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Heretics and Sufi Theology of Tolerance

The Medinan-Kurdish thinker, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1690), is widely regarded as one of the most leading commentators of the Akbarian school in the Ottoman era. His Sufi-theological writings cover a broad spectrum of Akbarian philosophy. A fundamental study of Kūrānī's thought by Nasser Dumairieh (2022) corroborates a few existing studies and further argues that the Akbarian formulation of “oneness of being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is fused with systematic theology in Kūrānī's authoritative intervention. The Kurdish thinker articulates his theological arguments by intermixing foundational and canonical Ash'arī texts, from the time of the founder up to the Shirāzī philosopher Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī (d. 1502), with major Akbarian corpora, buttressed by the extensive validations of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth with rigorous chains of transmission.

In the intellectual milieus of the post-Timurid and post-Mamluk periods, I argue, Kūrānī's spirit of philosophical verification brought in the ‘harvest of the new Islamic theology’ in the seventeenth century. The *waḥdat al-wujūd* – for which al-Kūrānī not only elaborated Ibn 'Arabī's teachings but also transmitted the latter's *ḥadīth* – became a hallmark of intellectual rigor in the Ottoman-Hijazi context, where he continued the legacy of his last, influential teacher: Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1661). Despite his prominent position, his thought inspired and provoked other scholars. Accused of being a heretic by many African luminaries, he persistently attempted to clarify, directly and indirectly through his community of letters, the Sufi-theological positions regarding *shaṭaḥāt* – especially uttered by Southeast Asian ‘heretics’ – various formulations of being, human action, and the problem of the Satanic verses. The most apparent impact of his approach, especially among his strong proponents throughout island Southeast Asia, was to curb polemics and political violence and thus promote the culture of tolerance. This paper finally will interpret further aspects of the way in which an Akbarian commentator facilitates the cessation of *takfīr*.



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