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## *Fana and Baqa*

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Introduction

Reference Works

General Overviews

Primary Sources

Anthologies

Studies on Individual Thinkers (Classical Period)

Studies on Individual Thinkers (Post-Classical Period)

Comparative Studies

Music

### **Introduction**

*Fanā'* and *baqā'*, or "annihilation" and "subsistence," respectively, are two technical terms in Sufism that describe two contrasting states of the human being on the path to God. A key Quranic reference is *Everything upon the earth is undergoing annihilation, but there subsists the face of your Lord, Possessor of Majesty and Generous Giving* (Q 55:26-27). Some Sufis categorize *fanā'* and *baqā'* as "states" (*aḥwāl*) of the human being, while others call them "stations" (*maqāmāt*), "waystations" (*manāzil*), "fields" (*maydān*), and so on, all of which are hierarchically ordered to indicate progressive stages of the spiritual journey. In most schematization, *fanā'* is followed by *baqā'*, with the latter constituting a more advanced stage than the former. While Sufis over the centuries have developed slightly different formulations of these two terms, a basic sense of *fanā'* is the annihilation of the human selfhood in the sheer presence of God, which is followed by *baqā'*, where the human selfhood returns and subsists. The selfhood at the stage of *baqā'* is understood to be different from the selfhood before it was annihilated. As *fanā'* and *baqā'* constitute a pair of opposite states of the human being, they are closely related to other pairs of opposite states, such as intoxication (*sukr*) and sobriety (*ṣaḥw*), expansion (*basf*) and contraction (*qabḍ*), and gathering (*jam'*) and separation (*tafriqa*). By discussing *fanā'* and *baqā'* together, Sufis made the point that the journey to God does not end in the annihilation of the self-awareness. Rather, the highest stage is where the human being is able to retain self-awareness while being fully aware of divine presence at the same time. One may say that the stage of subsistence after annihilation is roughly analogous to the state of the philosopher in Plato's allegory of the cave when he returns to the cave after having seen the world of Forms above ground. The stage of subsistence after annihilation is where human beings can live an earthly life in full harmony with God's will while retaining individual awareness and sobriety that enable them to speak to and guide others. Sufis regard this to be the state of the prophet Muhammad and the state to aspire to through the spiritual discipline of the Sufi path.

### **Reference Works**

These encyclopedia entries in English provide useful background for understanding *fanā'* and *baqā'*. Those who are new to the subject are recommended to begin with Böwering 1988 and Mojaddedi 2011, followed by Gardet and Rahman, with supplementary use of Carra de Vaux 1927. Lajevardi and Waley 2013 focuses on Bāyazīd and discusses his understanding of *fanā'*.

Böwering, Gerhard. "Baqā' wa fanā'." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Edited by Ehsan Yarshater. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

The most extensive reference work on the two terms including a substantial bibliography. Available \*online[<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baqā-wa-fana-sufi-term-signifying-subsistence-and-passing-away>]\*.

Carra de Vaux, B. "Fanā'." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition (1913-1936)*. Edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T. W. Arnold, R. Basset, and R. Hartmann. Leiden: Brill, 1927.

The oldest Brill reference for the term *fanā'*. Concise and may be more useful for understanding the history of Western scholarship on *fanā'* than the concept itself. Available \*online[[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X\\_ei1\\_SIM\\_2270](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_2270)]\* by subscription.

Gardet, L. "Ḥāl." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs.

Provides necessary background for understanding *fanā'* and *baqā'* by putting them in the context of the discussion of the states (*aḥwāl*) of the human being. Available \*online[[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0254](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0254)]\* by subscription.

Lajvardi, Fatemeh and M.I. Waley. "Bāyazīd Bastāmī." In *Encyclopaedia Islamica*. Edited by Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

See the section on "The Nature and Description of *Fanā'* (annihilation)," which explains Bāyazīd's conception of *fanā'*. Available \*online [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-9831\_isla\_COM\_000000105]\* by subscription.

Mojaddedi, Jawid. "Annihilation and Abiding in God." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

The latest and after Bowering 1988 the most extensive reference work on *fanā'* and *baqā'* published by Brill. Available \*online[[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_SIM\\_0329](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_SIM_0329)]\* by subscription.

Rahman, F. "Baḳā' wa-Fanā'." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs.

A compact but useful reference work on the two terms. Available \*online[[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_1083](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1083)]\* by subscription.

### General Overviews

Aside from reference works, there are few dedicated studies on *fanā'* and *baqā'* as such. Most publications focus on individual thinkers' interpretation of the two terms, which can be found under \*Studies\*. Wilcox 2011 provides an overview of early Sufi discourse on *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

Wilcox, Andrew. "The Dual Mystical Concepts of *Fanā'* and *Baqā'* in Early Sufism." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38 (1): 95-118. 2011.

An overview of the classical Sufi discourse on the two terms.

### Primary Sources

Early sources that touch on *fanā'* and *baqā'* tend to belong to a genre of Sufi literature enumerating the stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*) of the human being on the path to God or to Sufi lexicons. In the genre of stations literature are al-Anṣārī 2010, al-Anṣārī 2011, Baqlī 1974. Lexicons include Hujwīrī 1911,

Ibn 'Ajība 2011, al-Qushayrī 2007, and al-Sarrāj 1914. Abdel-Kader 1962 contains a translation of *The Book of Annihilation* ascribed to Junayd. Al-Kalabādhī 1935 catalogues and analyzes various Sufi doctrines, one of which is on *fanā'*. For later critique of Sufi notions of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, see Ansari 1986, which includes Sirhindī's view on *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

Abdel-Kader, Ali Hassan. *Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic, with an Edition and Translation of His Writings*. London: Luzac, 1962.

Includes a translation of *The Book of Annihilation (Kitāb al-fanā')*, a short treatise of eight pages in which Junayd explains the concept with reference to the Day of the Covenant (Q 7:172). For a newer English translation, see Sells 1996 cited under \*Anthologies\*

al-Anṣārī 'Abd Allāh al-Harawī. *Stations of the Sufi Path: The One Hundred Fields (Sad Maydān) of 'Abdu'llāh Ansārī [sic] of Herat*. Translated by Nahid Angha. Cambridge: Archetype, 2010.

An English translation of al-Anṣārī's Persian work that predates *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* that he composed in Arabic. See chapters 99 on *fanā'* and 100 on *baqā'* out of the hundred "fields" or "battlefields" (*maydān*) presented in this work. The ordering of the hundred stages differs from *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*.

al-Anṣārī, 'Abd Allāh al-Harawī. *Stations of the Wayfarers*. Translated by Hishām Rifā'ī. Paris: Albouraq, 2011.

A parallel English-Arabic text of *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, which was composed in Arabic after *Sad maydān* (in Persian). See chapters 92 on annihilation and 93 on subsistence out of the hundred chapters laid out in this work. Each of the hundred chapters of the book presents a "door" (*bāb*) leading to God. For a study and translation of the text in French, see al-Anṣārī 1962 cited under \***Studies on Individual Thinkers (Classical Period)**\*

Ansari, Muhammad Abdul Haq. *Sufism and Sharī'ah: A Study of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's Effort to Reform Sufism*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1986

A study and translation of Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, or letters written in Persian, some of which contain substantial discussion of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. For the original Persian text (selected letters) and an eighty-page English introduction containing a discussion of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, see Sirhindī, Aḥmad. 1968. *Intikhāb-i maktūbāt-i Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī*. Edited by Fazlur Rahman. Karachi: Iqbal Academy.

Baqī, Rūzbihān. *Kitāb maṣrab al-arvāḥ va huva'l-maṣhūr bi-hazār u yak maḳām (bi-alfi maḳāmin va maḳāmin)*. Edited by Naṣreden Nazif M. Hoca. Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaasi, 1974.

An Arabic text outlining 1001 stations leading to God, including *fanā'* and *baqā'*. An English translation of various passages can be found in Javad Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*, 16 vols. London: Khanqah-i Nimatullahi Publications, 1987–).

Hujwīrī, 'Alī b. 'Uthmān. *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sūfism*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. Leiden: Brill, 1911.

Includes discussion of *fanā'* in connection to the idea of poverty (*faqr*) and mentions of Sufi masters who have dealt with the idea.

Ibn 'Ajība, Aḥmad. *The Book of Ascension to the Essential Truths of Sufism. Mi'rāj al-tashawwuf ilā ḥaqā'iq al-taṣawwuf: A Lexicon of Sufic Terminology*. Translated by Mohamed Fouad Aresmouk and Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011.

The Arabic text and English translation of a text by Ibn 'Ajība (d. 1809), a Darqāwī Sufi from Morocco. See chapter 54 on “effacement and subsistence.”

al-Kalābādihī, Abū Bakr. *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfīs: (Kitāb al-Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf)*. Translated by Arthur John Arberry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935.

See chapter 59 on “passing-away and persistence,” which begins by stating “Passing-away is a state in which all passions pass away” (p. 120) and includes a substantial analysis of early Sufi views on *fanā'* in contrast to one another.

al-Qushayrī. *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*. Translated Alexander Knysh. Reading: Garnet, 2007.

A full English translation of al-Qushayrī's famous treatise on Sufism, which includes a section on *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

al-Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb al-luma' fi 'l-taṣawwuf*. Edited by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson. Leiden: Brill, 1914.

A catalogue and explanation of various Sufi doctrines and technical terms, including *fanā'*.

### **Anthologies**

Anthologies of Sufi texts are bound to have multiple mentions of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. For classical Sufi texts, see Sells 1996.

Sells, Michael A.. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.

An anthology of early Sufi texts in translation, including the works of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, Tustarī, Qushayrī, Rābi'a, Muḥāsibī, Sarrāj, Bisṭāmī, Junayd, Ḥallāj, and Niffarī, many of which contain references to *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

### **Studies on Individual Thinkers (Classical Period)**

Numerous studies of Sufi texts exist that touch on the notions of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. Abdel-Kader 1962 focuses on Junayd; al-Anṣārī 1962 contains its editor's analysis of the content of *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*. Godlas 1985 translates parts of al-Anṣārī's *Sad maydān* and al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* that discuss *fanā'*.

Abdel-Kader, Ali Hassan. *Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic, with an Edition and Translation of His Writings*. London: Luzac, 1962.

See Abdel-Kader's chapter 8, “The Theory of *Fanā'*,” which is an updated version of Abdel-Kader, Ali. 1954. “Al-Junayd's Theory of *Fanā'*.” *Islamic Quarterly* 1: 219-228.

al-Anṣārī, 'Abd Allāh al-Harawī. *Kitāb manāzil al-sā'irīn*. Edited by Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1962.

A critical edition, study, and translation of the text in French. For an English translation, see al-Anṣārī 2011 cited under \*Primary Sources\*.

Godlas, Alan. 1985. "Stations of Wisdom and Battlefields of Love: Introduction and Translation." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 5: 87–98.

Godlas' partial translation of al-Anṣārī's *Sad maydān* and al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, including their discussion of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. For full translations of these two works, see al-Anṣārī 2010 and al-Qushayrī 2007, respectively, cited under \*Primary Sources\*. Available [\\*online\[https://doi.org/10.2307/521754\]\\*](https://doi.org/10.2307/521754) by subscription.

### Studies on Individual Thinkers (Post-Classical Period)

In later periods of Sufism, one can witness less of cataloguing of earlier Sufi views on *fanā'* and *baqā'*, which was emblematic of classical Sufism, but more of Sufis further developing the two ideas with new nuances, some with critical stances to earlier views. Instances of new developments in understanding the two concepts can be found in Buehler 1998, Schimmel 1976, and Ghomi 1999. Nicholson 1966 covers a wide range of Sufis and their discussion of the two concepts. Ernst 1985 is useful for understanding the behavior of Sufis who enter the state of *fanā'*. Lewisohn 1999 focuses on 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's view on *fanā'*. Zargar 2017 has a chapter on 'Aṭṭār's understanding of *fanā'*. Chittick 1998 provides a translation of a chapter on *fanā'* and *baqā'* in Ibn al-'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makīyya*, which is also discussed in Morris 1988.

Anjum, Ovamir. "Sufism without Mysticism? Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah's Objectives in 'Madāriġ al-Sālikīn.'" *Oriente Moderno* 90 (1): 161–88. 2010.

See the section on "The Problem of Ontology: Annihilation (*fanā'*)" for Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's critique of al-Anṣārī al-Harawī's view on *fanā'*.

Buehler, Arthur F. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*. Studies in Comparative Religion. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998.

See for some discussion of Indian Naqshbandīs' formulations of *fanā'* and *baqā'* in God, in the Messenger, and in the shaykh, which are discussed in Schimmel 1976 (pp. 69-71).

Chittick, William C. *Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998.

Includes a translation and discussion of Ibn al-'Arabī's chapter on *fanā'* and *baqā'* in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makīyya* (pp. 84-6)

Ernst, Carl W. *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

A study on ecstatic sayings (*shath*), which are uttered in a state of intoxication and hence closely related to the experience of *fanā'*. Thinkers treated include Rūzbihān Baqlī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, and al-Ḥallāj.

Ghomi, Heideh. "The Imagery of Annihilation (*Fanā'*) in the Poetry of Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī." In *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan, 3:493–517. Oxford: Oneworld, 1999.

A study of a seventeenth-century Sufi from Isfahan in whose poetry the notion of *fanā'* figures prominently.

Lewisohn, Leonard. "In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the *Tamhīdāt* of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī." In *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from Its origins to Rumi (700-1300)*. Edited by Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan, 1:285-336. Oxford: Oneworld, 1999.

An investigation of *fanā'* in 'Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī's thought accompanied by a brief overview of classical Sufi discourse on the subject.

Morris, James Winston. 1988. "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabī and the Mi'rāj Part II." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1): 63–77.

Includes a study and translation of chapter 367 of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, where Ibn 'Arabī discusses the Prophet's ascension (*mi'rāj*). Morris discusses *fanā'* and *baqā'* mainly in his footnotes. Available \*online[<https://doi.org/10.2307/603246>]\* by subscription.

Nicholson, R. A. *The Mystics of Islam*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1966.

Contains a somewhat outdated account (in the introduction) of *fanā'* in connection to the Buddhist notion of nirvana, but also includes some useful explanation of various types of *fanā'* (pp. 59-62); a discussion of how al-Niffarī uses another term, *waqfat*, "signifying cessation from search" (p. 156), in place of *fanā'*; and Tilimsānī's commentary on Niffarī including a discussion of *fanā'* and *baqā'* (p. 164).

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth Century Muslim India*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Includes a study of a later Indian thinker, Khwāja Mīr Dard of Delhi (d.1785), who explained three types of *fanā'*: in the shaykh, in the Messenger, and in God.

Zargar, Cyrus Ali. *Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism*. London: Oneworld, 2017.

See chapter 9 for 'Aṭṭār's view on *fanā'*.

### Comparative Studies

Jabre 1956 is one of the oldest publications on the idea of *fanā'* and one of the few comparative studies on the subject in modern scholarship.

Jabre, Farid. 1956. "L'Extase de Plotin et le Fanā' de Ghazali." *Studia Islamica* 6:101-124.

A comparison of al-Ghazālī's formulation of the spiritual path leading to God and the Plotinian ascent to the One with a focus on the ideas of annihilation and ecstasy.

### Music

Avery 2004 touches on *fanā'* as a state induced by the practice of *samā'* (audition).

Avery, Kenneth S. *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samā': Listening and Altered States*. Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Discusses *fanā'* in connection to the practice of *samā'* (audition) and the state of *wajd* (ecstasy).