



# **Beyond Dogma: Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories**

*Jawid Mojaddedi*

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Despite Rumi's (d. 1273) recent emergence as a best-selling poet in the English-speaking world, fundamental questions about his teachings, such as the relationship of his Sufi mysticism to the wider Islamic religion, remain contested. In this groundbreaking study, Jawid Mojaddedi reaches to the heart of the matter by examining Rumi's teachings on *walaya* (Friendship with God) in light of earlier discourse in the wider Sufi tradition and juridico-theological Islam. *Walaya* is not only central to Rumi's teachings, but forms the basis for the celebration of intimacy, communication with the Divine, and transcendence of conventional religiosity in his poetry. And yet *walaya* is the aspect of Sufism which has proven the most difficult to reconcile with juridico-theological Islam.

In addition to its focus on Rumi, *Beyond Dogma* presents a perceptive analysis of the historical development of the discourse on *walaya* in the formative centuries of Sufism. This period coincides with the time when juridico-theological Islam rose to dominance, as reflected in the harmonizing efforts of theoretical Sufi writings, especially the manuals of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Mojaddedi's analysis facilitates a nuanced and contextualized evaluation of Rumi's teachings on *walaya*, which had already attracted a range of views before his time: from arguments in favor of its superiority to Prophethood, to guarantees of subordinate deference towards the Prophetic heritage interpreted by juridico-theological scholars. In the process, *Beyond Dogma* enables a fresh evaluation of the influential early Sufi manuals in their historical context, while also highlighting the significance for juridico-theological scholars of fundamental dogma in the process of consolidating their own dominance.

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