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad Qalānisī-i Nasafī (d. ca 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>), *Kitāb al-Irshād*.

*Catalogue of Geographical Manuscripts among Muslims.* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 1395/2016. [142 Pp, ISBN 978-600-94584-9-3].

A descriptive catalogue of geographical manuscripts in Arabic and Persian.

*Kīmīyā-yi Kūy-i Nīyāz.* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 1395/2016. [110 Pp, ISBN 978-600-94584-1-1].

A critical edition and Persian translation of *Du‘ā-yi Kumayl*, a book of supplication in Arabic attributed to Kumayl b. Ziyād.

*The Advice of the Youthful Mentor.* Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 2015. [114 pages, ISBN 978-600-94584-6-2].

Selected aphorisms by Persian sage and Sufi master Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī (d. 786/1384) with an English translation. The main text is critically edited based on two manuscripts from Tehran and Lahore.

*Ṣalawāt wa Munājāt-i Sha‘bāniyya with Persian and English translation.* Co-authored with Vahid Janfarsa. Tehran: Rhagae Publication, 1393/2014. [126 Pp, ISBN 978-600-9458-40-0].

## II. Articles and Book Chapters

“Barkhī Yaddāsht-hā Pīrāmūn-i Tafsīr-i “Futūḥ al-Raḥmān fī-Ishārāt al-Qur’ān” wa-Mu’allif-i Ān: Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī al-Hamadānī,” *Ayina-yi Pazhūhish* 27, no. 157 (1395/2016), pp. 5-19.

A study of *Futūḥ al-Raḥmān*—a yet unpublished text and one of the most important Persian Sufi commentaries on the Quran, written by Shams al-Dīn al-Daylamī (d. ca. 593/1197)—that attempts to show how al-Daylamī belongs to a lesser-known current of Persian Sufism in western Iran.

“Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī and His *Kitāb al-Shawāhid wa-l-Amthāl*,” *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook*, no. 3 (1391/2012), pp. 279-300. [In English]

“Darbāra-yi Tafsīr-i al-Ta’wīlāt al-Najmiyya wa-Mu’allif-i Ān: Najm al-Dīn Dāya-i Rāzī (d. 654/1256),” *Khīrad-nāma-yi Hamshahrī*, no. 50 (1389/2010), pp. 113-125.

A study of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s life and works with a focus on his major *tafsīr* work, which had been wrongly ascribed to his master, Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221).

“Mir’āt al-Muruwwāt-i Ibn-i Ja’dawayh: Futuwwat-Nāma-yi Pīshkīsh-Shudih bi Khwāja Nizām al-Mulk-i Tūsī,” *Ittilā’āt-i Hikmat wa-Ma’rifat* 5, no. 6 (1389/2010), pp. 36-43.

A study of the link between the old Iranian tradition of magnanimity (*jawānmardī*) and the Muslim practice of chivalry (*futuwwa*) through the analysis of lingering Persian elements in the latter especially before the Mongol invasion with a particular attention to *Mir’āt al-Muruwwāt*, a work by Ibn Ja’dawayh al-Qazwīnī that was dedicated to Khwāja Nizām al-Mulk al-Tūsī (d. 485/1092), which is full of quotations from famous Iranian figures representing the old Iranian tradition of chivalry.

“Jur’a’ī az Jāmhā-yi Hinduān: Zībā’ī-Shināsī-yi Mūsīqī dar Hind,” *Ittilā’āt-i Hikmat wa-Ma’rifat* 4, no. 12 (1388/2009), pp. 27-32.

This article introduces the Persian school of music from the time of Bārbad to the Islamic era with occasional references to the musical tradition of India. The article contains a critical edition of a part of *Makhzan al-Fawā’id* by Ghulām Sarwar-i Hindī (d. 1241/1826) that discusses musical terms and systems (*dastgāh*), which point to common tendencies in Indo-Iranian musical traditions.

“Ma’khaz-Shināsī-yi Yakī az Dāstānhā-yi Mathnawī,” *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi ‘Ulūm-i Insānī-i Dānishgāh-i Simnān* 8, no. 28 (1388/2009), pp. 87-94. Co-authored with Mojtaba Damavandi.

This article attempts to identify possible sources for Rumi’s stories in the *Mathnawī* and presents a newly-discovered origin of the story of Laylā and the Caliph (*Mathnawī*, Book One), which had not been identified by Furūzānfār.

“Manāqib al-Aṣfiyā’, Tazkira-yi Arjmand Pīrāmūn-i Mashāyikh-i Suhrawardiyya-yi Firdawsiyya-yi Hind,” *Ittilā’āt-i Hikmat wa-Ma’rifat* 2, no. 10 (1386/2008), pp. 22-27.

A study of Persian-speaking Sufi masters of the Suhrawardiyya-Firdawsiyya order in India before the Safavid period, whose works contain historically and hagiographically valuable information.

“Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1221) wa Barrasī-yi Taṭbīqī-i Digar Āthār-i Ū,” *Kitāb-i Māh-i Kulliyāt*, Murdād wa-Shahrīwar (1384/2005), pp. 72-97.

This article discusses the political and cultural context of Sufi masters in Khurasan in the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries before the Mongol invasion, including Abū Sa’īd Abū al-Khayr, al-Qushayrī, and al-Sulamī. The article also contains the first annotated bibliography of al-Sulamī’s works in Persian and a forty-page textual comparison of the published edition of *Haqā’iq al-Tafsīr* against Ms. Fatih 261 with suggestions for correction.

# Recent Academic History

## Mojtaba Shamsavari

2023 Fall - Master of Arts

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Crs Code	Title	Wgt	Mrk	Grd	Crs Avg.
HIS1997H	The Practice of History	0.50		CR	
LRQ6666Y	Language Requirement	0.00		CR	
NMC2056H	Readings in Qur'an and Tafsir	0.50		A	
NMC2226H	Medieval Persian	0.50		CR	

### Credits

**Earned: 1.50**



**2024 Winter - Master of Arts**

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<b>Crs Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Wgt</b>	<b>Mrk</b>	<b>Grd</b>	<b>Crs Avg.</b>
HIS1001H	Topics in History	0.50		A	
NMC2160H	Hadith and the Study of	0.50		A-	
NMC2180H	Iranian Modernity	0.50		A+	
<b>Credits Earned: 1.50</b>					

**2024 Summer - Master of Arts**

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<b>Crs Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Wgt</b>	<b>Mrk</b>	<b>Grd</b>	<b>Crs Avg.</b>
HIS2000Y	Directed Research	1.00		IPR	
<b>Credits Earned: 0.00</b>					