

ering of Khawlān sitting in the mosque and 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Malik came out, trying to escape the plague. So he asked about him and was told that he came out to escape from the plague. He then said:

From God we came and to Him we return (*innā lillāh wa-innā ilayhi rāji'ūn*). I did not think I would live to see this. Should I not tell you of the state that your brothers were in? First, meeting God the exalted is dearer to them than life. Second, they do not fear the enemy, whether they are many or few. Third, they do not fear poverty. They are confident that God will provide for them. Fourth, if plague afflicts their [area] they do not leave until God's decree for them has passed.⁷⁸

Thus in Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* we find a plethora of references and information that provide valuable historical insight into the early Islamic period and the prevalent perceptions of martial pursuits by the early Muslims. We also find other related information, such as the veiled criticism of the Umayyads in the above quote, the continuity the Muslims perceived between their battles of the second/eighth century and the early battles of the Prophet, and an emphasis on the ethics of warfare.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 110.

01 Aralık 2021

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

Abdullah b. Mübarak (010205)

ez-Zuhd ve'r-Rek'at (230374)

Ibn al-Mubārak and His Zuhd

What is Zuhd?

Al-Dhahabī described Ibn al-Mubārak as the “exemplar of the practitioners of *zuhd* and their leader” (*qudwat al-zāhidīn wa-imāmihim*).¹ Al-Sha'rānī called him the “crown of the worshipers and people of *zuhd*.”² He was cited as being the first to write a book of *zuhd* and thus begin a genre of books of *zuhd* (*kutub al-zuhd*) and it was reported that he was rendered speechless “like an ox after slaughter” when reading his book of *zuhd*.³ It is rare to read an entry on Ibn al-Mubārak in biographical dictionaries without a reference to his distinction as a man of *zuhd*.

What then is *zuhd*? What do the references which link Ibn al-Mubārak to *zuhd* mean? This is precisely the question which Leah Kinberg attempts to answer in her article, “What is Meant by *Zuhd*.”⁴ In her article, Kinberg emphasizes the importance of using the term *zuhd* within its own historical context. She argues that many assert that practitioners of *zuhd* were emulating practices that were prevalent among Christian ascetics because the word *zuhd* is commonly defined as “asceticism” and not used within the parameters of the Islamic tradition. Kinberg writes, “... It seems that there is an incompatibility between the foreign and Arabic terms due to the fact that one term used in one society cannot give a clear idea of another term used in another society.”⁵

Indeed Ofer Livne-Kafri makes this assumption of an inherent analogy between Christian monasticism and the Islamic concept of *zuhd*.⁶ Livne-Kafri argues that asceticism was a phenomenon that appeared early on in the Islamic tradition as a result of Christian monastic influences on Muslims

¹ al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 1:202.

² 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Sha'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktab Muḥammad al-Malījī, 1897), 1:52. The literal wording is *'arūs al-'ubbād wa-l-zuhhād* or “bride of the worshipers and people of *zuhd*.” I have translated the word as “crown” since it is closer to the intended meaning.

³ al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 1:203.

⁴ Leah Kinberg, “What is Meant by *Zuhd*?” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), 27–44.

⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶ Ofer Kafri-Livne, “Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 105–129.

Feryal Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunni Scholasticism: 'Abdallah b. Al-Mubārek and the Formation of Sunni Identity in the Second Islamic Century*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2016

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