Islamic Mysticism

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VOLUME 1

Islamic Mysticism

A Short History

By

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BRILL

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In transliterating Arabic and Persian words I follow the system of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* with the modifications adopted by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, namely *q* instead of *ḳ* and *j* instead of *dj*. All dates are given according to the Muslim lunar calendar (*hijra*), which are followed by a backslash and the Common Era equivalent.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EI   *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, vols. 1–11, Leiden.

BEO   *Bullentin d'Études Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas*, Damascus.

JAOS   *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Ann Arbor, MI.

JRAS   *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London.

MIDEO   *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, Cairo.

StI   *Studia Islamica*, Paris.

ZDMG   *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Wiesbaden.

INTRODUCTION

An ascetic and mystical element that was implicitly present in Islam since its very inception became explicit during the first Islamic centuries (the seventh and eighth centuries C.E.). This period witnessed the appearance of the first Muslim devotees and "moral athletes," who formed primitive ascetic communities in the central and eastern lands of Islam, primarily in Mesopotamia, Syria and Eastern Iran. By the thirteenth century C.E. such early communities spread all over the world of Islam, forming new social institutions, the *ṭarīqa*s or brotherhoods, which had their distinct devotional practices, lifestyle, moral and ethical system, educational philosophy as well as semiindependent economic basis. In the Later Middle Ages (the twelfth–sixteenth centuries C.E.), Sufism became a dominant feature of the Muslim social order. Its common textbooks and authorities, its networks of *ṭarīqa* institutions and its distinctive code of behavior became a spiritual and intellectual glue that held together the culturally and ethnically diverse societies huddled up under the Islamic umbrella. Unlike Christian mysticism, which was overshadowed and marginalized by the secularizing and rationalistic tendencies in Western European societies that culminated in the Enlightenment, its Muslim counterpart, Sufism, retained its pervasive influence on the spiritual and intellectual life of Muslims until the beginning of the twentieth century. At that point, Sufi rituals, values and doctrines came under the criticism of such diverse religio-political groups as Islamic reformers, modernists, liberal nationalists and, somewhat later, Muslim socialists also. These groups accused Muslim mystics of deliberately maintaining "idle superstitions," such as the cult of departed saints and their shrines, of stubbornly resisting the imposition of "progressive" and "activist" social and intellectual attitudes, of indulging in outdated customs and ritual excesses and of exploiting the uneducated and superstitious masses to their advantage. Parallel to these critical attacks, in many countries of the Middle East, the economic foundations of Sufi fraternities were undermined by the agrarian reforms, secularization of education and new forms of taxation, which were instituted by Westernized nationalist governments. The extent of Sufism's decline in the first half of the twentieth century varied from one country to another. However, on the whole, by the 1950s the

vigorous anti-Sufi campaigns launched by various groups and parties within Muslim societies and the profound changes in the traditional economies and social make-up of Middle Eastern, Central Asian and North African societies, and to a lesser extent those of sub-Saharan Africa, resulted in Sufism's dramatic loss of appeal in the eyes of many Muslims. Its erstwhile institutional grandeur was reduced to a few low-key lodges that were staffed by Sufi masters with little influence outside their immediate coterie of followers. At one time, it seemed that the very survival of the centuries-old Sufi tradition and mode of piety was jeopardized by the sweeping social and economic changes which came on the heels of modernization. And yet, against all odds, not only did Sufism survive, but also, in recent decades, has been making a steady comeback. Sufi lodges sprang back to existence in many countries of the Middle East, South East Asia and North Africa as well as in Europe, in the United States and in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Basing themselves on the spiritual genealogies, doctrines, moral precepts and training techniques of the traditional Sufi orders they are working towards what may soon turn into a full-blown Sufi revival. Alongside traditional *ṭarīqa*s, we witness the emergence of the so-called Neo-Sufi movement seeking to bring Sufi values in tune with the spiritual and intellectual tastes of modern men and women. Some Westernized Sufi groups go as far as to divest Sufism of its Islamic garb, presenting it as an expression of a supraconfessional, universal truth that animates mystical quest in all religious traditions.

The aim of this book is to provide an accessible historical overview of Sufism's evolution from a simple world-renouncing piety to a series of highly sophisticated doctrines that circulated within a formal and highly hierarchical institutional framework known as the *ṭarīqa*. The *ṭarīqa* institution emerged in the sixth/twelfth century, flourished in the seventh/thirteenth-thirteenth/nineteenth centuries, suffered a profound spiritual and institutional decline at the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century, and, more recently, is experiencing an incipient revival. This study seeks to supplement and update the general surveys of Islamic mysticism by Fritz Meier,[1] Louis Massignon,[2] Margaret Smith,[3] Tor Andrae,[4] Georges Anawati and

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[1] *Vom Wesen der islamischen Mystik*, Basel, 1943.
[2] *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*. Trans. by Benjamin Clark, Indiana, 1997.
[3] *Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*, Oxford, 1995.
[4] *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in early Islamic mysticism*, Albany, NY, 1987.

Louis Gardet,[5] Arthur J. Arberry,[6] Marjan Molé,[7] Annemarie Schimmel,[8] and Julian Baldick.[9] Of these, the latter two often serve as textbooks in both graduate and undergraduate courses on Islamic mysticism in English-speaking universities. Written by scholars specializing in Persian and Urdu literature and culture, these books are primarily concerned with the history of Sufism in the eastern parts of the Muslim world, while giving short shrift to developments in the central lands of Islam, the Caucasus and the Muslim West. I will attempt to rectify this bias by focusing on the geographical areas neglected by my predecessors. While earlier historians of Sufism have tended to concentrate on the evolution of Sufi doctrines and practices, my concern here is to furnish a picture of Islamic mysticism that is firmly rooted in the historical and socio-political contexts within which it developed. In my survey of Sufism I will avoid, so far as possible, delving into numerous controversial issues of Sufi studies. To spring them upon the reader with no prior knowledge of the subject would result in nothing but confusion. In the footnotes I will, however, occasionally alert my readers to the various possible approaches to one and the same phenomenon or personality of Sufism's history, inviting them to undertake a further inquiry if they so wish. I will also be very sparing in providing readers with broad theoretical generalizations that quickly become outdated as scholarship on Sufism advances. Nor shall I try to force this variegated material into any ready-made conceptual framework, although I cannot deny that, like any scholar, I have my own methodological preferences and incipient intellectual biases. They will of necessity determine how I present the facts and interpret the sources at my disposal.

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[5] *Mystique musulmane: Aspects et tendences, expériences et techniques*, 3rd edition, Paris, 1976.

[6] *Sufism: An account of the mystics of Islam*, 5th ed., London, 1969.

[7] *Les mystiques musulmans*, Paris, 1965.

[8] *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1975.

[9] *Mystical Islam: An introduction to Sufism*, London, 1989.

THE BEGINNINGS

The Name

Most accounts of Sufism, including those written by Sufis themselves, open with a discussion of the etymology of this term. Here I will mention only the most common theories of its origins. The word "sufism" is a Latinized derivation from the Arabic root *ṣ-(w)-f*, the meaning of which was disputed already in early Sufi literature. Muslim mystics often trace it to the root *ṣafā* with the general meaning of "purity;" to the phrase *ahl al-ṣuffa* ("the People of the Bench"), that is, the pious and indigent companions of the Prophet who lived in his mosque; or to the *ahl al-ṣaffa*, i.e., those who occupy "[the First] Rank/Row" [in the mosque or in the eyes of God]). However, the most common, if less romantic, etymology points to the Arabic word for "wool" (*ṣūf*).[1] The Arabic verb *taṣawwaf*, which is derived from this noun, means "to put on or to wear a woolen garment." Hence the verbal noun *taṣawwuf*, "the practice/habit of wearing woolen garments," which is the native Arabic equivalent of the Latin *S(s)ufismus* and its analogues in various European languages, "Sufi(i)sm" (Eng.), "Sufitums" or "Sufik" (Ger.), "soufisme" (Fr.), "sufizm" (Rus.), etc. The Muslim mystic is usually called *ṣūfī* or *mutaṣawwif*, pl. *ṣūfiyya* or *mutaṣawwifa*. The normative literature of Sufism routinely describes the Prophet and some of his Companions, who were dissatisfied with the outward observance of the religious law and engaged in self-imposed strictures, as the first Sufis. However, the term does not seem to have gained wide currency until the first half of the third/ninth century, when it came to be applied to the Muslim ascetics and recluses in Iraq, Syria and, possibly, Egypt. Among the first ascetics in the Prophet's immediate retinue, whom the Sufi tradition presents as Sufis *avant la lettre*, are Abū Dharr (d. 32/652), Abū 'l-Dardāʾ (d. 32/652), his wife Umm al-Dardāʾ, Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 35/655 or 37/657), Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yaman (d. 37/657) and ʿImrān b. al-Ḥusayn

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[1] See, e.g., A. J. Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, Cambridge, reprint, 1991, pp. 5–11.

al-Khuzāʿī (d. 53/672 or 54/673). To tie them firmly to the Sufi movement, its later exponents credited all of them with wearing wool,[2] an assertion that critics of later Sufism, e.g., Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), vigorously denied.[3]

In Islamic literature not directly affiliated with Sufism, these individuals as well the pious men and women of the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid era (ca. 51/670–ca. 185/800) were commonly referred to as *nussāk* (devout [men]), *zuhhād* (world renouncers or ascetics), *ʿubbād* (worshipers)—terms that roughly correspond to the Latin concept of *viri religiosi*. More than just fulfilling their religious duties, they paid close attention to the underlying motives of their actions and sought to impregnate them with a deeper spiritual meaning. This goal was achieved through a meticulous contemplation on the Qurʾānic revelation, a thorough imitation of the Prophet's piety, introspection as well as voluntary poverty and self-mortification. Strenuous efforts aimed at self-purification and self-improvement (*jihād, mujāhada*) were sometimes accompanied by voluntary military service in the Arab-Byzantine frontier region (*al-thugūr*), where many renowned early ascetics settled in search of a pure life and licit livelihood or, as the case may be, martyrdom "in the path of God." The acts of penitence and self-renunciation, which their practitioners justified by references to certain Qurʾānic verses and the Prophet's utterances,[4] may be seen as a reaction against Islam's newly acquired wealth that often led many faithful to abandon the frugal ways and heroic self-denial associated with the original Muslim community in Medina. The secular pastimes and lavish lifestyles of the Umayyad rulers and their officials were seen by many as contrary to the original Islamic ideals. While some religio-political factions, such as the Khārijīs and the militant wing of the Shīʿī movement, tried to topple the "impious" government through armed struggle, others opted for a passive resistance and a quietist attitude that they presented as a complete surrender to the will of God. Even though their exemplary piety and scrupulosity were sometimes interpreted as a challenge to the secular or military authorities,[5] they were by and large tolerated as long

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[2] See, e.g., Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, *Nashʾat al-taṣawwuf al-islāmī*, Cairo, 1969, pp. 11–12.

[3] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, Cairo, n.d., pp. 161–165.

[4] For a fine selection of such verses and prophetic logia see, e.g., Smith, *Early Mysticism*, pp. 125–152; cf. Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 15–30.

[5] E.g., ʿAmir b. ʿAbd Qays al-ʿAnbarī, whose defiant uprightness, frugality and unconventional vegetarian diet aroused the suspicions of his superiors, who reported

as they did not agitate against the state. They argued that the truly God-fearing person should try to save himself by withdrawing from the overbearing world and its sinful and unjust ways. As an outward sign of this pietistic withdrawal, some of them adopted a distinct dress code, which often featured a rough woolen robe. This robe set them apart from people wearing more expensive silk or cotton. Wittingly or not, the early Muslim *religiosi* thereby came to resemble Christian monks and ascetics, who also donned coarse woolen clothes as a symbol of penitence and contempt for worldly luxuries.[6] In view of its strong Christian connotations, some early Muslim authorities sometimes frowned upon the wearing of wool. Others condemned it as an ostentatious display of poverty, which, they argued, implied that God was not adequately providing for the needs of his servants. In spite of their protests, the custom of wearing a woolen robe caught on with many piety-minded Muslims in Syria and Iraq. By metonymy, the name of the material was transferred onto those who made the habit of wearing it. Originally applied to itinerant outsiders (possibly in a derogatory sense), by the end of the eighth century C.E., in the central lands of Islam the nick-name *ṣūfiyya* ("wool-people" or "wool-wearers") became a self-designation of those given to ascetic life and mystical contemplation. This term did not, however, meet with a quick and universal acceptance. Thus, in Khurāsān and Transoxania, mystics of speculative slant were for a long time known as the "wise men" (*ḥukamāʾ*; sing. *ḥakīm*), "those who know [God]," or "gnostics" (*ʿārifūn*; sing. *ʿārif*). As for the more practice-oriented individuals, in the eastern lands of Islam, as in Iraq and Syria, they were called "the poor" (Arab. *faqīr*; Pers. *darwīsh*) or "the devotees" (*zuhhād*). In the East, ascetic discipline and world-renouncing piety were cultivated by some local sects, most notably, the Karrāmiyya of Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Malāmatiyya of Nīshāpūr, which were suppressed by, or incorporated into, the Iraqi-based Sufi movement under the Saljuqs.[7]

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him to the caliph Muʿāwiya, Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. Und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, Berlin and New York, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 87–88.

[6] See Arthur Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relevant to Syrian Asceticism*, Stockholm, 1960, pp. 20, 58, 59, 101, etc. cf. van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, pp. 88, 94, 610, etc.

[7] J. Chabbi, "Réflexions sur le soufisme iranien primitif," in: *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 266/1–2 (1978), pp. 37–55; B. Radtke, "Theologen und Mystiker in Ḥurāsān und Transoxanien," in: *ZDMG*, vol. 136/1 (1986), pp. 536–569.

Assumptions and Goals

While most of early Muslim ascetics emphasized personal purity, moral uprightness, fear of God and strict compliance with the letter of the Divine Law, there were those who carried their search of God's pleasure a bit further. The latter group, who can be viewed as the forerunners of the Sufi movement, strove to achieve a psychological and experiential proximity with God through self-imposed deprivations (especially, abstinence from food and sex), self-effacing humility, supererogatory religious practices, long vigils, pious meditation on the meaning of the Qur'ānic text and a single-minded concentration on the divine object. In their ardent search for intimacy with God they sought inspiration in the following Qur'ānic verses: "If My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close: I listen to the prayer of every supplicant, when he calleth on me" (2:185/186); "We are nearer to him [man] then his jugular vein" (50:15/16), and "Withersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God" (2:144/145). Likewise, the first Muslim mystics pondered on those Islamic traditions (*ḥadīth*), which pointed to God's immanent presence in this world. Thus, in one tradition, God says: "I am present when My servant thinks of Me. . . . And whosoever seeks to approach me by a span, I approach him by a cubit; and he who seeks to approach me by one cubit, I will seek to approach him by two fathoms; and whoever walks towards me, I will run towards him."[8] In another popular *ḥadīth*, the Prophet encourages believers to serve God as if they see Him, to count themselves among the dead, to know that the little quantity that suffices them is better for them than the abundance that distracts them [from the worship of their Lord] and to realize that a pious deed persists forever, while a transgression is never forgotten [by God].[9] In meditating on these and similar scriptural passages and on the precepts attributed to the Prophet's pious followers, the representatives of the nascent Sufi movement developed a strict code of behavior which encouraged repentance, abstinence from worldly delights, frugality and voluntary poverty. The latter occasionally had an underlying political intent, as some early ascetics consciously abandoned gainful professions or

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[8] Smith, *Studies*, p. 145.
[9] Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-zuhd*. Ed. by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faryawānī, 2d edition, Riyadh, 1994, vol. 1, p. 234.

even refused to inherit in protest against the perceived injustices and corruption of the Umayyad regime.[10] Since this passive protest and withdrawal from active social life and economic activity did not normally lead to active resistance, the powers-that-be saw no reason in cracking down on the early world-renounces, focusing instead on activist religious groupings, such as the Khārijīs and some radical Shīʿīs. The ascetics, on the other hand, were allowed to practice self-imposed strictures which they deemed as preparation for the imminent Final Reckoning. Although cognizant of their shortcomings in fulfilling the Divine Commands, the proto-Sufis placed their faith in God's limitless grace and mercy, which, they hoped, would assure salvation on the Day of Judgement to those who strove on the path of God. The emphasis on the more benign aspect of Divine Majesty gradually led some ascetics to speak of the love of God, citing the Qurʾānic verse 5:54/57: "He [God] loves them, and they love Him.'' Inspired by this and similar verses and traditions, the early mystics began to celebrate their longing for the Divine Beloved in poems and utterances of exceptional beauty and verve. It was this exalted love and longing which, in their eyes, justified the austerities to which they subjected themselves in order to demonstrate their faithfulness to the heavenly Beloved. In the teachings and statements of the early mystics, the feeling of intimacy with God was often mixed with an intense fear of divine retribution for the slightest slippage in thought or action exhibited by God's servant or even for his momentary neglectfulness of divine grace (*ghafla*). Also prominent in early mystical speculations was the idea of an eternal covenant between God and the human race prior to their creation as individual human beings endowed with sinful and restive bodies. Basing themselves on the Qurʾān (7:172), Sufi theorists described the emergence from "the reins of the sons of Adam'' of the human souls in the form of specs of light. The specs bear testimony to the sovereignty of their Lord in pre-eternity and promise him their faithfulness and devotion. However, once the human souls have acquired their bodies and found themselves in the corrupt world of false idols and appearances, they forget their promise and succumb to temptations. The mystic's goal therefore consists in "recapturing the rapture'' of the day of covenant in an effort to return to the state of

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[10] B. Reinert, *Die Lehre vom tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik*, Berlin, 1968, p. 188; van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, pp. 228–229.

primordial purity and faithfulness that characterized the soul-specs before their actual creation.[11] In an attempt to achieve this goal the mystic had to contend not only with the corruptive trappings of the world, but also with his own base self (*nafs*), which Sufis see as the seat of egoistic evil lusts and passions impeding their progress towards God. It was therefore his task to look into himself and exercise self-restraint, with the aim of doing away with the self and all the impulses emanating from it. For as long as the self was endur-ing, true Islam, true surrender to God's will was not possible. In what follows I will demonstrate how these general tenets manifested themselves in the lives and intellectual legacy of those whom later Sufi literature portrayed, probably inaccurately, as the first Sufis.

The Archetypal Sufi: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

While later Sufi writers routinely attributed ascetic and mystical ten-dencies to the leading representatives of the early Muslim com-munity and even to the Prophet himself, they nevertheless did not deny that "Sufi science" (*'ilm al-taṣawwuf*) *per se* emerged among the second and third generations of Muslims. Of these, they usually cite the great ascetic and preacher from Baṣra named al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21/642–110/728). He belonged to the generation of the "successors" (*tābi'ūn*), that is, those early Muslims who came after the Prophet's Companions (*ṣaḥāba*). His father, whose name was originally Pērōz, was taken prisoner during the Arab conquest of Iraq, and is said to have been brought to Medina, where he was manumitted by his owner, an Arab woman whose identity cannot be definitely estab-lished. While in Medina, Pērōz married a girl named Khayra who gave birth to al-Ḥasan in 642. He grew up in the Ḥijāz. In 42/662, after the famous Battle of Ṣiffīn, in which the supporters of the fourth "Rightly-Guided" caliph 'Alī clashed with the Syrian army of the Umayyad pretender Mu'āwiya, al-Ḥasan moved to Baṣra. There he joined an Arab expeditionary force and took part in the conquest of eastern Iran (43/663 and the following years). Upon his return from the military expeditions, he settled in Baṣra, where he lived

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[11] G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam*, Berlin, 1980, pp. 145–165.

until his death in 110/728. Al-Ḥasan's fame rests on the sincerity and uprightness of his religious personality which made a deep impression on his contemporaries and won him many followers. He was, above all, famous for his fiery sermons in which he not only warned his fellow citizens against committing sins, but also commanded them to regulate their whole life in anticipation of the Last Judgement, as he did himself. These sermons, of which only fragments have been preserved, are among the best surviving specimens of early Arabic prose. Al-Ḥasan's vivid images of hell and his striking antitheses are masterpieces of religious rhetoric. Many later writers, especially al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 194/809) and al-Mubarrad, quote them together with the famous speeches of the political leaders of the Umayyad period as models of hortatory style; many of his sayings are included into the dictionaries of the greatest Arab quotations. Here are two famous examples: *ḥādithū hādhihi 'l-qulūba fa-innahā sarī‘atu 'l-duthūr* ("Re-polish these hearts, for they are quick to grow rusty!"); *ij‘al dunyāka 'l-qanṭara tajūzu ‘alayhā walā ta‘muruhā* ("Make this world a bridge over which you cross but upon which you do not build!").

Al-Ḥasan's judgements of the Umayyad state and its representatives are not, as is usually the case, confessions of allegiance to a political party. Rather they flow naturally from his religious principles. He criticized fearlessly the Umayyad caliphs of his time as well as the Umayyad governors of Iraq. After al-Ḥasan dared to attack the founding of Wāsiṭ by the caliph's trusted lieutenant, the fearsome Ḥajjāj, who sought to achieve complete control of the restive Muslim population of Kūfa and Baṣra, he was forced into hiding until Ḥajjāj's death in 96/714. At the same time, al-Ḥasan disapproved of those who sought to depose the evil governors through violence (*taghyīr al-munkar*). When the followers of the rebel Ibn al-Ash‘ath (82/700) invited al-Ḥasan to join their struggle against the caliphal "oppressors," he excused himself by explaining that the violent actions of tyrants are a punishment inflicted by God upon his servants. They therefore should not be opposed by the sword but be endured with patience and fortitude. In his sermons al-Ḥasan constantly warned against worldly attitudes and attachment to earthly possessions: men are on the way to death and those who are already dead are only waiting for the others to follow. He was suspicious of those who amassed riches and even rejected a wealthy suitor for his daughter's hand. Nor did he accept the uncultivated land which was being distributed free by the authorities among the inhabitants of Baṣra: "If

I could have everything that lies between the two bridges for a basketful of earth, that would not please me." Al-Ḥasan referred to the worldling, whose faith sat lightly on him and who sinned without concern, as "hypocrite" (*munāfiq*)—one who hovers midway between faith and unbelief. He judged sins strictly (*tashdīd al-maʿāṣī*) and considered the sinner to be fully responsible for his actions. Hence he denied that one can exculpate himself by saying that God created all actions—a position that was interpreted by some as his support of the doctrine which emphasized human free will over against divine determination of events (*qadariyya*). However, his exact stance on this hotly debated issue remained elusive. In his famous letter to the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, who supported the predestinarian view which implicitly justified the rule of his dynasty, al-Ḥasan shows a remarkable ability to skirt potentially divisive problems, without, however, overtly sacrificing his basic principles. Duly respectful of the caliphal authority, he reserved the right to criticize it for what he saw as violations of the divinely ordained order of things. He exhorted his listeners to practice humility and self-scrutiny. The latter was necessary in order to bring out the real motives of one's words or actions and thus to make them more sincere. This psychological analysis was to become the cornerstone of Sufi self-discipline and introspection which were brought to fruition in the work of al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857).[12] Al-Ḥasan's brotherly feeling towards his contemporaries (*ukhuwwa*) and his altruism (*īthār*) were also appropriated by later Sufis as an attitude conducive to the mystical goal. They became the foundation of the doctrine of chivalry (*futuwwa*)—a hallmark of many Sufi associations in the subsequent epochs. Another feature that made al-Ḥasan so attractive to later Sufis was his relative disregard for the exacting standards of *ḥadīth* transmission, which, in the eyes of pedantic *ḥadīth* experts, determined the overall worth of a Muslim scholar. His own sayings were sometimes circulated as *ḥadīth*s, and he did not protest. Nor was he interested in reconstructing and documenting the chain of transmitters of any given statement attributed to the Prophet or his Companions—an attitude that caused some later *ḥadīth* scholars to treat him as a "weak" authority prone to "fibbing" (*tadlīs*). Since many later Sufis were themselves accused of carelessness in this matter, they argued that al-Ḥasan was, like themselves, interested in the "kernel" rather than the "husks" of religion. No

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[12] On him see below.

wonder that his name appears in the spiritual genealogies (*silsila*s) of many Sufi orders, and he is cited innumerable times in moral works of exhortation. The influence of his ascetic piety persisted in Baṣra and beyond. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 382/993 or 386/996), a classic of later Sufi literature, stated in his "Nourishment of the Hearts" (*Qūt al-qulūb*) that al-Ḥasan was "our leader (*imām*) in this doctrine . . . and we walk in his footsteps and we follow his ways and from his lamp we have our light."[13] The Sufi apologetics aside, his real relation with the nascent ascetic and mystical movement in Islam is difficult to ascertain. Some contemporary evidence indicates his reluctance to commit himself fully to any one religious or intellectual trend in Islam, including proto-Sufism.[14] His awesome stature as the leading exponent of Islamic tradition has made him a convenient figurehead for various later religious schools and movements.

The Accumulation of Ascetic and Mystical Lore in the second/eighth and early third/ninth Centuries

Whether or not al-Ḥasan was indeed the founding father of the Sufi movement and the Sufi *avant la lettre*, his passionate preaching of high moral and ethical standards won him numerous followers such as Yazīd b. Abān al-Raqāshī (d. between 101/729 and 121/738), Muḥammad b. Wāsiʿ (d. 127/744), Mālik b. Dīnār (d. 128/745), Farqad al-Sabakhī (d. 132/749), ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. ca. 133/750), Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī (d. 165/781), and many others. Coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, these men are described in the sources as professional Qurʾān-reciters (*qurrāʾ*), pious fighters for religion and frontier warriors (*nussāk mujāhidūn*), small-time traders, weavers, scribes and Qurʾān copyists. All of them shared a strong repugnance to worldly delights, social injustices, oppressive powers-that-be, luxury, and hypocrisy. Their actions and utterances exhibit a common fear of divine retribution for the slightest moral lapse and an exaggerated sense of sin that they sought to alleviate through constant penance, mortification of the flesh, contrition and mourning.[15] This self-effacing, God-fearing attitude often found an outward

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[13] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1310 A.H., vol. 1, p. 149.

[14] Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, *Nashʾat al-taṣawwuf*, pp. 12–13.

[15] For the authoritative statements that encourage the practice of weeping and self-recrimination see Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, vol. 1, pp. 248–263.

expression in constant weeping which earned some of the early
ascetics the name "weepers" (*bakkāʾūn*).[16] Already at that stage,
some of them show the awareness that their exemplary piety, moral
uprightness, and spiritual fervor place them above the herd of ordi-
nary believers who were unable to overcome their simplest passions
of the moment, not to mention the temptations and complex moral
dilemmas which God deliberately placed before his elect friends to
test the strength of their resolve. Hence the idea of friendship with,
or proximity to, God (*walāya*), which the early ascetics and mystics
traced back to several Qurʾānic phrases suggesting the existence of
a category of God's servants whose exemplary piety and high moral
integrity have secured them God's special favor in this and future
life (e.g., 10:62; 18:65).[17] It is in this narrow circle of the early Muslim
ascetics that we witness the emergence of an elitist, charismatic piety,
which was gradually translated into moral authority and, eventually,
into a significant social force. In that early epoch, however, the social
ramifications of this ascetic and moralizing tendency were rather lim-
ited. By and large, this accentuated God-fearing attitude was confined
to a small group of religious *virtuosi*, whose search for personal sal-
vation through constant meditation on their sins and extraordinary
ascetic feats was too individualistic to win them a broad popular fol-
lowing. Nevertheless, the arduous sermonizing and exemplary upright-
ness of al-Ḥasan's disciples secured them a relatively wide acceptance
among the population of Baṣra and beyond. Firmly rooted in the
Qurʾān and the tradition, their pious preaching and admonitions
encountered no significant opposition from either Muslim scholars
or secular rulers. Their moralizing and penitential discourses often
exhibit the influence of the Torah and the Gospels—an influence
most of them did not care to conceal. It is especially prominent in
the sayings ascribed to Mālik b. Dīnār,[18] a renowned preacher and
moralist of Baṣra, who called upon his listeners to "fight against
[your] desires just as [you] fight against [your] enemies." In a similar
vein, his contemporary, the pious weaver Farqad al-Sabakhī, frequently
quoted Jesus (ʿĪsā) and the Torah in his pious exhortations. He was,
incidentally, an Armenian Christian, who embraced Islam later in
life and had a profound knowledge of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures.[19]

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[16] See F. Meier, "Bakkāʾ", EI, vol. 1, 959–61.
[17] See, e.g., van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, p. 90.
[18] R. Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums*, Wiesbaden, 1995, vol. 1, p. 60.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 51–53.

Interestingly, Farqad's woolen robe was denounced by a visitor from Kūfa as a sign of his "residual" Christianity (*naṣrāniyya*),[20] in an episode indicating that, in his age, the wearing of wool was still perceived as something foreign to Islam. This impression is confirmed by Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728), a celebrated scholar contemporary with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who criticized the wearing of wool as a deliberate imitation of the Christian monastic custom. For him, this habit was incompatible with Muḥammad's preference for cotton[21] and, moreover, showed a lack of gratitude for God's bounty. Later on, similar misgivings were voiced by Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), a prominent early expert on the Islamic Law, tradition (*ḥadīth*) and Qur'ān interpretation, who viewed the ostentatious wearing of wool as an "innovation" in religion (*bidʿa*).[22] On the other hand, Mālik b. Dīnār declared that he was not fit to wear wool (*ṣūf*) because he had not yet achieved the level of personal purity (*ṣafāʾ*) which characterizes the perfect servant of God.[23] These and similar statements indicate that, contrary to what later Sufi authors try to make us believe, neither the Sufi devotional style, as we know it from later works, nor its outward symbol, the woolen garment, met with universal approval. In fact, the early ascetics who adopted this dress code seem to have been in the minority, especially since the above criticisms came from the men, whom the later Sufi tradition invariably presented as "Sufis." The woolen habit was relatively common in Baṣra and, to a lesser extent, in Kūfa, which seems to have been home to the first ascetics known as *sufis*: Abū Hāshim (d. 160/776) and ʿAbdak (fl. in the second half of the second/eighth century). Its link to Christian monasticism, especially to its Nestorian version,[24] was obvious to the Muslims of Iraq. Yet, this did not prevent the first Sufis from making the woolen tunic a hallmark of their devotional style. On the contrary, they appear to have been deliberately imitating Christian monks: early ascetics, such as ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd (al-)Qays, fl. ca. 650, Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 94/713) and

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[20] Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ*, Cairo, 1932–1938, vol. 4, 221–222; cf. Ch. Pellat, *Le milieu basrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiẓ*, Paris, 1953, p. 101.

[21] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 35.

[22] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 7, p. 33 and van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 224.

[23] Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, London, 1935, p. 69.

[24] Vööbus, *Syrian and Arabic Documents*, pp. 20, 58, 101, etc.; Ogén, "Did the Term ṣūfī . . .", pp. 40–45.

ʿĪsā b. Ṣabīḥ al-Mudrār (d. 227/841), were often reverently referred to as "the monks of this community." From Kūfa and Baṣra the practice of wearing wool and the style of piety, which it had come to symbolize, spread to Syria and Baghdad. Eventually it gave name to the ascetic and mystical movement that gained momentum in the early third/ninth century.

In the eastern lands of the Caliphate, the spread of Baghdad-style Sufism was delayed by almost one century by the resistance of local ascetic groups, notably the Karrāmiyya of Khurāsān and Transoxania, whose leaders discouraged their followers from adopting the "foreign" custom and name. Little is known about the style of piety peculiar to these groups, which were later suppressed by, or incorporated into, the Sufi movement.

ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd

Among al-Ḥasan's numerous followers ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. ca. 133/750) gained special prominence through his public sermons that emphasized humility and scrupulosity in food and conduct. A professional preacher (qāṣṣ) famous for his eloquence, he painted vivid pictures of the Judgement Day, calling upon his listeners to prepare themselves for a face-to-face encounter with God. Each person's righteousness and record of good works, he argued, will determine the clarity of this beatific vision. Some of his statements imply that the righteous may actually experience the delights of paradise in this life as a reward for their sincere and disinterested worship of God.[25] According to ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, God imparts to his righteous friends (awliyāʾ, sing. walī) the "internal," secret knowledge (ʿilm al-bāṭin) of himself and of the world, which he conceals from the rest of his creatures, including the angels. This sacred trust elevates God's friends above other mortals, placing them just beneath the prophets.[26] Later Sufi theorists juxtaposed this "internal" knowledge with the so-called "external" one (ʿilm al-ẓāhir), that is, traditional Islamic sciences, such as the Qurʾān and its commentary, the authoritative tradition (ḥadīth) and jurisprudence (fiqh). The "external" knowledge was viewed by

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[25] Abū Nuʿaym, Ḥilya, vol. 6, pp. 157–158.
[26] B. Radtke (ed.), Adab al-mulūk: Ein Handbuch zur islamischen Mystik aus dem 4./10. Jahrhundert, Beirut, 1991, pp. 34–35 (Arabic text).

the Sufis as inferior to ʿilm al-bāṭin—an assumption that aroused the ire of many Muslim traditionalists who revered the letter of the Divine Law. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid belonged to the category of ascetics whom the sources describe as "weepers." These were the people who wept profusely over their sins or out of fear of God (khashayt Allāh) and uncertainty about the divine verdict to be passed on them on the Judgement Day.[27] On the more personal level, weeping could be caused by one's feeling of weakness and humility before God as well as compassion for those who strayed from the right path or for the dead who are no longer able to better their fate in the afterlife. Through constant mourning, these "beggars of the spirit" hoped to obtain the good will of God in remitting, at least partly, their future punishments. Their weeping finds a striking parallel in the early Christian concept of gratia lacrimarum, which characterized many Coptic and Syrian monks, such as Shenute (Shenoudi), Ephraem the Syrian, John of Ephesus and Isaac of Nineveh.[28] Unsurprisingly, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid's pietistic exhortations occasionally mention Christian monks whose deep disdain for this world and its sinful inhabitants he found praiseworthy and encouraged his followers to emulate.[29] Like the Christian monks, they should keep themselves entirely apart from the world by forming a closely-knit community that was united by the common desire to pursue the path of God in very truth.[30]

It was with this goal in mind that ʿAbd al-Wāḥid founded the first Sufi "cloister" (duwayra) on the island of ʿAbbādān at the mouth of the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab.[31] Whether ʿAbd al-Wāḥid was indeed its founder or simply occasional resident, ʿAbbādān indeed became a chief training ground for Iraqi ascetics. Originally a military outpost against sea raiders, it was manned mostly by pious volunteers for the religion (ghuzāt; sing. ghāzī), who combined military service with acts of worship and supererogatory piety. ʿAbbādān's commandant, Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ, was a famed fighter for religion who perished on a military

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[27] L. Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam*, Paris, 1929, p. 5.

[28] F. Meier, "Bakkāʾ", EI, vol. 1, p. 960; Margaret Smith, *Studies*, p. 25, and 126–127.

[29] *Ḥilya*, vol. 6, p. 155.

[30] Smith, *Studies*, p. 185.

[31] The existence of the first Sufi "monastery" (khānaqā) at Ramla (Palestine), which was allegedly constructed by Abū Hāshim al-Ṣūfī in the first decades of the second/eighth century, is impossible to ascertain, see F. Meier, *Abū Saʿīd-i Abū l-Ḫayr (357–440/967–1049): Wirklichkeit und Legende*, Leiden and Tehran, 1976, pp. 302–304.

expedition against "infidel" Indians in 161/777, during the reign of the caliph al-Mahdī. A pious man, who, like ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, studied under al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Rabīʿ is said to have imposed upon his garrison a number of supererogatory fasts and vigils. Additionally, the inhabitants of ʿAbbādān engaged in the constant recitation of God's name (*dhikr*) which later become a keynote of Sufi ritual practice. Whoever was the real founder of the Sufi cloister at ʿAbbādān, he certainly made it a major attraction for *jihād*-minded Muslim ascetics who flocked there from far and wide. When ʿAbbādān lost its strategic significance, it became a refuge for Iraqi world-renouncers. It was visited by such great heroes of the later Sufi literature as Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 227/841), Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 251/867), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) as well as the great Qurʾān commentator Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767 or 159/775),[32] whose exegetical work played an important role in "the birth of the mystical language of Islam." ʿAbd al-Wāḥid left many disciples: some of them distinguished themselves as accomplished ascetics. Among them was Aḥmad al-Hujaymī (d. in the late second/eighth century), who is credited with the establishment of the first ascetic lodge in Baṣra.[33] Funded through a charitable donation, it housed many of al-Ḥasan's and ʿAbd al-Wāḥid's disciples in Baṣra, assuring the continuity of their teaching.

Variety of Devotional Styles: Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham, Ibn al-Mubārak and Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ

About the same time, we witness the emergence and spread of ascetic groups in the garrison towns and fortresses along the Byzantine-Muslim frontier in Syria and upper Mesopotamia. This area, known as al-Thughūr ("Marches"), was home to two great representatives of the next generation of Muslim ascetics: Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 161/778) and Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797). Coming from the eastern lands of the Caliphate, they settled in the Marches in search of "a pure and licit livelihood" (*ḥalāl maḥḍ*). Their presence in the area, which was a scene of fierce struggle between the Muslims and the Christians, further illustrates an intimate link between the nascent

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[32] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, pp. 102–106.
[33] Meier, *Abū Saʿīd*, pp. 304–305.

ascetic movement and what the sources describe as the *ribāṭ* and *jihād*, that is, residence and voluntary military service on the borders of Islam. In addition to martyrdom, life in the Thughūr offered a welcome escape from the increasingly overbearing caliphal state for the "knights of the prayer niche" (*fursān al-miḥrāb*) who were anxious to dissociate themselves completely from the "tyranny" of its "impious" rulers. The fervid atmosphere of self-denial and martyrdom that characterized life in the frontier territory produced a class of warrior-monks who combined warfare against the Byzantine enemy with spectacular acts of "harsh worship," charity and self-imposed poverty.[34] It was there that the piety of the fighters for faith reached its peak: their incessant search for purity, especially in dietary matters, caused them to reject even those things which are usually permitted under the Divine Law.

Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham

A typical representative of this extreme world-renouncing piety is Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham.[35] A native of Balkh (presently in Afghanistan), whom later legends portray as heir apparent to the local ruler,[36] he had experienced a sudden conversion during a hunting trip. Shaken by the heavenly voice that commanded him to abandon his "sinful ways," Ibn Adham is said to have abandoned kingship for the life of a vagabond and set out on a journey to the west. During his life-long peregrinations, he was "eating [what he earned from] the labor of his own hand," that is, reaping, gleaning or grinding corn, or tending orchards. When he was unable to procure a licit livelihood, he fasted.[37] In addition to ascetic precepts, his teaching emphasized a constant meditation (*murāqaba*), contrition, sadness (*kamad*), Divine friendship (*khulla*), and gnosis (*maʿrifa*).[38] They were to become standard in the later Sufi tradition. Having settled in Syria, on the border with Byzantium, Ibn Adham took part in several naval and land expeditions, on the last of which he died "[of a decease] of the

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[34] M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War*, New Haven, CT, 1996, pp. 107–134.

[35] For his biography and teaching see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, vol. 1, pp. 135–282.

[36] According to his earliest biographers he came from "a pure Arab stock", Radtke, "Theologen," p. 539.

[37] Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 126, cf. al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 13.

[38] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, p. 73.

belly." When he could not find a food that he considered "clean," he walked hungry or ingested clay and sand. In an effort to avoid popular acclaim and the enthusiastic crowds that flocked to him in search of his blessing, Ibrāhīm went out to live in the desert. While there, "he fell in with Christian anchorites," who instructed him in their "inner wisdom," or "gnosis" (ma'rifa), which gives its possessor power over his fellow believers.[39] As M. Bonner pointed out, Ibrāhīm's fasting and eating of earth springs from the ascetic fear of the world as the source of pollution. Abstinence from food and social inter- course (Ibrāhīm is said to have sought an employment that would allow him to stay away from people, such as, for instance, guard- ing one's orchard during the night) was deemed to reduce the intake of this pollution to a minimum. In his own words, "whoever wishes to repent must abandon his oppressive ways, and cease mixing with the people." Paradoxically, Ibrāhīm's radical aversion to the world and its inhabitants, his voluntary poverty and the divine wisdom that he achieved through spectacular deprivations gained him the popu- larity that he had been so anxious to avoid. In spite of his fear of publicity, he acquired a wide and enthusiastic following who aspired to emulate his stringent ways. These "devotees of harsh worship" formed a recognizable group whose obsession with purity, to the extent of identifying the supererogatory as the norm, set them apart not only from the Muslim community at large but from the other ascetics of the frontier as well.[40] Ibrāhīm's asceticism was described by R. A. Nicholson as one of "quietist and practical type," which "had not crossed the borderline that divides asceticism from mysti- cism." Whether this statement can be sustained in the absence of a crisp distinction between ascetic and mystical piety and of the orig- inal works by the early ascetics,[41] Ibrāhīm b. Adham was re-imag- ined by later Sufi authors as a paragon of, and a chief spokesman for, the nascent mystical movement.

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[39] Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 36–37 and Bonner, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–129.
[40] Ibid., p. 130 and pp. 159–184.
[41] For, in my view, an unsuccessful attempt to establish a crisp chronological and conceptual borderline between the two see C. Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.," *StI*, vol. 83/1 (1996), pp. 51–70.

Ibn al-Mubārak

A more accommodating, inner-worldly oriented type of piety is exemplified by the Khurāsānī devotee ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak,[42] who is credited with great feats of arms in the holy war against the Byzantine Christians. Although his later biographers invariably stressed his exemplary piety and abstinence from worldly delights, he was primarily famous for his active "striving on the path of God" (*jihād*) and superior physical strength. These qualities made him a formidable warrior and a popular military leader. A role model and a source of inspiration for his numerous friends and comrades-in-arms, who insisted that his virtues "were never united in any man of learning" of the epoch,[44] Ibn al-Mubārak represents an activist, innerworldly oriented asceticism that was quite distinct from that pursued by Ibn Adham and his followers. Not only did he disapprove the idle and slothful ascetics he encountered in Baghdad, he also actively encouraged his followers to engage in a gainful employment, especially in trade and the crafts. He himself was a successful merchant, who generously lavished his wealth on the Muslim volunteer fighters of the frontier and provided for indigent Muslim pilgrims to Mecca.[44] A prolific writer and *ḥadīth* collector (*muḥaddith*), Ibn al-Mubārak is famous for his "Book of Renunciation [Asceticism]" (*Kitāb al-zuhd*), one of the earliest, and probably the most comprehensive, works of this genre. *Kitāb al-zuhd* is a collection of the *ḥadīth* and pious dicta, which are carefully selected to emphasize the world-renouncing attitude of the Prophet, of his family, of the Companions and the Successors as well as of those Muslim devotees who came in their wake. Similar to the *zuhd* collections by Zāʾida b. Qudāma, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812) and Asad b. Mūsā (d. 212/827), this work contains hundreds of pious aphorisms, moral and ethical precepts which became the building blocks of the later Sufi tradition. As the other works of this genre, Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-zuhd* praises humility, patience, penitence, trust in God, hospitality, vigils, silence, poverty and weeping, while strongly condemning avarice, envy, anger, selfishness, and other vices. Yet Ibn al-Mubārak was careful to steer

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[42] Some sources described him as a native of Marv (Central Asia), see Reinert, *Die Lehre*, p. 309; Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 40.

[43] Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 120.

[44] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, p. 552.

clear of the extremes of *tawakkul* (trust in God) which were practiced
by some of his overzealous contemporaries.[45] In Arberry's words, Ibn
al-Mubārak's collection on *zuhd* "shews the ascetic at work assem-
bling evidence in the Prophet's life and preaching to justify his own."
Although most of the professional *ḥadīth* experts viewed Ibn al-
Mubārak as a reliable transmitter, they were generally suspicious of
the ascetically minded collectors of pious dicta on account of their
propensity to disseminate the narrative material that the *muḥaddithūn*
considered either undocumented or outright fabricated. Among such
ostracized individuals we find compilers of the other *zuhd* collections,
especially Asad b. Mūsā and, to a lesser extent, Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ,
whom established *ḥadīth* experts usually dismissed as "weak" or "unre-
liable."[46] From the third/ninth century onwards, standard biogra-
phies of *ḥadīth* transmitters demoted them to the rank of *quṣṣāṣ*
(story-tellers or sermonizers)—a name that came to carry strong
derogatory connotations due to the rapid proliferation of the unscrupu-
lous and ignorant itinerant preachers who plied their narrative wares
in the streets and bazaars. Anxious to edify their audiences by putting
ready-made answers to various moral and ethical dilemmas into the
mouths of the early Muslim heroes, the collectors of the pious man-
uals often forewent the careful scrutiny of the narrative and exeget-
ical material from the Prophetic epoch. Their lack of rigor aroused
the suspicions of the professional *muḥaddithūn* who had doubts about
the authenticity of the ascetic and moralizing lore disseminated by the
free-booting ascetics, especially since the latter were rarely associated
with any established legal or *ḥadīth* school. Such suspicions led to
acute tensions between the two groups of Muslim *religiosi*. In response
to accusations of unreliability and outright forgery of their pious
narratives, the ascetics denounced their learned detractors for mak-
ing religious science their profession and source of livelihood, which
they saw as a gross offence against religion.[47] It fell to the great Sufi
apologists of the tenth and eleventh centuries C.E. to try to allay
this mutual mistrust.

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[45] Reinert, *Die Lehre*, p. 220.
[46] See, e.g., Raif G. Khoury (ed.), *Asad b. Mūsā, Kitāb al-zuhd*, Wiesbaden, 1976.
[47] Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, p. 117.

Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ

In Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), whom a later Sufi legend portrayed as a converted highway robber from Transoxania (Samarqand),[48] we find a Muslim equivalent of "the Knight of the Mournful Countenance." According to a later Sufi writer, upon Fuḍayl's death, sadness disappeared from this world. His permanent grief and mourning were signs of his repentance and compassion for his fellow believers. Only once in his lifetime did he allow himself to smile: on the day his son died. He interpreted this horrible affliction as a token of divine grace by which God meant to lighten his lot in the hereafter. Hence his joy, which even his companions saw as incongruous and *outré*. Day and night he prayed for his salvation, and yet, when asked about the condition of humanity, his reply was: "Forgiven, had it not been for my [sinful] presence in their midst." His fear of God is thrown into sharp relief in his statement that he would rather live and die as a dog than wait to be resurrected as a man on the Day of Judgement.[49] Although he spoke constantly about death, it was not death that scared him, but rather his failure to secure God's satisfaction (*riḍā*) with his worship. This constant fear to fall below the standards of righteousness set by the Divine Dispensation and the resultant humility in God's presence, is combined in Fuḍayl with a total lack of respect for temporal rulers, including the fearsome caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, whom the sources portray as humbly seeking Fuḍayl's admonition.[50] Stripped of the thick layers of legend, his biography presents itself as an epitome of the world-renouncing attitude that was shared by many Sunnī authorities of the epoch.[51] Having started their careers as *ḥadīth* collectors and legal experts (*fuqahāʾ*), these men grew disillusioned with their profession and their colleagues, who were ever eager to curry favor with the rulers and powerful courtiers. By allowing themselves to be seduced by the trappings of the royal court or of a provincial governor's residence such sycophantic scholars, in view of their more scrupulous colleagues,

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[48] This legend was apparently unknown to Fuḍayl's earliest biographers, see J. Chabbi, "Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, un précurseur du ḥanbalisme (187/803)," in: *BEO*, vol. 30 (1978), pp. 331–345.

[49] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 8, p. 84.

[50] Ibid., pp. 105–107.

[51] J. Chabbi (see note 48 above) views him as a typical representative of the Sunni revival that culminated in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).

forfeited their right to guide the community to salvation. To disso-
ciate themselves from this herd of learned renegades, Fuḍayl and his
likes (e.g., Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī)[52] adopted a moderate ascetic lifestyle and
withdrew from the ranks of professional men of religion (ʿulamāʾ).
This nonconformist, anti-establishment position found an eloquent
expression in his vigorous defense of the Prophetic precedent (Sunna)
against all manner of "innovations" (bidʿa) under which its propo-
nents understood doctrines and practices either unknown to, or not
explicitly endorsed by, the Prophet and his immediate followers.
Although critical of the excessive luxury and ill-gotten wealth of the
rulers and their officials, Fuḍayl insisted that man should support
himself and his family[53] through the toil of his own hands rather
than rely on charity or begging.[54] Nor was he opposed to gainful
employment, including trade, as long as it did not distract the Muslim
from the worship of God and from fulfilling his religious obligations.
Although Fuḍayl consistently shunned the rulers and rejected their
gifts, he had no compunctions about accepting money from the pious
merchant Ibn al-Mubārak.[55]

Conclusions

While later Sufi literature tends to represent all three devotees we
have just discussed as the soul-mates and the founding fathers of the
Sufi movement, one cannot but notice substantial differences in their
religious attitudes and devotional styles. Ibrāhīm b. Adham and his
followers adhered to an extreme, exclusivist type of piety. Its strin-
gent requirements inevitably set them apart from the Islamic com-
munity as a whole. Ibn al-Mubārak, on the other hand, demonstrates
a much more inner-worldly, community-centered religious attitude.
Not only did he recognize the ascetic's obligations towards his
family and the society around him, but he also encouraged his adher-
ents to be actively involved in the affairs of this world. This posi-
tion found its expression in two distinct domains: his mercantile

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[52] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, vol. 1, pp. 283–288.

[53] While Fuḍayl was married (perhaps to several women), Dāwūd at-Ṭā'ī remained
celibate throughout his life, see Gramlich, *Alter Vorbilder*, p. 285.

[54] Fuḍayl may have inherited this notion from his teacher Sufyān al-Thawrī, see
Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, vol. 1, p. 220; cf. ibid., pp. 372–373 and Chabbi,
"Fuḍayl," pp. 338–339.

[55] Ibid., pp. 342–343.

activities and charity and in his role as a collector and classifier of
the prophetic legacy, the *ḥadīth*. One can describe his devotional
style as historicist in as much as it was based on a thorough con-
templation of, and meditation on, the Muslim community's past.[56]
To this end he engaged in the collection of hortatory *ḥadīth* which
fulfilled a clear edifying function by providing his fellow believers
with the exemplary ethos and practices ascribed to the early Muslim
heroes. This aspect of his activities attracted to him numerous dis-
ciples who flocked to him from far and wide. This educational func-
tion is much less prominent in the activities of Ibn Adham who
was primarily concerned with his personal salvation and tolerated
his enthusiastic partisans as a necessary evil. Another important aspect
of Ibn al-Mubārak's personality is his volunteering in the *ribāṭ* and
jihād, a feature which he shares with Ibn Adham but which he
exemplifies in his own distinct way, that is, as a combination of
personal strength, unswerving loyalty to his comrades-in-arms and
pious gloom.[57] A different facet of the inner-worldly devotional style
is demonstrated by the career of Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ. His evolution
from a professional *muḥaddith* to a reclusive and grim ascetic reflects
his desire to guide the consciousness of his fellow Muslims unfet-
tered by affiliation with either temporary authorities or with the
emerging theological and juridical schools. His activist social stance,
propensity for public exhortations, energetic opposition to all man-
ner of *bidʿa*, including ostentatious display of piety,[58] as well as his
emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and moderation make him
a precursor of the populist Sunnism of Ibn Ḥanbal and of his religio-
political school rather than an exponent of Sufism in the strict sense
of the word.[59] His statements clearly show him to be a proponent
of a moderate, inner-worldly asceticism and God-fearing attitude
rather than a mystic.[60] It is his impeccable Sunni credentials and
popularity that later Sufi authors, starting from Jaʿfar al-Khuldī
(d. 348/959) onward, endeavored to appropriate by casting him as
an exemplary Sufi master. The reason why these individuals of widely
disparate temperaments and dissimilar religious outlooks ended up

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[56] Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 120.
[57] Ibid., p. 131.
[58] E.g., the wearing of wool, see Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 8, p. 98.
[59] Chabbi, "Fuḍayl," passim.
[60] See, e.g., Smith, *An Early Mystic*, p. 74.

in the same classificatory category should be sought in the underlying
ideological agendas pursued by the creators of the Sufi tradition.
Should we, for a moment, ignore those later agendas and presup-
positions, we shall find that we are dealing with representatives of
distinctive devotional styles who were rather arbitrarily crammed
under the same conceptual umbrella.

The Love Mysticism of Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya

Another notable and influential trend in early Muslim asceticism is
brought into a sharp focus in the semilegendary life of Rābiʿa al-
ʿAdawiyya (d. 185/801), a female ascetic of Baṣra. One cannot go
so far as to doubt her historical existence, but accounts of her life
and teachings feature many legends that cannot be neatly separated
from authentic information. Rābiʿa is said to have been born in
95/714 or 99/717–18 and to have breathed her last in 185/801
at Baṣra, where her tomb is still shown outside the city. In later
Sufi hagiographies, she is described as one of the three famous female
ascetics (*mutazahhidāt*) of Baṣra, the two others being Muʿādha al-
ʿAdawiyya, wife of the early ascetic ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Qays al-ʿAnbarī
(d. ca. 50/670), and Umm al-Dardāʾ, wife of the Prophet's pious
companion Abū ʾl-Dardāʾ (d. 32/652).[61] Born into a poor family,
she was stolen as a child and sold into slavery. According to some
later sources, she even "fell into minstrelsy" and earned her living
as a singing girl (*qayna*).[62] However, her sanctity secured her freedom,
and she retired to a life of seclusion and celibacy, at first in the
desert and then in Baṣra, where she gathered round her many disciples
and associates, who came to seek her counsel or to listen to her
teaching. Among these visitors were such noted ascetics as Sufyān
al-Thawrī, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd, Mālik b. Dīnār, the mystic Shaqīq
al-Balkhī (d. 195/810) and the Baṣran recluse Riyāḥ b. ʿAmr al-
Qaysī (d. 195/810). Already the earliest accounts of Rābiʿa's life
report frequent verbal jousts between Rābiʿa and her guests. Out
of these jousts she always emerged triumphant, showing that her

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[61] Pellat, *Le milieu basrien*, p. 104; cf. van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 3, p. 101.
[62] J. Baldick interprets this legend as "a reminiscence of the celebrated converted
prostitutes of early eastern Christianity," see *Mystical Islam*, p. 29.

male visitors were still held down by affectation and egoism.[63] When
ʿAbd al-Wāḥid had proposed to her, he was greeted by a scornful
rebuff, "O the sensual one, seek another sensual like thyself. Hast
thou seen any sign of desire in me?" Another suitor, the governor
of Baṣra, who tried to entice her into marriage by a dowry of a
hundred thousand golden *dīnārs*, also got the brush-off. Other offers
of marriage, including the improbable one from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
who had died more than seventy years before her death, were also
rejected. In Rābiʿa's words, she was completely unable to tolerate
any suitor who would distract her from God for a single moment,
not to mention commit herself to him for life. For it was God whom
she considered to be her only genuine Bridegroom.[64]

In another episode she shows her disregard for the professional
ḥadīth collectors. For her, their profession was but a sign of vain-
glory and a distraction from contemplating God, which, in her mind,
was even worse than the accumulation of capital and the bringing
up of children.[65] This attitude was shared by many of her ascetic
contemporaries.

Rābiʿa's whole life was marked by extreme asceticism and self-
denial. Many of the statements attributed to her by later Sufi authors
emphasize her self-sufficiency and unwillingness to depend on any-
one save God. When her friends suggested that her kinsfolk purchase
her a servant to look after her needs, she said, "Verily, I should
be ashamed to ask for this world's goods from Him to Whom they
belong! How should I seek them from those to whom they do not
belong?"[66] Interestingly, the great Arab writer al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 256/869),
a native of Baṣra, who was possibly the first to record this anec-
dote,[67] makes no mention of the numerous miraculous deeds ascribed
to Rābiʿa by later authors. His silence indicates that, in the third/
ninth century, her legendary image was still in the making. On the
other hand, al-Jāḥiẓ's story is at odds with the evidence that she did
have a servant, Maryam al-Baṣriyya, to whom she communicated
her doctrine of pure love (ʿilm al-maḥabba). That Rābiʿa's legend
took at least two centuries to crystallize is evident from the fact that
it was not known to the tenth-century Sufi biographers al-Sarrāj

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[63] M. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, New York and Mahwah, 1996, p. 153.
[64] Ibid., pp. 10–13.
[65] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt* vol. 1, pp. 156–157.
[66] Smith, *Rabiʿa*, pp. 20–21.
[67] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa ʾl-tabyīn*, 3d edition, Cairo, 1960, vol. 3, p. 127.

(d. 378/988), al-Kalābādhī (d. ca. 384/994), and al-Makkī (d. 386/996), who, however, were aware of her existence.[68]

Rābiʿa's unshakable trust in God's generosity and solicitude for his servants is attested by her following statement: "Will God forget the poor because of their poverty or remember the rich because of their riches? Since He knows my state, what have I to remind Him of?" Oblivious of mundane comforts she was often seen sleeping "on an old rush mat with a brick under her head to serve as a pillow." She drank and made her ablutions from a cracked jar.[69] Placing her trust in God's providence, Rābiʿa gratefully accepted illness and suffering as signs of God's attention to her persona. In line with this belief she endured her afflictions and pain with fortitude, refusing treatment and medicine offered to her by her fellow ascetics.

Later Sufi writers, such as Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 627/1230),[70] credited her with numerous miracles. Food was miraculously served to her guests and she herself was provided for by mysterious visitors and donors: a camel (or a donkey), which died when she was on pilgrimage, was restored to life for her use; the lack of a lamp in her house was compensated by the light which emanated from her body during the night; God himself protected her house and fields from looting; she could fly in the air on her prayer-mat.[71]

However, by far the most striking feature of Rābiʿa's piety is her single-minded focus on God whom she viewed as the only worthy object of desire, love and worship. Before God all other concerns and commitments were allowed to fade into insignificance. For Rābiʿa, even love for one's children and the Prophet as well as fear of hell and Satan were but distractions that should not interfere with one's worship of God. This attitude is brought into a sharp focus in the famous story in which Rābiʿa publicly announces her intent to put to the torch the gardens of paradise and douse the flames of hell-fire, so that no one would serve God out of desire for his reward and fear of his punishment.[72] Questioned about her love for the

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[68] *The Kitāb al-lumaʿ fi 'l-taṣawwuf of Abū Naṣr ... al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī* ed. by R. A. Nicholson, 2d edition, London, 1963, p. 322; A. Arberry (tr.), *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 83, 93, 159; al-Makkī, *Qūt*, vol. 1, pp. 156–157.

[69] Smith, *Rabiʿa*, p. 25.

[70] A. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliyaʾ ('Memorial of the Saints') by Farid al-Din Attar*, reprint, London, 1990, pp. 39–51.

[71] Smith, *Rabiʿa*, pp. 31–38.

[72] Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 151.

Prophet, her answer was, "My love for God has so possessed me that no place remains for loving any save Him!" The Divine Beloved thus becomes the very core and ultimate goal of her being, which leads to a life of utter intensity and self-abnegation.[73] This total, undivided commitment to God is dramatized in numerous hagiographic stories of Rābiʿa's life reproduced by ʿAṭṭār. It was related that on her death-bed she bade her friends to depart and leave the way free for the messengers of God. As the visitors were departing, they heard her making confession of faith and a voice which responded, "O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise" (Qurʾān, 89: 27–30). After her death, Rābiʿa was seen in a dream and asked how she had escaped from Munkar and Nakīr, the angels who interrogate the newly deceased in their graves. When they approached her and asked her, "Who is thy Lord?", she sent them back to their Master, "Return to your Lord and tell Him, 'Although Thou hast thousands and thousands of Thy creatures [to remember of], Thou hast not forgotten a weak old woman. I, who had only Thee in the entire world, how could have I forgotten Thee, that Thou shouldst ask me, Who is thy Lord?'"

Since Rābiʿa left no written legacy, in reconstructing her religious views one has to rely on utterances such as just cited, which are usually presented in the form of responses to queries from her friends and visitors. Another source of our knowledge of her ideas is her prayers and homilies which are attributed to her by her biographers, such as ʿAṭṭār. According to the latter, she used to pray at night upon the roof of her house, saying, "O Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed and kings have shut their doors and every lover is alone with his beloved; and here am I alone with Thee!" In another prayer she speaks to God in the following manner, "O my Lord, if I worship Thee from fear of Hell, burn me therein, and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me thence, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from me Thine Eternal Beauty!"

Rābiʿa's sayings, which have come down to us in later renditions, display traditional ascetic and mystical themes, namely, repentance, gratitude, and the vision of God in this life and in the hereafter.

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[73] Ibid., p. 154

Thus, in discussing the process of man's conversion to a godly and righteous life, she emphasized that although the initiative may appear to be man's, his success or failure depends, in the long run, on God's good will, "How can anyone repent unless his Lord gives him repentance and accepts him? If He turns towards you, you will turn towards Him." In line with her overriding preoccupation with God to the exclusion of all else, she held that the true servant's gratitude towards God should focus on the Giver, not on the gift. One spring day, when her fellow ascetics urged her to come out and behold the works of God, she rejoined, "Come rather inside to behold their Maker. Contemplation of the Maker [in my soul] has turned me away from contemplating His creatures." In a similar vein, when asked about Paradise, Rābiʿa replied with a famous maxim: "First the neighbor, then the house!" (*al-jār thumma 'l-dār*). According to the great Sunnī theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 555/1111), this saying implies that no one who does not know God in this world will see him in the next; one who has not met him here and now will not enjoy the vision of him in the afterlife; nor can anyone seek to approach God in the future life without securing his friendship in this one. In other words, none may reap who has not sown. The otherworldly orientation of Rābiʿa's teaching is thrown into sharp relief in her vision of herself as a total stranger in this world; she eats its bread in sorrow, while preparing herself for the future life of bliss in the presence of her Maker. Asked how she had attained such an advanced stage of sanctity, Rābiʿa replied, "By abandoning what does not concern me and seeking fellowship with Him Who never dies."

Statements and themes such as these are the stock-in-trade of the nascent ascetic and mystical movement in Iraq and Syria, and could have been said by any of her world-renouncing contemporaries. What sets Rābiʿa apart from them is her ardent preaching of a disinterested and sincere love (*maḥabba*) of, and fellowship (*uns*) with, God. This concern becomes the sole aim and *raison d'être* of God's human lover that places him apart from the generality of the believers. This idea runs like a read thread across the countless utterances and poetic lines attributed to Rābiʿa, including the following:

> I have made Thee the Companion of my heart,
> But my body is present for those who seek its company,
> And my body is friendly towards its guests.
> But the Beloved of my heart is the guest of my soul.

The verse often ascribed to her[74] speaks of the two types of love: one that seeks its own ulterior ends, and one that is directed toward God alone. It is often quoted as evidence of the dual nature of her all-consuming passion for the Divine Lover:

> I love Thee with two loves: a selfish one and one of which Thou [alone] art worthy.
> The selfish love makes me oblivious of all that is not Thou and causes me to think only of Thee
> As for the love of which Thou [alone] art worthy,
> Thou raisest the veils for me so that I may see Thee.
> In neither love have I any merit, for the praise for both loves is wholly Thine.

Elaborating on these poetic lines, al-Ghazālī argues that by the selfish love Rābi'a meant one's love of God as the Bestower of grace and temporary happiness; by the love that is worthy of him, she implied the love of his Beauty "which He revealed to her." The latter, in al-Ghazālī's mind, is far superior to the first type of love. Anticipating the theosophical speculations of later Muslim mystics, Rābi'a described her arduous attempts to achieve union with the Divine (waṣl). According to one of her verses, "My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire!" Elsewhere, she says, "I have ceased to exist and annihilated my own self. I have thus become one with God and am now altogether His."

Thus, in later accounts of her life and teaching, Rābi'a presents herself as a true mystic inspired by an ardent love of, and conscious of having entered into unitive life with, God. Her emphasis on love of God distinguishes her from contemporary ascetics and quietists who were preoccupied with abstention from earthly delights, maintaining ritual purity, voluntary poverty, fear of God, and meticulous observance of religious duties. In the later Sufi tradition, Rābi'a is portrayed as the first exponent and the very embodiment of pure, disinterested love of God for His own sake alone. In a similar vein, she is depicted as the first to combine the preaching of divine love with the doctrine of unveiling (tajallī; kashf) of God before his lover, that is, of the beatific vision in this world.

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[74] It has been shown by G. J. H. van Gelder to be part of a secular love poem; see his "Rabi'a's Poem on the Two Kinds of Love: A mystification?" in: *Verse and the Fair Sex, a collection of papers presented at the 15th Congress of the UEAI . . . 1990*. Ed. F. de Jong, Utrecht 1993, pp. 66–76.

Rābiʿa's semi-legendary figure has inspired a number of her romantic biographies and at least two Egyptian films. In the West, she became associated with the story of the torch and water with which, as mentioned, she sought to burn paradise and put down the fires of hell. This motif, which goes back to the Persian work *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn* by the eighth/fourteenth century Anatolian writer Aflākī, resurfaces in an almost word-for-word rendition in the *Mémoires du sieur de Joinville* (Paris, 1854, p. 195). In that work the story is placed in a different geographical and chronological setting: a preaching friar named Yves the Breton, who was sent to Damascus by the King of France Louis IX (the future Saint Louis), meets en route an old woman carrying fire and water, and so on. It is not certain that the heroine of this story is our Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, since the scene is set in Damascus. This city was home to yet another holy woman of the second/eighth century, who was also named Rābiʿa bint Ismāʿīl al-ʿAdawiyya.[75] It is surprising that the oldest textual evidence of this story in the Islamic world goes back no further than the eighth/fourteenth century, while the French chronicle mentions it a century earlier. Somewhat later, the French bishop Jean-Pierre Camus (1582–1653) avails himself of the same motif to illustrate the notion of pure love in his book *La Caritée ou le pourtraict de la vraye charité, histoire dévote tirée de la vie de Saint-Louis* (Paris, 1641).

The Formation of Mystical Language and Speculation: Shaqīq al-Balkhī

In the Kurāsānī devotee Shaqīq al-Balkhī we find another instance of the impassioned, *jihād*-oriented piety which we have already observed in Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Ibn al-Mubārak. The only difference is the geographical setting against which his career unfolded. While the latter two "strove on the path of God" by waging war against the Christians of Byzantium, Shaqīq resided in a fortified *ribāṭ* at Washgird (eastern Iran), which was manned by volunteers fighting against "the pagan Turks" of Central Asia. In 195/810, he was killed in action during a military expedition to Kulan in the Upper Oxus.[76] In theological and juridical matters, he was originally a follower of Abū Ḥanīfa and his disciple Abū Yūsuf. However, after his conversion

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[75] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 25; cf. van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 144, note 42.
[76] Radtke, "Theologien," p. 540.

to asceticism, he lost interest in juridical and theological discourses and dedicated himself single-mindedly to the service of God. On the personal level, Shaqīq presents himself as a curious hybrid of Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Ibn al-Mubārak. As the latter, he began his career as a merchant, who did business with the semi-Islamicized Turks of Transoxania. His mercantile career came to an abrupt end after a curious encounter with a Buddhist monk who challenged him to demonstrate his trust in God as the sole provider of men by abandoning his trade.[77] In the aftermath of this encounter, Shaqīq "repented," distributed all his possessions in alms, and embarked on the career of a warrior-ascetic of the frontier.

In some respects, Shaqīq resembles Ibrāhīm b. Adham, with whom he associated for a while. As with Ibrāhīm, his scrupulousness (waraʿ) and reliance on God (tawakkul) often took extreme forms. On occasion, Shaqīq went even further than his master. For him, the rampant corruption of this world made it impossible for the true devotee to sustain himself through the work of his hands, except in dire need. To avoid the corruptive influence of the world, Shaqīq advocated "a rule of life involving a complete renunciation, a state of permanent acquiescence in the Will of God." In his mind, both craftsmanship and trade were "suspect" (shubha) and, therefore, must be relinquished by anyone seeking perfection in worshipping God. Furthermore, in Shaqīq's mind, attempts to secure one's livelihood amounted to casting doubt on God's beneficence and ability to provide for his creatures. No wonder that Shaqīq is often described as the earliest exponent, if not the founder, of tawakkul—a doctrine that promoted a complete trust in God and a total abandonment, or reduction to a minimum, of gainful employment.[78] Shaqīq seems to have adhered to the stringent version of tawakkul, which was later rejected by most of the Sufis in favor of a more moderate one. This watered down interpretation of tawakkul made it acceptable to the majority of Sufis and not just to a handful of spiritual athletes similar to Ibrāhīm b. Adham. Shaqīq's Khurāsānian disciple, Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 237/851)—whom the sources of the time describe as an "ascetic," a "scholar," and a "sage" (ḥakīm)— became the chief transmitter and exponent of Shaqīq's logia relating to ascetic ethics and practices.[79] Ḥātim's disciple, Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī (d. 245/859),

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[77] Abū Nuʿaym, Ḥilya, vol. 8, p. 59; cf. Arberry, Sufism, pp. 38–39.

[78] Reinert, Die Lehre, pp. 172–175.

[79] Radtke, "Theologen," p. 542; Arberry, Sufism, pp. 39–40.

was an itinerant ascetic who is said to have a following of 120 students (*murīdūn*). Of these, according to later Sufi authors, only two were able to withstand the rigors of ascetic training and to become established Sufi masters.[80] The high "drop-out" rate may indicate that, despite the popularity of individual ascetics, their stringent standards of asceticism remained the domain of a few "spiritual athletes" who were capable of maintaining their vows throughout their lifetimes. The figure of Abū Turāb is important in yet another regard. His itinerant lifestyle, which replicates that of many early devotees (notably, Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ), permitted him to bring the teachings of Shaqīq and Ḥātim to Iraq and Syria, where he successfully disseminated their ideas of *tawakkul* among local ascetics and mystics. As his predecessors, he thus served as a vital intellectual bridge between the Eastern and Western traditions of ascetic spirituality.[81] One may argue that the activities of Abū Turāb and his likes facilitated the convergence of the two strands of Islamic ascetic piety during the following century, when the Sufism of the Baghdad school became predominant. Perhaps even more significant was Shaqīq's contribution to what came to be known as "the science of the mystical path" (*ʿilm al-ṭarīq*)—the all-important symbol of the Sufi lifestyle and worldview. While earlier ascetics did sometimes refer to various levels of spiritual attainment they had experienced in the service of God, no one, it seems, had tried to classify them or present them in a hierarchical order. In his treatise "The Rule of Worship" (*Adab al-ʿibādāt*), for the first time Shaqīq attempted to do just that: to describe the various stages or "dwelling stations" (*manāzil*) of worship and the levels of experience associated with them. If authentic,[82] this short work can be viewed as an important borderline between asceticism and nascent mysticism.[83] In any event, Shaqīq's teaching stands in sharp contrast to, say, Fuḍayl's, who had considered renunciation (*zuhd*) and complete resignation to the will of God (*riḍā*) to be the highest stages of spiritual progress, beyond

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[80] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, p. 209; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 136; Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, vol. 1, p. 327.

[81] Ibid., pp. 325–332.

[82] For proofs of its authenticity see P. Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et language mystique*, Beirut, 1970, pp. 213–216.

[83] I personally doubt that any crisp line can be drawn chronologically or conceptually without skewing the process of the organic, gradual growth of mystical ideas from the simple piety of Islam's first devotees.

which there was "no higher stage." Significantly, in Shaqīq's system
both the world-renouncing piety and the fear of God, which char-
acterize a typical Muslim ascetic (*zāhid*), are relegated to the lower
stages of spiritual perfection. Although Shaqīq did not try to ques-
tion the intrinsic merits of these ascetic virtues,[84] he was quite forth-
right in placing them well below mystical experiences, such as the
all-consuming desire of paradisiacal bliss in the proximity of God
and the ardent love of God. Implicitly, Shaqīq's system gave pref-
erence to mystics over ascetics. In Shaqīq's view, the former occupy
two upper stages of the mystic path, while the ascetics remain at its
beginning.[85]

Table 1. Chapter I. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and His Circle

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728)
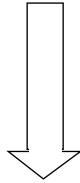
Yazīd b. Abān al-Raqāshī (d. between 101/729 and 121/738)
Muḥammad b. Wasī' (d. 127/738), Mālik b. Dīnār (d. 128/745)
Farqad ak-Sabakhī (d. 132/749)
'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. ca. 133/750)
Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī (d. 165/781)
Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185/801)
Riyāḥ b. 'Amr al-Qaysī (d. 195/810)
Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830)

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[84] E.g., he argued that "patience" (*ṣabr*) and "resignation," or "satisfaction" [with
the Divine Will] (*riḍā*), should be "the beginning and the end of each pious act,"
see al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 66.

[85] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 213–231; idem (ed.), *Trois ouevres inédites de mystiques musul-
mans*, Beirut, 1973, pp. 17–21.

ASCETICISM AND MYSTICISM IN WESTERN PROVINCES: SYRIA AND EGYPT

Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī and His Circle

In the early third/nineth century, Baṣra, and to lesser extent, Kūfa remained the main centers of ascetic and mystical life in Islam. From there, the ascetic and mystical ideas, which originated in the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, made their way to Islam's new capital, Baghdad. Other parts of the Muslim world also did not remain immune to such ideas. In Syria, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), who had studied with ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd and Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ at Baṣra and ʿAbbādān, evolved his own version of al-Ḥasan's teaching.[1] As with Fuḍayl and Shaqīq, Abū Sulaymān placed special emphasis on the trust in God (*tawakkul*); he also preached a total, unquestioning acceptance of the Divine Will (*riḍā*). He seems to have viewed these concepts as the pinnacle of ascetic piety (*zuhd*).[2] In Abū Sulaymān's phrase, "there is nothing in either this world or the next . . . of sufficient importance to keep men back from God; everything that distracts man from God, whether family or child, is to be regarded as misfortune." The true knowledge of God was to be obtained by obedience to the uttermost. This single-minded commitment helps explain Abū Sulaymān's preference for celibacy. According to him, "the sweetness of adoration and undisturbed surrender of the heart, which the single man can feel, the married man can never experience."[3] Seen from this angle, women are the major distraction from God in the entire world, for, in his own phrase, "there is nothing on earth more pleasant than women." Paradoxically, his warnings did not prevent him from having a wife and a son. In contrast to Shaqīq he was not a fighter for religion: although he held

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[1] He resided in Dārāyā, a village in the environs of Damascus.

[2] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 9, p. 256; cf. Reinert, *Die Lehre*, pp. 85, 89; on the relationship between these two notions see ibid., pp. 101–112.

[3] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 36, *apud* al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*.

warfare against the infidel enemy (*jihād*) in high regard, he treated the struggle against the passions and drives of one's own self (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) as a much more noble, albeit also more difficult, task.[4] For this struggle to be successful, one should be constantly watching over one's heart and members in order to prevent them from engaging in sinful actions. Even more importantly, al-Dārānī viewed this struggle as a progress along a path that was punctuated by a number of "stages" or "ranks" (*darajāt*). They roughly corresponded to Shaqīq's "dwelling stations" (*manāzil*) which were described in the previous chapter. Abū Sulaymān argued that one is incapable of describing one's stage until he has put it behind him and advanced to the next one. The amount of one's knowledge of God (*maʿrifat Allāh*) is in direct proportion to one's amount of pious works, which, in turn, determines the pace of one's progress along the path. Confident of his own perfection, Abū Sulaymān claimed to have achieved greater knowledge of God and of divine mysteries than any of his contemporaries in Syria.[5] That his claim was taken seriously by some of his compatriots is evidenced by the formation around him of a devout following led by his foremost disciple Aḥmad b. Abī 'l-Ḥawārī (d. 230/845 or 246/860). The latter was married to a pious widow named Rābiʿa bint Ismāʿīl, who is often confused with her namesake, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya.[6] Rābiʿa had inherited a fortune of 300,000 *dīnār*s from her rich husband, which she decided to spend on Aḥmad b. Abī 'l-Ḥawārī and his ascetic brothers in God. Impressed by her exemplary piety and chastity, Abū Sulaymān himself blessed their marriage despite his staunch opposition to marital ties. A later tradition portrays Rābiʿa and Aḥmad b. Abī 'l-Ḥawārī as a sexually abstinent couple, who devoted their whole lives to the service of God and whose relations remained strictly Platonic.[7] This legend does not quite tally with the fact that Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥawārī married three other women, at least one of whom was also renowned for her piety and godliness. In addition, we hear of Abū Sulaymān's sister, a pious and god-fearing lady, who appears to have been part of the same circle of ascetics.[8] Many of the stories about Rābiʿa bint Ismāʿīl mentioned by later Sufi sources bear close resemblance to

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[4] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 9, pp. 270 and 267.
[5] Ibid., p. 272.
[6] Smith, *Rabiʿa*, p. 140; cf. Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 29–30.
[7] Smith, *Rabiʿa*, p. 141.
[8] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 145.

those reported about her namesake from Baṣra.[9] One even wonders
whether we are dealing with a floating motif that eventually led to
the emergence of Rābiʿa's narrative twin. In any event, it appears
that, in the world of early Islamic piety, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya of Baṣra
was far from unique. Nor was the presence of female ascetics confined
to Baṣra and Iraq.[10]

   It is noteworthy that, contrary to his image in the later Sufi tra-
dition, Abū Sulaymān hardly considered himself a Sufi. Although he
did apply this term to other ascetics, namely to Mālik b. Dīnār, he
was wary of identifying himself with this group.[11] Given Mālik's Iraqi
background and Abū Sulaymān's ascetic training in Baṣra and in
ʿAbbādān early in his career, one may surmise that when he spoke
of "Sufism" he referred primarily to the Iraqi ascetic and mystical
tradition which by that time must have become firmly associated
with the practice of wearing a woolen robe. On the whole, Abū
Sulaymān's teaching, as systematized by Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥawārī, reveals
a worldview that is more ascetic than mystical in character. His say-
ings consistently emphasize fear of God and humility as the "root
of all that is good in this life and the next." Although he did occa-
sionally describe love of God as the mystic's ultimate objective or
mention the soul's progress through several stages (*darajāt*) to what
he identified as "divine gnosis" (*maʿrifa*), he left no systematic account
of this progress on the lines of Shaqiq's. It fell to his followers
to bring his nascent mysticism to fruition.[12] Apart from Ibn Abī
'l-Ḥawārī, this task was taken up by Aḥmad b. ʿĀṣim al-Anṭākī
(d. 220/835) of Antioch. Aḥmad is credited with the authorship of
several treatises that bear a close resemblance to the mystical psy-
chology of the great contemporary thinker al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī
(d. 243/857) of Baghdad. Although the attribution of these treatises
remains uncertain[13] and there is little evidence to support A. Arberry's
statement that al-Anṭākī converted contemporary asceticism "from a
way of life taken up as a protest against the worldliness prevalent

   [9] Ibid., 142–144.
   [10] On the pious women of Baṣra see Pellat, *Le milieu basrien*, pp. 103–106; cf.
Smith, *Rabiʿa*, pp. 143–149.
   [11] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 9, pp. 275 and 276.
   [12] See, e.g., R. A. Nicholson, "An Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and
Development of Sufism," in: *JRAS*, 1906, pp. 308–309.
   [13] There are indications that at least two of his three known works may have
been written by al-Muḥāsibī, van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 146.

in high places into a theory of existence and a system of theoso-
phy,'' there is little doubt that the ascetic and mystical thought in
Syria was not confined to Damascus and its immediate environs.
Internal evidence from al-Anṭākī's "Book of [Spiritual] Retreat" (*Kitāb
al-khalwa*) suggests that he addressed it to a wide audience, includ-
ing, possibly, the town-folk of Antioch and the pious volunteers of
the Arab-Byzantine Marches.[14] If authentic, many of al-Anṭākī's state-
ments "mark him out as a true mystic."[15] This, for example, is how
al-Anṭākī described the state of the mystical lover:

> When others look at the lover, he does not see them; when he is
> called, he does not hear; when misfortune comes upon him, he is not
> grieved; and when success looks him in the face, he does not rejoice.
> He fears no one and has hope of no one . . ., as if there were no one
> on Earth but yourself and no one in Heaven but God.

Al-Anṭākī's preoccupation with mystical psychology and introspec-
tion is further attested by his nickname "Explorer [lit. "Spy"] of the
Hearts" (*jāsūs al-qulūb*), which is said to have been given to him by
his teacher Abū Sulaymān.

Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī

We know little about Muslim ascetic life in Egypt from the time of
the Muslim conquest up to the turn of the third/ninth century. Given
the existence of a rich tradition of Christian monasticism in Egypt
before Islam,[16] it seems likely that it could have exercised certain in-
fluence on the nascent Muslim asceticism. However, historical evidence
as to its tendencies and social make-up is very scarce. An early Egyptian
chronicle mentions the rising, in Alexandria, in the year 815, of a
group of pious rebels, described collectively as "Sufis" (*al-ṣūfiyya*). Led
by a man named 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī, the rebels attempted to
persuade the governor to enforce a stricter Muslim code and opposed
those of his decrees which they considered inconsistent with the
Islamic Law.[17] This episode is indicative not only of the presence of

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[14] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 147.
[15] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, p. 79.
[16] Idem, *Studies*, pp. 13–19.
[17] R. Guest (ed.), *The Governors and Judges of Egypt . . . of El Kindi*, Leiden, 1912,
p. 162; 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Mutaṣawwifat Baghdād*, Paris, 1994, pp. 64–65.

ascetics on the Egyptian social scene, but also of their active political stance; it finds no contemporary parallels in the other parts of the Muslim world.

This episode notwithstanding, the earliest representative of ascetic and mystical thought in Egypt known to us was a rather quiet, retiring man named Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860). Born of a Nubian family at Ikhmīm (Akhmīm), Upper Egypt, he received his initial theological training in Syria and in the Ḥijāz, where he studied, among others, with the founder of the Mālikī school of law Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ. In theological matters, he was a bona fide traditionalist who advocated the doctrine of the create Qurʾān. This doctrinal position nearly cost him his life when its opponents gained the upper hand at the caliph's court in Baghdad and unleashed a campaign of persecutions against those who disagreed with their creed of the created Qurʾān. Dhu 'l-Nūn's mystical sayings, which were handed down to us by later Sufi authorities, as well as by his contemporary al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, demonstrate his intimate familiarity with the vocabulary and ideas of eastern ascetics and early mystics. During the infamous inquisition (*miḥna*) under the caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 219/833) and his immediate successors, Dhu 'l-Nūn was arrested on charges of upholding the view that the Qurʾān was uncreated, brought to Baghdad and interrogated. However, he was released by the order of the caliph al-Mutawakkil who, in 241/855, reversed the religious policy pursued by his predecessors. In Egypt, he was also persecuted for teaching mystical ideas publicly, but we know nothing about the exact charges brought against him on that occasion.[18] A humble man, who sought to devote himself wholly to the worship of God, Dhu 'l-Nūn gathered around himself a small circle of followers at Ikhmīm, and possibly at Gīza, to which he retired at the end of his life. Most of what is known about his teaching was preserved by later Sufi writers, such as Abū Nuʿaym (d. 430/1038), ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 627/1220) and Jāmī (d. 898/1492), who quote many of his prayers and homiletics as well as his mystical poems of considerable literary merit.[19] Later Sufi authors credit him with the introduction of a systematic teaching about the mystic "states" (*aḥwāl*) and the "stations" (*maqāmāt*) of the mystic path. Thus, accord-

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[18] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, p. 728.

[19] For a discussion of Dhu 'l-Nūn's literary talent see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 45–46.

ing to Jāmī, "he is the head of this sect [i.e., the Sufis]; they all descend from him and are related to him. There were Shaykhs before him, but he was the first that explained the Sufi symbolism[20] and spoke concerning this path." In some of his statements, Dhu 'l-Nūn indeed talks about seventeen "stations" (*maqāmāt*) on the path to God. He identified the first of these with the servant's response to the call of God; as for the last station, Dhu 'l-Nūn described it as man's total surrender to, and trust in, God (*ṣidq al-tawakkul*).[21]

Dhu 'l-Nūn's utterances exhibit "the erotic symbolism which afterwards became so prominent in the religious language of the Sufis." He often speaks of God as the mystic's intimate Friend (*anīs*) and Lover (*ḥabīb*), who causes him to "love what God loves and to hate what He hates and to do good always and to shun all that distracts from God."[22] In one famous saying, he addresses God in the following manner, "O God! In public I call Thee 'My Lord', but in solitude I call Thee 'My Beloved!'" Closely linked to the notion of intimacy with the Divine is Dhu 'l-Nūn's teaching about the privileged, intuitive knowledge, or gnosis, of God (* maʿrifa*). This knowledge sets its possessors, the gnostics (*ʿārifūn*), apart from other believers. For him, "the gnostics are not themselves, but in so far as they exist at all they exist in God." Dhu 'l-Nūn distinguishes three kinds of knowledge: that of the ordinary Muslims; that of the scholars and sages; and that of God's friends (*awliyāʾ*), "who see God with their hearts." The latter, in his view, are the select men of God; as such, they are endowed with the esoteric gnosis that must not be "spoken about, lest it come to the ears of the profane." In Dhu 'l-Nūn's discourses, this higher knowledge is presented as a primeval, pristine faith that God bestows upon his elect servants from eternity—a divine spark that is cast into man's physical body in order to guide him aright.[23] This notion is probably the closest Dhu 'l-Nūn comes to Coptic Gnosticism and neo-Platonic ideas which have been routinely ascribed to him by some Muslim and Western writers who portrayed him as a "theurgist" proficient in "hieroglyphics, alchemy, astrology and magic." Apart from the mystical elements outlined above, Dhu 'l-Nūn's teaching features traditional ascetic precepts, such as

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[20] Lit. "mystical allusions."
[21] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, p. 104.
[22] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, p. 238, *apud* Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 9, p. 333.
[23] Radtke, "Theologen," pp. 556–557.

preponderance of one's fear of God's wrath over one's hope for his mercy,[24] the duty of repentance, self-renunciation, and sincerity in word and deed which he eloquently describes as "the sword of God on earth which cuts everything it touches." In other words, there is simply not enough evidence to view his work as marking the decisive transition from ascetic to mystical piety.[25]

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[24] Meier, *Abū Saʿīd*, p. 153.
[25] Melchert, "The Transition," passim.

THE SUFISM OF THE BAGHDAD SCHOOL

The Rise of Mystical Psychology: al-Muḥāsibī

Dhu 'l-Nūn's teaching had a considerable impact on many of his contemporaries. He was held in high esteem by a leading religious psychologist, theologian and moralizer of the epoch, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857). Born of an Arab family in Baṣra, where he was introduced to *ḥadīth* studies and where he was exposed to the local ascetic tradition of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,[1] he later took up residence in Baghdad. There he received a solid theological and juridical education under the guidance of the leading scholars of the epoch, including, possibly, al-Shāfiʿī, the foremost jurist of the age and founder of the influential juridical school named after him. Additionally, al-Muḥāsibī's work reveals his thorough acquaintance with "exact philosophical definitions and . . . the dialectical methods" used by various theological schools of the day, especially the Muʿtazilīs.[2] Very little is known of his personal life except for a few anecdotes that illustrate his exceptional righteousness. For instance, he is said to have refused to inherit from his father whom he viewed as an erring heretic outside the pale of Islam.[3] From the scarce evidence found in his writing, it appears that his major occupation in Baghdad was teaching and preaching, which attracted to him a broad popular following. The structure of many of al-Muḥāsibī's works, which often present responses of a spiritual master to the questions posed by his disciple, reflects his pedagogical concerns. Others are "a series of pious sermons on ascetic themes" which are sometimes autobiographical in character. They usually describe al-Muḥāsibī's personal quest for the religious truth and salvation. In 232/846 his use of dialectical reasoning, possibly in the heat of a polemic against the

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[1] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 195 and 197.
[2] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, pp. 5–6.
[3] According to one account, his father was an adherent of the doctrine that emphasised [human] free will over against the divine predestination. Another story describes his father as a Khārijite, ibid., p. 6.

Muʿtazilīs, roused the ire of the popular Baghdad preacher and founder of a Sunnī religio-political party, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). The latter led an influential faction of scholars which adhered to a strictly fideist, literalist interpretation of the Scripture and was opposed to any attempt to justify it through rationalist argumentation.[4] In addition, Ibn Ḥanbal was ill at ease with al-Muḥāsibī's psychological analysis and retrospection, which he regarded as a reprehensible innovation.[5] Ibn Ḥanbal's hostility inspired mob violence against al-Muḥāsibī and several of his followers, forcing him to seek refuge in Kūfa. From there he sent a letter to Ibn Ḥanbal, asking for pardon and repenting of his alleged "errors." However, Ibn Ḥanbal, who may have been envious of al-Muḥāsibī's reputation as an eloquent and versatile scholar with a broad popular following, refused to pardon him.[6] As a result, his subsequent career was totally overshadowed by Ibn Ḥanbal's unrelenting hostility. Slandered and reviled by his Ḥanbalī adversaries, al-Muḥāsibī had to keep a low public profile and to live in the seclusion of his home. Although he eventually returned to Baghdad, he spent the rest of his life in abject poverty and obscurity. When he died there, only four of his followers dared to defy Ibn Ḥanbal's order, by then posthumous, not to pray over his dead body.[7]

Al-Muḥāsibī's very name, derived from the phrase *muḥāsabat al-nafs* ("taking account of oneself," or "examining one's conscience"),[8] alludes to the central theme of his teaching. His principal work, *Kitāb al-riʿāya li-ḥuqūq Allāh* ("Book of Observance of What Is Due to God"), was the first to give a detailed account of the science of scrupulous introspection to be practiced by anyone who aspires to a godly life and sincere worship of God. In the words of a Western student of his legacy, this work "reveals a profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses, while in the means which he suggests for combating these weaknesses and for attaining to the single-hearted service of God, he shews also the discerning wisdom and inspired insight of a true spiritual director and shepherd of souls."

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[4] For possible theological issues behind Ibn Ḥanbal's condemnation of al-Muḥāsibī see C. Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," in *Arabica*, vol. 44 (1997), pp. 242–44.

[5] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 199.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Melchert, "The Adversaries," p. 243.

[8] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 197.

It is significant that this influential treatise, which inspired many later exponents of Sufi psychology—most notably, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Ghazālī, Abū Madyan, Ibn ʿArabī, and Ibn ʿAbbād al-Rundī—opens with an accurate rendition of the Parable of the Sower from the New Testament; elsewhere in the same book he evokes the Biblical image of the separation of wheat from tares.[9] Al-Muḥāsibī's analysis of the most secret motions of the soul and of the heart allowed him to go beyond the simple ascetic piety of his predecessors which manifested itself in spectacular feats of self-abnegation, voluntary poverty and mortification of the flesh. Wary of this superficial asceticism, al-Muḥāsibī encouraged his followers to avoid an ostentatious display of righteousness. He warned that it often results in *riyāʾ*—a concept that, in his discourse, connotes simultaneously such vices as "hypocrisy," "vainglory," and "complacency." In al-Muḥāsibī's teaching, *riyāʾ* is presented as the major impediment in attaining to the purity and perfection that characterize the Friends of God (*awliyāʾ*). "When God befriends them, says al-Muḥāsibī, He bestows His Favors upon them: and when these Favors become manifest, they are known for their love of God. Love itself has no manifesting shape or form . . .; it is the lover who is known by his character and the multitude of Favors which God displays upon their tongue, by gently guiding him, and by what is revealed to his heart . . . Hence it is said that the sign of the love of God is the indwelling of God's Favors in the hearts of those whom God has singled out for His love." By scrupulously examining one's real intention in performing an act of worship or piety one can detect and eliminate the traces of *riyāʾ* that may adhere to it. As a result, one can now serve God in the most perfect manner. At the heart of this pious self-examination is a dual impulse which causes man to repent of his evil ways and of the taint of hypocrisy. Al-Muḥāsibī identifies it as fear of God (*khawf*) and hope for his mercy (*rajāʾ*). As long as man holds fast to fear of God, while pinning his hopes on his limitless mercy, he is assured success in reaching his goal.[10]

In his "Book of Religious Advice" (*Kitāb al-waṣāyā*) al-Muḥāsibī sets out to instruct his readers regarding the pitfalls of the path to God, among which attachment to this world and the resultant vainglory he considers to be particularly dangerous. He also warns against

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[9] Ibid., p. 83.
[10] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Riʿāya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 2d edition, Cairo, 1970, pp. 52–53.

excessive preoccupation with worldly things and wealth which, he argues, distract the heart from the remembrance and worship of God. At the same time, in his "Treatise on Earning a Livelihood, Pious Scrupulosity and Doubtful Things" (*Risālat al-makāsib wa 'l-waraʿ wa 'l-shubuhāt*) he "condemns excessive rigorism in the matter of what is dubious, while continuing to advocate the need for abstinence and asceticism." Contrary to Shaqīq al-Balkhī, who advocated extreme forms of *tawakkul*, al-Muḥāsibī advised moderation: reliance on God should not prevent man from earning his livelihood; nor should one live in idleness at the expense of others.[11] In describing various types of hermits and ascetics he makes clear his preference for an active, inner-worldly piety over inaction and quietism. In line with this preference, he encouraged his readers to adapt to the exigencies and conventions of the society around them, yet to avoid its corruptive influence by practicing self-analysis, moderation, serenity and restraint. For him, ascetic flight from this world and society in search of individual salvation was an unacceptable option. As a way to keep oneself constantly on alert against the world's allurement and distractions he recommended to imagine, or meditate upon (*tawahham*), the events of the Last Day and the subsequent life of the inhabitants of Paradise and Hell.[12] This practice constitutes the subject-matter of his "Book of Meditation and of the Terrors to Come" (*Kitāb al-tawahhum wa 'l-ahwāl*), which describes how,

> By His call, all the creatures are summoned to appear before Him, and the dead rise and stand upon their feet, a mighty army from all nations, king and beggar side by side, . . . bowing their heads in humility and adoration, before the King of kings. Then the sun and the moon will be darkened and the heavens and the earth will be cleft asunder and pass away, and the celestial beings, which dwell in the Seven Heavens, will shepherd those risen from the dead, on the Plain of Resurrection, and there . . . the records of men's deeds will be distributed . . . [whereupon] the balance will be set up, and he whose evil deeds outweigh the good will be condemned to eternal misery, and he whose good deeds outweigh the evil will be called to eternal happiness."[13]

Subsequent events, such as the soul's passing on its way to Paradise, its vision of the Lord in his beauty and its entrance into the joys

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[11] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 197–198.
[12] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 199.
[13] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, p. 48.

of the blessed are also painted in vivid colors. In al-Muḥāsibī's mind, these dramatic eschatological scenes were meant to strengthen the determination of the pious to lead a godly, God-fearing life and to stay away from any sin that would negatively effect their fate in the hereafter.

Here it is not the place to discuss al-Muḥāsibī's theological views, especially since this has already been done by J. van Ess in a special monograph.[14] The question remains whether he should be viewed as the forerunner of the Sufi movement of Baghdad, who was to have a long-ranging influence on the entire history of Islamic mysticism. J. Baldick, following J. van Ess, have argued that al-Muḥāsibī was "neither a Sufi nor a mystic," but rather a moralizing theologian. This statement may be true, especially if we keep in mind that the notion of Sufism as a homogenous and coherent movement originating in the first century of the Muslim era and resting on a common set of ideals and practices was largely a creation of later Sufi historiography. Thus, in many respects, al-Muḥāsibī is no more or less a "Sufi" than Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī, who, it is to be remembered, dissociated himself from the Iraqi "wearers of wool." Nor is his ascetic temper much different from that of Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, whom J. Chabbi[15] depicted as a forerunner of the activist Sunnism of Ibn Ḥanbal rather than a mystic *par excellence*. In any event, we are dealing here with an age which can boast very few, if any, *bona fide* "Sufis," that is, ones who would unequivocally identify themselves as such. On the other hand, there is no denying that al-Muḥāsibī was in some way affiliated with those individuals in Baghdad whose Sufi credentials do not arouse serious doubts, namely al-Ḥasan al-Musūḥī (d. 257/870), Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867), Abū Ḥamza al-Baghdādī (d. 289/902), al-Junayd (d. 298/910), al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), and so on.[16] Although, with the exception of al-Junayd, they did not present themselves as al-Muḥāsibī's friends or pupils (possibly, for fear of reprisals from the militant Ḥanbalī faction), these ascetics and mystics show intimate familiarity with his legacy and express themselves in a very similar language. Despite his harsh criticism of al-Muḥāsibī, the doyen of Baghdad mystics Sarī al-Saqaṭī

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[14] *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥāriṯ al-Muḥāsibī*, Bonn, 1961; idem, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 200–209.

[15] "Fuḍāyl b. ʿIyāḍ," passim.

[16] Smith, *An Early Mystic*, pp. 8–9, 27–43, 256–257.

(d. 253/867) reveals his underlying indebtedness to al-Muḥāsibī's eth-
ical teachings, which hinge on introspection and a meticulous analy-
sis of one's true intentions. Sarī's outward hostility to his eminent
contemporary may thus be attributed, apart from the fear of the
Ḥanbalīs, to a natural rivalry between the two popular preachers
who by and large addressed the same constituency.[17] Although al-
Muḥāsibī was primarily a theologian, his tenets do include many
elements, e.g., discourses on divine love,[18] which can be safely identified
as mystical. Whether he can be classified as a Sufi depends on our
definition of Sufism. Should we view Sufism as synonymous with the
mystical and ascetic tradition that flourished in Baghdad in the second
part of the third/ninth-early fourth/tenth centuries, then al-Muḥāsibī
no doubt can be seen as one of its major exponents.

The Formation of the Baghdadi Tradition

The ascetic and mystical school of Baghdad, with which al-Muḥāsibī
was affiliated through his disciple al-Junayd,[19] fell heir to the ideas
of the early pietistic movements that originated in Baṣra and Kūfa.
Soon after Baghdad had become the political and cultural center of
the Islamic world (the second half of the eighth century), it started
to attract secular talent, craftsmanship and the arts. Its wealth, cul-
tural ambience and prestige drew outstanding religious scholars as
well as unscrupulous fortune-seekers and adventurers. Into this intel-
lectual and cultural melting pot entered the ascetic-mystical ferment,
giving rise to a distinct trend of asceticism and mystical speculation.
In time this trend became known as "Sufism" (taṣawwuf)—the name
that was now applied to a wide variety of ascetic and mystical trends
in Islamic piety. The beginnings of the Baghdad school are often
linked to the semi-legendary figure of Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815).
Born of a family of Christians or Sabians of Persian background in
Lower Iraq, he spent most of his life in the Karkh quarter of Baghdad.
Through his teacher, the renowned ascetic Bakr b. Khunays, he was
exposed to the Kūfan tradition of ascetic piety. He is also said to
have associated with the famous Kūfan ascetic Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī (d.

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[17] Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt*, p. 10.
[18] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, pp. 76–85.
[19] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 278.

166/782), during the latter's visit to Baghdad, although some Muslim scholars denied this.[20] His opposition to the fair sex and marriage ("I do not care whether I see a woman or a wall")[21], suggests that he may indeed have been influenced by Dāwūd, who treated celibacy as a prerequisite for godly life.[22] Maʿrūf's study under the Baṣran devotee Farqad al-Sabakhī (d. 132/749) is much better attested, linking him to the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the Baṣran school of asceticism. Later Sufi sources describe Maʿrūf as a pious sermonizer who preached humility, abstention and perfect contentment with God's decrees from the pulpit of his own mosque in the Karkh quarter of Baghdad. He took little interest in theological speculation and encouraged pious actions, not words. Some sources even claim that, despite his knowledge of ḥadīth, he was illiterate and received no formal scholastic training.[23] To Maʿrūf belongs the famous statement which places his squarely into the traditionalist line of thought culminating in Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers: "When God loves His servant, He opens for him the door of [pious] actions and closes the door of theological disputes." It suggests that in the epoch in question mysticism was part and parcel of a broader fideist movement that had not yet broken up into a wide variety of religious attitudes and intellectual and pietistic trends that we observe a century later. Unsurprisingly, Maʿrūf's legacy came to be claimed by the Ḥanbalīs and the Sufis alike.[24] Legends describe his numerous miracles, emphasizing the supernatural efficacy of his prayers and blessings. After his death, his tomb on the west bank of the Tigris became an object of pious resort and pilgrimage. Later authors relate that the populace of Baghdad regarded prayer at his tomb as propitious in obtaining rain.

Far better documented are the life and teachings of another early representative of Baghdad Sufism named Bishr al-Ḥāfī, "the Barefoot" (d. 227/842). A native of Merv, in east Iran, he is said to have belonged to a young men's association or even a gang of robbers, with whom he supposedly indulged in debauchery and wine drinking. At some point, he parted company with his dissolute friends

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[20] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 288–290; cf. Massignon, *Essay*, pp. 158–159.
[21] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 8, p. 366.
[22] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, p. 285.
[23] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 158.
[24] C. Melchert, "The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis," an unpublished article that was kindly presented to me by the author.

and journeyed west, to Iraq and Arabia, where he studied traditions and jurisprudence under the founder of the Mālikī school of law Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) and the pious traditionalist and warrior-ascetic Ibn al-Mubārak.[25] When and where his conversion to Sufism took place is not clear. A legend has it that he relinquished his juridical studies, buried his books of *ḥadīth* and embarked on the life of a pauper. The study of law and tradition, he explained, was of little use in preparing man for the final reckoning. More often it serves as a means of gaining an easy and well-paid profession or of pampering one's ego. The true piety, in his opinion, should consist of virtuous deeds. Basing himself on this assumption, he challenged his former colleagues, the *muḥaddithūn*, to try to implement just 2,5% (*zakāt*) of the thousands of pious precepts they teach to their students.[26] His scruples are not entirely unfamiliar—similar sentiment was expressed already by Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ and Ibrāhīm b. Adham.

In Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867) we find another outstanding representative of Baghdad Sufism. Son of a peddler and subsequently himself a successful merchant, Sarī lived in the Karkh quarter of the ʿAbbāsid capital. Like many other members of the mercantile class, he took great interest in religious studies and distinguished himself as a *ḥadīth* collector (*muḥaddith*). His career as a merchant, however, came to an abrupt end after his encounter with Maʿrūf al-Karkhī. On hearing one of Maʿrūf's fiery sermons, he abandoned his mundane pursuits in favor of mysticism. His spiritual quest brought him first to Baṣra and later to ʿAbbādān. En route, Sarī made friends with a Syrian ascetic ʿAlī al-Jurjānī, who seems to have communicated to him the ideas of Ibrāhīm b. Adham and his Syrian followers.[27] In the aftermath of this encounter, he journeyed to Syria and the Arab-Byzantine frontier, where, despite his old age, he joined the *jihād* against the Christian enemy. His wanderings ended in 218/833, when he returned to Baghdad permanently. While there, he struck up friendship with Bishr al-Ḥāfī and his ascetic-minded followers, although, for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, he had no personal ties with al-Muḥāsibī, despite the fact that they shared many ethical precepts and took a similar approach to moral

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[25] On him see Chapter I of this book.
[26] Massignon, *Essay*, pp. 159–160.
[27] See Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, pp. 110–112.

self-discipline. His exemplary piety and ascetic life-style attracted to
him numerous students not only from Iraq and Khurāsān (e.g., al-
Junayd, al-Kharrāz, al-Nūrī, Sumnūn), but from Syria as well ('Alī
al-Ghadā'irī and Ismā'īl al-Shāmī). In addition to these renowned
ascetics and mystics, his sermons attracted many lay listeners who
were eager to benefit from his piety and charisma. His popularity
grew to such an extent that one day he found himself censured by
a misanthropic recluse named al-Sammāk, who accused him of aspir-
ing after mundane reputation. Sarī took heed. He limited his audi-
ence to a few close friends and withdrew from public lecturing.[28]

Sarī's teaching intricately combines the elements of the Baghdad
tradition (represented by Ma'rūf and Bishr) with that of the Syrian
"devotees of harsh worship" on the lines of Ibrāhīm b. Adham and
other "warrior-monks" of the frontier. The ideas of a sincere, unselfish
loyalty to one's friends and the community at large, which domi-
nated the teaching of Ibn al-Mubārak, are intermingled in Sarī's
teaching with the pithy utterances emphasizing pious action which
may have been inspired by Ma'rūf or Bishr. Like the early Sufi
heroes he was skeptical of juridical studies and the scholastic activ-
ity of professional *ḥadīth* transmitters, which he scornfully described
as "no provision for the hereafter."[29] Of the practical virtues, he
placed special emphasis on fortitude in adversity (*ṣabr*), humility
(*khumūl*), trust in God (*tawakkul*),[30] and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). His constant
warnings against the dangers of hypocrisy and complacency (*riyā'*) are
reminiscent of al-Muḥāsibī's scrupulous analysis of the conscience.

In a sense, Sarī's religions attitude marks a departure from the
traditional asceticism of Baṣra and Kūfa. Although he built his preach-
ing on basically the same assumptions as his predecessors, the accents
he placed on various strands of the old ascetic tradition constitute
his distinct contribution to its growth and sophistication. Moreover,
his teaching reflects his internal evolution from a conventional ascetic,
preoccupied with avoidance of sin and meticulous compliance with
the religious and social conventions of the age, to a fully-fledged
mystic immersed in the contemplation of God and, therefore, totally
oblivious of the world around him. Sometimes these conflicting

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[28] Ibid., p. 119.
[29] Ibid., p. 127; B. Reinert, "Sarī al-Saḳaṭī", EI, vol. 9, p. 57.
[30] Idem, *Die Lehre*, pp. 118, 123, 131, etc.

attitudes are simultaneous, reflecting the growing complexity and agonizing choices faced by the mystic who wanted to preserve outward decorum, while being irresistibly drawn into an ever intimate contact with God. Allied with these diverse impulses is an exaggerated sense of one's own depravity and insignificance before God. This feeling finds a vivid expression in the anecdote that portrays Sarī as regularly squinting at the tip of his nose in order to make sure that his face had not yet been blackened by his sins.[31] Corollary of this self-effacing piety is the continuous mourning which, as we know, was widely practiced by the early "pious weepers" (*bakkā'ūn*).

Sarī's innovative refinement of the ascetic tradition is also evident in his subtle attempts to transcend the simple ascetic dichotomy between fear of God and hope for his benevolence. Apart from introducing such intermediate notions as "shame" (*ḥayā'*), "reverence" (*hayba*) and "intimacy" (*uns*) with God, Sarī sought to bridge the divide between fear and hope by inserting the concept of love of God which he presented as the mystic's principal motivation and ultimate driving force. Yet, as a practicing mystic, Sarī carefully avoided any speculation about his experience. For him love of God is a given experience, "an inner burning," which eludes even the most sophisticated description. In order to grasp it, the inquirer must seek a direct experience of it. When this is achieved he is no longer capable of conveying it to his listeners, because his experience surpasses human understanding. The intensity of Sarī's own mystical experiences and the veracity of his insights are attested by his nephew and disciple al-Junayd, who, however, ignored his master's advice and attempted to give a detailed discursive account of mystical visions and goals.

A Mysticism of Sobriety: al-Junayd al-Baghdādī

Like his paternal uncle Sarī al-Saqaṭī, Abū 'l-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Junayd (d. 298/910) came from an urban mercantile background. His father traded in glassware and he himself earned his livelihood as a dealer in tussah silk. Under the influence of Sarī, by then a renowned spiritual master, the young al-Junayd embraced

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[31] Idem, "Sarī al-Saḳaṭī", EI, vol. 9, p. 58.

mystical ideals and ascetic ethos. He eventually succeeded his uncle
as the leader of the Baghdad school of mysticism. As with Sarī, he
received a solid juridical and theological training under the guidance
of such famous Shāfiʿī scholars as Abū Thawr (d. 240/855) and Ibn
Kullāb (d. ca. 240/855) and was well qualified to issue legal opin-
ions on various juridical issues. However, most of his teachers belonged
to the Sufi circles. He cultivated the friendship of al-Ḥārith al-
Muḥāsibī with whom he had long theoretical discussions of ques-
tions relating to mystical experience and godly life. Al-Muḥāsibī later
wrote up his responses to these questions in the form of books.[32]
The influence of al-Muḥāsibī's mystical psychology and introspection
on his young associate is abundantly attested by the latter's epistles
and logia.

The subsequent Sufi tradition portrays al-Junayd as the greatest
exponent of the "sober" type of mystical experience. It was rou-
tinely juxtaposed with the excesses of its "intoxicated" counterpart,
represented by Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, al-Ḥallāj and, to a lesser
extent, al-Nūrī, Sumnūn, and al-Shiblī.[33] The honorific titles which
later Sufi writers bestowed on him—*sayyid al-ṭāʾifa* (Lord of this [i.e.
Sufi] community), *ṭāʾūs al-fuqarāʾ* (Peacock of the Poor [i.e. the Sufis]),
shaykh al-mashāikh (Master of the Masters)—indicate the high esteem
in which he was held by his contemporaries and later Sufis. His
public lectures were not confined to his fellow-mystics; they attracted
many high-ranking state officials and respectable theologians as
well.[34] Western scholars share this esteem. Typical in this regard is
A. Arberry's assessment of al-Junayd as "the most original and pen-
etrating intellect among the Sufis of his time," who "took within his
ranging vision the whole landscape of mystical speculation stretch-
ing below him, and with an artist's eye brought it to comprehen-
sion and unity upon a single canvas."[35] His was a "profoundly subtle,
meditated language" that "formed the nucleus of all subsequent elab-
oration."[36] The abstruseness of al-Junayd's discourses may have been

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[32] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, pp. 74–75; Junayd, *Enseignement spirituel*. Trans.
and annotated by R. Deladrière, Paris, 1983, p. 22.

[33] Ibid., pp. 13–15; according to one tradition al-Junayd requested that upon his
death his works be buried together with him in order to prevent outsiders, i.e.,
non-Sufis, from looking into them; van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 281.

[34] Melchert, "Transition," p. 67.

[35] Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 56–57.

[36] Ibid.

a deliberate strategy aimed at rendering his ideas impenetrable to exoterically minded scholars.[37]

The subsequent Sufi tradition depicts al-Junayd as the first exponent of "the science of God's oneness" (*ʿilm al-tawḥīd*),[38] who was also proficient in the knowledge of the mystical states (*aḥwāl*) experienced by the mystical seeker. As we have seen, this statement is not quite accurate: classifications of the *aḥwāl* were provided by a number of his younger and older contemporaries. Al-Junayd's legacy includes a number of epistles (*rasāʾil*) to his contemporaries[39] and short treatises on mystical themes. The latter are often cast in the form of a running commentary on select Qurʾānic passages. As mentioned, his style was deliberately obscure and difficult to understand. It was imitated and elaborated by al-Ḥallāj, who, however, was much more outspoken in describing his mystical ravings than his older, and more cautious, contemporary. In one of his letters al-Junayd mentions that a former communication of his had been opened and read in the course of transit by a suspicious scholar who sought to impugn his orthodoxy. To this ever present danger must in part be attributed the deliberate obscurity of his writings.

Couched in a recondite imagery and elusive terminology, al-Junayd's teaching reiterates the theme, first clearly reasoned by him, that since all things have their origin in God, they must finally return, after their dispersion (*tafrīq*), to live again in him (*jamʿ*). This dialectic of ecstatic rapture and subsequent return is captured in the mystical experience of passing-away (*fanāʾ*), followed by the state of perdurance in God (*baqāʾ*). In the process of *fanāʾ*, the human self is completely shattered by the encounter with of the Divine Reality, which leads it to a mystical union with the Divine. In describing this exalting experience al-Junayd writes:

> For at that time thou wilt be addressed, thyself addressing; questioned concerning thy tidings, thyself questioning; with abundant flow of precious wisdom, and interchange of visions; with constant increase of faith, and uninterrupted favors.[40]

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[37] Melchert, "Transition", p. 67.
[38] Anawati and Gardet, *Mystique*, p. 34.
[39] See e.g., al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 239–243.
[40] A. H. Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junaid*, London, 1962, p. 1 (Arabic text).

In accounting for his own mystical experience he says:

> This that I say comes from the continuance of calamity and the con-
> sequence of misery, from a heart that is stirred from its foundations,
> and is tormented with its ceaseless conflagrations, by itself within itself:
> admitting no perception, no speech, no sense, no feeling, no repose,
> no effort, no familiar image; but constant in the calamity of its cease-
> less torment, unimaginable, indescribable, unlimited, unbearable in its
> fierce onslaughts.[41]

In meditating on the Qur'ānic image of the pre-eternal covenant
between God and disembodied humanity (Qur'ān 7:172), al-Junayd
presented "the entire course of history as man's quest to fulfil that
covenant and return to the [primeval] state in which he was before
he was."[42] By endowing man with a separate, individual existence
God deliberately plunged him into the corporeal world of trial and
affliction where his bodily passions and appetites cause him to for-
get about his earlier acknowledgement of God's absolute sover-
eignty. Through an arduous ascetic self-discipline and intense meditation
the mystical man strives to obliterate the last trace of the selfish
impulses emanating from his vile body. If he succeeds in this difficult
endeavor, he is re-absorbed into the realm of the divine presence.
He then returns to this world by experiencing survival, or subsistence,
in God (*baqā'*), which gives him a new, pure life in, and through,
God.[43] Yet, even in the blissful state of *baqā'* the mystic remains sep-
arated and veiled from God. To accentuate the painful nature of
this separation al-Junayd employed the imagery of the lover yearn-
ing after the Divine Beloved, who takes intense joy in observing the
reflections of divine beauty in God's handiwork. This painful vacilla-
tion between the feeling of union and separation is the keynote of
al-Junayd's entire legacy. Eschewing those extravagances of language
which on the lips of the "intoxicated" mystics Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī
and al-Ḥallāj alarmed and alienated the orthodox, al-Junayd by his
clear perception and absolute self-control laid the foundations on
which most of the later Sufi systems were built.

On the political and social plane, al-Junayd demonstrated "an
overt political conformism" and docility that saved him from the
persecutions against all manner of heretics, which abounded in this

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[41] Ibid., pp. 4–5 (Arabic text).
[42] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 57.
[43] Abdel-Kader, *The Life*, pp. 40–43 (Arabic text) and passim.

tumultuous age. Time and again, al-Junayd explicitly advised his dis-
ciples against challenging the temporary and religious authorities of
the age. He viewed political and social activism as a sign of spiri-
tual and intellectual immaturity and an attempt to rebel against the
divine order. His cautious attitude comes to the fore in his disavowal
of the overpowering drunkenness of ecstasy that permeated the say-
ings of his contemporary Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī.[44] Al-Junayd's glosses
on Abū Yazīd's ecstatic utterances (shaṭaḥāt) clearly show his prefer-
ence for the state of sobriety over mystical intoxication.[45] His dis-
courses are firmly rooted in the Qur'ānic notions of God's uniqueness
and absolute transcendence. He is careful not to present the rela-
tionships between man and God in terms of a union of two essences
(ittiḥād).[46] On the contrary, he never tired of stressing the purely
experiential nature of this phenomenon.

Al-Junayd's age was rich in charismatic and mystical talent. Among
his associates and disciples we find such consequential figures of the
Sufi tradition as Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899), Abū Ḥamza
al-Khurāsānī (d. between 290/903 and 298/911), ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān
al-Makkī (d. 291/903 or 297/909), Abū 'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907),
Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/915), Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946),
Abū Muḥammad al-Jurayrī (d. 312/924), Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī (d.
322/934), Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959), to name but a few. Theirs was
the time which witnessed an unprecedented efflorescence of virtuoso
religiosity. No wonder that students of Islamic mysticism often describe
it as "the golden (or classical) age of Sufism." Considerations of space
do not allow me to include but a brief account of the leading figures,
each of whom left his distinctive imprint on the tableau of Islamic
mysticism. These individuals of varied ethnic and social backgrounds,
who resided in different parts of the Muslim Empire, articulated
what came to be termed "the science of Sufism" (ʿilm al-taṣawwuf).

The "Tongue of Sufi Science": Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz

Standing out among al-Junayd's numerous associates is Abū Saʿīd
al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or earlier) who is sometimes described (in-
accurately it seems) as his disciple. In fact, some later Sufi authors

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[44] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 46.
[45] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 370–373.
[46] Molé, *Les mystiques*, p. 67.

placed this man, who earned his living mending shoes,[47] above al-Junayd on account of his versatility and eloquence which earned him the title "the Tongue of Sufism" (*lisān al-taṣawwuf*).[48] He was initiated into Sufism by the same spiritual masters as al-Junayd (namely, Bishr, Sarī, and Dhu 'l-Nūn, among others). Yet, unlike his eminent contemporary who spent most of his life in Baghdad, al-Kharrāz traveled widely from an early age. He visited Ramla, Jerusalem, and Ṣayda, and lived in Mecca for eleven years. His final departure from Baghdad was probably occasioned by the wave of prosecutions against a group of Baghdad Sufis instigated by the Ḥanbalī ascetic Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888) in 264/878.[49] During or shortly after this event, he took refuge in Bukhārā. Later, he set-tled in Mecca, where he spent some eleven years, before the local governor expelled him from that city for "slighting the goodness of ordinary believers."[50] He ended his days at Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo). Later Sufi accounts, notably those by al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), credit him with the elaboration of the *fanā'/baqā'* theory which was discussed in the section on al-Junayd.[51] For al-Kharrāz, it was said, annihilation and subsequent survival in God are the mystic's ultimate goal.[52] This report implies that al-Junayd should have been his student, at least as far as this particular concept is concerned. Al-Kharrāz's writ-ings are directed at two different audiences. As most Sufi masters, he was concerned with instructing the beginners on the Sufi path. To this end he composed his "Book of Truthfulness" which encour-aged Sufi novices to subject their actions and thoughts to a close scrutiny with a view to establishing their truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and sin-cerity (*ikhlāṣ*). The goal of such a scrutiny, according to al-Kharrāz, was to purify the novice's acts and words of the slightest trace of egoism or complacency. Combined with patience and perseverance in the service of God (*ṣabr*), these qualities were deemed to assure the Sufi beginner a quick and smooth progress along the mystic path.[53] In his more esoteric works, al-Kharrāz addressed the needs

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[47] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 282.

[48] Arberry, *The Doctrine*, p. 13; idem, *Muslim Saints*, p. 218.

[49] Massignon, *Recueil*, pp. 51–52 and 212–14; C. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany, N.Y., 1984, pp. 97–99.

[50] Melchert, "Transition", p. 64.

[51] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 204.

[52] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 231–232.

[53] 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Al-Ṭarīq ilā 'llah, Kitāb al-ṣidq li-Abī Saʿīd al-Kharrāz*, Cairo, 1979; cf. Nwyia, op. cit., pp. 232–233. For possible parallels with the trea-tises of Isaac of Nineveh see Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 40–42.

of a maturer audience. They may have become pretexts for his expul-
sion from Baghdad and Mecca. In the first, titled "The Book of
Luminosity," al-Kharrāz deals with seven classes of advanced seek-
ers of God. Each of these classes strives to attain God through a
special type of devotional practice and of meditative techniques. In
accounting for their experiences the seekers of each class avail them-
selves of a distinctive language that reflected their particular image
of God. Only those who reach the highest stage of the mystical path
are capable of transcending this plurality of visions and of arriving
at a comprehensive knowledge of God. In the process, their per-
sonal attributes fall away and are supplanted by those of the Godhead.
As a result, they find themselves on a superior plane of awareness
that eludes ordinary mortals. Al-Kharrāz defined their experience as
that of "essential union" (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*)—a term that figures promi-
nently in al-Junayd's writings.[54] Here is how Abū Saʿīd describes
this experience:

> The servant of God who has returned to God and attached himself
> to God . . . has completely forgotten himself and all other than God.
> Therefore if you were to say to him, "Where are you from, and what
> do you seek?" he would have no other answer but "God".[55]

This statement could well have brought upon him the wrath of
some Sunnī scholars. In his "Book of Unveiling and Elucidation"
(*Kitāb al-kashf wa 'l-bayān*) al-Kharrāz sets out to discuss the relation-
ships between the prophets (*anbiyāʾ*) and the friends of God (*awliyāʾ*)
with a view to repudiating those who place the former above the
latter. In al-Kharrāz's argument, sainthood and prophethood fulfil
complementary functions. The principal difference between them lies
in their respective orientations. Whereas the prophet is entrusted by
God with spreading and enforcing the Divine Law among his com-
munity, the *awliyāʾ* are absorbed into the contemplation of the divine
majesty, which makes them oblivious of the world around them. In
other words, for al-Kharrāz, prophethood and sainthood seem to
represent two distinctive, if complementary, types of relationship be-
tween man and God, that is, ones that correspond respectively to
the outward, or exoteric (*ẓāhir*), and the inward, or esoteric (*bāṭin*),
aspects of the Revelation.[56] At the same time, al-Kharrāz is ever

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[54] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 234–237; Massignon, *Essay*, p. 204.
[55] Arberry, *Muslim Saints*, p. 219.
[56] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 237–242; cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, p. 247.

anxious to emphasize that there can be no conflict between the two: "any esoteric [teaching] that contradicts the exoteric [meaning of the Divine Law], is false (*bāṭil*)."[57] Likewise, neither prophethood nor sainthood can be viewed as being superior to one another. Hence, the visions held by the respective adherents of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, that is the prophets and the saints, are equally legitimate and valid. Somewhat later, these ideas received a further elaboration in the work of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/910) and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).[5]

Seeking to explain the presence of sin and disobedience to the Divine Command in this world, al-Kharrāz has recourse to the notion of the Primordial Covenant which was outlined in the previous section. The disembodied human souls, before they were given their lower natures, proclaimed God's absolute sovereignty and lordship. However, as time went by, their lower natures distracted the majority of mankind from fulfilling the obligations arising from that preeternal commitment. They succumbed to their passions and appetites of the moment. As a result, the entire human race fell into two categories: the sinners, that is, those, who forfeited their pact with God, and the righteous, that is, those who remained faithful to it. In laying out his theodicy al-Kharrāz suggests, somewhat illogically, that from the outset the former were created from darkness, whereas the latter were made from light. This apparent inconsistency is, however, offset by a profound psychological analysis of the various shades of mystical experience and, especially, of the concept of nearness to God that al-Kharrāz provides in his shorter treatises. As P. Nwyia has finely demonstrated, his contribution to the formation of the mystical vocabulary was extremely influential.[59] In describing the experiences of the perfected friend of God, al-Kharrāz went further than al-Junayd. For instance, he admitted that, in one's unitive experience, one can reach the point at which he is no longer able to conceive of himself as being separate from God. Once this state has been reached, the mystic leaves the domain of ordinary mortals and identifies himself completely with the divine essence, whose eternal attributes he acquires in the process.[60] Seen from the standpoint of

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[57] Ibid.

[58] See M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and sainthood in the doctrine of Ibn ʿArabi*, Cambridge, 1993.

[59] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 243–310.

[60] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 286; cf. Melchert, "Transition," pp. 59–60.

al-Junayd's sober mysticism, this idea looked a bit outré. It places al-Kharrāz squarely into the category of the Sufi advocates of all-consuming divine love whose contribution to the Sufi tradition will be discussed in the section that follows.

The Blossom of Erotic Mysticism

Three mystics in al-Junayd's immediate entourage form a distinct group due to their shared single-minded fixation on divine love. They are Abū 'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), Sumnūn al-Muḥibb (d. 298/910) and Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/945).

Born in Baghdad of a family of Khurāsānī background, al-Nūrī spent most of his life in the ʿAbbāsid capital. He studied *ḥadīth* under Sarī al-Saqaṭī and was an associate of both al-Kharrāz and al-Junayd. From Sarī he inherited a propensity to the most rigorous forms of self-deprivation, which he regarded as an essential prerequisite for winning God's affection and demonstrating one's faithfulness to the Divine Beloved. This attitude is expressed in his definition of Sufism as "abandoning all pleasures of the carnal soul."[61] Throughout his life, he sought to implement this precept to the full by subjecting himself to spectacular austerities and self-imposed sufferings. He passed his days in worship and meditation at a humble shack on the outskirts of Baghdad. He left it only once a week for the Friday prayer.[62] Through his companionship with Aḥmad b. Abī 'l-Ḥawārī al-Nūrī was acquainted with the Syrian ascetic tradition exemplified by Ibrāhīm b. Adham and the Muslim warrior-monks of the Arab-Byzantine frontier.[63] Al-Junayd held him in high esteem and once referred to him as "Commander of the Hearts," on the analogy with the "Commander of the Faithful," that is, the ʿAbbāsid caliph of Baghdad.[64] Unlike al-Kharrāz and al-Junayd, al-Nūrī shunned any speculation on the nature of mystical experiences. According to him, "the intellect is weak, and that which is weak only guides to what is weak like itself."[65] He was also critical of the outward show of piety that was characteristic of some self-professed Sufis. In his

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[61] Arberry, *Doctrine*, p. 10.
[62] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, p. 382.
[63] R. A. Nicholson, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb. The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, reprint, London, 1959, p. 131.
[64] Arberry, *Doctrine*, p. 148.
[65] Ibid., p. 46.

view, "[true] Sufism consists not of [outward] appearances and sciences but of high moral qualities (*akhlāq*)."[66] In line with this precept he vigorously attacked all deviations from the Divine Law. On one occasion, he even assumed the role of a vigilante censor of morals (*muḥtasib*) and boldly smashed the jars of wine prepared for the caliph's table.[67] This behavior is in sharp contrast to "the disarming dissimulation of al-Junayd," who taught his students in the privacy of his home and strove to remain on good terms with the religious and secular authorities of the capital.[68] A true proponent of divine love, al-Nūrī advocated a highly emotional type of mysticism. In expressing his intense feeling of love for God he frequently availed himself of profane erotic poetry, viewing it as a natural vehicle of this sublime experience. To alert his fellow believers to the inner, subtle dimensions of faith, he often resorted to scandalous utterances on account of which he was charged with heresy and had to stand trial. Stories abound of his persecution by the caliph and his religious advisors, such as Ghulām Khalīl and the chief *qāḍī* of Baghdad Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥammādī. These stories are for the most part pious legends meant to emphasize his advanced spiritual state. They follow same pattern: the Sufi is apprehended by the secular authorities or by concerned scholars for making seemingly outrageous statements (e.g., responding with the remark "Deadly poison!" to the cry of the *mu'adhdhin* or exclaiming "Here I am [God!] Blessings to you!" on hearing a dog bark); however, he is soon released after having provided a perfectly orthodox explanation of his blasphemies.[69] Al-Nūrī emerged unscathed from the famous trail instituted against seventy five proponents of divine love by the literalist ascetic Ghulām Khalīl who was enraged, among other things, by al-Nūrī's use of the words "desire", or "passion" (*'ishq*), to describe God's relationship with his select creatures. For Ghulām Khalīl, a bona fide representative of the old ascetic school of Baṣra, the possibility of reciprocal intimacy between God and man, which was asserted by al-Nūrī and his companions, amounted to a pure heresy that called for capital punishment.[70] Using his influence with the

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[66] Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, pp. 251–252.
[67] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, p. 317; cf. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, p. 99.
[68] Melchert, "Transition", p. 68.
[69] See, e.g., Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, pp. 97–101; Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 383–386.
[70] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 283–284.

caliph and his womenfolk, Ghulām Khalīl succeeded in bringing the
Sufis to trial on charges of blasphemy. Al-Nūrī, so the story goes,
was instrumental in frustrating Khalīl's cruel plan by offering that
his life be taken first. His selfless behavior led to the retrial and sub-
sequent vindication of the condemned Sufis. He was, however, forced
to leave Baghdad for Raqqa, where he spent some fourteen years
before returning to the capital.[71] Characteristically, in that episode,
which involved the leading Sufi masters of Baghdad, al-Junayd was
not among the accused: he is said to have avoided arrest by posing
as a jurist (*faqīh*).[72]

Despite his avowed opposition to rational speculation, al-Nūrī pro-
vided a perceptive classification of mystical experiences in a tract
titled "Stations of the Hearts." Directed at the beginners on the mys-
tical path, it pursued a clear didactic goal. Al-Nūrī saw the knowl-
edge of God as a duty incumbent upon every believer. Since he
denied that God can be fully apprehended by the rational faculties,[73]
he encouraged his disciples to rely on their hearts in seeking inti-
macy with, and perfect knowledge of, their Lord. In the process,
the heart passes four principal stages that correspond to the four
names for the heart, or its parts, mentioned in the Qur'ān: *ṣadr,
qalb, fu'ād* and *lubb*. In al-Nūrī's scheme, the *ṣadr* corresponds to the
first stage of spiritual attainment, which he identifies as a mere out-
ward submission to God's will (*islām*); it is at the level of the *lubb*,
the innermost heart, that a complete realization of God's unity (*tawḥīd*)
is effected. According to al-Nūrī, the heart of the believer is the
house (*bayt*), or residence (*maskan*), of God, where divine and human
natures lodge in perfect harmony. This union leads to a life of true
gnosis (*ma'rifa*) that removes from the heart the veils of passion, lust
and ignorance.[74] In another powerful allegory, he likened the heart
of the mystic to the seat of the King of Certitude who is aided
by two viziers named Fear and Hope. Anticipating the garden ima-
gery of later Persian Sufis, al-Nūrī depicted the mystical heart as a
lush, bloomy orchard that is sustained by constant outpourings of
divine grace.

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[71] Ibid., cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, pp. 250–251; Melchert, "Transition,"
pp. 65–66.
[72] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 383–384; cf. van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp.
281–282.
[73] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 390–391.
[74] Ibid., pp. 394–398; cf. Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 345–347.

Al-Nūrī's frankness of language, intensity of mystical feeling, active social stance, and blunt refusal to pay tribute to scholarly conventions and outward decorum rendered him something of a maverick even among al-Junayd's Sufi associates. His controversial reputation is captured in a legend depicting his tragic death of self-inflicted wounds that he sustained on hearing a profane verse on love and falling into a trance.[75] In another story, upon his return from his long exile in Raqqa, he fell out with the new Sufi community of Baghdad led by al-Junayd. Reportedly, he resented the overly ambiguous language that they used in discussing their experiences and the ultimate goal of mystical quest. After a fateful encounter with some of al-Junayd's students, who used this recondite language, he was taken ill, went blind and withdrew into the deserts and graveyards. Soon afterwards he passed away, abandoned by his former companions. Such was the pitiful end of the mystic whose ardent advocacy of union with the divine caused him to reject the obliquities and equivocalities that were prudently adopted by al-Junayd and his associates.[76]

In Sumnūn, nicknamed "al-Muḥibb" ("the Lover"), we find another representative of the erotic trend in Baghdad mysticism. Like al-Kharrāz and al-Nūrī, his lack of conformity and the explicit erotic symbolism he used in describing his relationship with the Divine made him a misfit in Baghdad society. A legend has it that his lack of restraint became the main pretext for the persecution of the Sufis instigated by Ghulām Khalīl.[77] Be this as it may, his statements clearly show him to be an advocate of love of God which he placed above mystical gnosis (*maʿrifa*), contrary to the views of al-Junayd and his disciples.[78] Elaborating on Sarī's idea that to test the resolve of his human lovers God puts them through well-nigh unbearable trials, Sumnūn provided moving poetic descriptions of his sufferings and frustrations:

> With patience I am shod, and roll
> Time's chances round me for a dress,
> Crying, "Have patience, O my soul!
> Or thou wilt perish of distress."
> So huge a mass my sufferings are

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[75] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, p. 210; cf. Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, p. 387.
[76] Melchert, "Transition", p. 69; cf. Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 425–429.
[77] Arberry, *Muslim Saints*, p. 241.
[78] Ibid., p. 239.

That mountain, trembling at its height,
Would vanish, like a headlong star
And evermore be lost to sight.[79]

In the ecstasy of love he chafed his legs down to the bare bone dur-
ing supererogatory prayers; it is said that he aspired to fill the whole
world with his cry of love. At one point, Sumnūn asked God to test
his resolve by afflicting him with a painful tribulation. Taken up by
God on his challenge with urine retention, he pitifully failed the test.
Since that moment, he referred to himself as "Sumnūn the Liar,"
instead of "Sumnūn the Lover."[80] His "all-the-way" mentality finds
a dramatic expression in his adoption of extreme forms of worship
and self-imposed sufferings, which constitute the hallmark of his piety.
According to later hagiographic accounts, so moving and intense
were Sumnūn's public sermons on divine love that they affected not
only humans but animals and even inanimate objects as well.[81]

Our gallery of love-lorn mystics would be incomplete without the
portrait of Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946). A man of a fiery tem-
perament, his whole life-story is enveloped in thick layers of legend
that make any accurate reconstruction of his personality difficult, if
not impossible. He was born in either Baghdad or Samarra of the
family of a state official from Transoxania who was employed by
the caliph al-Muwaffaq. A son of the caliph's chamberlain (ḥājib), he
himself was promoted in the imperial service. Simultaneously, the
young and ambitious al-Shiblī distinguished himself as an expert on
the Mālikī law and an assiduous transmitter of ḥadīth. His mundane
career reached its peak when he was appointed to the post of the
governor of Demavend (Dumbawand) in Persia. However soon after-
wards, at the age of forty, following a brief encounter with the famous
Baghdad Sufi Khayr al-Nassāj (d. 322/934), he experienced a sud-
den conversion and joined the Sufi circle of al-Junayd who, from
that moment onward, became his spiritual advisor and friend.[82] The
intimate, and at times ambivalent, relationships between the two
great Sufis are detailed in scores of later hagiographic elaborations.
They turn on several chief motifs, namely, al-Junayd's negative atti-
tude toward al-Shiblī's excesses in expressing his love for God and

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[79] Idem, *Doctrine*, p. 85.
[80] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 10, p. 310.
[81] Arberry, *Doctrine*, pp. 164–165; idem, *Muslim Saints*, pp. 239–240.
[82] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 519–522.

his disapproval of the blatant disregard for social and religious con-
ventions exhibited by his overly emotional disciple.[83] Al-Junayd propen-
sity for secrecy caused him to condemn al-Shiblī's public preaching
at the mosques of Baghdad, which eventually set him on collision
course with some local jurists.[84] While al-Junayd was alive, he man-
aged to keep al-Shiblī's fiery temper under control. However, fol-
lowing his death in 297/910, al-Shiblī gave free reign to his eccentric
nature and began to indulge in outrageous behavior and scandalous
statements. His inclination toward a "drunken" type of mysticism
endeared him to its major exponent in Baghdad, Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr
al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), with whom he felt a close emotional affinity.
However, during al-Ḥallāj's trial and execution he kept a low profile
and is said (incorrectly it seems)[85] to have publicly disowned his for-
mer friend at the foot of the scaffold.[86] A later legend even holds
him partly responsible for al-Ḥallāj's cruel death. This report does
not ring true, since in the aftermath of al-Ḥallāj's execution al-Shiblī
seems to have continued to preach the ideas that bear a close resem-
blance to those of the great Sufi martyr.[87] Furthermore, he carried
on with his bizarre ways and scandalous utterances. When faced
with the prospect of persecution, he affected madness. Al-Shiblī's
indulgence in eccentrics, such as burning precious aromatic sub-
stances under the tail of his donkey, tearing expensive garments and
tossing gold coins into the crowds[88] repeatedly landed him in the
lunatic asylum. His seemingly blasphemous "allusions", which de-
scribed his intimacy, or even complete identification, with God enjoyed
wide circulation and were even considered to be one of the three
wonders of Baghdad. He often presented his experiences in the
imagery and language borrowed from bacchic and erotic poetry,
which he was fond of citing. Apart from many mystical paradoxes
and poetic lines, al-Shiblī left after him a large group of disciples
many of whom became leading Sufi masters and Sunnī scholars of
their epoch.[89]

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[83] Ibid., pp. 555–560.
[84] Ibid., pp. 523–524.
[85] Ibid., p. 562.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., pp. 560–563.
[88] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 398–406.
[89] For a list of his students see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 516–517.

Although later Sufi writers often portrayed al-Shiblī as the second greatest master of the Baghdad Sufis after al-Junayd, he was probably too exotic and unpredictable a figure to succeed his teacher at the head of the local Sufi movement. Furthermore, he joined that movement too late in his life to be seen as a competent exponent of its doctrine. Al-Junayd's organizational successor, Abū Muḥammad al-Jurayrī (d. 312/924), was a surprisingly listless figure that made no significant contribution to the ideas of his eminent predecessor. A sober and cautious man with impeccable reputation for piety and godliness, he was, however, able to command the loyalty of his followers and to steer the movement clear of potential dangers that were rife in the troubled period before and after the execution of al-Ḥallāj.[90] It is important to point out that early in his career al-Jurayrī studied under the famous Baṣran mystic Sahl al-Tustarī,[91] whose work will be discussed further on. He thus can be seen as a bridge between the ascetic-mystical schools of Baṣra and Baghdad, each of which was anxious to preserve its distinct identity. His dual allegiance to the traditions of Baṣra and Baghdad must have broadened his constituency by making him acceptable to the partisans of both schools.

Although some of al-Junayd's followers had to leave Baghdad to avoid persecution in the aftermath of al-Ḥallāj's trial, the Baghdad school survived this fateful episode and with time was able to extend its influence far beyond the confines of Iraq. Some of the Sufi émigrés from the ʿAbbāsid capital were instrumental in carrying its teachings to Egypt, Arabia, Persia and Transoxania, where they laid the groundwork for the eventual triumph of al-Junayd's version of Sufism over regional ascetic and mystical movements.

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[90] Ibid., pp. 483–512.
[91] Massignon, *Passion*, vol. 1, p. 71.

Table 2. Chapter III. The School of Baghdad

Ascetics and Mystics of Baṣra and Kūfa

Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815)
Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 247/842)
Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867)

Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899)
Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910)
Abū Ḥamza al-Khurāsānī (d. between 290/903 and 298/911)
ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903 or 298/911)
Abū ʼl-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907)
Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/915)
Khayr al-Nassāj (d. 322/934)
Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946)
Al-Jurayrī (d. 312/924)
Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/934)
Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959)

Al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), Ibn ʿAṭāʼ (d. 309/922) and their followers
(*al-ḥallājiyya*)

THE "INTOXICATED" MYSTICISM OF AL-BISṬĀMĪ AND AL-ḤALLĀJ

The importance of al-Ḥallāj's trial and execution for the subsequent history of Islamic mysticism warrants a closer look into the phenomenon that medieval Muslim authors describe as the "intoxicated", or "extreme," trend within Sufism. It is traditionally associated with the names of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) and al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, although, as we shall see, their mystical ravings varied considerably and represented two distinctive types of mystical experience.[1] In the final analysis, however, their ideas and imagery are quite consistent with those of the advocates of divine love who were discussed in the previous chapter. As mentioned, for a time al-Shiblī attached himself to al-Ḥallāj, and it seems likely that many other mystics in al-Junayd's entourage would have eagerly endorsed many of the "blasphemous" statements which were cited as the reason for his tragic death. Moreover, al-Ḥallāj's "intoxicated" counterpart in Persia, al-Bisṭāmī, was no less bold in describing his face-to-face encounters with God.[2] Yet, as al-Shiblī and other bards of divine love, al-Bisṭāmī enjoyed great popularity and respect in his native town and died peacefully in his bed. What sets al-Ḥallāj apart from them all is his unwillingness to dissimulate his true convictions at a time when the Muslim community was beset by a host of external and internal crises, notably, the crumbling and discredit of the caliph's authority and the depredations of the Qarmaṭīs (Carmathians) on the very doorstep of the capital. Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is much more to al-Ḥallāj's story than meets the eye and that he, in all probability, owed his death as much to the courtly intrigue, the conspiratorial outlook of the capital's populace and the intense jockeying for power at the caliph's court as he did to his daring ideas and ecstatic locutions.[3] Here, however, it is not

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[1] Massignon, *Essay*, pp. 191–192.
[2] Ibid., pp. 185–189.
[3] See, e.g. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, pp. 102–110 and 133–145.

the place to "deconstruct" the traditional portrait of al-Ḥallāj, which has been carefully crafted by later Sufi historiography and which continues to shape our understanding of his extraordinary career and tragic death.

One of the most celebrated mystics of all times, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī was born in the town of Bisṭām in northern Persia, where he remained throughout his life, except for a few brief spells in exile (due to the hostility of an influential local *faqīh*) and during his pilgrimages to Mecca. Unlike most of the Sufis we have discussed, Abū Yazīd was a loner who was not affiliated with any mystical or theological school. His adherence to the Ḥanafī school of law, which was predominant in that part of the Muslim world, seems to have been nominal.[4] In any event, it left no visible imprint on his legacy that is mystical through and through. Some sources portray him a covert Shīʿī, but the authenticity of such reports is impossible to ascertain.[5] Al-Bisṭāmī presents himself as a typical reclusive mystic: he shunned the company of men and spent much time in an isolated cell or in his home, engaging in meditation and rigorous ascetic exercises. His parents appear to have exerted a major formative influence on his personality, as attested by some moving stories about his relationship with his righteous mother.[6] He is also said to have corresponded with Dhu 'l-Nūn and cultivated friendship with Sarī al-Saqaṭī. His study of the "self-annihilation in [the contemplation] of divine unity" (*al-fanāʾ fī 'l-tawḥīd*) under the guidance of an enigmatic mystic Abū ʿAlī al-Sindī, who knew neither Arabic nor the obligatory duties of Islam, gave rise to an intense academic speculation about the possible impact of Indian monistic philosophy on his mystical thought.[7] This hypothesis, however, remains very tenuous. There is little in his teaching that we do not find in the sayings and poetry of his Islamic predecessors. As for his pioneering account (at least in Sufi literature) of his miraculous ascent through the heavenly spheres into the presence of God, it is closely patterned on Muḥammad's *miʿrāj* experience, alluded to in Qurʾān 17:1, 17:60

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[4] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 185.

[5] R. Deladrière, "Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī et son enseignement spirituel," in: *Arabica*, vol. 14 (1967), pp. 79–80.

[6] Ibid., pp. 80–81.

[7] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, p. 325; Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 35–37; Molé, *Mystiques*, pp. 24–25.

and 53:10–14, and elaborated in great detail by Muslim exegetes.[8] Since this account is, in large part, responsible for al-Bisṭāmī's posthumous notoriety, I can do no better than to quote it in A. Arberry's translation:[9]

> I saw that my spirit was borne to the heavens. It looked at nothing and gave no heed, though Paradise and Hell were displayed to it, for it was freed of [apparent] phenomena and veils. Then I became a bird, whose body was of Oneness and whose wings were of Everlastingness, and I continued to fly in the air of the Absolute, until I passed into the sphere of Purification, and gazed upon the field of Eternity and beheld there the tree of Oneness. When I looked, I myself was all those. I cried: "O Lord, with my I-ness I cannot attain to Thee, and I cannot escape from my selfhood. What am I to do?" God spake: "O Abū Yazīd, thou must win release from thy thou-ness by following my Beloved (sc. Muḥammad). Smear thine eyes with the dust of his feet and follow him continually."

In describing one of his most intense (and controversial) encounters with the Divine Reality (al-ḥaqq) al-Bisṭāmī says:[10]

> I gazed upon Him with the eye of truth, and said to Him: "Who is this?" He said: "This is neither I nor other than I. There is no God but I." Then he changed me out of my identity into His Selfhood . . . Then I . . . communed with Him with the tongue of His grace, saying: "How fares it with me with Thee?" He said: "I am Thine through thee: there is no God but Thou."

This unusual religious experience exemplifies a famous state of consciousness which can be described as the reversal of roles, that is, a state in which "the worshipper plays the part of God and God that of the worshipper." In such a state, "the personal identity [of the mystic] is put in question and yet at the same time [his] consciousness is extraordinary intense."[11] In this and many similar ecstatic utterances (shaṭaḥāt; sing. shaṭḥ),[12] al-Bisṭāmī describes himself as confronting God, after having peeled off all of his self-centered preoccupations by means of spectacular ascetic feats. In this state nothing

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[8] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 387–395.
[9] I have made slight emendations to Arberry's text, Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 54–55.
[10] I quote Arberry's translation in Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 1, p. 404.
[11] Ibid., p. 405; cf. A. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, London-New York, 1957, pp. 100–101 and Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 44–45.
[12] Concerning this term describing the state in which the mystic gives voice to his most intimate experience, which may lay him open to accusations of heresy and unbelief, see ibid., passim; cf. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, Kuwait, 1976.

exists except he and God; the all-important borderline between the human self and the Divine Absolute is blurred and eventually vanishes altogether, resulting in a complete, undifferentiated union of both.[13]

> Once He raised me and stationed me before Him, and said to me, "O Abū Yazīd, truly My creatures desire to see thee." I said, "Adorn me in Thy Unity, and clothe in Thy Selfhood, and raise me up to Thy Oneness, so that when Thy creatures see me they will say, "We have seen Thee: and Thou will be That, and I shall not be there at all."[14]

This and similar mystical paradoxes prefigure the doctrine of *fanāʾ* that, as we have seen, was brought to fruition by the Baghdad mystics al-Junayd and al-Kharrāz. Al-Bisṭāmī's teaching therefore may be seen as marking a momentous transition from the ascetic preoccupation with the service of God (and the concomitant emphasis on world-renouncing piety) to a genuinely mystical experience of the total annihilation of the human self in God. This experience informs al-Bisṭāmī's intemperate utterances, such as "Glory be to me![15] How great is My majesty;" "Thy obedience to me is greater than my obedience to Thee;" "I am the [divine] throne and the footstool;" "I saw the Kaʿba walking round me;" "I am I, and there is no God but I," etc. Such bold proclamations, which sprang from al-Bisṭāmī's overwhelming experience of union with the Divine, became a grave embarrassment to his more "sober" counterparts in Baghdad, "until they developed the technique of interpreting them as innocent of the blasphemy that to the uninitiated seemed all too apparent in them."[16] Al-Junayd, who is said to have translated al-Bisṭāmī's daring paradoxes from Persian into Arabic, had to bend over backwards in an attempt to prove their religious propriety in a commentary that was explicitly designed to allay the suspicions of literalist scholars.[17] According to al-Junayd, the experience of *fanāʾ* is an inferior state. It should eventually be replaced by the mystic's "return" to this world and its inhabitants, so that he could impart to them the gnosis which he acquired directly from God. Al-Junayd dubbed this superior mystical state "survival," or "subsistence," (*baqāʾ*) in God,

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[13] Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 1, p. 405.
[14] Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt*, p. 28.
[15] *Subḥānī*, a phrase commonly applied only to God.
[16] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 54.
[17] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 380–393.

equating it with "sobriety after the overpowering drunkenness of ecstasy."[18] Al-Junayd's *fanāʾ*/*baqāʾ* dichotomy went a long way in making these controversial concepts acceptable to the scholarly establishment, although even his ingenuity failed to convince many conservative scholars of the legitimacy of Sufi unitive experience. The impact of al-Junayd's apologia for Sufi experience was considerably weakened by al-Ḥallāj's trial and execution which demonstrated a dramatic rift between the communal spirit promoted by the Sunnī ulema and the disruptive individualistic outbursts fostered by some radical mystics. Some later Sufi authors, for instance al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1072 and 469/1077), routinely juxtaposed the sobriety and conformist attitude of al-Junayd and his followers (*al-junaydiyya*) with the intoxication and ecstatic behavior characteristic of al-Bisṭāmī and his adherents (*al-ṭayfūriyya*, after Abū Yazīd's given name, Ṭayfūr).[19] Another great representative of the "drunken" trend within Sufism, al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), was directly responsible for the widening of this rift.

Al-Ḥallāj's life, teaching and tragic death is seen by many Muslim and Western scholars as a turning point in the history of Islamic mysticism, if not of the Muslim religion as a whole. Al-Ḥallāj was born around 244/857 at Ṭūr, in the Persian province of Fars. His father, a wool-carder (*ḥallāj*) by profession, left Ṭūr for the textile region between Tustar and Wāsiṭ. The family settled in Wāsiṭ (on the Tigris river), a town with a predominantly Sunnī-Ḥanbalī population. There al-Ḥallāj received a solid training in the traditional Muslim sciences. He distinguished himself as an expert on the Qurʾān, which he learned by heart by the age of twelve. Already at that early stage of his life he began to concern himself with an inner meaning of the Qurʾānic text. When, at the age of twenty, he left Wāsiṭ for Baṣra, he attached himself to the followers of the famous Sufi exegete Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896). While in Baṣra al-Ḥallāj received the habit of the Sufis (*khirqa*) from ʿAmr al-Makkī, and married Umm al-Ḥusayn, the daughter of the renowned Sufi master Abū Yaʿqūb al-Aqṭaʿ, who gave birth to his three sons and daughter. Al-Ḥallāj did not take any other wives. When he traveled away from home, al-Ḥallāj left his family in the custody of his brother-in-law, who belonged to the Karnabāʾī family. Through him al-

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[18] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 46.
[19] Nicholson, *The Kashf al-maḥjūb*, pp. 184–188.

Ḥallāj was, for a short time, affiliated with a clan that supported the Shī'ī-based rebellion of the Zanj, the predominantly black slaves who were employed in the sugar plantations and salt marshes of southern Iraq. This episode loomed large in the later accusations against al-Ḥallāj. His accusers presented him, inaccurately it seems, as a missionary (dā'ī) on behalf of the Ismā'īlīs, or Qarmaṭīs, who operated in Arabia and Southern Iraq. Although he may have been influenced by some Shī'ī or Ismā'īlī ideas, he remained profoundly loyal to Sunnism and continued to lead, at Baṣra, the life of an ascetic and devotee. Shortly before the Zanj rebellion was quashed by the caliphal troops, he departed for Baghdad, where he struck up friendship with al-Junayd and became a disciple of al-Nūrī.[20] After the brutal suppression of the Zanj rebellion by the caliph's forces, he set off for Mecca on a pilgrimage.

On reaching the holy city, al-Ḥallāj made a vow to remain for one year in the courtyard of the sanctuary, subjecting himself to spectacular acts of penitence and perpetual fasting. Throughout that period, he observed a vow of silence and engaged in arduous ascetic exercises and intense meditation. These extraordinary ascetic feats soon bore fruit as he began to feel that he had achieved a spiritual union with God. Contrary to the discipline of secrecy recommended by sober Sufi masters, he made his experience public. As a result, he was disowned by his former teachers, including 'Amr al-Makkī, who had warned him that such experiences should not be divulged to the uninitiated. Although al-Ḥallāj's fellow Sufis rejected him, his fiery preaching of divine love won him a broad popular following.

On his part, to demonstrate his total break with his former Sufi teachers and associates, upon returning to Iraq, al-Ḥallāj gave up the traditional Sufi dress and adopted a lay habit (qabā) that was usually worn by soldiers. This was a symbolic gesture that was deemed to demonstrate that al-Ḥallāj no longer considered himself bound by the Sufi conventions which strictly prohibited a public discussion of the union between man and the Divine. In his public sermons al-Ḥallāj called upon his audience to find God within their hearts, the idea that earned him the nickname Ḥallāj al-asrār ("The Carder of the Consciences"). His public ministry aroused the hatred of the religious and temporary authorities of the age and further alienated

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[20] Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, p. 102.

from him his former associates and masters among the Sufis of
Baghdad. At the same time, he made friends with some powerful
ʿAbbāsid courtiers who responded to his teaching with enthusiasm
and became his disciples. Their patronage of the controversial Sufi
caused resentment among an influential faction of Muʿtazilī and Shīʿī
leaders who accused him of deception and of practicing false mira-
cles. His powerful foes incited the mob against him, causing him to
leave Iraq for Khurāsān. Undeterred by his exile, al-Ḥallāj contin-
ued to spread his message among the Arab settlers of Khurāsān for
five years. For some time, he resided in the fortified ascetic lodges
which housed volunteer fighters in the holy war against the "pagan"
populations of eastern Iran and Central Asia. Upon his return to
Iraq, he moved to Baghdad together with his family.

    His fame now had grown so that when he set out on a pilgrim-
age to Mecca for a second time, a cohort of four hundred disciples
joined him. Soon after al-Ḥallāj had arrived in the holy city, he ran
afoul of the local scholars and Sufis who accused him of magic and
sorcery as well as of making a pact with the *jinn*. These accusations
do not seem to have detracted from his popularity among the com-
mon folk. After returning from his second *hajj*, he undertook a long
journey to India and Turkestan, where he may have been exposed
to the influence of Hinduism, Manichaeism and Buddhism. About
290/902, al-Ḥallāj returned to Mecca for his third and last pil-
grimage. Clad in the *muraqqaʿa*, a piece of patched cloth thrown
round his shoulders, with an Indian loin-cloth round his waist, he
prayed God to reduce him to nothingness, to render him despised
and rejected. At the same time, he called upon God to proclaim
himself through the heart and the lips of his servant.

    Upon joining his family in Baghdad, al-Ḥallāj behaved erratically.
At night he prayed in the cemeteries and in the daytime he pro-
claimed in the streets and the bazaars his burning love of God and
his desire to die at the hands of his fellow believers. On several
occasions, he called upon his listeners to save him from God by
putting him to a cruel death. Furthermore, he provoked a public
scandal by setting up in the yard of his house a model of the Kaʿba
sanctuary and by circumambulating it during the pilgrimage season.
Al-Ḥallāj's actions and preaching aroused popular emotion and caused
anxiety among the educated classes. The famous Ẓāhirī scholar
Muḥammad b. Dāwūd strongly denounced his statements that asserted
the possibility of mutual love between God and man and demanded

his execution.[21] His legal ruling was contested by the Shāfiʿī jurist Ibn Surayj, who maintained that mystic inspiration fell outside the jurisdiction of the courts. It was in this period that, according to a hostile account, al-Ḥallāj replied to al-Shiblī, in the mosque of al-Manṣūr, by probably the most famous ecstatic utterance: *anā ʾl-ḥaqq*, "I am the Truth [i.e., God]," implying that he had achieved a complete identification with the Divine.

Al-Ḥallāj's public preaching set on foot a broad popular movement aimed at a moral reform of the community. His condemnation of social inequities and injustices had long-ranging political implications which irritated the religious and military authorities of the ʿAbbāsid capital. At the same time, those who believed in his mission proclaimed him the hidden spiritual Pole of his epoch (*quṭb al-zamān*). Apart from the masses of Baghdad, who continued to respond to his preaching with great enthusiasm, he was able to win the powerful viziers, Ibn Ḥamdān and Ibn ʿĪsā, over to his cause. His involvement in the courtly intrigues made him many influential enemies as well. In 296/908, following an unsuccessful coup d'état and the restoration of the infant caliph al-Muqtadir, al-Ḥallāj found himself among the enemies of the newly appointed vizier, the powerful Shīʿī financier Ibn al-Furāt. Although initially he was able to escape Ibn al-Furāt's wrath by fleeing to Sūs in the province of Ahwāz, three years later he was apprehended and brought back to Baghdad. This time he fell victim to the hatred of the Sunnī governor of Wāsiṭ, Ḥāmid, who would later preside over al-Ḥallāj's last trial. Accused of claiming divine lordship and preaching incarnationism (*ḥulūl*), he was thrown in prison in Baghdad, where he remained for nine years.

In 301/913, the cultured vizier Ibn ʿĪsā, cousin of one of al-Ḥallāj's disciples, threw out evidence against al-Ḥallāj as fabricated and ordered his imprisoned supporters to be released. Nevertheless, succumbing to pressure from al-Ḥallāj's enemies, including the chief of the Baghdad police, the vizier was unable to forestall a public humiliation of his Sufi protégé: al-Ḥallāj was exposed on the pillory for four days, while the crier announced, "Behold, here is the missionary of the Qarmaṭīs!" In the following years he remained imprisoned, mostly at the caliph's palace, where he preached his message to other prisoners. Further attempts to put him on trial floundered

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[21] Ibid.

due to the support of some of the caliph's courtiers as well as the
queen mother Shaghab.[22] In 303/915, he cured the caliph of a fever;
two years later he restored to life the crown prince's favorite par-
rot. These healing miracles assured al-Ḥallāj the protection of an
influential clan of the caliph's family which was headed by the queen
mother. During this period of relative calm and security al-Ḥallāj
wrote his most important works, the *Ṭā sīn al-azal*, a meditation on
the tragic fate of Satan (*Iblīs*) who valiantly refused to bow to any
one else than God; and a short account of the prophet Muḥammad's
miraculous ascension (*miʿrāj*) to heaven in the course of which, accord-
ing to the Muslim tradition, the prophet contemplated God from
the distance of "two bow-shots or nearer."[23]

Al-Ḥallāj spent the last years of his life in prison at the caliph's
court. In 308–9/921–2 he was finally brought to trial at the in-
stance of Ḥāmid, who was probably anxious to diminish the influence
of al-Ḥallāj's supporters at the caliph's court. The vizier's campaign
to condemn al-Ḥallāj as a dangerous heretic was supported by Ibn
Mujāhid, the respected head of the Qurʾān-readers guild of Baghdad.
Although Ibn Mujāhid associated with some leading Sufis of the
time, including Ibn Sālim and al-Shiblī, he was no friend of al-
Ḥallāj's, whose preaching, as mentioned, was strongly denounced by
the Sufi leaders of the age. The Sufi exegete Ibn ʿAṭāʾ,[24] supported
by some Ḥanbalī scholars, organized popular demonstrations against
Ḥāmid's fiscal policy, probably in hopes of forcing him to release
al-Ḥallāj. Ḥāmid, however, stood firm. Moreover, these popular
protests gave Ḥāmid the pretext to request that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ appear
before the tribunal. When he refused to testify against al-Ḥallāj and
boldly insisted that the vizier had no right to condemn one of "God's
friends," the irate Ḥāmid unleashed on him the caliph's retainers
who brutally beat him to death with his own sandals.[25]

Ḥāmid and the Mālikī *qāḍī* Abū ʿUmar Ibn Yūsuf, who always
supported those in power at the time, made sure that the tribunal
pass a death verdict on al-Ḥallāj. By citing al-Ḥallāj's statement
that one should "circumambulate the Kaʿba of the heart seven
times," the *qāḍī* declared it to be an invitation to dispense with the

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[22] Ibid., p. 104.
[23] Qurʾān, 53:9.
[24] On him see Nwyia, *Trois oeuvres*, pp. 25–182.
[25] Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, pp. 105–106.

obligation of the *ḥajj* and accused him of being a Qarmaṭī (Carmathian) missionary, plotting to destroy the Meccan sanctuary. Citing the absence of a representative of the Shāfiʿī school at the trial, the Ḥanafī judge declined to endorse death warrant. However, his assistant supported Abū ʿUmar Ibn Yūsuf and the syndic of the professional witnesses succeeded in producing eighty-four signatories. Sitting in judgement, Abū ʿUmar, urged by Ḥāmid, pronounced the formula, "It is lawful to shed your blood."

For two days the grand chamberlain Naṣr and the queen mother tried to intercede with the caliph, who, stricken with a fever, ordered the execution to be delayed. However, the vizier was eventually able to convince the ruler to proceed with the execution. A legend has it that he prevailed over al-Muqtadir's hesitation by putting forward the following argument: "If he is not put to death, he will change the religious law, and everyone will apostatize because of him. This will inevitably lead to the destruction of your state."[26] On the next day, at Bāb Khurāsān in the presence of "an enormous crowd" al-Ḥallāj was severely beaten, then exposed, still alive, on a gibbet (*ṣalīb*). While rioters set fire to the shops, friends and enemies questioned him as he hung on the gibbet. Some of his replies were taken down by those present and later circulated along with other narratives related to his "passion." The caliph's warrant for his decapitation did not arrive until nightfall, therefore his final execution was postponed for another twenty-four hours. During the night rumors of wonders and supernatural happenings spread among the population of Baghdad, laying the grounds for a popular riot. Jolted into action by the danger of a major social upheaval, al-Ḥallāj's accusers hastened to sign his condemnation and to make the following announcement: "It is [done] for the sake of Islam; let his blood be on our heads." Al-Ḥallāj's head fell, his body was sprinkled with oil and burned, whereupon his ashes were cast into the Tigris from the top of a minaret (March 27, 922).

Al-Ḥallāj's trial took place against the background of the religious, political and financial intrigues at the ʿAbbāsid court which grew especially intense during the minority of al-Muqtadir. It illustrates the great power enjoyed by the caliph's viziers at the turn of the fourth/tenth centuries. Al-Ḥallāj's two main prosecutors were the Shīʿī vizier Ibn

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[26] Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*. Ed. by ʿAbbūd al-Shaljī, Beirut, 1971, vol. 1, p. 164; cf. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, p. 107.

al-Furāt and, later on, his Sunnī successor Ḥāmid. Al-Ḥallāj's appeals for a moral and spiritual reform of Islam, combined with his advocacy for social justice struck fear in the hearts of the upper classes of the capital. His preaching in the streets and bazaars of Baghdad was interpreted as sedition and rabble-rousing by many high-ranking secular and religious officials, especially the Mālikīs and the Ḥanafīs, who were instrumental in bringing about his execution. Surprisingly, al-Ḥallāj's strongest supporters seem to have been the Ḥanbalīs who had considerable influence on the common people of Baghdad. Their support helps to explain why al-Ḥallāj survived several earlier trials. At the same time, his bold rejection of prudence and discipline of secrecy in dealing with the uninitiated members of the community led to his disavowal by his fellow Sufis, who were anxious to keep a low social profile following the trial against the proponents of divine love instigated by Ghulām Khalīl. Likewise, many Sufi leaders saw al-Ḥallāj's indulgence in public miracles as a quest for cheap popularity and an irresponsible use of the divine powers which God bestowed upon His elect friends.[27] Al-Ḥallāj's detractors, including some influential courtiers of a Muʿtazilī slant, blamed him for staging his miracles in order to achieve ulterior goals.[28] Finally, his bold proclamation of his union with God insulted many mainstream scholars, who accused him of blasphemy and of claims to *ḥulūl* (a substantial union with God similar to the Christian theory of incarnation). In a similar vein, his emphasis on the inner significance of ritual acts, such as the *ḥajj* and the prayer, was interpreted by some literalist scholars as an attempt to abolish the acts themselves.

Even more crucial for al-Ḥallāj's tragic death was the troubled political atmosphere of the epoch which witnessed grave threats to the ʿAbbāsid state. On the home front, the dynasty was faced with a broad popular discontent that was fuelled by the irresponsible social and fiscal policies of the increasingly shaky government in Baghdad. Externally, the caliphate had to deal with the secession of the provinces and the rise of various chiliastic movements that operated on its very doorstep, in Lower Iraq, Eastern Arabia and in the Syrian Desert. Through his wife, al-Ḥallāj was linked to the Shīʿī rebellion of the Zanj; his travels to the distant lands were interpreted as being related

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[27] Anawati and Gardet, *Mystique*, p. 38.
[28] Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, vol. 1, pp. 159–169.

to his agitation for the Qarmaṭī (Carmathian) cause. Such suspicions
were further aggravated by his use of the themes and terminology
that were current among the hated "extremist" Shīʿī groups.[29] All
these facts gave his accusers the pretext to portray him as a fomenter
of public discontent and a covert Qarmaṭī agent intent on destroy-
ing the Meccan sanctuary.[30] Finally, there are reasons to believe that
during the last years of his life al-Ḥallāj actively sought martyrdom,
viewing it as a means to achieve the absolute union with God through
love and suffering. In any event, his defiant behavior during the trial
certainly did not help his case.

   Al-Ḥallāj left behind a great number of statements in poetry and
prose. They were carefully collected by his disciples and edited by
later Sufi writers, such as Ibn Khafīf (d. 371/982) and Rūzbihān
Baqlī (d. 606/1209). Additionally, he composed a few short treatises,
some of which have come down to us. Both the sayings and the
treatises elaborate on the already familiar theme of the union of man
and God, in the course of which God witnesses himself in the heart
of his faithful worshipper (ʿābid). This union, or joining (jamʿ), leads
to a unification (ittiḥād) which al-Ḥallāj presented not as a union of
two substances, but as an act of faith and love (ʿishq, maḥabba). In
attempting to account for this sensation, al-Ḥallāj made the follow-
ing bold statements: "Thy Spirit has mingled itself with my spirit as
ambergris mixes with fragrant musk;" "We are two spirits that reside
(ḥalalnā) in a single body." This line of thinking reaches its culmi-
nation in the poetic lines that became emblematic of al-Ḥallāj's entire
teaching:

> Glory be to Him whose humanity manifested
> The secret of His piercing Divinity's radiance
> And Who then appeared openly in His creation
> In the form of one who eats and drinks[31]

Little wonder that such declarations made al-Ḥallāj liable to accusa-
tions of incarnationism (ḥulūl) which were indeed cited during his
trial. Whether he was referring here to the union of two substances,
the human (nāsūt) and the divine (lāhūt), or simply to the union of
the human and divine will remains unclear.[32]

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[29] Ibid., p. 162.
[30] Ibid., pp. 162–163.
[31] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 53.
[32] L. Massignon, *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj*, Paris, 1936, passim.

Another major theme of al-Ḥallāj's works addresses the tragic fate of Satan (*Iblīs*), whom God punished for his bold refusal to pay obeisance to anyone else but him.[33] Contrary, to the Muslim dogma, which unequivocally condemns Satan's arrogant refusal to follow God's command, in al-Ḥallāj's interpretation, Iblīs presents himself as "a tragic, martyr figure, who, despite his dedicated preaching [of God's oneness], perfect monotheism and eternal loyalty, suffers destruction at the hands of God, whom he lovingly worships."[34]

This idea is thrown into high relief in the following passage from al-Ḥallāj's treatise *Kitāb al-ṭawāsīn*:

> There was no monotheist like Iblis among the inhabitants of the heavens. When the [human] essence revealed itself to him in stunning glory, he renounced even a glance at it and worshiped God in ascetic isolation. . . . God said to him, "Bow!" he replied, "To no other!" He said to him, "Even if My curse be upon you?" He cried out, "To no other!"[35]

Al-Ḥallāj's daring portrayal of Iblīs as the model monotheist did not fail to scandalise most of his fellow Sufis, not to mention the majority of Muslim scholars, who denounced it as a blatant heresy. As with al-Junayd's interpretations of al-Bisṭāmī's "ecstatic utterances," later Sufi writers had to exercise their ingenuity to bring al-Ḥallāj's interpretation of the Iblīs episode in line with the standards of conventional exegesis, according to which Iblīs was an archetypal sinner, driven by his proverbial hubris.

L. Massignon's painstaking analysis of al-Ḥallāj's posthumous influence[36] absolves me from the necessity to dwell on this topic. Suffice it to say that his legacy intricately combines the elements of the Middle Eastern esoteric lore—namely, neo-Platonic metaphysics, gnosticism, and the cabbalistic speculation on the meaning of letters and numbers—with Qur'ānic imagery and terminology. The end product is an exotic and paradoxical teaching that was too bold even for al-Ḥallāj's Sufi contemporaries, to say nothing of exoterically minded scholars and secular authorities. Whether it served as a mere pretext or as the principal cause of his execution is immaterial.

After al-Ḥallāj's cruel death, some of his disciples went into hid-

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[33] Qur'ān, 38:71–85.

[34] P. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi psychology*, Leiden, 1993, p. 126.

[35] Ibid., p. 124.

[36] L. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*. Vol. 2. *The Survival of al-Ḥallāj*. Trans. by H. Mason, Princeton, 1982.

ing or dispersed. Others were apprehended and beheaded in Baghdad. Still others fled to Khurāsān and Central Asia, where they disseminated his teaching among local mystical groups. Through their efforts the "drunken" trend in Islamic mysticism was embraced and developed by a number of eminent Persian Sufis, such as Muḥammad al-Dastānī (d. 417/1026), al-Kharaqānī (d. 425/1033), Abū Saʿīd Ibn Abī 'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049), and Fārmadī (d. 477/1084), all of whom traced their spiritual genealogy back to either al-Bisṭāmī or al-Ḥallāj, or both. Al-Ḥallāj's disciple, Ibn Khafīf of Shīrāz, founded an independent mystical school which combined the ascetic tradition of Persia with the speculative mysticism of the Baghdad school. To these Ibn Khafīf added some elements of nascent Ashʿarī theology.[37]

An attempt to exonerate al-Ḥallāj from accusations of heresy and to bring his ideas into the mainline of the Sufi tradition was made by the Central Asian Sufi author Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990 or 395/995) in his "Introduction to the Sufi Doctrine." His task was "to bridge the chasm between orthodox theology and Sufis, which the execution of al-Ḥallāj had greatly widened."[38] Characteristically, even though the thrust of al-Kalābādhī's argument is clearly directed toward the defense of al-Ḥallāj, he did not dare to cite him openly.[39] Throughout his treatise, the statements of the great Sufi martyr are quoted anonymously—a clear indication that the dramatic memories of al-Ḥallāj's trial were still rankling among Sunnī scholars, most of whom remained leery of his teaching. Al-Ḥallāj and his followers, al-Ḥallājiyya, were strongly condemned by the Sufi apologist al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 465/1073 or 469/1077) of Ghazna, who, in his "Unveiling of That Which is Hidden," sought to separate "correct" Sufism from its "heretical" offshoots and thereby to render the former acceptable to Sunnī orthodoxy.[40]

Up to the present day, Muslim scholars remain divided over the issue of al-Ḥallāj's status vis-à-vis the Sharīʿa. Their opinions can be classified under three major headings: (a) condemnation, which ranged from a simple repudiation of his views to an unequivocal and final declaration of his disbelief (takfīr); (b) affirmation of his sainthood (wilāya), which ranged from the attempts to find an excuse (iʿtidhār) for his behavior to an unconditional acceptance (qabūl); (c)

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[37] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 93.
[38] Ibid., p. 23, *apud* A. Arberry.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Nicholson, *Kashf*, pp. 130–131 and 260–266.

pious suspension of judgement (*tawaqquf*), which eventually became the position of the majority of Sunnī scholars.

In the West, opinions on al-Ḥallāj varied dramatically. Early Western students of his life and work, such as A. Müller and d'Herbelot, portrayed him as a secret Christian; Reiske accused him of blasphemy, Tholuck of abusing paradox; A. von Kremer considered him to be a monist of Indian inspiration, Kazanski dismissed him as a psychopath, while Browne depicted him as "a dangerous and able intriguer."

L. Massignon, who spent the greater part of his life trying to piece together a comprehensive portrait of this Sufi master, saw in his personal experience the culmination of mystical life in Islam. After al-Ḥallāj's tragic death, in Massignon's opinion, Islamic spirituality never recovered and entered the period of a protracted and unrelieved decline. This decline found its dramatic expression in the "dispirited" philosophical monism of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, who, by intruding "alien" neo-Platonic elements into Islamic spirituality, irrevocably compromised its primeval experiential essence.[41] Recent studies, including those by L. Massignon's own students, have demonstrated the tendentious and highly personal nature of this view of al-Ḥallāj's legacy. For instance, many of the themes and ideas, which Massignon considered to be original to his hero, had been articulated by his predecessors at Baṣra and Baghdad long before al-Ḥallāj appeared on the historical scene.[42] Such findings, however, do not diminish his lasting influence on the entire history of Islamic mysticism. In fact, many later Sufis explicitly identified themselves with his (as well as al-Bisṭāmī's) ecstatic, or "drunken," spirituality, which they juxtaposed with the more conventional and "sober" mysticism of al-Junayd and his followers. What does set al-Ḥallāj apart from his predecessors and contemporaries, including al-Bisṭāmī, was his uncompromising refusal to keep his daring experiences to himself. His involvement in the precarious politics of the court, combined with his bold temper and nonconformism, eventually led to his tragic death, endowing him with the halo of martyrdom that ensured his posthumous "survival" as an emblem of the mystical lover.

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[41] Massignon, *Essay*, pp. xxvii–xxix, 35, 56–57, etc.
[42] See, e.g., Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 10–14.

ASCETIC AND MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS
IN BAṢRA AND KHURĀSĀN

I would like to begin my survey of regional trends in Islamic mys-
ticism with the ascetic and mystical school of Baṣra, which, at that
time, was intimately associated with Sahl al-Tustarī, his disciple
Muḥammad b. Sālim (d. 297/909) and the latter's son Aḥmad b.
Sālim (d. 356/967). Although many representatives of this school
maintained close ties and an active dialogue with their contempo-
raries in Baghdad, they were anxious to assert their separate iden-
tity in matters of doctrine and practice. Any systematic comparison
between the two schools is impossible in the absence of a reliable
documentation and due to the disparate intellectual and practical
strands within each of them. Generally, the teachings of the Baṣran
Sufis were more conservative and less speculative than those of their
counterparts in Baghdad. Ghulām Khalīl, a scholar of Baṣran back-
ground who instituted the famous trial against some proponents of
erotic mysticism in Baghdad, was probably a typical representative
of this conservative and predominantly ascetic devotional style. His
prior affiliation with the ascetic movement of Baṣra may help to
explain why, upon his arrival in Baghdad, he took exception to the
theosophical speculations of the local mystics, which he found improper
and offensive.[1] If this suggestion is correct, we are dealing here with
a dramatic example of the tensions between two regional expressions
of ascetic-mystical piety and the distinctive imagery employed by
their respective exponents. As we shall see, such tensions burst into
the open whenever the proponents of the Baghdad school attempted
to spread their mystical worldview among provincial ascetics and
mystics. In any event, prior to the concerted systematization and
consolidation of the ascetic-mystical tradition by the Sufi apologists
of the late fourth/tenth-fifth/eleventh centuries we witness numer-
ous regional strands of mystical piety, which were sometimes different

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[1] Melchert, "Transition," passim.

enough to lead to a conflict between their exponents. In some instances, these differences were further accentuated by the conflicting theological doctrines advocated by members of these ascetic and mystical schools. This situation finds a vivid illustration in the tensions between the mystical establishment of the ʿAbbāsid capital and the Baṣran adherents of Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), known as the Sālimiyya.

As an erstwhile teacher of such consequential Sufis as al-Jurayrī, al-Ḥallāj and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Tustarī merits special notice. A native of Tustar, in Khūzistān (present-day Iran), he studied ḥadīth with his maternal uncle Ibn Sawwār, who transmitted them on the authority of Sufyān al-Thawrī. Like many Sufi masters before and after him, al-Tustarī spent some time in the famous ribāṭ of ʿAbbādān. There he engaged in arduous ascetic exercises, which are said to have induced in him a vision of God's greatest name written in the sky in green letters from east to west. Al-Tustarī himself derived his spiritual genealogy (silsila) from Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, with whom he had a brief meeting during the latter's stay in Iraq. The first twenty years of al-Tustarī's life were marked by ascetic feats and self-imposed austerities which attracted to him a group of devoted disciples, especially Muḥammad b. Sālim (d. 297/909), his companion of sixty years, who remained by his side until his death. Muḥammad b. Sālim, along with his son Aḥmad b. Sālim and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 396/996), became the foremost exponents and propagators of al-Tustarī's legacy, which their master did not care to present in a systematic way or even to commit to writing. Of the other students in al-Tustarī's entourage, mention should be made of al-Ḥallāj, who became his pupil at the age of sixteen and stayed with him for two years (260/873 to 262/875).[2] In 263/877, al-Tustarī was expelled from Tustar for political or doctrinal reasons and took up residence in Baṣra. There he made friends with the famous Ḥanbalī scholar Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889). At the same time, his claims to be "the proof of God" (ḥujjat Allāh) raised the hackles of the leading Shāfiʿī doctors of the city, who denounced him as a heretic.

Upon al-Tustarī's death at Baṣra, his followers formed several separate groups. One chose to move to Baghdad, where it merged with the Sufi followers of al-Junayd. The most prominent member of this group was al-Jurayrī, who succeeded al-Junayd as the leader of the

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[2] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 82.

city's Sufis. Another group, of which the stern Ḥanbalī preacher al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941) was the most notable representative, settled in the Muḥawwal quarter of Baghdad. Those of al-Tustarī's followers who chose to stay in Baṣra formed a distinct theological school, the Sālimiyya. It derived its name from its leader Aḥmad b. Sālim, the son of his lifelong companion Muḥammad b. Sālim. The tenets of the Sālimiyya received their final articulation in the work of Aḥmad's disciple, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), whose monumental book "Nourishment for the Hearts" had a profound influence on al-Ghazālī's "Revivification of the Religious Sciences."[3] In the first half of the fifth/eleventh century, the school's theological propositions (related mostly to the beatific vision and to other events on the Day of Judgement) come under the attack of some Ḥanbalī theologians. Since these theological debates have no direct bearing on al-Tustarī's mysticism, they need not be discussed here.[4] One should, however, point out that al-Tustarī's admission that the mystic can experience a contemplative witnessing of God (*mukāshafa*) in this life through "the light of certitude" (*nūr al-yaqīn*), which God grants to him as a reward for his loyalty and self-abnegation,[5] exposed him to accusations of blasphemy. Such accusations were leveled at him and at his followers by those conservative scholars who interpreted his statements about *nūr al-yaqīn* as contrary to the mainline Muslim doctrine that a beatific vision cannot be experienced by the faithful until the Day of Resurrection.[6] In the later heresiographic literature, we find the mention of the Ḥulmāniyya sect, which allegedly pushed the doctrine of the Sālimiyya to its logical conclusion by claiming that God can dwell in any beautiful object or individual. Basing himself on this idea, the founder of the sect, Abū Ḥulmān al-Fārisī (flourished in the second half of the third/ninth century), a Persian mystic who resided in Damascus, called upon his followers to prostrate themselves before handsome individuals, beautiful plants, animals, or other objects. He argued that the perfection of their forms was a corporeal reflection of God's eternal beauty, and, as such, must be worshiped by all believers. Whether the Ḥulmāniyya was in any way related to the Sālimiyya[7] or to an ascetic and mystical

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[3] Ibid., pp. 25–27.
[4] Ibid., pp. 94–95.
[5] Ibid., pp. 207–216.
[6] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 411–415.
[7] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, pp. 131 and 260.

movement of Damascus (e.g., Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī and his dis-
ciples)[8] is impossible to ascertain. It may, after all, have been a
simple elaboration of the doctrine that admitted that, already in this
life, God's faithful servants could contemplate him in the hearts in
the same way as they will see him by their naked eyes in the here-
after. This idea was vigorously opposed by many Sunnī ulema as
well as some prominent Sufis of the Baghdad school.[9]

The central idea of al-Tustarī's mystical teaching is the constant
recollection of God (*dhikr*). Practiced continually, *dhikr* assures the
faithful servant passage into the immediate presence of his Lord. The
practice of *dhikr* will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of this
book. Here it suffices to point out that al-Tustarī regarded it as a
means for the mystic to re-live the experience of the Primordial
Covenant between God and humanity, when the human race in its
entirety was made to bear testimony to his lordship.[10] Eventually,
the mystic reaches the point at which God begins to effect his own
recollection in the heart of his perfected servant. On the practical
level, al-Tustarī recommended incessant repentance and complete
trust in God, which, in his mind, were to divest the mystic from occu-
pying himself with any mundane concerns. Al-Tustarī's theology and
mystical ideas take their origin in a thorough contemplation on the
Qur'ānic word in an effort to bring out its hidden, inward mean-
ing (*bāṭin*). This contemplation results in an exegesis that draws on
the allegorical or symbolic potential of the Revelation and thereby
illuminates, and gives meaning to, the mystic's elusive experiences
and associations. In contemplating the famous "light verse" of the
Qur'ān (24:35) al-Tustarī presented God as a pure light. From this
divine light derives the luminous essence of the prophet Muḥam-
mad, the embodiment and prototype of the perfect worshipper,
who had stood in primordial adoration of God before humanity was
brought into existence.

As mentioned, al-Tustarī's disciples in Baṣra formed a school called
the Sālimiyya. Named after Aḥmad b. Sālim, son of his foremost
follower Muḥammad b. Sālim, the Sālimiyya was associated with the
local Mālikīs. This may have pitted it against the rival Ḥanbalīs and
Shāfiʿīs, who constituted the majority of the city's population. Although

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[8] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 1, p. 144.
[9] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, p. 468.
[10] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 153–157.

Aḥmad and his followers were concerned with asceticism, sources do not identify them as Sufis. Rather, later Muslim writers, especially those affiliated with the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad, presented the Sālimiyya as a deviant theological sect. This is even more surprising since the Sālimīs, like the Ḥanbalīs, were known for their hostility to speculative theology (kalām).[11] This hostility may have prompted Ibn Khafīf of Shīrāz (d. 371/982), a Sufi with strong Ashʿarī propensities, to write a refutation of the Sālimiyya. The fact that Ibn Khafīf was on friendly terms with those of al-Tustarī's students who had settled in Baghdad may indicate that, by that time, the Sālimiyya was seen as an ascetic-theological faction with a distinctive theological doctrine.[12] The work of Aḥmad b. Sālim's principal disciple, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, evinces a rather conventional, if exceedingly stern, style of piety that had characterized the ascetic movement of Baṣra since its very inception. If al-Makkī's "Nourishment for the Hearts" does indeed represent the devotional style and world-outlook of his master,[13] then the teachings of the Sālimiyya appear to be quite compatible with those of the mystics in al-Junayd's circle. The fact that al-Jurayrī and other erstwhile followers of al-Tustarī who immigrated to Baghdad were quickly integrated into the local Sufi community is another evidence of the underlying affinity between two mystical schools. One, therefore, may interpret the tensions between them as springing not so much from doctrinal disagreements as from a struggle for spiritual dominance and wider recognition between leaders of the movement's regional factions. In the ideological contest that ensued, the ascetic and mystical school of Baghdad, supported by the powerful Ḥanbalī and the Shāfiʿī ulema, triumphed over its Baṣran rivals who threw in their lot with the less influential Mālikī school of law. The rapid spread of the Baghdad-style Sufism ensured that its version of mystical piety as well as its spiritual lineage, stretching back to al-Junayd, would eventually prevail in Iraq, incorporating or suppressing competing ascetic and mystical tendencies. Essentially the same pattern is in evidence outside Iraq, where the influence of the Baghdad Sufi tradition gradually asserted itself as the dominant pattern of ascetic and mystical life. It is hardly surprising that the

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[11] G. Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History," in: StI, vol. 17 (1962), p. 54.
[12] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 93.
[13] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 201.

propaganda of its values and authorities by its itinerant representatives in the provinces inevitably ran into the stiff resistance of the local ascetic and mystical groups whose positions were threatened by the newcomers. Faced with this resistance, the Sufis had no option but to either integrate or dislodge their rivals.

Ibn Karrām and the Karrāmiya

One regional ascetic school that did not survive the ideological expansion of Baghdad Sufism was the Karrāmiyya, which flourished in Jerusalem, Transoxania and Khurāsān from the third/ninth century until the Mongol conquest. Its eponymous founder, Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869), claimed to be of Arab descent, although his detractors routinely ridiculed him on account of his Persian accent.[14] In his youth Ibn Karrām traveled widely across Khurāsān and Afghanistān, where he associated with many spiritual masters and *ḥadīth* transmitters, including those who were considered unreliable by experts on Islamic traditions. In Nīshāpūr he studied with the local ascetic Aḥmad Ibn Ḥarb (d. 234/848), a fiery orator whose sermons inculcating piety and godliness drew enthusiastic crowds. Deeply impressed by Ibn Ḥarb's popularity with the masses of Nīshāpūr, Ibn Karrām imitated his oratory style throughout his subsequent career. However, he went further than his teacher by adopting an itinerant lifestyle that allowed him to spread his pious message far and wide.[15] After residing in Mecca for five years, he returned to his home in Sijistān, where he relinquished all his possessions in favor of holy poverty and put on a garb of penitence made of the rough sheepskin. He then embarked on the career of a public preacher, inculcating in his audience fear of God and desire of Paradise. To this end, he made use of some prophetic sayings of eschatological character, the authenticity of which was doubted by professional *ḥadīth* transmitters. Irritated by his preaching, the governor of Sijistān ordered his execution. However, fearing a popular unrest, he desisted and simply expelled Ibn Karrām from his province.[16] The preacher then with-

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[14] Ibid., p. 174.
[15] J. Chabbi, "Remarques sur le développment historique des mouvements ascétiques et mystiques au Khurasan," *StI*, vol. 46 (1977), pp. 30 and 41, pp. 48–49.
[16] Ibid., p. 49.

drew to the rural areas of Ghūr and Khurāsān, where he continued
his sermons among the local peasants. On his arrival in a new loca-
tion his companions built a brick platform, or chair, from which Ibn
Karrām, dressed in rough sheepskins and a white pointed bonnet
(*qalansuwa*), delivered his sermons and recited *ḥadīth* about the horrors
of the punishment of the grave and the delights of Paradise. His pre-
sentations were often accompanied by spectacular displays of asceti-
cism and by minor miracles performed by his disciples.[17] According
to later writers, most of whom were hostile to the movement, Ibn
Karrām rallied around him a large and enthusiastic following that
consisted of the despised class of weavers and other riff-raff. When
he entered Nīshāpūr, the ruler of the Ṭāhirid dynasty, who was sus-
picious of his goals, put him in prison for almost eight years. Upon
his release in 251/865, Ibn Karrām retired to Jerusalem, where he
ended his days in 255/869. Ibn Karrām's teachings have reached
us in mostly hostile accounts of his critics, most of whom were
affiliated with the Shāfiʿī school of law and espoused Ashʿarism in
matters of theology. They routinely described Ibn Karrām and his
followers as crude anthropomorphists, who considered God to be a
substance (*jawhar*) possessed of a body that is finite in certain direc-
tions.[18] He also held distinctive views on the imāmate of ʿAlī and
Muʿāwiya as well as on the ablutions before the prayer and on the
notion of faith (*īmān*). Ibn Karrām's moral and ethical teaching dis-
played his overriding preoccupation with asceticism and the "life of
the heart," which he described as resting on the five principles:
hunger, a [frequent] recitation of the Qurʾān, the nights spent in
prayer, humility during the day, and keeping company with the right-
eous.[19] He also stressed the role of self-mortification (*taqashshuf*) and
utter dependence on God for all aspects of life (*tawakkul*) as a means
to draw nearer to God. He may have borrowed these precepts from
his spiritual master Aḥmad b. Ḥarb whom the sources describe as
the foremost "ascetic" (*zāhid*) of Nīshāpūr.[20] It is noteworthy that
despite their obvious ascetic credentials, the Karrāmiyya are never
described as Sufis in contemporary sources.[21] For their contempo-
raries, they represented a distinctive strain of Persian piety that shunned

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[17] Ibid., pp. 51–52.
[18] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 408–410.
[19] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 174, note 96; cf. idem, *Recueil*, p. 24.
[20] Chabbi, "Remarques", p. 30.
[21] R. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, p. 42.

theoretical mysticism and theosophical speculation, which, in the words of a Western scholar, "might well have detracted from the activism and militancy of their message."[22] In any event, a salient feature of the movement instituted by Ibn Karrām was its emphasis on the active propagation of its tenets among the rural and urban masses, including non-Muslims. This goal was achieved through the construction of cenobitic lodges (*khānaqā*), which served as centers for instruction and ascetic life. The inhabitants of the lodges, which were scattered across the Persian countryside, were characterized by the following features: fear of God, the spirit of solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyya*), humility and mendicancy.[23] It seems likely that the Karrāmī *khānaqās* became the prototypes of the Sufi lodges, which mushroomed in the eastern parts of the Muslim world from the sixth/twelfth century onward. This institution will be discussed further on. At this point, it is important to point out that Ibn Karrām's evangelism, which was directed at the disenfranchised classes in cities and the countryside, was strongly opposed by both the Ashʿarī Sufis of Shāfiʿī background and their Ḥanafī opponents who espoused rationalism in matters of theology.[24] Given the predominantly middle and upper-class affiliations of the leaders of the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī parties of Nīshāpūr, one can see why they resented the lower class and populist Karrāmiyya. As we have seen, Ibn Karrām's populism also roused the suspicions of secular rulers, who repeatedly banished Ibn Karrām from their realms or incarcerated him. Despite these persecutions, Ibn Karrām did not abandon his active religious stance. Even in his last days, his fiery sermons in the courtyard of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem drew large crowds. After his death, his tomb became a hostel for his numerous disciples and the prototype of a special hermitage in Jerusalem. Its pious inhabitants were engaged in preaching and begging long after Ibn Karrām's demise.[25]

As with the other ascetic and theological movements we have discussed, Ibn Karrām's followers formed several subgroups, without however departing significantly from the teaching of the founder. Since the tenets of the Karrāmiyya have come down to us in the

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[22] Ibid., p. 43.
[23] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 50.
[24] Idem, "Réflexions," in: *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 266 (1978), pp. 52–53; Bulliet, *The Patricians*, p. 43.
[25] Massignon, *Essay*, p. 175.

renditions of their opponents, who presented them as abominable and ridiculous, it is difficult to reconstruct their original import. In the view of their Shāfiʿī and Ashʿarī critics, the Karrāmiyya's major fault was their advocacy of a gross anthropomorphism. For our purpose, it is important to point out that they were also accused of upholding the superiority of the perfect friends of God (awliyāʾ) over the prophets.[26] This position, as we shall see, came to be associated with the famous Persian thinker al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/910), who may have been influenced by the Karrāmī teaching. On the issue of faith the Karrāmiyya adhered to the view of the Murjiʾa theological school that held that it was enough for a person to make a double declaration of the Islamic "profession of faith" (shahāda) to become a faithful (muʾmin), even though he might later become an unbeliever in Muhammad's apostleship or a heretic. A sympathetic report by the famous geographer al-Muqaddasī (d. ca. 380/990) praises the Karrāmiyya of Jurjān, Biyār and Ṭabaristān as "people given to asceticism and worship, who adhered to [the school of] Abū Ḥanīfa."[27] On the issue of the leadership (imāma) of the Islamic community the Karrāmiyya adhered to a strictly Sunnī position: al-Muqaddasī reports several bloody clashes that took place between the Karrāmiyya and their Shīʿī neighbors in Nīshāpūr and Jurjān.[28] A few fragments of Ibn Karrām's doctrines that have survived show him to be a moderate theologian who was anxious to maintain a delicate balance between doctrine and practice by illuminating his theoretical discourses with the mystical experiences which he acquired through his rigorous asceticism. His teaching thus appealed to two distinct audiences: the practically minded individuals who sought to achieve moral purity and those who took interest in theological issues. The significance of the Karrāmiyya movement is attested by its wide spread over many parts of the central and eastern Islamic world. We find their khānaqās in the quarters of Jerusalem, of Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo) and in the towns and countryside of Khurāsān and Transoxania. They were especially prominent at Nīshāpūr, where many Karrāmīs resided in a large khānaqā headed by the influential Mahmashādh family with strong ascetic propensities.[29] Here as elsewhere, the hold

[26] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 45.
[27] M. J. de Goeje (ed.), *Descriptio imperii moslemicici autore . . . al-Moqaddasi*, Leiden, 1906, p. 365.
[28] Ibid., p. 336.
[29] Chabbi, "Remarques," pp. 37–38.

of the Karrāmiyya on the populace stemmed from the exemplary
asceticism of their leaders and their evangelistic and teaching activ-
ity. The Karrāmiyya experienced their heyday under the patronage
of the powerful Ghaznavid dynasty in the late fourth/early eleventh
centuries. When this patronage was withdrawn in 402/1011, the for-
tunes of the Karrāmiyya began to decline until the movement was
finally suppressed by the joint forces of the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī fac-
tions of Nīshāpūr in the late fifth/eleventh centuries. Some Karrāmī
pockets survived in the mountainous region of central Afghanistān
under the Ghūrids, but they seem to have disappeared either shortly
before or during the Mongol onslaught (the first decades of the sev-
enth/thirteenth centuries). By that time, the mystical tradition of
Baghdad, which had absorbed a number of ascetic and mystical
trends in Persian Islam, asserted its monopoly on spiritual life, driving
its potential rivals, such as the Karrāmiyya, from the historical scene.

   While most Sufi writers tend to ignore the activities and doctrines
of the Karrāmiyya and its founder or to denounce them as rank
heretics, Ibn Karrām's younger contemporary and purported disci-
ple Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872) figures prominently in
later Sufi biographies and manuals.[30] The two men may indeed have
studied under the same master, Aḥmad b. Ḥarb of Nīshāpūr.[31] This
fact would explain why some of Yaḥyā's statements and ideas bear
a close resemblance to those of Ibn Karrām.[32] One feature that Ibn
Karrām and Yaḥyā have in common is their fascination with pub-
lic preaching, which may point to their common intellectual roots.
Thus both Sufi and non-Sufi authors invariably present Yaḥyā as
"the Preacher" (*wāʿiz*) *par excellence*.[33] According to some accounts, he
was the first among the Sufis to preach from a "chair," or a pul-
pit,—a practice that was condemned by some Sufi masters as a sign
of vanity.[34] Since such misgivings were voiced primarily by Iraqi
Sufis, they may reflect their cautious public stance in the aftermath

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[30] See, e.g., Massignon, *Essay*, p. 180; Arberry, *Muslim Saints*, p. 179; cf. Meier,
Abu Saʿīd, pp. 148–184.
[31] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 30.
[32] Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*. Ed. by Maʿrūf Zurayq
and ʿAlī Balṭarjī, Beirut, 1993, p. 414; Massignon, *Recuiel*, pp. 24 and 26.
[33] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, reprint, Beirut, no date, vol. 14,
p. 208.
[34] Ibid., p. 209; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, vol. 1, p. 166; cf. Meier, *Abū Saʿīd*,
p. 173.

of Ghulām Khalīl's persecution of proponents of divine love and the execution of al-Ḥallāj. This cautious attitude stands in sharp contrast to the proselytizing fervor and high public profile of Ibn Karrām and Yaḥyā, who had no compunctions about reaching out to anyone who wanted to listen to their message.[35] In any event, there is no doubt that the teachings of both Ibn Karrām and Yaḥyā took their origin in the same intellectual environment, that of Khurāsān, and, especially, of Nīshāpūr. Although later Sufi biographies credit Yaḥyā with numerous mystical treatises, his surviving legacy consists mainly of disparate sayings. They won a high praise from al-Hujwīrī, who described them as "delicately molded and pleasant to the ear and subtle in substance and profitable in devotion."[36] Cast in rhyming prose or in poetic lines—in order to facilitate their memorization by his listeners—they mirror Yaḥyā's preoccupation with inculcating ascetic and mystical values through public preaching.[37] For his contemporaries both in Baghdad and Khurāsān, the most striking feature of Yaḥyā's teaching was his emphasis on hope for God's beneficence (rajā'), which he placed far above the fear of divine wrath. According to his critics, this optimistic attitude may lead to irresponsibility: confident of receiving God's loving-kindness, the Sufi is tempted to lapse into complacency and even licentiousness.[38] In line with this optimistic world-outlook, Yaḥyā is said to have given preference to wealth over poverty. This unusual attitude came to the fore when, late in his life, he ostentatiously discarded his rags and rough woolen shirt and replaced them with a luxurious silk raiment. Commenting on this extravagant volte-face, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī accused him of failing to bear the burden of poverty to the end.[39] In general, Yaḥyā explicitly treated asceticism as an inferior stage of spiritual progress, while setting store by mystical gnosis and intimacy with God. In one parable, he compares the progress of the ascetic toward his goal with the slow pace of a pedestrian. By contrast, the gnostic ('ārif) flies to his goal like a bird.[40] From his contemptuous warning against consorting with "the ignorant Sufis"[41] one may

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[35] Chabbi, "Remarques," pp. 51–55.

[36] Nicholson, The Kashf, p. 123; cf. Arberry, Sufis, pp. 61–62.

[37] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ta'rīkh, vol. 14, pp. 209–212.

[38] Meier, Abu Saʿīd, pp. 167–168; al-Sulamī, Ṭabaqāt, p. 303.

[39] Al-Sarrāj, Lumaʿ, p. 188.

[40] Ibid., pp. 365 and 224; cf. Meier, Abu Saʿīd, p. 174.

[41] Ibid., p. 182.

surmise that he may have seen the conventionalities of Sufi piety as being inferior to the advanced spiritual state of the true gnostic and friend of God. His hero is a sage (*ḥakīm*), who combines outward piety with proficiency in all the major religious sciences of the day, including the Qurʾān, the *ḥadīth*, the dogma and the law.[42] Significantly, in Yaḥyā's sermons an ardent desire for intimacy with the Divine Friend takes precedence over all other considerations and conventions, including the fear of hellfire. In a similar vein, he did not set much value on poverty, seeing it as a sign of doubt over God's generosity. For the *ʿārif*, his outward condition is of little consequence, be it favorable or adverse. His only object is God. In light of this overriding concern all else fades into insignificance.[43] In more than one way, this emancipated stance foreshadows the buoyant, upbeat mysticism of the great Persian mystic Abū Saʿīd b. Abī 'l-Khayr, who, like Yaḥyā, was often accused of an extravagant lifestyle and love of luxury.[44]

The Path of Blame: The Malāmatiyya of Khurāsān

The name of this loosely structured ascetic movement, which was contemporary with the Karrāmiya, derives from the Qurʾānic verse 5:54, which praises those who "struggle in the path of God and fear not the blame of any blamer." According to most commentators, this verse refers to "the Prophet and his Companions," whom the Malāmatī ascetics indeed considered to be the first of their number.[45] However, as a historically identifiable group, the Malāmatiyya first emerged in third/ninth century Nīshāpūr. Most of the local Malāmatīs came from the middle class artisan or mercantile milieu. Al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), the first author to describe the tenets of the Malāmatiyya, links its origins to the teaching of Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār, i.e., "The Fuller,"[46] and his master Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, i.e., "The Blacksmith" (d. between 265/874 and 270/879). To them

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[42] Ibid.; cf. B. Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmiḏī: Ein islamischer Theosoph des 3./9. Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg, 1980, p. 95.

[43] Meier, *Abu Saʿīd*, pp. 178–179.

[44] Ibid., pp. 183–184 and passim.

[45] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, p. 62.

[46] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 2, pp. 155–168.

one should add Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910), an erstwhile dis-
ciple of Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh, who is credited with giving Khurāsānī
mysticism its final shape.[47] All these men were known for their mod-
esty and desire to conceal their true spiritual state, which the sources
described as being extraordinary advanced. The founding fathers of
the Malāmatiyya discouraged their followers from engaging in pub-
lic preaching, from performing acts of piety in public and from don-
ning a distinctive dress. According to their teaching, "piety and godly
devotion should not be reduced to a single vocation out of many in
social life but should instead infuse its very aspect."[48] To this end,
the exponents of the Malāmatiyya recommended that their follow-
ers conceal their inner spiritual state and earn their livelihood by
the sweat of their brows. Simultaneously, they frowned upon beg-
ging which was widely practiced by the Karrāmiyya and other ascetics.
Any external manifestation of piety, including the wearing of a
patched frock or a woolen robe, was denounced as vainglorious pre-
tence meant to impress the ordinary believers. At the same time,
the founders of the Malāmatiyya advised their followers to make
anonymous donations to the poor, to engage in intense ascetic exer-
cises and to wear hair shirts in the privacy of their houses. This was
to be done in order to keep secret their advanced spiritual state from
potential admirers and to avoid slipping into hypocrisy.[49] It is note-
worthy that one of the Malāmatī trio, Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār, was a
disciple of Sālim al-Bārūsī, who went on record as an outspoken
critic of the ostentatious public devotions of the Karrāmiya ascetics.
In an oft-cited story al-Bārūsī suggested that the pious externals of
Ibn Karrām's disciples are in conflict with the vainglorious pretenses
that they harbor in their bosoms.[50] It is therefore quite feasible that
the deliberate concealment of their piety, which was the hallmark
of the Malāmatiyya, came as a reaction against the Karrāmiyya
rather than the Ṣūfiyya. This fact would explain why the Malāmatiyya
were eventually integrated into the Sufi movement which, however,
remained staunchly opposed to Ibn Karrām's version of ascetic piety.

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[47] Ibid., pp. 175–241.
[48] A. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 30.
[49] Abū 'l-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī, *Al-Malāmatiyya wa 'l-ṣūfiyya wa ahl al-futuwwa*, Cairo, 1945,
pp. 93, 94, 101, 106, 108, and passim.
[50] Chabbi, "Remarques," pp. 53–54.; van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, pp. 610–611.

One consequence of the Malāmatiyya emphasis on a secretive, inward-looking devotion was their unwillingness to set forth their principles in writing. Such Khurāsānī Sufis as al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) appropriated many of the Malāmatī precepts, making them part and parcel of the later Sufi tradition.[51] That the doctrine of the Malāmatiyya, if it ever existed as a coherent body of precepts, was far from monolithic can be construed from the disagreements among its principal spokesmen. Typically, in one episode, at issue was the practice of public preaching: it was vigorously discouraged by Abū Ḥafṣ and Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār,[52] but advocated by Abū 'Uthmān.[53] According to al-Hujwīrī, Abū 'Uthmān's sermons were so popular that "the people of Nīshāpūr set up a pulpit that he might discourse to them on Sufis."[54] This altercation may indicate that the younger generation of the Malāmatiyya leaders departed from the movement's original position in an attempt to disseminate its pious precepts among the masses. Whether this was a concession to, or an attempt to counter, Karrāmī or Sufi propaganda remains unclear. In a similar vein, al-Sulamī saw Abū 'Uthmān's teaching techniques as a departure from the legacy of his predecessors. In describing Abū 'Uthmān's pedagogical assumptions al-Sulamī implies that they were akin to his own,[55] which, in turn, were shared by the majority of Sufi masters. Furthermore, in contrast to Abū Ḥafṣ and al-Qaṣṣār, Abū 'Uthmān had no compunctions about committing his precepts to writing—a practice that both of his predecessors warned against.[56] All this evidence indicates that Abū 'Uthmān's teaching was aimed at effecting a rapprochement between the Sufi and Malāmatī traditions. At least, this is the impression which al-Sulamī, who straddled both traditions, sought to convey to his readers. In any event, the demarcation between the Malāmatīs and the Sufis was not always clear-cut. All three major exponents of the Malāmatī doctrine, including Abū Ḥafṣ, traveled to Iraq, where they rubbed shoulders with al-Tustarī, al-Junayd and their disciples and are even said to have won al-Junayd's enthusiastic approval.[57] That

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[51] Chabbi, "Remarques," pp. 67–72.
[52] Nichoslon, *The Kashf*, p. 125.
[53] Arberry, *The Doctrine*, p. 148.
[54] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, p. 134.
[55] Al-Sulamī, *Al-Malāmatiyya*, pp. 102–103.
[56] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, pp. 123–126 and 134; cf. Arberry, *The Doctrine*, p. 13.
[57] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 117–118.

the precepts of the Malāmatiyya were not confined to the popula-
tion of Nīshāpūr is attested by an anecdote that presents Yūsuf b.
Ḥusayn of Rayy (d. 304/916) as a better Malāmatī than Abū ʿUthmān
al-Ḥīrī.[58] Generally, the teachings of the Malāmatiyya exhibit the
same values, notions and technical terms that were propounded by
the Iraqi Sufis, namely, gratitude toward God, maintaining a bal-
ance between fear and hope (contrary to Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh), obedi-
ence to God and his Command, the all-consuming concentration on
God, and a sincere love (*maḥabba*) and passionate longing (*shawq*) for
God. All these and similar tenets were aimed at perfecting the seeker's
inner self and leading him to a better knowledge of his Creator.[59]
If the leaders of the Malāmatī movement ever criticized Sufi-style
piety as one that gave too much weight to the outward indications
of one's internal state, all evidence to this effect was later carefully
expunged from Sufi literature by the pro-Sufi writers who followed
a ready-made conception of how Sufism developed in time and
space.[60] On the other hand, most of the Iraqi Sufis found the Malāmatī
focus on the evil whisperings of the lower soul (*nafs*) uncongenial in
so far as it presented the human soul as a self-sufficient reality that
may oppose God.[61] For Sufi theorists, the reproach of the *nafs*, which
lay at the heart of the Malāmatī self-discipline, associated with a rel-
atively early stage of self-awareness, one that characterizes beginners
on the mystical path rather than its accomplished masters. The latter
are no longer aware of their *nafs* and of its evil suggestions, engrossed
as they are in the contemplation of the Divine.

Al-Sulamī, who was the first to provide a sympathetic account of
the Malāmatī tenets,[62] consistently linked them to the *futuwwa* clubs,
which brought together young professionals of urban middle class
background.[63] The ideals of *futuwwa*, which may be loosely defined
as spiritual chivalry and altruism, dovetailed neatly into the Malāmatī
doctrine that forbade its followers to elevate themselves above the
common crowd or to display contempt for laymen's shortcomings.[64]

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[58] Arberry, *Muslim Saints*, pp. 290–291; cf. Molé, *Mystiques*, pp. 75–76.
[59] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 2, pp. 192–217.
[60] Chabbi, "Remarques," pp. 68–69 and passim.
[61] Arberry, *The Doctrine*, p. 91; cf. Ibn al-Qayṣarānī, *Ṣafwat al-taṣawwuf*. Ed. by
Ghadā al-Muqaddam ʿAdra, Beirut, 1995, p. 96.
[62] On him see Chapter 2 of this book.
[63] Bulliet, *Patricians*, p. 43.
[64] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 125–129.

In a like vein, both the Malāmatī and the *futuwwa* leaders urged their
adherents to give preference to other people, no matter how sinful
and lowly, over their own selves (*īthār*) in order to avoid vainglori-
ous pretensions.[65] On the practical level, the members of both the
Malāmatiyya and the *futuwwa* associations seem to have practiced
common initiatory ceremonies and adhered to a special, albeit low-
key, dress-code. They also took a common negative stance vis-à-vis
the extreme manifestations of reliance on God (*tawakkul*) that were
not uncommon among the Karrāmiyya and some Sufi masters. Since
the membership of the *futuwwa* organizations and of the craft guilds,
which were also permeated by the Malāmatī principles, consisted
mainly of small-time merchants, artisans and shopkeepers, their lead-
ers could ill-afford to demand that their adherents should abandon
gainful employment. However, at least some of the movement's lead-
ers may have been "full-time" ascetics, at least toward the end of
their careers.[66] This did not prevent them from emphasizing self-
effacing probity and fair dealing, anonymous charity, moderation
and good works, all of which tallied well with the values of the
responsible middle class citizenry. The exact nature of the relation-
ships between the *futuwwa* and the Malāmatiyya traditions is hard
to establish due to their secretive character. According to R. Bulliet,
while the *futuwwa* conception of the ideal young man (*fatā*) as a con-
vivial and loyal squire who was "as adept at poetry as at archery
was not in consonance with the [Malāmatī] mystic's vision of a
chaste and fraternal disciple following his master on the mystic path,"
"neither was there dissonance between them. They coexisted."[67] The
exact extent of the interpenetration between these traditions and their
respective practices and institutions remains obscure.

With time, however, some antinomian-minded drifters and trick-
sters, who actively sought the blame of others instead of being ready
to humbly accept it, adopted the name Malāmatī. The subsequent
unfolding of the libertarian and antisocial potential inherent in the
Malāmatī teaching is associated with the activities of the wandering
dervishes who brought the entire movement into disrepute. A revival
of some of the original Malāmatī ideals and practices, especially the
avoidance of a distinctive garb and a loud *dhikr*, the prohibition of

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[65] Ibid., pp. 116–122.
[66] See, e.g., al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla*, p. 69, regarding Abū Ḥafṣ.
[67] Bulliet, *Patricians*, p. 44.

ceaseless voyaging and the cultivation of close ties with the people
of the bazaar, is sometimes associated with the Naqshbandī brother-
hood, which was active in Central Asia and India in the ninth/
fifteenth-thirteenth/nineteenth centuries and which falls outside the
chronological scope of this chapter.

Why Sufism? Some Observations Regarding Sufism's Ascendancy During Islam's Golden Age

Upon examining the ascetic and mystical movements of Khurāsān
and Transoxania in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, the
impression one gains is that of considerable diversity. The gradual
expansion and eventual ascendancy of Iraqi Sufism in these areas,
which began in the first quarter of the fourth/tenth centuries and
gained momentum in the next two centuries, has not yet found a
satisfactory explanation in scholarly literature. Some investigators tend
to attribute it to "the efficacy of its [i.e., Sufism's] powerful synthe-
sis of individualist and communalist tendencies," which allowed it to
"disenfranchise both the Karrāmiyya and Malāmatiyya by sapping
them of their spiritual thrust and absorbing their institutional fea-
tures."[68] Others emphasize the role of the powers-that-be in delib-
erately promoting Sufism over against the rival ascetic and mystical
trends which eventually disappeared from the historical scene. In this
view, the secular rulers found the loosely structured, urban,
middle-class Sufism to be more "manageable" than the lower class and
largely rural Karrāmiyya or the secretive Malāmatiyya.[69] Finally,
some Western authors argue that the fierce factional struggle among
several religious and legal schools in Nīshāpūr and in other cities of
Khurāsān and Transoxania may have influenced the fortunes of the
rival ascetic and mystical tendencies, propelling the Ṣūfiyya to the
forefront and leaving their opponents on the fringes of the society.
    Be this as it may, in the final account, out of this struggle for
domination Sufism emerged triumphant, taking on board both the
Karrāmī institution of the *khānaqā* and the Malāmatī *futuwwa* lore
and putting them to good use. Apart from the possible religio-political

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[68] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 31.
[69] Chabbi, "Réflexions"; idem, "Remarques."

factors just mentioned, Sufism's eventual success was secured by the
vigorous propaganda of its values that was launched by a number
of Baghdad-trained Sufis in the first decades of the fourth/tenth
century. The reason for their emigration to the eastern lands of the
Caliphate remains obscure, although it has been repeatedly suggested
that it came on the heels of al-Ḥallāj's trial and execution which
triggered a wave of harsh prosecutions against his suspected sympa-
thizers.[70] Of these Sufi émigrés, Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī was to play an
especially prominent role in the dissemination of the Iraqi style mys-
ticism. A student of al-Junayd and al-Nūrī, he emigrated to Khurāsān
at a relatively young age and after long peregrinations settled in
Merv, where he died around 320/932. As with al-Junayd, al-Wāsiṭī
carefully disguised the essence of his mystical teaching under obscure
images and cryptic allusions. Nevertheless, his mystical discourses
seem to have irritated some literalist scholars, who were not accus-
tomed to this abstruse manner of expression.[71] Their suspicions may
explain why for many years he wandered from one town to another,
until he was finally welcomed by the inhabitants of Merv who showed
tolerance toward his mystical discourses. His terminology and world
of ideas reveal his profound debt to the teachings of the Baghdad
school.[72] Although some of his statements may be interpreted as a
veiled criticism of the local versions of ascetic and mystical piety,[73]
his major disagreement with his Khurāsānī colleagues had to do with
their educational methods. On his arrival in Nīshāpūr, he met some
disciples of the Malāmatī master Abū 'Uthmān al-Ḥīrī. In response
to his question about their master's teaching method, they told that
the latter commands them to "be obedient much, but always keep
in sight [our] shortcomings." To the disciples' dismay al-Wāsiṭī pro-
claimed Abū 'Uthmān's method to be a pure Magianism (*majūsiyya*),[74]
since, in his view, one should be totally oblivious of one's acts of
piety and obedience, focusing instead on Him Who is the source of

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[70] Massignon, *Passion*, vol. 3, passim; cf. Chabbi, "Réflexions," pp. 48–53 and
idem, "Remarques," passim.
[71] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, p. 154.
[72] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 2, pp. 267–411.
[73] E.g., al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla*, p. 439, concerning the necessity to maintain a bal-
ance between fear and hope (cf. Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, above).
[74] He was probably referring to the Manichean concern with perfecting one's
piety through ascetic exercises. At that time Manichaens were still active in both
Mesopotamia and Persia.

all obedience.[75] This episode helps explain why al-Wāsiṭī subsequently warned his followers against visiting Khurāsān, where their faith could be "corrupted." It is on the basis of such flimsy evidence that some Western scholars argued that there was a serious rift between the Malāmatiyya of Khurāsān and the newly-implanted Ṣūfiyya of Iraq—a rift, so goes the argument, that was mended by the authors of the classical Sufi manuals and histories, most of whom came from Khurāsān or Transoxania.[76] This may well have been the case. One can, however, as well argue that we are dealing here with the personal preferences of, or rivalries between, individual Sufi masters rather than a broad ideological conflict between adherents of competing ascetic and mystical schools. Thus, for example, on the issue of the need to maintain a delicate balance between fear of God and hope for his mercy (possibly in opposition to the "hopeful" stance of Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh) Abū ʿUthmān and al-Wāsiṭī display a remarkable unanimity.[77] Likewise, the Malāmatiyya and the Ṣūfiyya were in complete agreement over many other critical issues of ascetic and mystical theory and practice.

At the same time, there is no denying that Iraqi Sufism aggressively disseminated its doctrines, spiritual genealogies, authorities and teaching techniques in the eastern lands of the Caliphate. Nor should we ignore the gradual but inexorable displacement by Iraqi Sufism of the local ascetic and mystical traditions. In less then one century, from the early fourth/tenth until its end, the number of pious individuals designated as "Sufi" rose, in Nīshāpūr, from a mere five to forty eight.[78] The remarkable numerical growth and doctrinal dominance of the Iraqi tradition was accompanied by the emergence of a vast body of apologetic literature that presents us with an idealized and seamless picture of Sufism's history. Only now Western scholars of Islamic mysticism are beginning to take this picture *cum grano salis.* Before turning to the work of the creators of this standard Sufi historiography, I would like to give a brief account of the mystics who fall outside the ascetic and mystical traditions just outlined.

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[75] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 2, pp. 347–348; cf. Arberry, *The Doctrine*, p. 91 and Chabbi, "Réflexions," p. 46.

[76] Ibid., pp. 46–47.

[77] Al-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt*, pp. 172 and 303; cf. Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm*, p. 95.

[78] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 64; cf. Bulliet, *Patricians*, p. 41, which mentions the progression from three to forty-three Sufis in Nīshāpūr.

Isolated Cases: al-Niffarī, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Masarra

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī (d. after 366/977) is "a sufficiently obscure figure in the history of Islamic Mysticism."[79] Standard Sufi literature ignores him almost completely, probably due to his lack of affiliation with any established mystical school or a renowned spiritual master. Judging from his name, he came from the ancient town of Nippur (Niffar) in Iraq. His literary works, "The Book of Spiritual Stayings[or Standings]" (*Kitāb al-mawāqif*) and "The Book of Spiritual Addresses" (*Kitāb al-mukhāṭabāt*), deal with his internal progress on the path to God and contain no references whatsoever to his outward life. The little that we know about al-Niffarī's life is derived from the statements made by his editor and commentator ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), who described him as "a wanderer in deserts," who "dwelt in no land, neither made himself known to any man." According to al-Tilimsānī, al-Niffarī resided at Niffar and Baṣra, in Iraq, and died in an Egyptian village at an unknown date.[80] However, since al-Tilimsānī neglects to give a reference to the source of this information, his account is to be taken with caution. In al-Tilimsānī's view, al-Niffarī himself was not responsible for the setting in order of his works. He was, in all probability, a retiring visionary who took no interest in popularizing his breathtaking mystical insights which focus on his direct encounters with the Divine Essence. In the course of these encounters, the mystic is engaged in dialogues with God. Their contents were probably recorded by one of his companions or relatives, since, according to al-Tilimsānī, "the Shaykh never composed any book."[81] Al-Niffarī's most original contribution to the Sufi theory is the notion of "staying" or "standing" (*waqfa* or *mawqif*), a term that may have been borrowed from the eschatological traditions describing the events of the Last Day.[82] Each section of al-Niffarī's "Book of Stayings" opens with the phrase "God stationed (or stayed) me before Him . . . and said to me . . .," whereupon he sets out to recount the wisdom that he acquired in the course of these dialogues "between the two essences."[83] When al-Niffarī's narrative reaches its apogee, "it becomes

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[79] A. Arberry, *The Mawāqif and Mukhāṭabāt of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdi 'l-Jabbār al-Niffarī*, London, 1935, p. 1.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 352–353, note 5; cf. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 281.

[82] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 64.

[83] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 357–358; cf. Arberry, *The Mawāqif*, pp. 14–16.

difficult to know who is speaking to whom, and the identities shift at the center of the standing."[84]

Al-Niffarī's mystical method can be described as an attempt to re-live and re-enact the experience of the prophet of Islam, which he acquired during his spiritual ascent through seven heavens into the presence of God.[85] As with the prophet, the mystic becomes a companion and confidant of God (*jalīs Allāh*) and thus privy to his most intimate secrets.[86] These secrets, however, must not be divulged to the public at large—a precept that accounts for the nature of al-Niffarī's style. Deliberately opaque and elusive, it was deemed to protect his insights from the uninitiated. The idea of an intimate dialogue between the mystic and his Divine Companion probably goes back to al-Bisṭāmī's *shaṭaḥāt*. However, written more than century later, al-Niffarī's inspired dialogues strike us as more subtle and perhaps also more tragic. Despite their highly technical language and recondite style, they "have an authentic beauty and seem to possess the ring of genuine mystical experience."[87] Here is a passage from al-Niffarī's *Mawāqif* in A. J. Arberry's translation:[88]

> He [God] stayed me in Death; and I saw the acts, every one of them, to be evil. And I saw Fear holding sway over Hope; and I saw Riches turned to fire and cleaving to the [hell] fire; and I saw Poverty an adversary adducing proofs;[89] and I saw every thing, that it had no power over any other thing; and I saw this world to be a delusion, and I saw the world of Divine Power [i.e., heavens] to be a deception. And I cried out "O Knowledge!" and it answered not. Then I cried out, "O Gnosis!", and it answered me not. And I saw everything, that it had deserted me; and I saw every creature, that it had fled from me; and I remained alone . . . And He said to me, "Where is thy knowledge?" And I saw the Fire. And He said to me, "Where is thy gnosis?" And I saw the Fire. And He unveiled for me the knowledge of His uniqueness and incomparability and the Fire died down. And He said to me, "I am thy Friend." And I became firmly established. And He said to me, "I am thy Gnosis." And I spoke. And He said to me, "I am the One who seeks you." And I went forth.

As we can see from the passage just quoted, al-Niffarī puts "staying" above both ordinary mystical gnosis (*ma'rifa*) and the formal,

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[84] Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 283.
[85] Qur'ān, 53:1–11.
[86] Nwiya, *Exégèse*, p. 358.
[87] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 64.
[88] Arberry, *The Mawāqif*, p. 52; I have made some minor changes to Arberry's text.
[89] Or, perhaps, "I saw Poverty to be lacking."

traditional knowledge found in the scriptures and in their commen-
taries (*ʿilm*). In fact, he sees the former two as veils between God
and man. *Waqfa*, on the other hand, is "the light (*nūr*) of God, with
which darkness cannot dwell;" it is also "the destroying hand of
God," which eliminates "everything upon which it comes."[90] The
mystic in the state of *waqfa* (*wāqif*) is nearer to God than any other
thing; he almost transcends the condition of humanity (*bashariyya*) by
removing one after another the veils that separate him from God:
"He alone . . . is separated from limitation, for he is beyond every
limit."[91] In a beautiful metaphor, al-Niffarī describes *waqfa* as "the
wind (*rīḥ*) of God" that carries the mystic to his Divine Master.[92]
Through this lofty experience the mystic becomes the channel of
God's will and grace and thus may acquire the creative powers per-
taining to his Master. In such a state, he can bring things into tem-
poral existence just by repeating the divine fiat "Be!"[93] In the end,
the *wāqif* is granted a direct vision of his Creator.[94] Contrary to the
view of the majority of Muslim scholars,[95] al-Niffarī not only admitted
that the perfected mystic can contemplate God in this world, but
also considered it to be essential for the beatific vision in the world
to come. According to al-Niffarī, "whoso sees not God in this world,
will not see Him" in the hereafter.[96] Some elements of al-Niffarī's
teachings, namely that God can be seen in a human form and that
he has secrets that must not be disclosed to each and every one,
resemble the doctrines of the Sālimiyya.[97] His indebtedness to this
theological and mystical school is quite feasible both chronologically
and geographically. However, in admitting it we are entering the
realm of conjecture, for there is not enough evidence to either sup-
port or disprove it. Despite the undeniable originality of al-Niffarī's
insights, we can detect the elements already familiar to us from the
teachings of al-Junayd's circle and, especially, those of al-Ḥallāj.[98]
This impression is further confirmed by several eschatological pas-
sages in al-Niffarī's works in which he appears to identify himself

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[90] Ibid., p. 14.
[91] Ibid., p. 16.
[92] Ibid., p. 14.
[93] Qurʾān, 2:117; Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 386–387; cf. Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 54.
[94] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, p. 359.
[95] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 411–424.
[96] Arberry, *The Mawāqif*, pp. 18–19.
[97] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 54.
[98] Nwyia, *Exégèse*, pp. 386–387.

with the divinely guided eschatological world-restorer (*al-mahdī*). The authenticity of these passages is, however, doubtful,[99] although one cannot deny that, even without them, al-Niffarī's esoteric views could be shocking to his contemporaries. This would explain why his legacy nearly sank into oblivion out which it was brought back into the spotlight by such sophisticated later mystics as Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), al-Tilmsānī and al-Shushtarī (d. 668/1269).

Another isolated mystical thinker who does not readily fit into the Sufi tradition of Iraq came from the town of Tirmidh (Termez), on the upper Oxus. His nickname, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, i.e., "The Sage of Termez," indicates his affiliation to a loosely structured group of eastern Muslim thinkers whom some later Sufi writers described as the "Ḥakīmiyya." Represented by several scholars of a mystical slant who resided in Khurāsān and Transoxania, the Ḥakīmiyya may have had some links to the Karrāmiyya. However, its members seem to have espoused a more elitist version of mystical piety than either the Ṣūfiyya or the Karrāmiyya of the age.[100] In any event, the Ḥakīmiyya "sages" considered themselves to be superior to "ordinary" Sufis, whom they allotted an inferior rank in their hierarchy of divine knowers.[101]

Born in the family of an Arab *ḥadīth* scholar in the first decade of the third/ninth century,[102] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Tirmidhī spent his early years studying *ḥadīth* and Ḥanafī jurisprudence.[103] When he was twenty-seven, al-Tirmidhī left for Mecca to perform a pilgrimage. En route, he spent some time at Kūfa, Baghdad and Baṣra studying *ḥadīth*. During his travels, he acquainted himself with several mystical treatises, including a book by the Syrian Sufi Aḥmad b. ʿĀṣim al-Anṭākī.[104] He may also have studied with such Iraqi Sufis as Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī, Yaḥyā al-Jallāʾ and Aḥmad b. Ḥaḍrūya.[105]

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[99] According to A. Arberry, "Niffarī was not interested in Mahdī pretensions: his kingdom was of the next world, not of this," *The Mawāqif*, p. 7; cf. ibid., pp. 198 and 215.

[100] Radtke, "Theologen," pp. 562–563; idem. *Al-Ḥakīm*, pp. 94–95; S. Sviri, "Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī Movement in Early Sufism," in: L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism*, London and New York, 1993, pp. 583–613; van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 2, p. 565.

[101] Van Ess, ibid.

[102] Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm*, pp. 12–15.

[103] Ibid., 16.

[104] Ibid., p. 34.

[105] Ibid., 17 and 36.

On his return to Termez, he experienced a mystical conversion,[106] adopted an ascetic lifestyle and devoted himself fully to pious meditation. Around 261/874, his daring discourses on love of God and on God's intimate "friends" (*awliyāʾ*) were interpreted by some local ulama as heresy and sedition. Accused of corrupting public faith and morals and of laying claim to prophesy, he was summoned to Balkh, where the local ruler interrogated him in person in order to test his faith.[107] Two of his writings, "The Seal of the Saints" (*Khatm al-awliyāʾ*) and "The Deficiencies [of Worship]" (*ʿIlal al-ʿubūdiyya*) were cited by his accusers, the hostile scholars of Termez, as evidence of his perfidy and unbelief. After a protracted trial, he succeeded in convincing the ruler of his orthodoxy. The tables were now turned on his detractors as the ruler ordered their expulsion from Termez. Al-Tirmidhī, on the other hand, was allowed to return to his native town. In 269/883, his pious wife had a dream in which she saw al-Tirmidhī accede to the rank of the forty "veracious ones" (*al-ṣid-dīqūn*). In 285/898, he is said to have come to Nīshāpūr, where he held lectures on *ḥadīth*. He died around 320/932, although the exact date of his death is still a matter of debate.[108]

Al-Tirmidhī's intellectual universe consisted of diverse, sometimes diametrically opposed, strands of Islamic thought. He was first and foremost a mystic who did not seek to develop a systematic and logical doctrine.[109] As many mystical thinkers before and after him, he sought to describe his elusive visions and fleeting experiences from a variety of different viewpoints. Although he, for the most part, expressed himself in an Islamic idiom, wittingly or not he borrowed his ideas from pre-Islamic sources. At the same time, in many of his works he presents himself as a bona fide traditionalist, who refused to engage in a rational analysis of the Qurʾān or the Sunna. In a like vein, he was suspicious of rationalist theology (*kalām*) and resented theological polemic. Despite his Ḥanafī background, he rejected the use of reason and of personal opinion (*raʾy*) in theological and legal matters. In political theory, he was inclined towards the strict Sunnī communalism of the Ḥanbalīs to the point of giving preference to the Umayyads over the ʿAbbāsids. At the same time, he showed little

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[106] Ibid., p. 83.
[107] Ibid. 16.
[108] Ibid., p. 18.
[109] Ibid. 59.

respect for a dry literalist, exoteric interpretation of the Revelation and encouraged his readers to seek its hidden, esoteric meaning. He took a similar allegorical approach to the *ḥadīth* and the Sharīʿa. In line with the position of his contemporary al-Ashʿarī and his followers, al-Tirmidhī reduced the hundred names of Allāh to ten major attributes. As al-Ashʿarī, he was strictly opposed to philosophy. At the same time, he did not seem to object to his sobriquet "al-Ḥakīm" (the "sage" or "wise man"), which was sometimes applied to philosophically minded Muslim thinkers of mystical propensities. Despite his Sunnī leanings, he made use of some esoteric Shīʿī ideas. This, however, did not prevent him from attacking the Shīʿī doctrine of the imāmate. The existence of such contradictory trends within the intellectual system of one and the same individual attests not only to the breadth of his intellectual interests, but also to the relative freedom of the religious thought of the age, which was still in a state of flux. In addition to various religious tendencies, al-Tirmidhī's work was influenced by the scientific and alchemical theories of his time. All these various strands of religious and philosophical thought form, in the work of al-Tirmidhī, a rather exotic synthesis in which philosophical ideas and lyrical sentiment mix freely with mystical experiences without any concern for logic, coherence or compatibility. His discourses are riddled with paradoxes: he derives earth from water and light from the refinement of water; he claims that though the element of fire is absent from man, the earth of which his body is composed is capable of blazing with the fire of passion; likewise, he argues that when the heart of an initiate is purged of evil tendencies it turns into "an ingot of pure silver," as in an alchemical reaction, and so on.

Al-Tirmidhī's cosmology exhibits traces of neo-Platonist and Pythagorean thought, which was widespread at that time among some refined members of the Muslim élite, in the East as well as in the West. A strict monotheist, he consistently described God as the only true reality. At the same time, he acknowledged the possibility for a man to reach his Creator by means of a gradual mystical ascension. Its stages roughly corresponded to the stations (*manāzil*; sing. *manzila*) of the mystical path, namely, repentance (*tawba*), abstinence (*zuhd*), self-control (*riyāḍat al-nafs*),[110] illumination,[111] desperation, reprieve,

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[110] Lit. "the taming of the soul."
[111] Ibid., pp. 83–89.

bewilderment, and the stage at which God manifests himself to the seeker.

Basing himself on several Qur'ānic verses, al-Tirmidhī constructed a myth of Adam and Iblīs which replaces "the fall of the soul" with the "casting of divine light." According to this myth, God has created all beings in order for them to serve his most perfect creature, man. The act of creation occurred through the agency of God's Creative Command, *kun* (Be!), with only one exception: God created man with his own hands, thereby setting him apart from the other creatures. Before the creation of Adam, mankind went through three preparatory phases. During the first phase, called the "Day of Destinies" God "seeded" men in the earth and determined their status as believers or infidels by sprinkling them with his light at random and according to his will. In accordance with the quantity of light received, men were divided into three groups: infidels, hypocrites and believers. Of the latter, the mystical gnostics or friends of God enjoyed a special status, since God blessed them with his right hand.

Fifty thousands years later, during the second phase of divine creative activity, God picked up a piece of clay and mixed it up with the "water of His mercy." To this mass he added the "light of gnosis" and the five components of intelligence. He then gave this mixture the finest physical form, by patterning the body of Adam upon his own image. After this had been accomplished, God infused into Adam's body divine "gnosis," the "light of life" and the spirit (which, in al-Tirmidhī's scheme, governs speech). After God had endowed Adam with this combination of elements, the first man "acknowledges his Lord" and makes a pact with him by reciting the profession of faith (*shahāda*). Adam's form, the light of gnosis and the spirit constitute, according to al-Tirmidhī, the "light of destinies" (*nūr maqādirī*) of which all of his descendants of necessity partake.

At the third stage of precreation, God brought forth the souls of future mankind from the loins of the their ancestor Adam, whereupon he demanded that they acknowledge his Lordship. Although God received the same positive reply from all of the souls, they were driven by different motivations: the souls of the future evildoers replied out of fear; afterwards they were lead astray by the Devil. The souls of the believers, on the other hand, replied out of love of God and a true conviction. God will reward them with his favour in the afterlife. Mankind's divine form, their vision of God in preeternity and the divine speech are described by al-Tirmidhī as

entities that pertain to the "light of the pact" (*nūr mīthāqī*). Every man's senses and intelligence recognize it by analogy with the "light of destinies" of which all of mankind partake to some extent.

Iblīs refused to bow before Adam, whose body and soul were made from a soil that he himself had trampled underfoot. He challenged Adam to prove his superiority over him. In the aftermath of man's fall, God declared that Iblīs should be able to rule only over the wicked. He would be leading them astray by appealing to their appetites and passions of the moment, which inhere in their fallible souls. God however accepted the repentance of Adam and promised to send prophets to the faithful in order to help them to vanquish the evil drives of their souls by appealing to a hundred virtuous traits of their character (which derive from the corresponding divine attributes), through reason, gnosis and the five components of intelligence.[112]

The fundamental duality of human nature, which springs from the conflict between man's heart/spirit and his soul/ego, results, in al-Tirmidhī's anthropology, in a multiplicity of organs and faculties. Thus he speaks of the external soul (which is nothing other than the body with its members and organs and which, due to its senses, already has some embryonic knowledge). In addition, al-Tirmidhī describes the internal soul which is located in the lung and which was fashioned by God from the soil trampled underfoot by Iblīs. Al-Tirmidhī distinguishes the heart (both the organ and the faculty); reason (located in the brain); and the spirit (located in the head, below the ears). Finally, he speaks of the five components of intelligence (located in the chest): intelligence proper (*dhihn*), memory (*ḥifẓ*), understanding (*fahm*), perspicacity (*dhakāʾ*) and knowledge. All the faculties, which Adam and his descendants received on the "Day of the Pact," form their inborn nature (*fiṭra*).

Thus, according to al-Tirmidhī, all men are endowed at the outset with "natural reason" (*ʿaql al-fiṭra*), which, in theory, should make all of them faithful servants of God. Their duty is to use this natural reason in combination with the five components of intelligence. The intelligence proper (*dhihn*), with the help of understanding (*fahm*), receives exterior knowledge (sensible awareness) in bulk. It then conveys it to the breast, upon the lining of which each idea leaves an imprint of its form. After that the *dhihn* communicates the ideas to the memory, which is also located in the breast. When the heart is

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[112] Ibid., pp. 64–65.

in need of a particular thing, it turns to the memory, illuminating
it with the "light of life" that resides in it. As a result of this process,
the memory shows the heart the thing that it is looking for.

From the outset, according to al-Tirmidhī, there existed rivalry be-
tween the heart and reason on the one hand and man's lower soul
(*nafs*) on the other. Charged with lesser functions, especially satisfy-
ing appetites, both licit and illicit from the viewpoint of the Divine
Law, the *nafs* is driven not by knowledge but by appetites. Appetites
are a soft breath, created from the fire of Hell. Located in a thin
vesicle between heart and lung and distributed throughout the body
by the blood vessels (like the demons), they bring delight to the lower
soul and are therefore the acolytes of Iblīs. The *nafs*, in al-Tirmidhī's
scheme, is thus the seat of such evil qualities as lust, uncontrollable
desire, fear, anger, doubt and forgetfulness.[113] Human beings, whose
appetites dominate heart and reason and who do not feel the need
to love God, are those whom God rejected on account of their dis-
regard for the "Day of the Pact." They become an easy prey to the
demons, who lead them on to polytheism and disbelief. On the other
hand, the evil drives of the soul can be vanquished through the
workings of the heart,[114] since God has endowed the believers with
the "light of reason." Through the door of the brain it pours into
the breast and illumines the things that the eyes of the heart wish
to see. The heart then proceeds to classify the objects of awareness
and to distinguish between the good and the ugly (evil actions leave
a black stain in the heart). Furthermore, to the "light of life" that
resides in the heart of his faithful servants God has added the "light
of monotheism." It is through this light that man acknowledges God
and proclaims his uniqueness. In so doing, man's "natural reason"
is actualized and then superseded by "reason of faith." Despite their
love of God, simple believers have nothing more than a utilitarian
and concrete knowledge; they retain their appetites which coexist
with the heart and with reason. Al-Tirmidhī repeatedly warns believ-
ers against falling victim to their appetites, which tend to accumu-
late in the breast, like soot or dust. When they exceed a certain
measure, they begin to prevent the imprisoned heart from observ-
ing the imprints of various ideas on the lining of the breast. As a
result, faith may give way to uncontrollable passions.

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[113] Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi," p. 611.
[114] Ibid.

After the believer has acquired a more-or-less complete awareness
of the exterior world, the knowledge, which is accumulated in the
chest and which can be observed by the eyes of the heart, is trans-
formed into "knowledge of the heart." By means of this knowledge
the believer's faith is further strengthened: the lowly desires of his
nafs turn into a desire for God; fear becomes fear of God; anger is
transformed into an anger for the sake of God; doubt becomes cer-
titude; idol worship becomes pure monotheism; and forgetfulness is
supplanted by determination to please God.[115] As a result, the believer
advances to a higher level of awareness. In observing the breast, the
heart discovers in itself and in the creatures of this world the attrib-
utes which pertain to, and are derived from, divine omnipotence.
Gradually, the heart begins to ascend towards the attributes of divine
unity and an even greater awareness of God, until it reaches the
highest level accessible to the believer. After that, the heart descends
back into the breast, bringing with it the quintessence of an incom-
parable knowledge. Heart, reason and intellect thus join hands in
illuminating the breast of the believer. Consequently, the light of
gnosis and of "monotheism" shine forth and, in the illuminated
breast, merge into one resplendent light, the "light of certitude" and
of love of God. All these lights correspond to the divine attributes
which are derived from the divine light, for the heart is like a mir-
ror where heaven and the world of divine power are reflected, allow-
ing the believer to witness the majesty of God. One can thus discern
the following hierarchy of human awareness, according to al-Tirmidhī:
"the reason of faith," followed by "the reason of knowledge and of
perception (*idrāk*)," which in turn is succeeded by "the reason of
right guidance" (*hidāya*) and "the reason of gnosis and supersensory
insight" (*baṣīra*).

In addition to the hierarchy of stages of mystical awareness, al-
Tirmidhī ranked the faithful in accordance with their respective near-
ness to God. In this system, ordinary believers fall into the category
of the *awliyā' al-tawḥīd*, "the [sincere] adherents of divine unity,"
who, despite their exalted status, still retain the appetites of their
lower souls. Above them he places four classes of friends of God,
who have achieved an exalted status in the eyes of God. Included
in the first category are the so-called "truthful ones." Despite their
love of God, they are attracted to the concrete realities of mundane

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[115] Ibid.

life. They are therefore engaged in a ceaseless struggle with their lower souls, with the aim of cleansing them of their appetites and a hundred diabolic traits. They also strive to gain full control of their members which are the instrument of the lower soul. Although they fulfil the requirements of the Divine Law to the letter, they shun supererogatory acts of piety for fear that their souls might lead them astray. Finally, they seek divine mercy in the hope that it would help them to ascend to a higher level of perfection.

If they succeed in entering the class of "the free and noble ones" (*aḥrār kirām*), God casts into their selves the lights of proximity and divine mercy which position themselves between their hearts and their lower souls in order to help the former to resist the onslaught of the soul's drives and appetites. However, even at this lofty stage, the soul and its appetites survive. Only after both have been suppressed fully, can one advance to the next class of God's folk.

This next class consists of the forty "veracious ones" (*ṣiddīqūn*). Although they are still not entirely free from their souls, they are completely dominated by love of God. They are distinguished from the friends of God occupying the lower stages of the hierarchy by their ability to receive inspiration directly from God and to see veridical dreams. While at this stage, the *ṣiddīqūn* begin to progressively assimilate, by means of divine grace, ten virtues that correspond to the principal divine attributes. Each of these virtues is acquired through conquering the spiritual domain associated with a particular attribute.

The seeker, who has reached the tenth domain, that of divine Unity, is granted the status of God's personal representative on earth. At-Tirmidhī calls this holy individual "the unique one" (*munfarid*) and grants him the status that is closer to that of the prophets than to that of the *ṣiddīqūn*. Such a person acquires up to a half and even more of the functions associated with prophecy, including the ability to receive divine revelations through "veracious dreams"—an idea that may have been borrowed from the Shī'īs.

In another classificatory scheme, al-Tirmidhī distinguishes between the people of truth (*ahl al-ṣidq*) and the people of divine grace (*ahl al-minna*). While the former have to exert themselves strenuously to escape the slavery of their appetitive soul, the latter proceed effortlessly from one stage of spiritual perfection to another, as was prescribed for them from eternity by the god-like traits of their character. It is for these saints that al-Tirmidhī reserved the status of *munfarid*.

Of al-Tirmidhī's numerous mystical ideas, his theory of the seal

of the saints—that is, the supreme saint of all times who brings
to an end the cycle of universal sainthood—has proved to be both
the most controversial and the most consequential. Al-Tirmidhī
may have borrowed this idea from contemporary Shīʿī theorists, who
assigned the status of the ultimate messiah and world-restorer to their
hidden imām, viewing him as the channel of divine grace to this
world. The Shīʿī concept, in turn, was probably formulated in response
to the Sunnī doctrine that presented Muḥammad as the last link in,
or the seal of, universal prophesy, which precluded any possibility
of direct communication between God and his community after his
demise.

Al-Tirmidhī's legacy left a deep imprint on the subsequent his-
tory of Islamic thought. His influence is perceptible in the works of
the great later mystic and preacher ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. In many
respects he can be seen as a precursor of Ibn ʿArabī, who quoted
him extensively in his works. Finally, the Shīʿī elements of his teach-
ing, which have just been pointed out, are an eloquent evidence of
the common roots of Sufi and Shīʿī esotericism.

In Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī (d. 319/931) we find another isolated mys-
tical thinker without any known spiritual or intellectual affiliation.
This fact, together with the originality and obscurity of his teach-
ing, effectively placed him outside the mainstream Sufi pale and into
the realm of heresy and freethinking. As a result, he was practically
unknown to the creators of the Sufi tradition, most of whom hailed
from the eastern lands of Islam and had little notion of mystical
movements west of Egypt. Ibn Masarra's relative obscurity is akin
to that of al-Tirmidhī. Yet, there are differences as well. Unlike al-
Tirmidhī, most of Ibn Masarra's works have been lost or destroyed
by his persecutors, when he was posthumously accused of heresy and
anti-government sedition (*bidʿa wa hawā wa fitna wa zaygh*).[116] Passages
from his works quoted by later authors show him to be a practi-
tioner of an extreme asceticism who constantly engaged in a subtle
self-analysis (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*) with a view to eliminating complacency and
purifying his acts of worship of any extraneous concerns. Together
with a group of devoted disciples he withdrew into a mountainous
retreat in the vicinity of Cordoba, where they engaged in acts of
"harsh worship" and in theosophical speculation. His puritanical

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[116] M. I. Fierro, "Heresy in al-Andalus," in: *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Ed. by
S. K. Jayyusi, Leiden, 1994, vol. 2, p. 900.

fervor is evident from his rejection of things that were normally per-
mitted by the Sharī'a. Combined with his acute interest in cosmol-
ogy and metaphysics, his ideas made him a natural suspect in the
eyes of his learned contemporaries.[117] Given the intolerant religious
attitude that prevailed in his native al-Andalus, it is no wonder that
he came to be portrayed by local Mālikī scholars as an out-and-out
heretic. Some European scholars uncritically accepted this polemical
image of Ibn Masarra and declared him a bona fide neo-Platonist,
"a follower of Pseudo-Empedocles" and an Ismā'īlī missionary. Recent
studies have dispelled these misconceptions[118] and they need not
detain us here. From the scant details about his life scattered through-
out Andalusī chronicles one can conclude that from a very young
age he was exposed to various eastern Islamic influences, including
Mu'tazilī theology and, more importantly, to the ascetic and mysti-
cal tradition of al-Tustarī's school. His long trips to Mecca and Iraq
later in his life point in the same direction. The exact sources of his
views, however, cannot be ascertained. His interest in cabalism and
numerology may have been ignited by his study of al-Tustarī's "Book
of the Letters,"[119] but the dubious attribution of this work makes the
link between the two thinkers somewhat tenuous.[120] Ibn Masarra's
fascination with rational sciences and, especially, with the inductive
method (*i'tibār*), which he used in order to establish the general laws
that govern the universe, does not necessarily render him a fully-
fledged philosopher. Rather he hews closely to the inspired wisdom
of the *ḥukamā'* sages on the lines of al-Tirmidhī and his soul-mates
in Khurāsān and Transoxania.[121] For Ibn Masarra, such sages, who
combine rational method with divine inspiration, were identical with
the "the friends of God" mentioned in many passages of the Qur'ān.
The sages obtain their gnosis both through rigorous ascetic exercises
and a thorough contemplation of God's creation. The fact that he
adopted some Mu'tazilī ideas, especially those that emphasized man's
freedom of choice and his responsibility for his actions, hardly makes

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[117] D. Urvoy, "The 'Ulamā' of al-Andalus," in: ibid., pp. 855–856; cf. Radtke,
"Theologen," p. 553.
[118] Ibid. and S. M. Stern, "Ibn Masarra, Follower of Pseudo-Empedocles—an illu-
sion," in: *Actos do IV Congresso de Estudios Arabes e Islámocos*, Coimbra-Lisbon, 1968,
Leiden, 1971, pp. 325–339; van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, pp. 273–274.
[119] C. Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn 'Arabī," in: *The Legacy
of Muslim Spain*. Ed. by S. K. Jayyusi, Leiden, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 915–917.
[120] Böwering, *Vision*, pp. 17–18.
[121] Radtke, "Theologen," passim; cf. Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism," p. 917.

him an enthusiastic advocate of the Mu'tazilī school in al-Andalus. It seems more likely that he chose them deliberately in order to strengthen his disciples' resolve to attain a pure and godly living without giving them the excuse of fatalism.[122] Unlike the philosophers whose speculative reasoning leaves them lost "in mazes without light,"[123] the gnosis of the sages is granted to them by God in return for their faithfulness to his commands. According to Ibn Masarra, the science of the hidden meaning and properties of the letters constitutes an integral part of this divinely inspired knowledge. Cognizance is a two-way process: while the inductive method allows men to decipher the universe that is an aggregation of God's signs, the knowledge of the esoteric meaning of the letters permits "the friends of God" to gain an insight into the most intimate mysteries of creation.[124] Enveloped in the thick layers of adverse criticism of his opponents, the conflicting assertions of various claimants to his legacy and fanciful legends, Ibn Masarra's real personality and teaching remain obscure. A campaign of persecutions against his direct disciples in 350/940 resulted in their forced recantations and the destruction of his works. The extent of his influence on later Andalusī mystics, such as Ibn Barrajān, Ibn al-'Arīf, Ibn Qasī and Ibn 'Arabī is still a matter of dispute among scholars. The latter's familiarity with Ibn Masarra's work is attested by his references to the writings of his controversial countryman.[125] One cannot, however, be sure whether Ibn 'Arabī cites Ibn Masarra's original ideas or their later renditions by his followers.

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[122] Van Ess, *Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 273.
[123] Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism," p. 917.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., pp. 918–919.

THE SYSTEMATIZATION OF THE SUFI TRADITION

The late fourth/tenth century was above all a period of construc-
tion and consolidation of the Sufi tradition. It witnessed the rise and
growth of the vast corpus of apologetic Sufi literature that contin-
ues to shape our understanding of Sufism's evolution across the ages.
In less than one century, between 356/967 and 465/1074, there
appeared dozens of treatises, histories and manuals that covered all
the major aspects of the "Sufi science" (*ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*).[1] They dis-
cussed such topics as the technical terminology of Sufism, the nature
of saintly miracles, the rules of companionship and collective worship.
Such discussions were supported by the authoritative statements attrib-
uted to those who were seen as the founding fathers of the Sufi tra-
dition, including those whose lives almost surely predated its formation.
The exemplary biographies of these revered early individuals pro-
vided later Sufi authors with a vast pool of data from which they
drew in an effort to articulate authoritative patterns of behavior and
ready responses to concrete moral and ethical dilemmas which their
readers encountered in everyday life. Apart from preserving and
handing on the teachings of the early Sufis, the authors of norma-
tive Sufi treatises, manuals and biographies pursued a clear apolo-
getic agenda. First, they were anxious to justify the movement in
the eyes of its critics, especially those Sunnī scholars who were
apprehensive of its potential to disrupt Muslim communal life. In
response, the advocates of Sufism tried to demonstrate that the state-
ments of the Sufi classics were in full agreement with the doctrines
of the founding fathers of Islamic law and theology, such as al-Ḥasan
al-Baṣrī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfiʿī and al-Ashʿarī.
Characteristically, the Sufi writers of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh
centuries routinely open their works with a set of doctrinal propo-
sitions which were meant to prove their loyalty to the "correct creed"
of Sunnī Islam. Obviously, their understanding of Sunnī orthodoxy

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[1] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 21–34.

was determined by their affiliation with one or the other theological
school or faction. As the collectors of ascetic and pietistic *ḥadīth* before
them, later apologists of Sufism sought to convince their readers that
elements of Sufi theory and practice were part and parcel of Islam
since its very inception. In an effort to show Sufism's orthodoxy to
the often skeptical contemporary ulama, they continually appealed
to the example and authority of the Prophet and his followers.

Unfortunately, the earliest samples of this apologetic literature have
not come down to us. All we have are the titles of, and occasional
quotations from, these early writings, which figure in later Sufi works.
Of the writings that appear to have been lost, one can mention what
may have been the first work of this genre: "The Generations [or
Classes] of the Devout" (*Ṭabaqāt al-nussāk*) by Abu Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī
(d. 341/952), a disciple of al-Junayd, who died at Mecca at the age
ninety four.[2] Patterned on the *ṭabaqāt* works of the contemporary
Islamic legal schools, theological factions, and professional guilds (e.g.,
jurists, theologians, poets, grammarians, and so on), Abu Saʿīd's work
was expressly designed to assert Sufism's legitimacy as a distinctive,
yet totally orthodox intellectual trend and devotional style. This work
engendered a host of later imitations and elaborations that pursue
the same apologetic goal. One can name, for example, "Stories of
the Sufis" (*Akhbār al-ṣūfiyya*) by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dāwūd
Pārsā (d. 342/953),[3] "Tales of the [Sufi] Masters" (*Ḥikāyāt al-mashāʾikh*)
by Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959), "Classes [or Generations] of the
Sufis" by Abū ʾl-Faraj al-Warathānī (d. 372/982), "Tales of the Sufis"
(*Ḥikāyāt al-ṣūfiyya*) by Abū Bakr Ibn Shādhān al-Rāzī (d. 376/986)
and several others.[4] These works, in turn, formed the foundation for
the classical Sufi text-books which gave Sufism its final shape and
orthodox tone, namely "The [Book of] the Essentials of Sufism"
(*Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī ʾl-taṣawwuf*) (usually translated as "The Book of
Flashes") by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), "The Nourishment
for the Hearts" (*Qūt al-qulūb*) by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996),
and "An Introduction to the Sufi Doctrine" (*al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl
al-taṣawwuf*) by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990). In addition,
mention should be made of the numerous writings by Abū ʿAbd al-
Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), especially his "Generations [or

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[2] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 66.
[3] Chabbi, "Réflexions," p. 37.
[4] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 20–21.

Classes] of the Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) and "The True Realities of the Qur'ān Commentary" (*Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*), and "The Epistle on Sufism" by Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074). To these one may also add the recently discovered work titled "Good Manners of the Kings [i.e., Sufi masters]" (*Adab al-mulūk*) by an anonymous author who was active in the second half of the fourth/tenth century.[5] A little later, we find the first collection of Sufi biographies in Persian, "The Generations of the Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) by 'Abdallāh Anṣārī of Herat (d. 481/1089). About the same time his contemporary, 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī of Ghazna (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077), composed the first Persian handbook on Sufism titled "Unveiling of That Which Is Hidden" (*Kashf al-maḥjūb*).

In what follows I will provide a brief account of the contents of these works and the backgrounds of their authors, whereupon I will proceed to outline some of the Sufi tenets expounded therein. Significantly, most of the writings in question originated in the eastern parts of the Muslim world. This may indicate that by the end of the fourth/tenth centuries the center of Sufi spiritual and intellectual activity was shifting from Iraq and Syria to Khurāsān and Central Asia. It was there that the mysticism of Baghdad and Baṣra was impregnated with the local ascetic and mystical ferment, giving a final shape to what is now known as "Sufism."

Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj and His Kitāb al-Lumaʿ

Our list of Sufi authors begins with Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988). A native of the city of Ṭūs in Khurāsān, he traveled extensively across Persia. He also journeyed to Iraq, Syria and even as far as Egypt. Through his association with the early Sufi historian Jaʿfar al-Khuldī he can be linked to al-Junayd's circle in Baghdad. Al-Sarrāj is said to have been on friendly terms with a leading representative of this school in southern Persia, Ibn Khafīf al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/982), who added a number of distinctive elements to Baghdad-style Sufism. Finally, al-Sarrāj had personal contacts with the circle of al-Tustarī's disciples in Baṣra, including the leader of the Sālimiyya school Aḥmad b. Sālim, whom he frequently quoted in his book. Through these affiliations and acquaintances al-Sarrāj was exposed

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[5] Radtke, *Adab al-mulūk*.

to a wide variety of regional and doctrinal trends in the early mystical movement. In spite of his Khurāsānī background, in his book al-Sarrāj presents himself as an exponent of Iraqi Sufism with its regional variations (primarily Baghdadi and Baṣran). His high renown in the eyes of contemporary Iraqi Sufis is attested by the fact that, at one point in his career, he was entrusted with the education and supervision of the ascetics and mystics who were associated with the Shīnīziyya mosque in Baghdad.

Al-Sarrāj's *Lumaʿ* differs in character from the works of Abū Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī and al-Khuldī who by and large limited themselves to providing the biographical sketches and disparate sayings of the authoritative Sufi masters of the past. In the *Lumaʿ* we find a fully-fledged critical analysis of the doctrines and practices of various Sufi groups of the time. Al-Sarrāj saw his chief task in demonstrating Sufism's rootedness in primeval Islamic tradition. Hence his attempts to trace its origins back to the time of the Prophet and his Companions at the beginning of the book. Here and throughout the subsequent narrative, he presents the heroes of early Islam as paragons of piety whom every true Sufi should try to imitate. After quoting Muḥammad's famous statement that proclaimed the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) of his community to be his only legitimate heirs, al-Sarrāj then proceeds to divide them into three subgroups: *ḥadīth* experts (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and Sufis.[6] In his mind, this division is based on three types of religious wisdom which each of these subgroups is supposed to exemplify, that is, the knowledge of the Qurʾān and the Sunna, the knowledge of the legal interpretation and application of these sources, and the knowledge of the true realities of faith (*ḥaqāʾiq*). In the subsequent narrative, al-Sarrāj not only seeks to place the Sufis on an equal footing with the other two groups of the learned, but also tries to convince his reader of the preeminence of the Sufi masters over all other groups of learned men. He, for instance, claims that only the Sufi masters are capable of living up to the high standards of personal piety and worship that are laid down in the Qurʾān and in the Prophet's Sunna. The members of the two other groups, in his view, do little more than skim the surface of the divine dispensation or rehash its precepts mechanically, without trying to implement them in real life. Conversely, the Sufis, in his view, have fully realized the noble character traits and qualities laid down in the

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[6] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 7–10 (Arabic text); cf. pp. 3–5 (English text).

Scriptures in their own lives. They have thus achieved the exem-
plary piety and serenity which set them apart from the common
herd of believers.[7] Not only are the genuine Sufis in complete con-
formity with the Divine Law, they are, in fact, the spiritual élite (*al-
khāṣṣa*) of the Islamic Community.

After this apologetic introduction, al-Sarrāj sets out to elucidate
the ideas, practices and terminology accumulated by Sufis over the
centuries. He devotes several chapters to the discussion of the states
and stages of the mystical path, the rules of Sufi companionship,
saintly miracles, and the controversial ecstatic utterances of some
early mystics. He also addresses what he sees as the theoretical and
practical mistakes which some of them are guilty of. In the words
of A. Arberry, al-Sarrāj's *Lumaʿ* is "extraordinary well-documented,
and abounds in quotations not only from the sayings and poems but
also from the letters of the mystics."[8] Al-Sarrāj's definitions of the
Sufi technical terms are precise and subtle, giving his readers a valu-
able clue to understanding sophisticated mystical texts. Each chap-
ter of his work forms an autonomous treatise on a given aspect of
Sufi theory or practice. At the same time, in an effort to categorize
the personal mystical experiences of individual Sufi masters, al-Sarrāj
has the tendency by put their accounts into a number of prefabri-
cated conceptual pigeonholes. This tendency comes to the fore in
his analysis of the stations and states of the Sufi path which attempts
to set them in neat triads, sometimes rather artificially. An honest
and well-informed thinker, al-Sarrāj does not conceal his own views
which place him squarely into the tradition of "sober" mysticism
personified by al-Junayd.[9] At the same time, he is not opposed to
such controversial Sufi practices as listening to mystical poetry and
music during Sufi sessions, provided that no prohibited musical instru-
ments be used by the participants. Al-Sarrāj's broad-mindedness is
also evident from his defense of the ecstatic utterances of al-Bisṭāmī
against his critics, including Aḥmad b. Sālim who held the mystic
of Bisṭām to be an infidel (*kāfir*).[10] This does not prevent al-Sarrāj
from denouncing what he perceived as Sufi errors and excesses,
thereby demarcating the limits of Sufi orthodoxy.[11]

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[7] Ibid., pp. 13–15 (Arabic text).
[8] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 67.
[9] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 55.
[10] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, pp. 390–391 (Arabic text).

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī

A less theoretical view of Sufism, which sets great store by practical self-discipline and a strict observance of Islamic rituals, is taken by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996). A native of Persia, he grew up in Mecca, where he attached himself to Abū Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī, a Sufi writer of Baṣran background who belonged to the circle al-Junayd. As a young man, Abū Ṭālib left Mecca to join the Sālimiyya of Baṣra, whereupon he went to Baghdad to study with al-Sarrāj. Possibly on account of his Sālimī propensities, his first public preaching was greeted with a sharp rejection and even stirred up a popular riot that caused him to temporarily withdraw from public view.[12] Abū Ṭālib's fame rests on his massive Sufi manual titled "The Nourishment for the Hearts" (*Qūt al-qulūb*). Modern scholars view this work as a detailed exposition of the moral and ethical precepts of the Sālimiyya school, which, as we know, was founded by al-Tustarī's disciples Muḥammad Ibn Sālim and Aḥmad Ibn Sālim. Abū Ṭālib's indebtedness to the Sālimiyya is attested by the frequency with which he quotes al-Tustarī and Aḥmad Ibn Sālim, whom the author describes respectively as "the master of our master" and "our master."[13] The apologetic thrust of the "Nourishment" is even more obvious than that of al-Sarrāj's *Lumaʿ*: Abū Ṭālib's book simply brims with long-winded quotations from the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth* and the respectable mainstream Sunnī opinions which are meant to underscore the perfectly orthodox nature of Sufi piety and customs. According to A. Arberry, "the pattern of the *Qūt al-qulūb* is a little reminiscent of the standard manuals of religious jurisprudence, with its minute discussion of the ritual practices of Islam, which are however treated from the mystical standpoint."[14] In Abū Ṭālib's work, meticulous discussions of standard Islamic rituals (such as ritual purity, various prayers and supplications, Qur'ān recitation, funeral procedures, the *ḥajj*, the giving of alms, the fast of Ramaḍān, etc.) and of mainstream beliefs (the punishment of the grave, the intercession

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 3, p. 89; cf. Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 26.
[13] Ibid., pp. 26–27.
[14] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 68.

of the Prophet, the events of the Day of Resurrection, the vision of
God in the hereafter, the characteristics of hell and paradise, etc.)
are interspersed with quintessential Sufi themes, for example, the sta-
tions and states of the mystical path (repentance, patience, gratitude,
fear, hope, renunciation of the world, reliance on God, contentment,
and love of God). Additionally, he deals with the issues of the per-
missibility of gainful employment, of pious self-scrutiny, and so on.
As with al-Sarrāj and perhaps even more forcibly, Abū Ṭālib claims
that Sufi teachings and lifestyle represent the authentic custom of
the Prophet and his followers, "transmitted first by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
and maintained scrupulously intact by relays of [Sufi] teachers and
disciples."[15] As time went on, so goes his argument, this original cus-
tom was corrupted by the mundane and self-serving concerns of its
learned bearers, who, in addition, diluted it with various reprehen-
sible innovations, most notably speculative theology (kalām), which
the author treats as totally irrelevant to the all-important salvational
goals.[16] According to Abū Ṭālib, as the true followers of the Prophet,
the Sufis strive to restore his precious legacy to its original purity.
An intricate fusion of the typical Sunnī precepts with the moral and
ethical values of Islamic asceticism which characterize Abū Ṭālib's
work received its final elaboration in al-Ghazālī's monumental master-
piece "The Revification of the Religious Sciences" (Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-
dīn). Here, long passages from Abū Ṭālib's Qūt are often reproduced
verbatim.

Unlike his "Nourishment," which catered to the needs of the begin-
ners on the Sufi path, Abū Ṭālib's other treatise, "Knowledge of the
Hearts," was explicitly aimed at the Sufi élite. Hence the stark con-
trast between the contents and language of the two works. Whereas
the "Nourishment" represents a "sober" and "disciplined" version
of Sufi piety meant for public consumption, the narrative of the
"Knowledge" is "marked by a definitely esoteric, enthusiastic Sufism."
The latter book indeed addresses such recondite and potentially con-
troversial issues of Sufi esotericism as the status of the Sufi gnostic
(ʿārif), the nature of divine unity (tawḥīd) and its implications for the
life of an individual mystic, the events of the primordial covenant
between God and men, the light of Muḥammad, and so on.[17] As in
the "Nourishment," in the "Knowledge" also Abū Ṭālib shows his
dependence on al-Tustarī's esoteric speculations about Muḥammad's

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., pp. 68–69; apud al-Makkī, Qūt, vol. 1, p. 160.
[17] Böwering, Mystical Vision, p. 27.

primordial light and the covenant between God and the human souls. However, in comparison to the "Nourishment," the impact of this work on the later Sufi thought was much more limited.

Sufism on the Eastern Fringe: al-Kalābādhī

The fame of another Sufi author of that period, Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990 or 385/995), rests mostly on his treatise titled "Introduction to the Doctrine of the Sufis" (*Al-Taʿarruf li-madh-hab ahl al-taṣawwuf*). He is credited with a few other works on *ḥadīth* and ethics, but they seem to have sunk into obscurity. The wide acceptance of al-Kalābādhī's mystical manual, which sought to "bridge the chasm between orthodox theology and Sufism, which the execution of al-Ḥallāj greatly widened," is due in large part to its brevity and lucidity. Unlike the works just discussed, al-Kalābādhī's "Doctrine" seems to have originated in Bukhārā, that is, at some distance from the traditional Sufi centers in Iraq and Khurāsān. It is therefore all the more surprising that the author not only demonstrates an intimate knowledge of Iraqi-style Sufism, but also presents himself as a champion of its most controversial exponent, al-Ḥallāj.[18] Al-Kalābādhī's familiarity with the Iraqi tradition indicates its wide diffusion among the Muslims of the eastmost fringes of the crumbling Muslim Empire.

As with his predecessors, al-Kalābādhī's principal purpose is frankly apologetic. He takes great pains to explain the origins, theological doctrine, concepts and practices of Sufism to the uninitiated in order to convince them of its legitimacy vis-à-vis Sunnī Islam. In the first section of his book he focuses on doctrinal issues. He tries to prove that the Sunnī teachings, which circulated in Transoxania under the name of Abū Ḥanīfa, were shared by every notable early Sufi master of the past.[19] Simultaneously, he attacks a number of Muʿtazilī precepts as being contrary to the teachings of the leading Sufi authorities. The peculiarity of al-Kalābādhī's approach lies in his acceptance of both the Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī and Ḥanafī theological positions as being equally orthodox—a view that Sufi writers of Shāfiʿī/Ashʿarī background, e.g. al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī, would hardly have subscribed to. Otherwise, the views laid down in the "Doctrine" are

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[18] One of his teachers was Fāris b. ʿĪsā al-Dīnawarī (d. 345/956), a student of al-Ḥallāj who fled from Iraq following his teacher's execution, Chabbi, "Réflexions," pp. 45 and 49.

[19] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 69.

more or less conventional. As his predecessors, the author describes
stations of the Sufi path: repentance, abstinence, patience, poverty,
humility, fear, pious scrupulosity, sincerity, gratitude, trust in God,
contentment, recollection [of God's name], intimacy, nearness, union
[with God], love of God, etc.[20] Additionally, al-Kalābādhī sets out
to discuss various Sufi terms and notions, including ecstasy and sobri-
ety, unveiling, the passing away of the mystic's self in God and his
subsequent return to his own conscience and attributes.[21] His nar-
rative consists almost entirely of thematically arranged quotations
attributed to the authoritative figures of Iraqi Sufism, namely (in
order of frequency) al-Ḥallāj, al-Junayd, al-Nūrī, al-Tustarī, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ,
al-Kharrāz, Dhu 'l-Nūn, and al-Wāsiṭī.[22] Representatives of the
Khurāsānī schools, on the other hand, are quoted rather sparingly
and sometimes unfavorably.[23] In the final section of the "Doctrine,"
al-Kalābādhī addresses some aspects of Sufi conduct and ethics with
an emphasis on the special graces and gifts that God bestowes on
his Sufi friends.[24] In spite of his apologetic agenda, al-Kalābādhī
frankly admits the existence of disagreements between individual Sufi
masters on various issues of theory and practice.[25] He also recog-
nizes that certain advanced mystical truths might confuse the pub-
lic and therefore should not be divulged to outsiders. His reticence
in this regard can be attributed to the campaign of persecution of
the Sufi followers of al-Ḥallāj in the aftermath of the latter's tragic
death in Baghdad.[26] In any event, many passages of his treatise are
explicitly geared to proving that Sufis harbor no political ambitions
and are concerned exclusively with perfecting their souls and acts of
worship.[27] Al-Kalābādhī's partiality for Iraqi-style Sufism and the dim
view that he takes of the ascetic and mystical traditions of his native
Transoxania and eastern Iran is evident from his lack of apprecia-
tion of the Ḥakīmiyya or the Karrāmiyya. He either relegates them
to a low rank in his hierarchy of gnostics or passes them over in
silence.[28]

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[20] Idem, *Doctrine*, pp. 82–104.
[21] Ibid., pp. 104–136.
[22] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 24; in all, al-Kalābādhī cites more than eighty
Sufi masters, Chabbi, "Réflexions," p. 42.
[23] Ibid., p. 52; Arberry, *Doctrine*, pp. 90 and 150.
[24] Ibid., pp. 137–167.
[25] Chabbi, "Réflexions," p. 42.
[26] Ibid., p. 43.
[27] Ibid., p. 45.
[28] Ibid., pp. 52–54.

The Systematization of the Khurāsānī Tradition: al-Sulamī

A little later than al-Kalābādhī wrote Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), whose legacy features a great number of treatises on the "Sufi science," including the oldest extant biographical collection titled "The Classes [or Generations] of the Sufis." In view of al-Sulamī's great importance for Sufi history, his personality and literary work merit a close examination. He was born at Nīshāpūr in 325/937 or 330/942 to a family of wealthy Arab settlers. When al-Sulamī's father, an ascetic of sorts, left Nīshāpūr for Mecca, he entrusted his son's education to his maternal grandfather, Abū ʿAmr Ismāʿīl b. Nujayd (d. 366/976–7). A well-known Shāfiʿī scholar, Ibn Nujayd had studied religious sciences under the leader of the Malāmatiyya of Nīshāpūr Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910) and is said to have met al-Junayd in his youth.[29] Al-Sulamī was formally initiated into Sufism by Ibn Nujayd's associate, the Ḥanafī judge of Ashʿarī propensities, Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980),[30] who conferred on al-Sulamī a certificate (*ijāza*) allowing him to teach his own pupils. Around 340/951, in confirmation of his status as an accomplished master, al-Sulami received a Sufi cloak (*khirqa*) from Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Naṣrābādhī (367/977–8), who, in turn, was initiated into Sufism by Abū Bakr al-Shiblī at Baghdad in 330/942. His long association with al-Naṣrābādhī further strengthened al-Sulamī's links with the Baghdad school of Sufism with which he had already been connected via his grandfather and al-Ṣuʿlūkī.[31] He was also in contact with Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, whose *Lumaʿ* he frequently quoted in his works.[32] An avid student of *ḥadīth*, al-Sulamī traveled widely throughout Khurāsān and Iraq in search of renowned *muḥaddithūn*, visiting Merv and Baghdad for extended periods of time. He journeyed as far as the Ḥijāz, but apparently visited neither Syria nor Egypt. His travels climaxed in a pilgrimage to Mecca, performed in 366/976 in the company of al-Naṣrābādhī, who died shortly after this. When al-Sulamī returned to Nīshāpūr about 368/978, his teacher Ismāʿīl b. Nujayd had passed away, leaving him a substantial sum of money, a house and a library. The house and the library soon became the

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[29] G. Böwering, "The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Sulamī," in W. Hallaq and D. Little (eds.), *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, Leiden, 1991, p. 44.

[30] Bulliet, *Patricians*, pp. 115–116.

[31] Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, p. 516; Bulliet, *Patricians*, p. 150.

[32] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 29.

center of a small Sufi lodge (*duwayra*) in the quarter of the town
known as *sikkat al-Nawand*. There al-Sulamī spent the remaining forty
years of his life as a resident scholar, paying visits to Baghdad on a
number of occasions. Towards the end of his life, he was highly
respected throughout Khurāsān as a Shāfiʿī man of learning and the
author of numerous Sufi manuals. Upon his death al-Sulamī was
buried in the Sufi lodge he had established.

Al-Sulamī was a prolific author who employed his future biogra-
pher, Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Khashshāb (381–456/991–
1064), as his attendant and scribe. Al-Khashshāb drew up a long
list of his master's works which mentions more than a hundred titles.
They were written over some fifty years from about 360/970 up
until al-Sulamī's death. Some thirty of his works are known to be
extant in manuscript; a few have appeared in print. Al-Sulamī's
legacy may be divided into three main categories: Sufi biographies,
commentaries on the Qurʾān, and treatises on Sufi ethics and cus-
toms. Each of these categories is represented by a major work. Al-
Sulamī's massive "History of the Sufis" (*Taʾrīkh al-Ṣūfiyya*), which is
said to have comprised the biographies of a thousand Sufis, is known
only through extracts quoted in later sources. It was probably an
amplified version of an earlier work of this genre by Ibn Shādhān
al-Rāzī, who died in 376/986 at Nīshāpūr. Al-Sulamī's "Classes [or
Generations] of the Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) seems to be a shorter
variant of that "History." It includes biographies of one hundred and
five Sufis that are accompanied by selections of their sayings. A volu-
minous work on Sufi ethics and customs titled *Sunan al-ṣūfiyya* is no
longer extant. Judging by the extracts, it was similar to al-Sulamī's
minor treatises on Sufi ethics that have circulated as independent
treatises, such as "Rules of Companionship" (*Adab al-ṣuḥba*) and "The
Shortcomings of the Souls and How to Treat Them" (*ʿUyūb al-nufūs
wa-mudāwatuhā*). They deal with the practice, moral character and
manners of the Sufis, which, according to al-Sulamī, are modeled
on those of the Prophet and his Companions. His principal com-
mentary on the Qurʾān, "The Truths of Qurʾān Interpretation" (*Ḥaqāʾiq
al-tafsīr*), is a voluminous collection of exegetical discourses attributed
to the early Sufi masters.[33] Based on the selections from the Qurʾān
commentaries by such Sufis as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 309/922), al-Wāsiṭī, al-
Tustarī, al-Kharrāz and al-Junayd, this work represents the first con-
certed attempt to put the art of esoteric exegesis firmly on the Muslim

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[33] Böwering, "Qurʾan Commentary," pp. 45–46.

intellectual map. From then on, allegorical interpretations of the Muslim Scripture became integral to the Sufi tradition alongside biographical, pedagogical and ethical literature. In a sense, al-Sulamī's *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr* "fulfilled the same function with regard to classical Sufi Qurʾān commentary as the famous *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* ['The Comprehensive Clarification'] of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) with regard to the early traditional exegesis of the Qurʾān."[34] In al-Sulamī we find a well-rounded and eloquent advocate of the Sufi tradition. Unlike al-Kalābādhī and al-Sarrāj, whose single-minded allegiance to Iraqi Sufism prevented them from appreciating ascetic and mystical movements in the Caliphate's eastern provinces, al-Sulamī, who was trained by the Malāmatī ascetic Ibn Nujayd, took great interest in the teachings of the Malāmatiyya and promoted its precepts in his writings.[35] It is significant that the majority of the pious individuals described in his "Classes of the Sufis" were natives of Khurāsān, although Iraqi Sufis were by no means ignored.[36] Furthermore, al-Sulamī dedicated a special treatise, *Risālat al-malāmatiyya*, to the exposition of the ideals of that movement, which he not only presented in a favorable light but also placed a notch above the Ṣūfiyya, citing the prudent concealment of their elevated spiritual state by the members of the former group.[37] To al-Sulamī goes the credit of preserving for us the precepts of a buoyant ascetic and mystical tradition that was eventually superseded by the Sufism of Iraqi origin. Thanks to him, we can redress, at least partly, the bias in favor of Iraqi-style Sufism promoted by its apologists, such as al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī[38] and Ibn Ṭāhir al-Muqaddasī al-Qaysarānī (d. 507/1113).[39]

Al-Sulamī's legacy, especially his biographies of the early Sufi masters, constitute an important direct source for the Sufi writers who followed in his wake. They are extensively quoted in such masterpieces of Sufi literature of the fifth/eleventh centuries as "Decoration of the Saints" (*Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*) by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), "Epistle on Sufism" (*Risāla fi ʾl-taṣawwuf*) by al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) and "The Classes [or Generations] of the Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) by ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089).[40]

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[34] Ibid., p. 56.
[35] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 69.
[36] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 28.
[37] Chabbi, "Remarques," p. 70.
[38] Ibid., pp. 71–72.
[39] Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *Ṣafwat al-taṣawwuf*.
[40] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 29.

Abū Nuʿaym's "Decoration of the Saints"

The great Shāfiʿī scholar and Sufi biographer Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī
wrote what appears to be the most comprehensive collection of
biographies and sayings of 689 pious individuals whom he described
as either "Sufis" or as their direct predecessors. Surprisingly, this
biographical encyclopaedia of great Sufis begins with accounts of the
pious words and deeds of the four Rightly Guided caliphs. It then
proceeds to present almost every famous Muslim scholar or ascetic
who came after them, including the Prophet's Companions and the
founders of the Sunnī schools of jurisprudence. Abū Nuʿaym was
born to a noble Persian family with strong Sufi connections (his
grandfather on mother's side, Ibn al-Bannā, d. 286/899, was a major
Sufi master of Iṣfahān). His father, a famous *ḥadīth* expert, provided
his son with an excellent education by placing him under the super-
vision of the greatest traditionalists of his native city. When local
resources were exhausted, Abū Nuʿaym set out on an educational
tour of Iran. Later he visited Iraq and the Ḥijāz. In 371/982 he
arrived in Nīshāpūr, where he enjoyed the company of many renowned
scholars of the age including al-Sulamī. His vast expertise in *ḥadīth*
attracted about eighty students, who are said to have resided in his
private house.[41] However, his popularity also made him many ene-
mies, most notably the leader of the powerful Ḥanbalī faction of
Iṣfahān Ibn Manda.[42] An acute animosity soon developed between
Ibn Manda and Abū Nuʿaym on account of the latter's condemna-
tion of Ḥanbalī "anthropomorphism" and his vigorous support of
Ashʿarī theology. As a result, Abū Nuʿaym was expelled from the
great mosque of Iṣfahān, which was then dominated by the Ḥanbalī
faction. Only after the city and the mosque were sacked and nearly
destroyed by the sultan Maḥmūd Subuktegīn, was Abū Nuʿaym able
to return to Iṣfahān and to resume his teaching there.

His written legacy consists of several minor treatises on *ḥadīth* and
at least two major works. Of these "Decoration of the Saints" is by
far the most renowned. A careful compiler, Abū Nuʿaym sought to
incorporate into it all the narratives that praised the exemplary piety
of pious men of old. To this end, he drew heavily on early *ḥadīth*

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[41] R. Khoury, "Importance et authenticité des textes de *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt
al-aṣfiyāʾ* d'Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī," in: *StI*, vol. 46 (1977), p. 77.
[42] Ibid., p. 80.

collections on asceticism, especially on the works of Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) and Asad b. Mūsā (d. 212/827). Slight textual variations apart, Abū Nuʿaym usually gave faithful renditions of the original narrative material found in these sources. As a *muḥaddith*, he paid special attention to documenting the traditions which he quoted; every pious precept or anecdote cited in the "Decoration" is "supported" (*isnād*) by a chain of authoritative transmitters. One feature that catches the eye of the reader is his dependence on his older contemporary and teacher al-Sulamī, whose lost *Taʾrīkh al-ṣūfiyya* must have served as a model for Abū Nuʿaym's *magnum opus*.[43] Another frequently quoted source is the work of the Sufi biographer Jaʿfar al-Khuldī.[44] This is not to say that in his presentation of pietist traditions he did not filter the material available to him in order to bring it in line with his understanding of religious orthodoxy and ethical propriety.[45] The selective nature of Abū Nuʿaym's approach to the Sufi tradition betrays his apologetic agenda that consisted in cleansing the Sufi tradition of potentially objectionable or embarrassing elements. In the introduction to his book, Abū Nuʿaym seeks to give a definition of correct piety; he advises moderation and condemns various Sufi excesses, especially the doctrine of incarnation of God in man (*ḥulūl*) and concomitant antinomianism (*mubāḥiyya*).[46] His intellectual preferences are evident from his omission of al-Ḥallāj's biography, which his older contemporary al-Sulamī dutifully included in his "Classes of the Sufis." To the same token, his biographical collection ignores the founder of the Ḥanafī legal school, whose representatives were strongly opposed to the Shāfiʿī theological faction with which Abū Nuʿaym was closely associated. It is worthy of note that only the last volumes of the "Decoration" are dedicated to those who can be described as Sufis *stricto sensu*. This section roughly overlaps with al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. The Sufi credentials of the majority of men and women whose biographies are cited in the earlier volumes of Abū Nuʿaym's masterpiece are rather slim, to say the least. By placing them on the same footing with the real Sufis of his epoch Abū Nuʿaym endeavored to legitimize the latter in the eyes of potential critics among the ulema. It is with this goal

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[43] Ibid., pp. 100–105.
[44] Ibid., pp. 77 and 109.
[45] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 31.
[46] Khoury, "Importance," p. 82.

in mind that he put the typical Sufi precepts and maxims into the mouths of Islam's "pious forebears" (*al-salaf*), that is, the exemplary Muslims of the first two centuries of Islam.

Al-Qushayrī's Sufi Manual

From Khurāsān came another great Sufi writer of the fifth/eleventh century, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (465/1072). He was born in 376/986 in the region of Ustuwa into a wealthy family of Arab descent. He received his early education in Arabic and polite letters (*adab*). A son of the country squire, he was also trained in marshal arts, horsemanship and archery. At the age of fifteen, he came to Nīshāpūr in hopes of reducing the taxes on a village he owned. While there, he developed a taste for religious studies and joined the circle of the famous mystic Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), who was the head of a popular religious school (*madrasa*). Not only did he become the foremost disciple of al-Daqqāq, but eventually married his daughter and succeeded him at the head of the *madrasa*. Additionally, al-Qushayrī studied Shāfi'ī law and Ash'arī theology under leading scholars of Nīshāpūr, including such luminaries of his age as Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarāinī.[47] Later on, he struck up friendship with younger Shāfi'ī leaders and assumed the position of a leader of the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī party in Nīshāpūr. He traveled widely in search of *ḥadīth* reports and is said to have visited Merv, Baghdad and the Ḥijāz. After al-Daqqāq's death, he joined the circle of al-Sulamī's disciples. They introduced him to the tradition of Iraqi Sufism, which, in Khurāsān, was represented by al-Shiblī's disciple al-Naṣrābādhī. After Nīshāpūr fell under the control of the fledgling Saljuq dynasty in 429/1038, al-Qushayrī was embroiled in the struggle between the Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī factions of the city. In 436/1045 he asserted his position as a leader of the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī party by issuing a manifesto in defense of the orthodoxy of al-Ash'arī and his followers. His activities as the head of the Shāfi'ī faction aroused the ire of its Ḥanafī opponents. When in 446/1054 the powerful Saljuq vizier al-Kundurī threw in his lot with the opposing Ḥanafī faction, al-Qushayrī was arrested and imprisoned in the citadel of Nīshāpūr. Before long however his followers released him by force of arms. In 448/1056

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[47] Bulliet, *Patricians*, pp. 151–152.

he accepted the invitation of the caliph al-Qāʾim, who commissioned him to hold *ḥadīth* sessions at his palace in Baghdad. Upon his return to Khurāsān, he had to settle in Ṭūs, since Nīshāpūr was still firmly under the control of the hostile Ḥanafī faction. Following the rise of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, who reversed al-Kundurī's policies and reestablished the balance of power between the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī parties, al-Qushayrī, by then seventy-nine years old, was able to return to his native city, where he remained until his death. His six sons were famous scholars in their own right. They spread the fame of the Qushayrī family far and wide.[48]

Although al-Qushayrī wrote on a broad variety of subjects, his fame rests primarily on his mystical works. Of these, his "Epistle on Sufism" (*Al-Risāla fi ʾl-taṣawwuf*), which was completed in 438/1046, is by far the most famous. In contrast to Abū Nuʿaym's *Ḥilya* or al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*, which simply present undigested masses of hortative and moralizing statements or biographical data arranged chronologically, al-Qushayrī's work provides "a carefully designed and admirably complete account of the theoretical structure of Sufism."[49] Due to its concision and lucidity, the "Epistle" has served as a standard (and perhaps the most authoritative) introduction to Sufism up to this day. As with the other Sufi books just discussed, al-Qushayrī's "Epistle" carries a clear apologetic message, casting Sufism as a legitimate and respectable Islamic science that is in complete harmony with the precepts of the Sharīʿa. The author is careful to differentiate between the true Sufis and their imitators, whose irresponsible behavior and statements tainted Sufism's image in the eyes of outsiders. Throughout his book al-Qushayrī seeks to cleanse Sufism of any unbecoming traits and extravagancies that hindered its admission into the orthodox Sunnī fold.[50] At the same time, he does not try to conceal from his readers the existence among the Sufis of conflicting positions on certain issues of theory and practice.[51]

Al-Qushayrī's "Epistle" consists of several sections. It opens with a series of brief biographies of the famous Sufis and their ascetic forerunners, who lived in the first three centuries of Islam. Many of these biographies were taken directly from al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*. As

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[48] Ibid., pp. 153–159.
[49] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 71.
[50] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 32.
[51] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, pp. 62–63.

his predecessor, al-Qushayrī begins his biographical section with
Ibrāhīm b. Adham and concludes it with Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Rūdhbārī
(d. 369/980). Next comes a section on Sufi terminology. Starting
with a definition of the mystical state (ḥāl) and its distinction from
the station of the mystical path (maqām), al-Qushayrī proceeds to
analyze some forty-five concepts of the "Sufi science" (ʿilm hādhihi ʾl-
ṭāʾifa). His exposition of the stages of the mystic's progress toward
God is far more detailed than that of his predecessor al-Sarrāj.
Whereas the latter enumerated only seven stations (repentance, absti-
nence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, contentment)
and ten states (witnessing, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, long-
ing, intimacy, tranquillity, contemplation and certainty), al-Qushayrī's
list features several dozens of additional terms, highlighting many
important nuances of mystical discipline and experience. He illus-
trated his analysis of the key Sufi notions by a broad array of author-
itative statements and poetic pieces that he traced back to the early
Sufi masters. Especially often quoted are the members of the Iraqi
school: al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, al-Tustarī, Bishr al-Ḥāfī, Sarī al-Saqaṭī,
al-Nūrī as well as Dhu ʾl-Nūn. By contrast, the local Malāmatī move-
ment led by Abū Hafṣ al-Ḥaddād and al-Ḥīrī is almost totally ignored.
The educational thrust of the "Epistle" is evident from the sections
that deal with the miracles of the Sufi saints, the rules of fellowship,
the relationship between the spiritual guide and his disciple(s), lis-
tening to music during collective gatherings (samāʿ), the notion of
sainthood (wilāya), and so. Throughout, al-Qushayrī portrays Sufism
as "a fairly rigid and clearly definable way of life and system of
thought."[52] His discussions of God's unity and of the relationships
between the divine Essence and its Attributes as well as of the notions
of faith and unbelief reveal his profound indebtedness to the Shāfiʿī-
Ashʿarī school of theology.

Sufism Speaks Persian: al-Hujwīrī's Kashf al-maḥjūb

Contemporary with al-Qushayrī's magisterial "Epistle" is what appears
to be the earliest formal exposition of Sufism in Persian, "The
Unveiling of That Which is Hidden" (*Kashf al-maḥjūb*), by ʿAlī b.
ʿUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 465/1073 or 469/1077). This

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[52] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 74.

Persian Sufi of the Ḥanafī denomination was born at Hujwīr, a suburb of Ghazna, in present-day Afghanistān. The few facts that we know about his life come mainly from his own references to it in the *Kashf*. He studied Sufism under Abū ’l-Faḍl al-Khuttalī through whom he is linked to the circle of al-Shiblī and al-Junayd. Additionally, he frequently mentions many other Sufi shaykhs from whom he benefited in the course of his long travels across the Islamic Empire. He appears to have spent a time in Iraq, where he first grew rich but later ran deeply into debt. His married life was brief and unhappy. At the end of his life, he was taken prisoner by an invading force and carried off to Lahore, where he ended his days. After his death he was revered as a saint and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage.[53] Of the ten or so works which he states to have written,[54] there remains only “The Unveiling.” Although scholars disagree over the exact date of its composition, it was, in all likelihood, written at Lahore, during the last years of al-Hujwīrī’s life, in reply to the questions of a certain Abū Saʿīd al-Hujwīrī. Its aim was not “to put together a great number of sayings by different shaykhs, but to discuss and expound the doctrines and practices of the Sufis.”[55] Although “The Unveiling” contains a conventional biographical section, biographical details of the Sufis and of their pious forerunners are largely omitted in favor of a careful examination of their theoretical positions. Before giving his own opinion, the author usually cites the opinions of earlier writers on the subject, refuting them if necessary; discussions of the problems of mysticism are illustrated by examples drawn from the writer’s own experience. This personal element distinguishes al-Hujwīrī’s work from al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, whose method of presentation is much more academic and formal.[56] The general plan of al-Hujwīrī’s book was influenced by al-Sarrāj’s *Lumaʿ*. In his narrative, al-Hujwīrī makes frequent references to the writings of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī.[57] As these and other Sufi writers of the age, al-Hujwīrī was anxious to demonstrate the compatibility of Sufi precepts and moral values with the doctrines of Sunnī Islam. Therefore, in presenting some controversial issues of the Sufi science that could irritate his non-Sufi readers, he carefully watered them down.

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[53] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, pp. ix–x.
[54] Ibid., pp. xi–xii.
[55] Ibid., p. xx.
[56] Ibid., p. xii.
[57] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, p. 33.

Although al-Hujwīrī does discuss the theory of the annihilation of the
human self in God (*fanāʾ*), he phrases it very carefully in order not to
be accused of preaching a substantive union of two essences, human
and divine. Likewise, he declares to be heretical any doctrine that
admits that the human individual could be absorbed, or dwell in
the Divine Essence. For him, *fanāʾ* is combustion by a fire: it changes
the nature of everything into its own nature, without however chang-
ing the essence of the thing burned. Throughout his treatise, al-
Hujwīrī warns his readers that the Sufi gnostic, no matter how
advanced, cannot be exempt from obeying the religious law. He shows
great caution in dealing with such controversial issues as ecstatic
behavior, music and singing during Sufi concerts and takes a dim
view of erotic symbolism in mystical poetry. He considers listening
to music and to the recitation of mystical poetry to be permissible.
However, he strongly denounces dancing. Strangely enough, despite
his moderate approach to Sufi self-discipline, he advises celibacy and
regards marriage as a serious impediment to the mystic's spiritual
progress.[58] Another peculiarity of al-Hujwīrī's Sufi thought is his con-
cept of the relationships between mystical states and stations. In his
view, in fulfilling certain requirements and practicing a rigorous self-
discipline the mystic can settle down permanently in a fleeting, tran-
sitory state. As a result, his state turns into a special station called
"steadiness," or "fixity" (*tamkīn*), which al-Hujwīrī considers to be
superior to an ordinary station of the mystical path. For al-Hujwīrī,
tamkīn serves as a "resting place" for the accomplished mystics, in
which they can achieve direct contact with God.[59]

   "The Unveiling" seems to be the first Sufi source to treat the Sufis
of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries according to the so-
called schools.[60] He enumerated twelve such schools and gave a brief
summary of the doctrines professed by their followers. Ten of them
he found praiseworthy, while the remaining two he vigorously con-
demned. Some of these schools, e.g. the Malāmatiyya or the Sālimiyya,
are mentioned in the Sufi treatises discussed earlier in this book,
while others seems to be unique to al-Hujwīrī's narrative. It is not
clear whether these sects actually existed or they were invented by
al-Hujwīrī in his desire to systematize the Sufi tradition. There is,

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[58] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, p. 364.
[59] Ibid., pp. 367–373.
[60] Ibid., p. 33.

however, every reason to believe that he often mingled his own personal views with the doctrines which he attributed to the founder of each mystical school. In discussing their tenets he tended to isolate the concept that he saw as emblematic of a given school (e.g., "sobriety" in the case of al-Junayd's school), whilst giving short shrift to the other elements of its *Weltanschauung*.[61]

In summarizing the role of the *Kashf* in the history of Sufi thought R. A. Nicholson has this to say: "Though Hujwīrī was neither a profound mystic nor a precise thinker, his work on the whole forms an admirable introduction to the study of Sufism: it . . . has the merit . . . of bringing us into immediate touch with the author himself, his views, experiences, and adventures, while incidentally it throws light on the manners of dervishes in various parts of the Moslem world. His exposition of Sufi doctrine and practice is distinguished not only by wide learning and first-hand knowledge but also by the strongly personal character impressed on everything he writes."[62]

Sufism with a Ḥanbalī Flavor: al-Anṣārī al-Harawī

Despite his affiliation with the Ḥanafī school of law that was, in the eastern lands of Islam, locked in a bitter struggle with the Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī faction, al-Hujwīrī's "Unveiling" squares well with the analogous works produced by Shāfiʿī scholars, such as al-Sulamī, Abū Nuʿaym and al-Qushayrī. The only instance in which his party allegiance makes itself felt is when he includes the founder of Ḥanafism, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān (d. 150/767), into his list of the pious forerunners of the latter-day Sufis.[63] This inclusion is especially significant if we remember that Abū Ḥanīfa was deliberately ignored by Abū Nuʿaym, a staunch Shāfiʿī scholar of Ashʿarī leanings and, therefore, a natural opponent of the Ḥanafī theological party. In all other respects, however, the apologetic message of the Sufi works we have just discussed is basically the same.

One legal and theological school that has so far received little attention is the Ḥanbalīs. Ḥanbalī views of Sufism varied widely from one period to another and merit a separate study. Here, I shall

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[61] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 64.
[62] Nicholson, *The Kashf*, p. xvii.
[63] Ibid., pp. 92–95.

focus on one of the greatest representatives of Ḥanbalī Islam ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089), "a man who was both a devout practising mystic and a theorist."[64] A native of Herat in present-day Afghanistān, al-Anṣārī was an infant prodigy who started to attend school from the age of four and learned to read the Qurʾān when he reached six. When he was only nine years of age, al-Anṣārī began to take down *ḥadīth* from renowned scholars of his native town, among whom was the eighty-year-old Shāfiʿī chief judge of Herat.[65] Although he had initially studied under Shāfiʿī ulema, he eventually abandoned the Shāfiʿī school in favour of Ḥanbalism, which he found more congenial to his temperament and religious views. Subsequently, al-Anṣārī pursued his studies at Nīshāpūr, Ṭūs and Bisṭām, whereupon he arrived in Baghdad. There he studied with the chief exponents of the Ḥanbalī tradition in the ʿAbbāsid capital. Upon his return to Herat, he met the great Persian Sufi Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Kharaqānī (d. 425/1033). A great admirer of al-Bisṭāmī, al-Kharaqānī was a typical charismatic visionary with no formal education who had no interest in high theological speculation. A semiliterate man, who did not know Arabic, he cast his intense mystical experiences in rhymed Persian quatrains and parables. They deal with the already familiar theme: the mystic's all-consuming longing for God that leads him to self-annihilation in the Divine Mystery. In a similar vein, al-Kharaqānī described the true mystic's lack of concern for heaven and hell, which is totally overshadowed by his concentration on their Creator. His accounts of the loving union between the mystic and the Divine evince his heavy indebtedness to al-Bisṭāmī's "intoxicated" mysticism.[66] Al-Kharaqānī's spontaneous discourses, which show no traces of analytical self-reflection, had a profound influence on al-Anṣārī, who considered the elder of Kharaqān to be the greatest mystic of all times.[67] Al-Anṣārī's rhyming invocations of God and the pieces of moralising advice he dispensed to his disciples are patterned on those of al-Kharaqānī's.[68]

Upon return to Herat, al-Anṣārī divided his time between teaching and polemic against speculative theologians, whom the Ḥanbalīs

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[64] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 71.

[65] S. Laugier de Beaureceuil, *Khawdja ʿAbdullah Ansari (396–481 H./1006–1089), mystique hanbalite*, Beirut, 1965, pp. 28–30.

[66] Ibid., pp. 65–67; cf. R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, reprint, London, 1974, pp. 87, 133–138, 145–146.

[67] de Beaureceuil, *Khwadja*, pp. 272–273.

[68] Ibid., pp. 286–309.

traditionally detested on account of their reliance on logic and syl-
logistic argumentation. As a result, he soon ran afoul of a number
of influential Ashʿarī theologians who had him exiled from Herat on
several occasions. Undeterred, he continued to denounce Ashʿarism
and Muʿtazilism in front of his students in the Sufi lodge which he
inherited from his Sufi master Yaḥyā b. ʿAmmār. His high renown
as an orator and mystic was acknowledged by the Saljuq rulers and
the ʿAbbāsid caliphs who declared him to be the greatest religious
authority of the age (shaykh al-islām) and showered him with expen-
sive gifts and flattering praises.

In spite of his vast knowledge of the Sufi tradition, al-Anṣārī was
a preacher and orator rather than a writer. It was only at the end
of his life and under the pressure from his disciples that he agreed
to dictate his principal works to his secretaries. Several of his treat-
ises present detailed accounts of the mystic's spiritual itinerary. Of
these, al-Anṣārī's "Stations of the Travelers" (Manāzil al-sāʾirīn) is by
far the most renowned. Written in response to the requests of his
disciples, it provides a brief account of one hundred way stations on
the path to God. They are classified under ten different rubrics: the
beginnings, the gates, the actions, the virtuous morals, the roots,
the valleys, the mystical states, the principalities, the realities and
the ultimate [stations].[69] Al-Anṣārī's way stations enumerated under
these rubrics correspond to both the states and the stations of the
traditional Sufi path. Each station of al-Anṣārī's scheme falls into
three levels of realization that correspond to the level of self-perfection
peculiar to the individual mystic. Al-Anṣārī's spiritual itinerary posits
awakening (yaqza) as the first and divine unity (tawḥīd) as the last
stage of mystical life. At the furthest reaches of the last station, God
himself bears witness to his unity, whereupon he imparts his testi-
mony to the chosen few.[70]

In the treatise titled "The Deficiencies of the Mystical Stations"
(ʿIlal al-maqāmāt), al-Anṣārī deals with the shortcomings of the tradi-
tional Sufi stations. He shows that they all are inevitably tainted by
duality as well as by the mystic's self-centered impulses, which dis-
appear only when he has reached the stage of tawḥīd. At that point,
all these deficiencies and veils fall away, and the mystic becomes
completely absorbed into the direct contemplation of God.[71]

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[69] Ibid., pp. 231–233.
[70] Ibid., p. 255.
[71] Ibid., pp. 274–285.

Al-Anṣārī's "Classes [or Generations] of the Sufis" (*Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*) was written in the Persian dialect of Herat. It was based on the oral lectures he delivered to the students residing in his *khānaqā*. Modeled on al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*, it is, however, more prolix and includes numerous personal judgements by the author (which are absent from al-Sulamī's prototype) along with numerous digressions, poems and rhymed invocations of God. Al-Anṣārī's comments on the Sufi masters of old bear a vivid testimony to the originality of his mind. In discussing the chief representatives of the Baghdad Sufi school, he gives preference to Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz and Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/916)[72] over the great al-Junayd.[73] Four centuries later the great Persian mystic and poet ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) used al-Anṣārī's *Ṭabaqāt* as the foundation of his magisterial biographical collection of the Sufis titled "The Breaths of Intimacy" (*Nafaḥāt al-uns*). Up to this day Jāmī's work remains the greatest in its genre.

Since al-Anṣārī fell heir to the line of spiritual succession that included al-Ḥallāj's supporters Ibn Khafīf and al-Naṣrabādhī, he suspended judgement with regard to this great Sufi martyr. As with many later Sufis, al-Anṣārī acknowledged the authenticity of al-Ḥallāj's experience. However he did not condone al-Ḥallāj's alleged "betrayal" of the divine mystery.[74] Unlike his more circumspect predecessors, al-Anṣārī did not mince words in stating his personal preferences concerning the status of individual Sufi shaykhs or some moot theological issues. With regard to the latter he remained firmly in the Ḥanbalī camp throughout his eventful life, as his polemical vituperations against the Ashʿarīs and the Muʿtazilīs eloquently demonstrate.[75] At the same time, he was appreciative of Sufis regardless of their theological affiliations. His attempt to develop Sufi piety within the framework of Ḥanbalī Islam is quite remarkable and belies the obstinate notion of the incompatibility between them, which springs from the critical attacks on Sufism launched by some renowned Ḥanbalīs, such as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), and, in modern time, Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792).

One could give a few more examples of Sufi literature from this epoch. However, the ones that have already been cited give us a

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[72] On him see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilde*, vol. 1, pp. 447–482.
[73] de Beaureceuil, *Khwadja*, pp. 266–269.
[74] Ibid., pp. 270–271.
[75] Ibid., pp. 208–221.

general idea of its contents and underlying polemical agendas. As we have seen, the bulk of this literature, with the possible exception of the work by an anonymous author titled *Adab al-mulūk*,[76] originated in the eastern lands of the Islamic Empire, especially in Khurāsān. Curiously, all these works, with the exception of al-Sulamī's, promoted the Iraqi version of ascetic and mystical piety, exemplified by such figures as Sarī al-Saqaṭī, Sahl al-Tustarī, al-Nūrī, al-Junayd, and al-Shiblī. As a result of this bias, the ascetic and mystical trends that were indigenous to these areas prior to the advent of Iraqi Sufism received little attention. The reasons for the bias in favor of the imported Sufi piety remain obscure, although one can surmise that they had something to do with the politics of the caliphal state and the cultural ascendancy of Baghdad in the early fourth/tenth century. These factors may have assured Iraqi Sufism's central position on the Islamic religious map. The fact that the authors of the works in question lived in the eastern provinces of the crumbling Empire may indicate that, in their time, the focus of cultural life was gradually shifting eastwards. This process brought about a cultural and religious revival that manifested itself in acute rivalries and dialogues between external and indigenous theological schools and devotional styles. The transition, in the eastern areas of Islamdom, from Arabic to Persian as the principal vehicle of ascetic and mystical ideas underlines this momentous transition in cultural orientation. In analyzing the Sufi literature from that epoch one should view it against the background of the overall religio-political situation in the areas where it originated. The tensions between the "imported" Sufi tradition of Iraq and the "indigenous" Karrāmiyya/Ḥakīmiyya movements as well as the role that the caliphal state and the city-based religious establishment played in securing the eventual triumph of the former seem to support this observation. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that Sufism often formed just one, albeit important, facet of the complex religious and world-orientational positions of its learned champions. Their theological views and juridical allegiances intrude in significant ways into their expositions of Sufi doctrines and cannot be readily detached from their Sufi predilections. In other words, we usually deal with well-rounded individuals, whose interests and religious and social attitudes were not limited to Islamic mysticism. This intellectual versatility is exemplified by such early

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[76] Radtke, *Adab al-mulūk*, pp. 13–21.

Sufi writers as Abū Nuʿaym, al-Qushayrī, and al-Anṣārī, all of whom
were actively involved in the heated theological debates between var-
ious legal and theological factions of Khurāsān. To portray them as
Sufis *par excellence* would mean to ignore their multiple intellectual
allegiances and multi-faceted personalities.

Given the diverse backgrounds and scholarly affiliations of these
writers, it is surprising that their works still show a great deal of uni-
formity. Basically the same concepts, terms, anecdotes, and values
are found in the book of the Central Asian Sufi al-Kalābādhī and
in that of the anonymous Sufi author from Iraq or the Ḥijāz, who
flourished in the second half of the fourth/tenth century.[77] These
authors support their arguments by the sayings of the same Sufi
authorities—a clear indication that the tradition had already stabi-
lized and spread to remote geographical areas. The apologetic agenda
pursued by the authors of these Sufi works was elucidated in the
preceding sections of this study. Put briefly, it can be described as
a concerted effort to bring Sufism into the fold of Sunnī Islam by
demonstrating its consistency with the ideas and practices of the
"pious ancestors." In line with this apologetic agenda, the Sufi authors
discussed thus far portrayed the exemplary heroes of early Islam as
the founding fathers of the Sufi tradition. This tendency came to
fruition in the work of the great Sunnī theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-
Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). He is seen by many as Sufism's greatest
champion, who succeeded in reconciling it with "mainstream" Islam.

The Maturity of Sufi Science: al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī's Life

Born in the city of Ṭūs (near present-day Meshhed), in Khurāsān,
al-Ghazālī and his brother Aḥmad were left orphans at an early age.
Their education was begun in Ṭūs. Then al-Ghazālī went to Jurjān
and, after a further period in Ṭūs, to Nīshāpūr, where he attached
himself to the famous Ashʿarī theologian al-Juwaynī, nicknamed "The
Imām of the Two Sanctuaries" [i.e., Mecca and Medina], until the
latter's death in 478/1085. Several other teachers are mentioned,
mostly obscure, the best known being Abū ʿAlī al-Fārmadhī. His

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[77] Ibid., 23–32; cf. Arberry, *The Doctrine*, passim.

schooling was that of a theologian and jurist. A naturally gifted man, al-Ghazālī soon established himself as the leading Sunnī divine of his day. From Nīshāpūr, in 478/1085, al-Ghazālī went to the "camp" of the cultured Saljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk who had attracted many famous ulema. The vizier received him with honor and respect. At a date which he does not specify but which cannot be much later than his move to Baghdad and which may have been earlier, al-Ghazālī passed through a phase of skepticism and spiritual crisis, which prompted him to begin an energetic quest for a more satisfying intellectual position and practical way of life. In 484/1091 he was appointed by Niẓām al-Mulk to be professor of Shāfiʿī law at the prestigious religious college (*madrasa*) he had founded in Baghdad, the Niẓāmiyya. Al-Ghazālī was one of the most prominent scholars in Baghdad, and for four years lectured to an audience of over three hundred students. At the same time, he vigorously pursued the study of philosophy by private reading, and wrote several books. In 488/1095, however, he suffered from a nervous illness, which made it physically impossible for him to lecture. After some months he left Baghdad on the pretext of making the pilgrimage, but in reality he was abandoning his professorship and his whole career as a jurist and theologian. The motives for this renunciation have been much discussed from the contemporary period until the present day. While some investigators have argued that al-Ghazālī "was dissatisfied with the intellectual and legalistic approach to religion, and felt a yearning for a more personal experience of God,"[78] others advise to treat the sincerity of his sudden conversion to mysticism with caution.[79] He himself says he was afraid that he was going to hell, and he has many criticisms of the corruption of the ulema of his time; so it may well be that he felt that the whole organized legal profession, in which he was involved, was so corrupt that the only way of leading an upright life, as he conceived it, was to leave the profession completely. The suggestion that he was chiefly afraid of the Ismāʿīlīs (Assassins), who had murdered his patron Niẓām al-Mulk in 485/1092 and whom he had attacked in his writings, places too much emphasis on what can at most have been one factor. Another suggestion is that some contemporary political events may have made al-Ghazālī apprehensive; shortly before he left Baghdad the Saljuq sultan

[78] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 79.
[79] E.g., Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 65.

Barkiyārūq executed his uncle Tutush, who had been supported by
the caliph and presumably al-Ghazālī; it was soon after the death
of Barkiyārūq in 498/1105 that al-Ghazālī returned to teaching.

Be this as it may, from al-Ghazālī's abandonment of his profes-
sorship in Baghdad to his return to teaching at Nīshāpūr in 499/1106
is a period of eleven years, "punctuated by study and the composi-
tion of a succession of books."[80] On his departure from Baghdad in
the fall of 488/1095 he spent some time in Damascus, then went
by Jerusalem and Hebron to Medina and Mecca to take part in the
pilgrimage of 489/1096. He then went back for a short time to
Damascus, from where he proceeded to Baghdad in 490/1097. This
must have been only a brief stay in the course of his journey to his
native Ṭūs. During his retirement to Damascus and Ṭūs, al-Ghazālī
lived as a poor Sufi, often in solitude, spending his time in medita-
tion and other spiritual exercises. During this period he composed
his greatest work, "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ
ʿulūm al-dīn*), and he may have lectured on its contents to select audi-
ences. By the end of the period he had gained a clear understand-
ing of the mystic path and ascetic self-discipline and became convinced
that it was the highest way of life for man. One cannot, however,
be sure whether he considered himself a bona fide Sufi.

In the course of the year 499/1105–6, Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Niẓām
al-Mulk and vizier of Sanjar, the Saljuq ruler of Khurāsān, pressed
al-Ghazālī to return to public teaching. He yielded to the pressure,
partly moved by the belief that he was destined to be the reviver
of religion (*mujaddid*) at the beginning of the new century, in accor-
dance with a well-known *ḥadīth*. In 499/1106 he began to lecture
at the Niẓāmiyya in Nīshāpūr and not long afterwards wrote his cel-
ebrated autobiography "Deliverance from Error" (*al-Munqidh min
al-ḍalāl*). Before his death, however, in 505/1111, he had once again
abandoned academic work and retired to Ṭūs. Here he had estab-
lished, probably before he went to Nīshāpūr, a *khānaqā*, where he
trained young disciples in the theory and practice of Sufi life.

Al-Ghazālī's Works and Doctrines

A great difficulty in the study of al-Ghazālī's thought is that, while
he undoubtedly wrote many books, some have been attributed to

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[80] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 80.

him, which he did not write. In other cases, the same book appears under different titles, and a great deal of work has still to be done on manuscripts before scholars know exactly what is extant and what is not. Further, at least from the seventh/thirteenth centuries allegations have been made that books have been falsely attributed to al-Ghazālī.[81] The works whose authenticity has been doubted are mostly ones expressing advanced theosophical and philosophical views that appear to be at variance with the teaching of al-Ghazālī in the works generally accepted as authentic.[82] There are difficulties, owing to the richness of his thought, in establishing conclusively the existence of contradictions. Already in the Middle Ages, some Muslim scholars, who were well aware of these contradictions, suggested that al-Ghazālī wrote differently for ordinary people and for the elite, or, in other words, that he had esoteric views which he did not wish to divulge to everyone. If this indeed was the case, al-Ghazālī's circumspect attitude further complicates the problem of authenticity, but there is no reason for thinking that, even if al-Ghazālī had different levels of teaching for different audiences, he never in the "higher" levels directly contradicted what he maintained at the lower levels.[83] In the present state of scholarship the soundest methodology is to concentrate on the main works of undoubted authenticity and to accept other works only in so far as the views expressed there are not incompatible with those in the former.[84]

As mentioned, a year or two before his death al-Ghazālī wrote his famous "Deliverance from Error" (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), which provides an account of the development of his religious opinions and of his arduous quest for truth. Although its biographical value is sometimes called in question by Western scholars, it is often described as his autobiography. Most of the details about al-Ghazālī's life given above are derived from the *Munqidh*. This book is of particular relevance to our present purpose, since it describes how, upon examining several influential systems of thought available in his epoch (i.e., speculative theology, the messianic doctrines of Ismāʿīlism and

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[81] M. Watt, "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt?*," in: *JRAS*, vol. 54 (1949), pp. 5–22; idem, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī," in: *JRAS*, vol. 57 (1952), pp. 24–45.

[82] H. Landolt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft'," in: *Asiatische Studien*, vol. 55/1 (1991), pp. 19–72.

[83] G. F. Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," in: *JAOS*, vol. 79 (1959), pp. 225–33.

[84] M. Watt, "The study of al-Ghazālī," in: *Oriens*, vols. 13–14 (1961), pp. 121–31.

Hellenistic philosophy) the author arrives at the idea of the superi-
ority of mystical experience. In al-Ghazālī's view, together with a
meticulous observance of the ordinary rules and routines of Muslim
piety, Sufi moral and spiritual discipline is essential in leading the
believer to religious truth, intellectual serenity and, eventually, to
salvation.[85]

After the period of skepticism described in the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī
in his quest for certainty made a thorough study of philosophy—a
subject to which he had been introduced by his teacher al-Juwaynī.
This study occupied the entire earlier part of the Baghdad period.
What he learned was chiefly the Arabic neo-Platonism (diluted by
elements of Peripatetism) of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīnā
(d. 428/1037). Though his final aim was to show in what respects
their doctrines were incompatible with Sunnī Islam, he first wrote
an exposition of their philosophy without any criticism. This work,
"The Aims of the Philosophers" (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*), was much appre-
ciated in Spain and in the rest of Europe throughout the twelfth
and thirteenth centuries C.E. This he followed by a criticism of the
philosophical doctrines entitled "The Incoherence (or Inconsistency)
of the Philosophers" (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), which he finished at the
beginning of 488/1095. In this monumental work, al-Ghazālī noted
twenty points on which the philosophers' views were objectionable
to Sunnīs or inconsistent with their own claims. In respect of three
of these they were, according to the author, to be adjudged unbe-
lievers. In the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī seeks to demonstrate the inconsis-
tencies of the philosophers and does not argue for any positive views
of his own. Because of this he has been accused of having remained
something of a skeptic. This accusation fails to notice that the *Tahāfut*
was written just before the crisis which caused him to leave Baghdad;
it is therefore possible that at the time he was somewhat uncertain
of his positive beliefs. However, a few years later, when he was writ-
ing the "The Revival of the Religious Sciences," he was in no doubt
about what he believed. What impressed al-Ghazālī most of the var-
ious branches of philosophical studies was logic, and in particular
the Aristotelian syllogism. For the sake of Sunnī jurists and theolo-
gians to whom philosophical books were not easily accessible or,
because of their technical language, not readily understandable, he
wrote several tracts on Aristotelian logic. While full of enthusiasm

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[85] Idem, *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, London, 1953.

for philosophy, al-Ghazālī wrote a work on ethics "The Scale for the Deeds" (*Mīzān al-ʿamal*), though whether the whole of the extant text is authentic has been questioned. It is possible that, at the end of his life, as his enthusiasm for philosophy waned, he rejected much of what he had written in that early work.

Al-Ghazālī's chief work on dogmatics is "A Middle Course in Doctrinal Belief" (*al-Iqtiṣād fī 'l-iʿtiqād*), probably composed before or shortly after his departure from Baghdad. This book deals with roughly the same topics as the "The Book of Guidance" (*Kitāb al-irshād*) of his teacher al-Juwaynī, but it makes full use of Aristotelian logic, especially the syllogism. At the same time, according to al-Ghazālī, the *Iqtiṣād* is more likely to prepare for the gnosis (*maʿrifa*) of the Sufis than the usual works of dogmatics. This continuing approval strengthens the view that al-Ghazālī never ceased to be a bona fide Ashʿarī in dogmatics, even though he came to hold that intellectual discussions in religion should range far beyond the limited field of dogmatics, and that detailed discussions in dogmatics had no practical value. To the field of dogmatic theology might also be assigned al-Ghazali's "Decisive Separation between Islam and Heresy" (*Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa 'l-zandaqa*). This is partly directed against the esoteric teachings of the Ismāʿīlīs (*al-bāṭiniyya*). However, its chief objective was defense of al-Ghazālī's own views on the extent to which allegorical intepretation of the Scriptures is justified. In what appears to have been his last work, "The Reigning in of the Commoners from the Study of Speculative Theology" (*Iljām al-ʿawāmm ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*), al-Ghazālī warns of the dangers inherent in the study of speculative theology for those with little education.

The most consequential part of al-Ghazālī's literary legacy deals with various aspects of Sufi practice and theory. His greatest work on these subjects, both in size and in the importance of its contents, is "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulum al-dīn*). It furnished a detailed synthesis of theological and mystical sciences accumulated by the Muslim community over the centuries since the rise of Islam. In many respects, the *Iḥyāʾ* was a continuation and amplification of the ascetic and mystical ethos laid down by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in his *Qūt al-qulūb*. Oftentimes al-Ghazālī simply quoted long passages from that work *verbatim*. He also relied on the works of other Sufi classics, especially on al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and al-Sarrāj's *Lumaʿ*. The upshot of his argument in the *Iḥyāʾ* is that "the Muslim life of devotion to the One God could not be lived

perfectly save by following the Sufi way."[86] At the same time, al-Ghazālī was acutely aware of the dramatic difference in human temperaments and therefore recommended that Sufi spiritual discipline be followed by each person in accordance with his individual ability and inclinations.

The text of the *Iḥyāʾ* is divided into four "quarters" dealing with cult practices and worship (*ʿibādāt*); social customs and personal behavior (*ʿādāt*); vices, or faults of character leading to perdition (*muhlikāt*); virtues, or qualities leading to salvation (*munjiyāt*). Each "quarter" consists of ten books that intricately combine mainstream Sunnī piety with the introspective and ascetic discipline fostered by Sufism.[87] The *Iḥyāʾ* is thus a complete guide for the devout Muslim to every aspect of the religious life, that is, worship and devotional practices, conduct in daily life, the purification of the heart, and advance along the mystic way. The first two books deal with the necessary minimum of intellectual knowledge. Although al-Ghazālī pays due tribute to the traditionalist knowledge and received wisdom of mainstream Sunnī scholars, he implicitly gives preference to the divinely inspired, mystical knowledge that allows its possessor to unveil the true meaning of the Scriptures and to arrive at an absolute certitide and confidence that preclude any doubt.[88] Tucked away (perhaps deliberately) amidst the ethical and doctrinal banalities of mainstream Sunnism, such statements may indicate that al-Ghazālī was far more fascinated by Islamic neo-Platonism, gnostic theorizing and the more esoteric aspects of Sufism than is commonly believed.[89] These esoteric aspects of al-Ghazālī's thought come to the fore in his "Niche for the Lights," which will be discussed further on. This whole stupendous undertaking arises from al-Ghazālī's feeling that in the hands of the ulema of his day religious knowledge had become a means of worldly advancement, whereas it was his deep conviction that its goal is the attainment of salvation in the world to come. He, therefore, while describing the concrete precepts of the Sharīʿa in some detail, tried to show how they contribute to the believer's final salvation.

Al-Ghazālī wrote a number of lesser works dealing with the same issues. *Bidāyat al-hidāya* is a brief statement of a rule of daily life for the devout Muslim, together with counsel on the avoidance of sins.

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[86] Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 80–81.
[87] Ibid., pp. 81–82.
[88] Landolt, "Ghazālī's 'Religionswissenschaft'," p. 37.
[89] Ibid., passim.

Al-Ghazālī deals with religious ethics and morals in a number of shorter treatises, namely "The Book of the Forty [Chapters]" (*Kitab al-arbaʿīn*), which is a short summary of the *Iḥyāʾ* for the general reader, and "The Loftiest Goal" (*al-Maqṣad al-asnā*), which discusses in what sense men may imitate the names or attributes of God and the problem of "the knowability of God through the divine Attributes."[90] Similar issues are addressed in al-Ghazālī's "Alchemy of Happiness" (*Kīmiyā-yi-saʿādat*) which is often seen as a Persian abridgement of the *Iḥyāʾ* (also translated in whole or in part into Urdu, Arabic, etc.), although it contains some significant departures from the structure and content of al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus*.[91]

Al-Ghazālī is also credited with a number of writings on Sufi theosophy and metaphysics. It is in this field that most of the cases of false or dubious authenticity occur. The book titled "Niche for the Lights" (*Mishkāt al-anwār*) is usually held to be genuine. The most esoteric work of al-Ghazālī's authentic legacy, it focuses on the notions of mystical illumination (based on the "Light Verse" of the Qurʾān, i.e., 24:35) and the various ways in which God manifests himself to different classes of human seekers.[92] More than in any other work, in the "Niche" al-Ghazālī reveals his intimate knowledge of, and unmistakable fascination with, the Middle Eastern esoteric lore, especially neo-Platonic emanationist doctrine and Gnosticism. His identification of the Qurʾānic God with the Absolute Light evinces his kinship with, and dependence on, such thinkers as Ibn Sīnā with his allegorical discourses on the interplay of the darkness of inert matter and the illumination of the dynamic spirit.[93] As we shall see, the esoteric and metaphysical elements of al-Ghazālī's "Niche" received further elaboration in the work of later Sufi thinkers, especially Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī. To the category of esoteric works belongs al-Ghazālī's "Epistle on Divine Knowledge" (*al-Risāla al-laduniyya*), which deals with the nature of knowledge of divine things.

A balanced account of the influence of al-Ghazālī will probably not be possible until there has been much more study of various religious movements during the subsequent centuries. The following assessments are therefore to some extent provisional.

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[90] Ibid., p. 27.
[91] Ibid., p. 46.
[92] Ibid., pp. 24–26.
[93] Ibid., p. 54; cf. Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, p. 314; P. Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīna)*, Philadelphia, 1992, passim.

(a) Al-Ghazālī's criticism of the Ismāʿīlī doctrines may have helped to reduce the intellectual attractiveness of the movement, but its eventual failure, after its success in capturing Alamūt, is due to many other factors.

(b) After his criticism of the philosophers there are no further great names in the philosophical movement in the Islamic East, but it is not clear how far the decline of philosophy is due to al-Ghazālī's criticisms and how far to other causes. Its continuance in the Islamic West, where his "Incoherence of the Philosophers" was widely known, suggests that the other causes were equally at work.

(c) Al-Ghazālī's studies in philosophy led to the incorporation of certain aspects of philosophical sciences, notably logic, into Islamic theology, although here he was simply following a trend established by some earlier Ashʿarī thinkers, including his teacher al-Juwaynī. In course of time, theologians came to devote much more time and space to the philosophical preliminaries than to theology proper. In a similar vein, his speculations about the nature of the believer's knowledge of the divine realm and his conviction that the upright and devout man may attain to an intuition, or direct tasting (*dhawq*), of divine mysteries that is superior to the pettifogging casuistry of the exoteric ulema was a continuation of the trend that is already perceptible in the works of such Sufi apologists as al-Makkī, al-Sulamī, Abū Nuʿaym and al-Qushayrī.

(d) He undoubtedly performed a great service to devout Muslims of every level of education by presenting obedience to the prescriptions of the Sharīʿa as a sure and meaningful way to salvation. His *khānaqā* at Ṭūs, where he and his disciples lived together, can be seen as an attempt to implement his pious precepts into real life. Patterned on the similar lodges established by al-Sulamī, Abū Saʿīd Ibn Abī 'l-Khayr, and al-Anṣārī, it contributed to the formation of the Sufi institutions known as "dervish orders."

(e) The extent to which his teachings were responsible for "reconciling" Sunnism with Sufi piety is difficult to ascertain. His relative success in this regard may be attributed more to his imposing reputation as a Sunnī scholar, "who commanded the respect of all but the narrowest of the orthodox,"[94] than to the originality of his ideas. As indicated, much of his *Iḥyāʾ* covers the same well-traveled

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[94] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 83.

ground that had been explored before him by Sufi classics, especially Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī. His own Sufi credentials remain rather slim. There is, however, little doubt that his personal example and his enthusiastic advocacy of Sufi morals and ethics contributed in significant ways to making Sufism a respectable and laudable option for mainstream Sunnī ulema and the masses from his time on.

Al-Ghazālī's versatility and breadth of intellectual interests aptly reflect the complexity and sophistication of Islamic culture, in which Sufism played an increasingly important role. He was instrumental in fusing elements of various Islamic and non-Islamic teachings into a distinctive world-orientational system and a respectable lifestyle that came to be practiced in the Sufi institution called *ṭarīqa*.

Table 3. Chapter VI. The Systematization of the Sufi Tradition

Abū Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī (d. 341/952), a student of al-Junayd, author of *Ṭabaqāt al-nussāk*

Muḥammad b. Dāwūd Pārsā (d. 342/953), author of *Akhbār al-ṣūfiyya*

Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959), a Sufi of al-Junayd's school, author of *Ḥikāyāt al-mashāikh*

Abū 'l-Faraj al-Warathānī (d. 372/982), author of *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*

Abū Bakr Ibn Shādhān al-Rāzī (d. 376/986), author of *Ḥikāyāt al-ṣūfiyya*

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), author of *Qūt al-qulūb*

Anonymous (second half of the 4th/10th century), author of *Adab al-mulūk*

Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), author of *al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*

Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), author of *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr* and many minor treatises on "Sufi science"

Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), author of *Risāla fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, a Sufi classic

Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), author of *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*

ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. between 465/1073 and 469/1077), author of *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, the first known Persian manual of Sufism

ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), author of several treatises on Sufism, including *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, *Sad Maydān*, and *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*

SUFISM AS LITERATURE AND METAPHYSICS: THE
GRAND MASTERS OF SUFI POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

Although the goals of poetic expression and mystical experience would
seem to be quite distinct (self-expression and self-assertion as opposed
to self-annihilation in the divine mystery, or silent contemplation of
God as opposed to a creative verbalization of personal sentiment),
under certain conditions they may well be seen as complementary,
even identical.[1] Their affinity springs, among other factors, from their
common use of symbol as a means to convey subtle experiences that
elude conceptualization in a rational discourse which by its very
nature requires lucidity and a rigid, invariable relations between the
signifier and the signified. In the same way as poetical vision cannot
be captured by an orderly rational discourse, mystical experience
avoids being reduced to a sum total of concrete and non-contradictory
propositions. Both poetry and mystical experience carry emotional,
rather than factual content; both depend, in great part, on a stream
of subtle associations for their effect. It is therefore little wonder that
mystical experience is often bound intimately with poetic expression.
Mystical poetry, however, cannot be seen as a simple recreation of
mystical experience. Instead, both the poetry and the experience
derive from the mystic's relationship to the formative symbols of his
religious tradition and to the totality of his personal world-outlook
and intellectual environment. Erotic poetry may thus be read not as
an allegory of chaste mystical union with God, rather, its ambigu-
ity is to be understood as an expression of the poet's vision of both
mystical union and erotic climax—both are informed by the same
stance. The valuable state of consciousness and the unique perspec-
tive on life that a mystic gains through mystical experience often

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[1] The observations that follow are based on the unpublished paper "An Inquiry
into the Poetics of Sufism," which was presented in my class on Islamic Mysticism
in the fall of 1998 by John Hope, a graduate student at the Department of Near
Eastern Studies, The University of Michigan. I am grateful to John Hope for allow-
ing me to quote his work.

compels him to seek to communicate them to others, be it orally or in writing. This may seem paradoxical: if the essence of mysticism, the feature that sets it apart from other religious experiences, lies in the fact that it cannot be mediated by words or rationalization, any subsequent discussion of it is contrary to its fundamental nature that is often described by mystics as ineffable or too subtle to be conveyed to others. If however an individual mystic values his experience too much to allow it to die with him, he has at his disposal a variety of means of expression, from theological and philosophical discourse to terse maxims and poetry. For a number of reasons, in certain religious traditions poetry has become the preferred vehicle for mystical experience. First, the language of poetry is categorically different from the argumentative language of science and logic as well as from everyday use of language. Poetic language, no matter what form it might take, is marked by its open-endedness; while the goal of technical or legal writing is the greatest possible precision, a one-to-one correspondence of the signifier and the signified, poetic language functions as such because of its elasticity, the ability of the signifier to refer to multiple, even unlimited, signifieds. Its aesthetic value rests on the creation of tensions between various levels of meaning, never to be resolved, because it is in the tension, rather than the resolution, that poetic language has its effect. The value of poetic language, and the reason why literary works written in distant times still may be read and received aesthetically today, is that this elasticity allows each reader to create meaning, to enjoy the interplay between symbol and potential interpretations. In light of the foregoing, the similarities between poetic language and the articulation of religious experience appear to be obvious. Both make use of symbols and of the chains of associations they produce. Both lose their vitality and open-endedness when they are subjected to reductionism, when their elasticity is replaced by a one-to-one correspondence of the signifier to the signified. Finally, both carry emotional and intuitive, rather than factual, content, and both depend in great part on association for their effect.

This being the case, it is only natural, then, for mystical experience to be bound intimately with poetic inspiration and, consequently, poetic expression. It is with these general considerations in mind that we should approach the work of Sufism's greatest poets, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Jāmī.

ʿAṭṭār

Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAṭṭār is often seen as the greatest Persian
Sufi poet after Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who learned much from him.[2]
According to a popular legend that is often reiterated by written
sources, ʿAṭṭār was born in 513/1119 and killed by the Mongols
during the conquest of Nīshāpūr in the year 627/1230. This would
mean that he was one hundred fourteen years old at the time of his
death, which seems rather improbable. Furthermore, according to
some historical chronicles, Nīshāpūr was overrun by the Mongols in
628/1231 and not in 627/1230. Finally, an inscription on ʿAṭṭār's tomb
erected by his admirer Mīr ʿAlī Shīr (d. 906/1501) states unequiv-
ocally that he died as early as 586/1190, that is, three years after
he had completed his masterpiece "The Conference of the Birds"
(*Manṭiq al-ṭayr*). ʿAṭṭār's own works deal exclusively with a number
of Sufi topics and motifs, couched in a poetic form, and are of little
help in establishing the precise chronology of his life. Therefore the
issue remains open. A pharmacist and doctor by profession, ʿAṭṭār
was not a full-time practicing Sufi. Nor did he study under any
known Sufi master. The income that he derived from his trade made
him independent of the whims and changing tastes of prospective
royal patrons, who often used poets as court ideologues. However,
from his early youth he admired Sufi holy men and was fond of lis-
tening to the tales about their miraculous exploits. Later in his life
he dedicated much of his literary output "to honoring the Sufis
and glorifying their doctrines."[3] The genre of ʿAṭṭār's most impor-
tant writings is couplet-poems (*mathnawī*), which were to become the
hallmark of mystical poetry under Rūmī. ʿAṭṭār's *mathnawī* usually
tell a single frame-story that, in the course of the narrative, is embell-
ished by numerous incidental stories and by various narrative vignettes.[4]
Generally, the works attributed to him fall into three groups that
differ in content and in style to such an extent that it is sometimes
difficult to imagine that they were composed by the same person.
The principal works in the first group are *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, "The Book
of God" (*Ilāhī-nāma*) and "The Book of the [Mystical] Goal" (*Muṣībat-
nāma*). The second group includes "The Book of the Camel" (*Ushtur-*

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[2] Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, p. 305.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

nāma) and "The Heart of the Essence" (*Jawhar al-dhāt*). To the third belongs "The Arena of Marvels" (*Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾib*) and "The Language of the Unseen" (*Lisān al-ghayb*). There is, in addition, a fourth group of works which includes a number of works attributed to ʿAṭṭār. Their authorship is generally seen as doubtful. The same goes for some works in the third group. The books in the first group are generally modeled on the following pattern: there is a clear, well-constructed main motif, which is interspersed with numerous short subsidiary tales. Despite their auxiliary character, such tales are told with great skill and deal with a great variety of subjects. They sometimes constitute the main charm of the works in this group. In the second group, the number of such secondary tales is much smaller. Inward looking and visionary by character, they rarely deal with the external world. Here a few principal ideas are pursued with intensity and great emotion. To drive his point home ʿAṭṭār often repeats them over and over. Among such recurring ideas and themes are: the complete annihilation of man in God (*fanāʾ*) that sometimes leads to a physical death; the underlying unity of all being (there is nothing other than God, and all things are of one substance); the knowledge of one's self as the key to the vital mysteries of God and of the Universe. In the stories that constitute the second group, God often manifests himself in the guise of various human individuals, but is nevertheless recognized by some perceptive observers. The narrative of such symbolic tales is usually poorly structured and abounds in tiresome repetitions. Frequently one is at a loss as to who is speaking or who is being addressed. Here ʿAṭṭār makes extensive, and at times excessive, use of anaphora: on occasion a hundred consecutive lines begin with the same phrase. Some scholars regard the works of this group as spurious and place them in the third or even in the fourth group. Their authorship is tentatively attributed to his namesake, a man of Shīʿī propensities who lived at Ṭūs (near present day Meshhed, Iran) in the ninth/fifteenth century. In the absence of a conclusive evidence, most scholars continue to view ʿAṭṭār as the author of the works in the second group, especially since the use of anaphora and many of the themes that dominate the second group are similar to, or identical with, those in the first one. The works in the second group are full of allusions to Sufi gnosis, which the author presents as superior to all other types of cognition. Of the Sufi mystics of the previous centuries ʿAṭṭār was particularly fascinated by al-Ḥallāj, who figures prominently in many of his mystical works.

The writings of the third group have been conclusively proven to be spurious. They contain many chronological inconsistencies that point to a later date of composition.

By far the most famous of the works in the first group of ʿAṭṭār's writings is "The Conference of the Birds," a grandiose poetic elaboration of the "Epistle on the Birds" that is attributed to either Muḥammad al-Ghazālī or his younger brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. According to this story, a group of birds led by the hoopoe assembled in order to choose the worthiest among them as their leader. After failing to find such a leader among themselves, they set out on a search for the great magical bird Sīmurgh, whose beauty, which can be surmised from the feather that it had dropped in China, surpasses any description. All but thirty birds perish on the way to their goal—a symbolic representation of the dangers faced by the human soul on its journey toward its creator. When the birds finally reach their goal, they find out that the beauty of Sīmurgh surpasses their most bold expectations. Reduced by their adventures to practically nothing in both soul or body, they rediscover their true essences and see Sīmurgh (which in Persian means "thirty birds") in a giant mirror. Sīmurgh thus turns out to be their own image and they achieve their goal by merging in the final act of *fanaʾ* with the divine Essence.

To the first group of works belongs ʿAṭṭār's collection of poetry (*dīwān*), which, apart from love poems (*ghazal*), contains a poetic summary of ʿAṭṭār's favorite religious themes that permeate his entire work, especially his epic narratives. Another work in this group is ʿAṭṭār's "Book of the [Mystical] Goal" (*Muṣībat-nāma*). It describes the torments of the ideal mystical wayfarer (*sālik*) in search of his God. Overcome by frustration and despair after his individual quest has failed, he seeks the guidance of a Sufi master (*pīr*). The *pīr* advises him to visit successfully all mystical and cosmic beings: Gabriel and other angels, the divine throne and the foot-stool, the sacred tablet on which the celestial pen has inscribed the fate of the world from its origin to the Last Judgement, heaven and hell, the sun and the moon, the four chief elements of nature, minerals, plants, different orders of animals, the Devil, the spirits, Adam and the other prophets, the five senses, the imagination, reason, the heart, and, finally, the universal soul. Neither of these individuals, objects, sites and faculties is able to satisfy his quest, since all of them experience the same tormented state of mind. When he finally reaches the universal soul,

she advises him to seek the answer in his own self (soul). Only after having traversed the forty stages of the path, does the wayfarer discover his Lord in the sea of his own soul. The theme of the *Muṣībat-nāma* is typical of ʿAṭṭār's *Weltanschauung*: deliverance from spiritual anguish and doubt is to be found in embarking on the mystical path under the guidance of an experienced master. In the "Book of God," ʿAṭṭār depicts a king who asks his six sons to designate the object of their aspirations, but is disappointed when he learns that all of them are aspiring after material goals to the detriment of their spiritual needs. In the process, the king explains the esoteric meaning of each son's longing: the fairy princess desired by the first son symbolizes his quest for his purified soul; the magic ring of Solomon, which was requested by the second son, stands for his desire to achieve peace with his soul, etc. In general outlines, the *Ilāhī-nāma* carries essentially the same message as *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*: the answer to the seeker's quest lies in the knowledge of his own self.

"The Book of the Mysteries" (*Asrār-nāma*) lacks any visible structure. It presents loosely strung reflections on the world's transience, vanity, and on the depravity of human nature. One theme that stands out is the gnostic notion that the human soul is entangled in the trappings and allures of the material world, which distract it from its real objective. According to a popular legend, ʿAṭṭār presented a copy of this book to the young Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who further elaborated it in his "Poem of Inner Meanings" (*Mathnawī-i maʿnawī*).

The rest of ʿAṭṭār's authentic legacy consists of moralistic and didactic treatises, such as the "Book of Spiritual Advice" (*Pand-nāma*), which instructs the reader as to how best to cope with the world, and of a number of philosophical parables along the lines of the *Ushtur-nāma*. The latter portrays God as a puppet-master, who deliberately smashes the figures he has so carefully crafted and tears the curtain down from his stage. When a wise man asks him about the meaning of such outrageous actions, God sends the inquirer on a futile journey beyond the seven curtains. Having witnessed macabre and meaningless events, the seeker leaves the scene empty-handed and frustrated. The story contains numerous allusions to the experiences and life-stories of the early mystics, especially to the tragic fate of al-Ḥallāj, whose voluntary martyrdom is presented as the culmination of spiritual quest.

Our survey of ʿAṭṭār's work would be incomplete without mentioning

his "Memorial of the Saints" (*Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*), a collection of anecdotes about, and sayings of, the great Muslim mystics of the earlier generations. In this work, 'Aṭṭār's literary propensities come to the fore as he freely dilutes the dry, factual accounts of the older Sufi biographers with numerous fanciful details, marvels and legends. Such additions make 'Aṭṭār's Sufi biographies unreliable as sources of historical data. At the same time, they tell us a lot about the author's intellectual preferences and religious views as well as about his concept of the ideal Sufi master.[5] In the words of a Western scholar, these biographical narratives "are all warm and lively, and teach the lessons of Sufism more effectively than any [scholastic] treatise could do."[6]

Rūmī

The family of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whom his followers usually call "Our Master" (*mawlānā*), migrated from Balkh near the Oxus river to Anatolia (Konya) on the eve of the Mongol invasions. His father was a popular Sufi preacher in Balkh, who died when Rūmī was still a young boy. His father's students and friends made sure that he received a good education.[7] Rūmī's first shaykh, Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq was an old pupil of his father, who had come to Konya to visit his former master only to find that he was no loner alive. He took Jalāl al-Dīn under his wing and educated him in the fundamentals of the Muslim Law and the Sufi path. When Burhān al-Dīn died nine years later, Jalāl al-Dīn did not affiliate himself with another master and remained on his own for five years. A turning point in his whole life was the arrival in Konya in 642/1244 of the wandering dervish Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Tabrīzī (Shams-i Tabrīz), "a wildly unpredictable man who defied all conventions and preached the self-sufficiency of each individual in his search for the divine."[8] However, in the eyes of Konya's religious establishment, Shams-i Tabrīz was a disreputable drifter with neither family nor permanent home. His restless wandering life won him the nickname of "the flier" (*paranda*). During their first meeting, Shams-i Tabrīz

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[5] See Arberry, *Muslim Saints.*
[6] Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, p. 305.
[7] Ibid., p. 245.
[8] Ibid.

asked Rūmī about a saying of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī. When the young man successfully passed the test, the two Sufis struck up a friendship which soon grew very intimate, as Jalāl al-Dīn invited the dervish to stay in his house. As Hodgson put it, "in his personal devotedness to Shams-e Tabrīz, Rūmī found a paradigm of his love of God: participation, on a concrete level, in that free responsiveness to ultimate beauty in which he discovered the meaning of his life."[9] Although Shams-i Tabrīz's oral teachings (*maqālāt*) show his familiarity with the usual theological conceptions of his time, he discouraged his young friend from delving into bookish knowledge. Shams-i Tabrīz's emphasis on love as the surest way to God earned him the title of "the prince of the loved ones" (*sulṭān al-maʿshūqīn*). Later on, Rūmī's son Sulṭān Walad, who had personal knowledge of Shams, placed him in the class of the "lovers who have attained their goal" (*ʿāshiqān-i wāṣil*). He put them in the same league with God's "perfect saints" (*awliyāʾ-i kāmil*). Above them Sulṭān Walad placed those whom he described as the "beloved [of God]" (*maʿshūq*), indicating that Shams was the first to have reached this lofty status. Be this as it may, Shams opened before Rūmī the horizons of this new mystical way. Rūmī's love for Shams-i Tabrīz transformed him from an ordinary mortal into a divinely inspired poet of great stature. However, this all-consuming love caused him to neglect his other followers, who had been attracted to him by his charismatic personality and extraordinary poetic gift. As a result of Rūmī's infatuation with Shams, his *murīd*s felt neglected by their beloved teacher and began to hold a grudge against this disreputable stranger. Some of them even began to plot to assassinate Shams, causing him to flee to Damascus in 643/1246. However, the *murīd*s failed to achieve their end as Rūmī sent off his son to search for his beloved. On hearing Rūmī's poetic entreaties, which were conveyed to him in person by Sulṭān Walad, Shams returned on foot to Konya. Frustrated in their efforts to get rid of Shams, the *murīd*s tried at least to keep him away from Rūmī, for the most part unsuccessfully. In the meantime, Shams's antics and contemptuous manners outraged many of the townspeople of Konya. Matters came to a head in 645/1247, when Shams was murdered under the cover of night by Rūmī's disciples at the instigation of Sulṭān Walad's brother ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn. Shams's corpse was thrown into a well, where it was discovered by Sulṭān

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[9] Ibid.

Walad, who buried it in a secret location. He kept secret this episode
from his father and from Konya's townsfolk out of concern for the
family honor. Unaware of the death of his beloved, Rūmī went
searching for him in Syria, but returned empty-handed. As a result,
he experienced a deep psychological crisis which he tried to over-
come by engaging in Sufi concerts and Sufi dances in hopes of
finding Shams in his own soul. Many of his poems from this period
are signed by the name of his mystical lover, with whom he now
identified himself. Rūmī eventually found a substitute for Shams in
one of his *murīd*s, an illiterate goldsmith named Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb,
whom he appointed as his successor (*khalīfa*) at the head of his Sufi
brotherhood. The *murīd*s greeted this appointment with disapproval.
While Shams was a foreigner with no roots in the local community,
the uncultured goldsmith's apprentice was a well-known figure, whom
many considered to be dull-witted and entirely unsuitable for the
prestigious post of the chief Sufi *pīr*. The *murīd*s again conspired to
assassinate him, but Rūmī got the wind of their plot and threatened
to disown them and to leave Konya for good. Frightened by this
prospect, the *murīd*s desisted and submitted their apologies to their
master. It appears that in this episode the loyalty of Sulṭān Walad
and the modest and unassuming behavior of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb
helped to divert the impeding crisis. In any event, for the next ten
years, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn performed the functions of Rūmī's *khalīfa*. When
he died in 657/1258, he was succeeded by Ḥusām al-Dīn Ḥasan,
whom Rūmī dedicated his great couplet poem, the *Mathnawī*. Ḥusām
al-Dīn held this office until Rūmī's death in 672/1273, whereupon
he resigned it in favor of Sulṭān Walad. The latter, however, pre-
ferred to wait until Ḥusām al-Dīn's death in 683/1284 to become
the master of his father's *murīd*s. He occupied this office until his
own death in 712/1312.

The real history of the Sufi order founded by Rūmī (which came
to be known as the Mawlawiyya after his honorific title) thus begins
with Sulṭān Walad, whose able leadership secured it high prestige
and wide acceptance among the population of Anatolia. Although
originally recruited from among the craftsmen, the order gradually
grew more upper class. The distinctive feature of the Mawlawiyya
practice is the preeminent role that its leaders assigned to music and
dancing. As time went on, its rituals were regularized, culminating
in the famous whirling dance ceremony, which became the order's un-
mistakable trademark. They reflect the joyous and highly emotional

world-outlook that was encouraged by Rūmī and his immediate successors. The reading of Rūmī's countless love-poems instilled in his followers excitement and spiritual energy which they could release in an ecstatic dance.

Rūmī's greatest masterpiece is his "Poems of Inner Meaning" (*Mathnawī-i maʿnawī*), a collection of didactic poetry dedicated to his beloved friend Ḥusām al-Dīn. Rūmī dictated the verses of the *Mathnawī* to his followers over a long time, whenever he had poetic inspiration. This fact accounts for the lack of any preconceived structure that characterizes his poetic work. Motifs and ideas are strung together by free association; individual stories are left halfway, then taken up much later in the same poem. Rūmī's legacy also includes a collection of witticisms and sayings titled "In It Is What Is In It" (*Fīh mā fīh*) and a collection of lyrical poetry and quatrains signed by the name of his mystical lover Shams-i Tabrīz.

Rūmī's Weltanschauung

It is not easy to summarize systematically the main lines of Rūmī's thought. He saw himself as neither a philosopher nor a poet in the conventional meaning of these words. Rather, he presented himself as a passionate lover of God, who was free from societal conventions and religious stereotypes. Hence his propensity to express his feelings in an unorthodox, volcanic way, thus creating a poetic style that is unique in the entire Persian literature. This is not to say that his work had no antecedents: he seems to have been influenced by the religious and mystical ideas of al-Ghazālī, by the famous Sufi poet Sanāʾī (d. ca. 525/1131) and by ʿAṭṭār. He drew heavily on the topoi of the Sufi tradition which stretched back to the heroes of early Sufism.

On the metaphysical plane, Rūmī's God presents himself as an absolutely transcendent entity that is not subject to human notions of Good and Evil. He is beyond Nothingness and Being; the nature of his relations with the material world is an inscrutable mystery that eludes mere mortals. In this respect, Rūmī cannot be seen as a follower of the doctrine of the oneness of being, understood as pantheism. On the issue of causality, Rūmī embraced the Ashʿarī idea of the discontinuity of time and of creative process. For him, as for the Ashʿarīs, the phenomenal world presents itself as a succession of disparate atoms of time and disconnected individual accidents which

are arranged in differing combinations by God's arbitrary and un-
predictable will. God jolts non-existent things into existence by
murmuring into their allegorical ears the words of his creative
command. Rūmī saw the material world as created by God in pre-
paration for the creation of man, whom the poet presented as the
ultimate goal and culmination of God's creative plan. All individual
beings aspire toward their creator. A symbol of this eternal aspira-
tion is the trees that rise from the dark soil and extend their branches
and leaves toward the sun. God's creative plan culminates in the
creation of man who, by his very nature, aspires to rise above his
material environment in order to attain a union with his creator.
For Rūmī, man is not a simple compound of body and soul. The
human organism consists of a physical body, a soul, an intellect, and
a subtler spirit that is linked to divine inspiration. While all humans
share the former three in various degrees, the latter is confined exclu-
sively to prophets and saints, who are different from ordinary humans.
Rūmī likens them to "God's falcons"[10] whom their Lord periodi-
cally sends to humans in order to remind them of his laws and of
the exalted status of mankind in the divine plan. As the mouthpieces
of God, the prophets and messengers stand above the generality of
humans. They are the manifest signs and living reminders of God's
wisdom and majesty. In a sense, they are above the normal human
standards which Rūmī considered to be binding for the rest of
mankind. Man's diligent performance of his religious duties is a tan-
gible demonstration of his loyalty to his Lord. Rūmī likens acts of
piety and worship to the precious presents that the faithful lover
sends to his beloved. Rūmī's position on the perennial problem of
human free versus divine predestination is elusive. He draws a dis-
tinction between the act of God and its concrete result, between the
irrevocable divine command and its concrete realization in the con-
tingent world. When man's spiritual eyes are open, he sees no con-
tradiction between the two. He views himself as being moved by
God's inscrutable will, yet enjoying a freedom that surpasses the illu-
sory freedom that is claimed by ordinary believers. To reach this
higher state of freedom/dependence one has to actively exert one-
self in the service of God and not to wait until it is granted to him
by his divine Master. Rūmī's vision of the relations between

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[10] J. Renard, *All the King's Falcons*, Albany, N.Y., 1994.

God and his servant is subtle. For him, the process of the mystical annihilation of man in the divine Essence (*fanā'*) is never complete. As the flame of a candle continues to exist despite being outshined by the radiance of the sun, so does a mystical man retain his identity despite the overpowering presence of his Lord. In this state he can claim to be both human and divine, although in some instances he is tempted to declare his complete identity with the Divine Essence.

The style of Rūmī's poetic works is determined by the fact that the poet used to "sing" them in the process of composition on the assumption that they are likely to be "sung" by his followers. According to a famous legend, Rūmī improvised his odes while gently dancing around a pillar in his *khānaqā*. In a similar vein, Rūmī's first encounter with his favorite disciple, the goldsmith Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb, occurred when he began to move to the rhythm of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's hammer, while passing by the latter's shop. His sense of rhythm was not always matched by his attention to the conventions of Persian metrics, which he often ignores. In the *Mathnawī*, the conventional narrative flow of poetry is occasionally interrupted by a sudden poetic or stylistic deviation that may have been produced by a mystic rapture experienced by the author. Due to the intensely personal and "ecstatic" features of his poetry, it found practically no successful imitators in later Persian poetry. In Rūmī we find the paragon and the ultimate manifestation of Sufi artistic creativity, which combines organically mystical experience with poetic inspiration.

Jāmī

Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was born in 817/1414 in the district of Jām near Herat (present-day Afghanistān). As a youth he entered a prestigious religious college at Herat, where he excelled in Arabic rhetoric. To pursue his education further, he traveled to Samarqand, where he studied, among other subjects, astronomy and mathematics.[11] In the course of his studies he developed a deep passion for mysticism and decided to embark on the mystical path. His first spiritual director was Saʿd al-Dīn Muḥammad Kashghārī, a foremost disciple of, and the organizational successor to, the founder of

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[11] N. Heer (ed.), *The Precious Pearl: Al-Jami's al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, Albany, N.Y., 1979, p. 1.

the Naqshbaniyya, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. Later on, Jāmī made friends with the great Naqshbandī leader of Central Asia ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār (d. 896/1490). Although Jāmī met Aḥrār in person only on four occasions, he corresponded with him throughout most of his life and mentioned him by name in his poetical works.[12] Except for two pilgrimages, one to Meshhed, the other to the holy cities of the Ḥijāz, Jāmī resided in Herat. En route to the Ḥijāz, he visited Baghdad and al-Najaf, where he paid his respect to the tomb of the Prophet's cousin ʿAlī. He returned to Herat by way of Damascus and Aleppo. He spent the rest of his life in Herat under the patronage of the Tīmūrid sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, dividing his time between religious studies, poetry, and mystical meditation. Jāmī was one of the many luminaries at Bāyqarā's court, who also extended his patronage to the famous Chagataid poet ʿAlī Shīr Nawāʾī and the great miniature painters Bihzād and Shāh Muẓaffar. A person of varied talents, Jāmī at various times received invitations to settle at the courts of Delhi and Istanbul, but he preferred the quiet charm of Herat to the splendor of the capital cities.

Jāmī's numerous works in Persian and Arabic testify to the versatility of his genius as well as to his perfect mastery of Arabic and Persian language and style. His written legacy consists of *mathnawī* verses, a collection of lyrical poetry, and a selection of anecdotes that illustrate various religious or philosophical points. All these works are in Persian. Additionally, he wrote an allegorical romance *Salamān wa Absāl*, the characters of which symbolize the intellect's progress toward the ultimate truth; the didactic poems *Tuḥfat al-aḥrār* and *Subḥat al-abrār*; a literary rendition of the Qurʾānic story of Yūsuf (Joseph) and Zulaykha; a version of the story of Majnūn and Laylā, and a number of other works of similar content. Although Jāmī was far from the first Muslim author to avail himself of these themes and plots, he succeeded in infusing them with a new life through his masterful use of the rich resources of the Persian language. His style is fresh, graceful and supple. At times it excels the elaborate affectations of his eminent predecessors. Although Jāmī was not the last of the classical Persian poets, he is often viewed as the last great mystical poet of Persia.

His simple and lucid prose is almost as important as his poetry. Jāmī is the author of probably the most popular biographical collection of

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[12] Ibid., p. 2.

Sufism titled *Nafaḥāt al-uns* ("The Breath of Divine Intimacy") that draws on ʿAṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* and the works of earlier Sufi biographers.

Jāmī's Arabic treatises on various difficult issues of Sufi philosophy, *Lawāʾiḥ* ("Flashes of Light") and *al-Durra al-fākhira* ("The Precious Pearl"), are masterpieces of lucidity and concision.[13] In the *al-Durra*, Jāmī discusses the respective positions of the speculative theologians, the Sufis and the philosophers on eleven major issues of the Islamic creed, including the nature of God's existence, God's knowledge and attributes, and the origin of the universe in space and time.[14] In the *Lawāʾiḥ*, Jāmī summarizes, in a nutshell, the intellectual development of Islamic mysticism from its inception up to his own time. He also wrote commentaries on the Qurʾān, on the mystical poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Jāmī's indebtedness to the school of Ibn ʿArabī and his philosophically minded followers is to the fore in his "Epistle on Existence" (*Risāla fī ʾl-wujūd*). Here he identifies God with an absolute being that is not conditioned by anything. He then proceeds to describe this absolute being as the only existent reality outside our minds. In this scheme, the universe is presented as a mere manifestation or "particularization" of the absolute being, which in and of itself has no independent reality. According to Jāmī, this perception of reality is derived from mystical insight or "unveiling" (*kashf*) and, in particular, from the "mystical experience of *fanāʾ*, or annihilation, in which the entire universe, and the Sufi's own individuality, disappears, and only God remains as the sole true existent reality."[15]

As we can see, Jāmī's work recapitulates the major themes that were developed by the mystical tradition in the preceding centuries. His writings intricately mingle mystical poetry with didactic, biographical and metaphysical narratives, providing a helpful summation of various stands within contemporary Sufism.

Sufism as Unitive Metaphysics: Ibn [al-]ʿArabī

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabī, as he styled himself in his writings, or Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, as he was known

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[13] Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, p. 492.
[14] *The Precious Pearl*, pp. 6–7.
[15] N. Heer, "Al-Jami's Treatise on Existence," in: *Islamic Philosophical Theology*. Ed. by P. Morewedge, Albany, N.Y., 1979, p. 223.

among eastern Muslims, was born in the city of Murcia, in Islamic
Spain, in 560/1165. While still a child his family moved to Seville,
where the young Ibn ʿArabī received an excellent religious and sec-
ular education. Little is known about his early life which he himself
subsequently dismissed as a mere prelude to his all-important con-
version to the mystical path. This conversion was precipitated by a
heavenly voice commanding him to abandon his ungodly ways and
to devote himself fully to the service of God. Deeply shaken by this
episode, Ibn ʿArabī renounced the world and entered on the Sufi
path. Following the example of his Sufi friends, Ibn ʿArabī immersed
himself into ascetic practices and pious meditation and was soon able
to achieve an advanced degree of spiritual attainment. His quest for
spiritual tutors brought him to the Maghrib, where he met many
outstanding Sufi masters who belonged to the mystical school of the
great North African saint Abū Madyan (d. 594/1197).[16] In 598/1201,
at the age of 37 (lunar), Ibn ʿArabī set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca.
By the time of his departure, Ibn ʿArabī had written some sixty
works on esoteric sciences, Sufi practice and pedagogy. His writings,
however, did not seem to bring him wide fame.[17] His talents came
to full bloom in the Muslim East, where he composed most of his
famous works, including his controversial masterpieces, the "Bezels
of Wisdom" (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*) and the giant "Meccan Revelations" (*al-
Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*).

In the East, Ibn ʿArabī continued his search for renowned schol-
ars and Sufis. His quest brought him to the holy cities of the Ḥijāz,
Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Anatolia. In his journeys, he was accom-
panied by a small group of devoted disciples who were to become
active propagators and interpreters of his ideas after his death. Ibn
ʿArabī's profound knowledge of the Islamic tradition, allied with his
high reputation as a spiritual master, won him a large and enthusi-
astic following among both scholars and laymen. He cultivated the
friendship of a few Muslim sovereigns of the age, who provided him
and his disciples with material support. In Syria, Ibn ʿArabī enjoyed
the generous patronage of its Ayyūbid rulers; in Anatolia (Rūm), he
received a warm welcome from the local Saljuq sultans and struck
up friendship with some of their courtiers. Among the latter was the
father of Ibn ʿArabī's most consequential disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-
Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), who spread his ideas among the Persian-

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[16] On him see R. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia*, reprint, Gloucestershire, 1971, "index."
[17] O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification d'oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabi*, Damascus, 1964.

speaking scholars of Anatolia and beyond.[18] While in Anatolia, Ibn ʿArabī wrote many Sufi works and trained numerous disciples. He also counseled the sultan of Anatolia Kaykaūs on religious and political issues and addressed to him a famous letter of practical advice. Yet, unlike many contemporary ulema and Sufis who sought to be admitted to the royal entourage, Ibn ʿArabī eschewed close contacts with secular authorities. Although he accepted royal patronage, he neither amassed a fortune nor entered the service of any Muslim ruler.

From 620/1226 until his death in 638/1240, Ibn ʿArabī resided in Damascus, where he enjoyed the protection of its Ayyūbid rulers and of some influential religious officials. These connections allowed Ibn ʿArabī to promulgate his mystical teachings freely. The more controversial aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching were confined to a close circle of friends and disciples and became widely known only after his death. It was then that his bold mystical ideas began to antagonize many conservative ulema. Dismayed, they hastened to accuse him of "heresy" and of "grave delusion." Their criticism was countered by his supporters, setting in motion a torrid theological controversy that has not abated up to the present day.[19]

In Damascus, Ibn ʿArabī composed his most famous work, the "Bezels of Wisdom" (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*)—a brilliant, if extremely opaque reflection on the nature of prophethood and religious belief, which is mixed with abstruse metaphysical discussions, poetic illustrations of the underlying existential oneness of the created world, and daring exegetical paradoxes. At about the same time, Ibn ʿArabī completed a final recension of his *magnum opus*, the "Meccan Revelations." The end result was a colossal (no hyperbole in this case) book of 560 chapters, which can be seen as both the author's spiritual dairy and a comprehensive summa of Islamic esotericism, theology, jurisprudence, and ritual. With major projects of his life successfully accomplished Ibn ʿArabī passed away peacefully in 638/1240, surrounded by his disciples and family. His domed shrine in one of the suburbs of Damascus still attracts his admirers from far and wide.

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[18] For the dissemination of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in eastern Islamdom see H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabi*, Princeton, 1969, pp. 69–71 and 224; W. Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī and His School," in: *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*. Ed. by S. H. Nasr, New York, 1991, pp. 49–79; idem. "Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*," in: *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The heritage of Rumi*. Ed. by A. Banani, R. Hovannisian, et al., Cambridge, 1994, pp. 77–79.

[19] For details see A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The making of a polemical image in medieval Islam*, Albany, N.Y., 1998.

Ibn ʿArabī's Doctrine

Ibn ʿArabī's legacy consists, in his own estimation, of some 250–300 works, although some modern scholars credit him with twice this number of writings.[20] The length of individual works in this corpus varies from two page pamphlets to multivolume monuments such as the unfinished Qurʾān commentary and the *Futūḥāt*. Even more perplexing for investigators is the wide variety subjects and fields of knowledge that Ibn ʿArabī addressed in his writings.[21] To further complicate things, Ibn ʿArabī often treated traditional Islamic themes from a peculiar angle that was shaped by his overall monistic vision of God and the world. In other words, he was less interested in subjects themselves as in their relevance to the set of mystical and metaphysical insights which he wanted to illuminate by means of these subjects.

Nowhere in his works did Ibn ʿArabī provide a succinct and final account of his basic tenets. On the contrary, he seems to have been deliberately elusive in presenting his principal monistic idea. Throughout, he took care to offset it with numerous disclaimers. In a sense, this elusiveness and reluctance to speak his mind unequivocally seems to constitute the most salient features of Ibn ʿArabī's discursive method. It consists in couching his favorite motifs in the terminology and imagery of traditional Islamic sciences as well as the symbols and conventions of contemporary Islamic culture. In trying to communicate to the reader his personal mystical insights and subtle experiences, Ibn ʿArabī made skillful use of "symbolic images that evoke emergent associations rather than fixed propositions."[22] Although familiar with the syllogistic reasoning of the Muslim philosophers (*falāsifa*), he always emphasized that, in the final account, their method falls short of capturing the dizzying dynamic that characterizes the relationship between God, man and the cosmos. With regard to the mainstream Sunnī tradition, Ibn ʿArabī was strongly opposed to a blind imitation of earlier authorities, which he considered to be a sign of spiritual and intellectual immaturity on the part of its practitioners. In an attempt to overcome the perceived inadequacy of syllogistic argumentation and the slavish dependence on the wisdom

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[20] O. Yahia, *Histoire*, vol. 1, pp. 37–50.
[21] Ibid., passim.
[22] Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, p. 224.

of earlier scholars Ibn ʿArabī availed himself of shocking antinomies and breathtaking paradoxes meant to awaken his readers to what he regarded as the real situation in the universe, that is, the underlying oneness and common origin of all its elements. Oftentimes, his work strikes us as a mishmash of seemingly disparate themes and topoi operating on parallel discursive levels: from exegesis to poetry and mythology to jurisprudence and speculative theology.

Both Ibn ʿArabī's admirers and detractors tend to focus on the esoteric ideas expounded in the *Fuṣūṣ* rather than on the more traditional (and admittedly less controversial) aspects of his vast legacy. Unsurprisingly, therefore, to the general Muslim and Western reader, Ibn ʿArabī was and still is primarily the author of this controversial work which explores the status of prophecy vis-à-vis sainthood as well as other favorite themes of his *Weltanschauung*, such as the perfect man, the "myth of microcosmic return,"[23] the divine self-revelation in the events and phenomena of the empirical universe, the differing modes and scopes of the divine will, and the paradoxes of allegoric exegesis. Here, more than in any other work of his vast corpus, Ibn ʿArabī "integrally combined the contrasting approaches of earlier Islamic intellectual traditions that had focused respectively on spiritual disciplines and contemplation, intellectual and scientific inquiry, and the elaboration of scriptural and prophetic teachings" in ways that were "never really repeated or adequately imitated by any subsequent Islamic author."[24]

This statement captures the very essence of the Ibn ʿArabī's discursive method in the *Fuṣūṣ*—a work that presents itself as a complex maze of seemingly disparate theological and metaphysical propositions cast in opaque mythopoeic parables, exegetical paradoxes, poetic puzzles and puns, and ambiguous terminology.[25] Paradoxically, the discursive windows through which Ibn ʿArabī sought to highlight the various facets of his monistic world-view leave their peculiar imprint on the ideas and experiences Ibn ʿArabī endeavors to convey. Hence in the *Fuṣūṣ* it is practically impossible to separate the content from the form. This is not to say that an experienced

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[23] Ibid., pp. 222–227.

[24] J. W. Morris, "How to Study the 'Futuhat,'" in: *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi: A commemorative volume*. Ed. by S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan, Brisbane, 1993, pp. 73–89.

[25] For the so-called "mythic-visional" style of writing, which was used by many medieval Muslim thinkers and poets, see Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, pp. 225–227 and 311–315.

reader cannot identify several constantly reemerging motifs that inform Ibn ʿArabī's entire discourse. Yet, one can never be sure that in reformulating these motifs throughout his work Ibn ʿArabī retains their original meaning intact. For the goal of this deliberately devious discourse is to "carry the reader outside the work itself into the life and cosmos which it is attempting to interpret."[26]

Further adding to the reader's predicament is the way in which the elliptical and ambiguous text of the *Fuṣūṣ* forces him to engage in a perpetual decoding of its intended import. In the absence of a clearly defined referential framework (a difficulty that is further compounded by the ambivalence of the Arabic pronominal suffixes, whose referents are not always readily evident) Ibn ʿArabī's reader has to draw upon his own educational background, world-outlook, and subconscious intuition. In an apt observation made by J. Morris, Ibn ʿArabī's esoteric texts "are meant to function as a sort of spiritual mirror, reflecting and revealing the inner intentions, assumptions and predilections of each reader. . . . with profound clarity."[27] It is, therefore, hardly surprising that each Islamic century produced new interpretations of the *Fuṣūṣ*, though, in the end, several authoritative trends within this interpretive tradition triumphed over continued creativity and innovation. Given Ibn ʿArabī's open-ended and elusive discursive strategy, one can see why these numerous interpretations have failed to exhaust the potential of his polyvalent text, which continues to elicit interpretative responses from Muslim thinkers up to the present day.

It is not the place here to detail Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysical doctrine. Suffice it to say that he viewed the world as a product God's self-reflection that urged his unique and indivisible essence to show itself in the things and phenomena of the material universe as in a mirror. This idea scandalized many medieval ulema, who accused Ibn ʿArabī of admitting the substantial identity of God and world— a concept that contravened the doctrine of divine transcendence that was so dear to Islamic theology. In Ibn ʿArabī's system, God was not the absolutely otherworldly and impregnable entity of the mainstream Muslim theologians. Consequently, many of the latter came to view him as the founder of the heretical doctrine of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), understood as pantheism pure and simple.

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[26] Ibid., p. 315.
[27] Morris, "How to Study the 'Futuhat,'" 73.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN SUFISM.
THE RISE OF THE *ṬARĪQAS*

Already at the early stages of Sufism's history, some Sufi masters occasionally interpreted their mystical experiences in philosophical and metaphysical terms. In attempting to place their mystical insights into a wider existential context they invested them with a cosmic meaning that transcended the experience of an individual mystic. We have already discussed the views of the Persian mystic al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī who developed an early theosophical system that integrated elements of pre-Islamic ways of thinking: above all, the legacy of Classical Antiquity, mainly neo-Platonic as well as Aristotelian concepts of nature. Muslims in general and Sufis in particular were exposed to such pre-Islamic systems of thought through translations or free renditions into Arabic since the beginning of the third/ninth century. They also experienced the influences of Zoroastrian and Manichaean religions and mythologies, which probably circulated in an oral form.[1]

Al-Ghazālī's synthesis of Sufi moral and ethical teaching, theosophy, neo-Platonic metaphysics and the mainstream Sunnī piety of the *ḥadīth* folk was just one vivid example of this trend toward spiritual and intellectual syncretism. The theosophical and metaphysical elements of this synthesis were taken up and creatively re-interpreted by such mystical thinkers as Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) of Persia and Ibn ʿArabī of al-Andalus, who spent the second half of his life in Syria and Asia Minor, and died in Damascus in 638/1240. While al-Suhrawardī couched his Aristotelian and neo-Platonic ideas into the evolved mythical imagery and terminology of pre-Islamic Iranian traditions, especially Zoroastrianism, Ibn ʿArabī constructed a complex neo-Platonic-Gnostic system that stressed the underlying unity of all beings (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and their common origin in the unique and indivisible Godhead. This is not to say that the philosophical and metaphysical systems of al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī

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[1] Radtke, "Theologen," pp. 559–563.

were but foreign implants grafted onto the pristine body of the clas-
sical Sufi tradition. It seems more productive to treat them as a nat-
ural development of certain tendencies inherent in the Islamic religion
from the outset, which in turn reflected the growing sophistication
of later Sufism. Already in the classical Sufi tradition God was seen
as the only real agent in this world, to whose commands and actions
man must submit willingly and unconditionally. In the post-classical
period of Sufism's history, which began in the fifth-sixth/eleventh-
twelfth centuries, this perception of God evolved into a vision of
God as not just the only agent but also the only reality that exists.
This conception, which may somewhat loosely be termed "monistic,"
was rebuffed by the great Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/
1328), who condemned its Sufi adherents as out-and-out heretics.
Ibn Taymiyya and those ulema who came in his wake laid the foun-
dations of the anti-monistic polemical literature which was to play an
important role in the Islamic intellectual discourse from the eighth/
fourteenth century until today.[2]

In addition to non-Islamic philosophical systems, later Sufism inte-
grated and institutionalized a number of special spiritual exercises
and meditation techniques that have become its distinctive hallmarks.
They included such practices as spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), the remem-
brance of God (*dhikr*) and the mystical concerts (*samāʿ*) during which
formulas of *dhikr* were performed to the accompaniment of various
musical instruments. Sufi theorists saw these rituals as a means to
intensify relations between the mystic and his divine Master and to
release the spiritual energies that the mystic accumulated in the
process of direct contemplation of mysteries or even of God him-
self. It is with this end in mind that Sufi masters allowed music to
be played and love poetry to be recited during the *samāʿ* gatherings.
In the process, the mystic's encounter with his divine Beloved acquired
a recognizable ritual and artistic expression that set Sufis aside from
the commonality of the believers. During such gatherings, mystics
often fell into a state of ecstasy (*wajd*) that could force them to per-
form a spontaneous dance or to make frantic rhythmic gestures to
the accompaniment of music. As time went on, these practices became
more and more rigidly ritualized. On the psychological level, they
allowed the mystic to enter changed states of consciousness during

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[2] See A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The making of a polemical
image in medieval Islam*, Albany, New York, 1998.

which he could experience visionary "unveilings" (*mukāshafāt*) or come into direct contact with the Divine Reality. A system of classification and interpretation of such visions was developed by Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā of Khīva in Khwārazm (d. ca. 620/1220), who paid special attention to the visionary element of mystical experience.

A more conventional strain of Sufi thought drew its inspiration from the moralizing discourses of the Sufi classics whose works were discussed in the previous chapters. In an attempt to cleanse the Sufi tradition from ecstatic, uncontrollable elements, which many Sunnī religious officials and secular authorities found alarming, advocates of Sufism laid the emphasis on the moral and ethical aspects of Sufi piety. This strain of the Sufi tradition found an eloquent exponent in the great saint of Baghdad ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). A typical representative of the community-oriented mysticism of the Ḥanbalī school of law, al-Jīlānī tried to reach out to the ordinary townsfolk in his popular sermons which drew large crowds. As with al-Ghazālī, he emphasized the practical and moral aspects of Sufism and carefully eschewed its more intellectualizing expressions. The sober and practical tendency in mystical piety came to fruition in the last classical handbook of Sufism, "The Gifts of Divine Gnosis" (*ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*) of Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī of Baghdad (d. 635/1234). A Persian translation and adaptation of this book, which was made in the ninth/fifteenth century, has served as a standard textbook of Persian and Indian mystics ever since.

The devotional poetry of the early Sufi masters gave rise to a splendid literary tradition exemplified by such great Arab poets as Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), al-Shushtarī (d. 668/1268) and, later, by ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731). However, Sufism played a far greater role in the shaping of Persian literature which is virtually permeated by its themes and motifs. Here various aspects of the Sufi tradition received an aesthetic elaboration of unprecedented profundity and vigor. Its impact on the formation of Persian *belles-lettres* is hard to overestimate. In the words of a Western investigator, "classical Persian poetry is to a very notable extent Sufi in content and inspiration."[3] The contributions to Islamic literary culture by such Sufi poets as ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 615/1220), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/ 1273) and Jāmī (d. 898/1492) were examined in a special chapter

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[3] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 106.

of this study. Sufi motifs were also prominent in the other literary
traditions of the Islamic world: Turkish, Urdu, Malay, and so on.

The Rise of the Ṭarīqas

From the sixth/twelfth century onward, mystical life was increas-
ingly cultivated in the Sufi associations or orders (ṭuruq), many of
which are still active today. In fact, if today Islamic mysticism is
mentioned, the Sufi orders are the first thing that comes to mind.
Taking their origins in the Sufi lodges and hermitages, such as those
founded by al-Sulamī, al-Kharāqānī, Abū Saʿīd b. Abī ʾl-Khayr, and
ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣarī, the orders were usually located in special build-
ings, where Sufis practiced their rites and engaged in collective and
individual worship without being disturbed by the hustle and bustle
of everyday life. Gradually these institutions acquired rigidly fixed
rules of fellowship and a complex hierarchical leadership. In the early
centuries of Sufism's history, until the end of the forth/tenth cen-
tury, the teacher-disciple relation was a relatively loose one. The dis-
ciple (murīd) often attached himself to several teachers (shuyūkh) in
the hope of benefiting from their spiritual advice and from their
varying interpretations of the knowledge pertaining to the Sufi path.
From the end of the forth/tenth century onward, in some areas,
especially in eastern Persia, this relationship underwent an impor-
tant change. The face-to-face instruction in a casual setting that was
typical of early Sufism was replaced by a more-or-less formal course
that the spiritual master offered simultaneously to a relatively large
group of disciples. In some cases, the teacher supported his disciples
from his own funds or by means of pious donations. In return, he
came to require of his disciples undivided loyalty and could even
prohibit them from attending the teaching sessions of other Sufi
masters. The training technique of an individual teacher came to be
known as his spiritual "way," or "method" (ṭarīq, or ṭarīqa). It was,
in essence, a set of rules, rituals and pious formulas, which the shaykh
imposed upon his disciples in order to purify them of sins and of
mundane concerns and to instill in them absolute serenity. The goal
of this training was to liberate them from the ties to this world, to
make them receptive to the outpourings of divine grace and to lead
them into the direct presence of God. As time went on, the term
ṭarīq, or ṭarīqa, came to be applied metonymically to the Sufi disci-

pline and doctrine pursued by the followers of a Sufi master within the framework of a Sufi institution. In Western literature such institutions came to be known as "Sufi orders," a term that implied their underlying affinity with the monastic orders of Christian Europe. They were usually named after their founders, although the credit for the shaping of the disciples of a given shaykh into a structured social and religious organism usually went to his immediate successors. These successors put the teacher-disciple relationship on a formal foundation which came to serve as the rule of communal life within the order. Upon completing his training under a renowned master, the novice obtained from his teacher a license to instruct his own disciples (*ijāza*) and, as an external sign, a rough cloak (*khirqa*). A typical Sufi outfit also included a prayer rug (*sajjāda*), a rosary (*misbaḥa*) and a beggar's bowl (*kashkūl*).

Throughout the late sixth/thirteenth-early tenth/sixteenth centuries the ruling dynasties of the Middle East were generously supporting both Sufi brotherhoods and individual mystics, including such unconventional figures as Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/ 1269), Ibn Hūd (d. 699/1299), Ibn ʿArabī, and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428), who flourished under the Ayyūbids of Egypt and Syria and under the Rasūlids of Yemen. The institutionalization of Sufism that had begun under the Saljuqs gained further impetus under their successors in the eastern lands of Islam. In spite of the disruptions caused by the Mongol invasions of the middle of the seventh/thirteenth centuries, the Mongol rulers, who gradually embraced Islam, tended to extend patronage to renowned Sufis masters in hopes of benefiting from their popularity among their Muslim subjects and in order to secure their blessings (*baraka*) in political and military ventures. It is often argued that the network of Sufi organizations, which developed around that time, cemented the unity of eastern Islamdom following the fragmentation of the Caliphate and the emergence of numerous mutually hostile Muslim principalities.

In Egypt and Syria, the Mamlūk rulers continued the pro-Sufi policies of their predecessors. Many Mamlūks were fascinated with charismatic Sufi visionaries, whose blessing and charisma they highly valued and were anxious to secure. At the same time, religious officials in the Mamlūk administration found this fascination disturbing. They felt that freewheeling mystics with no formal education were ill qualified to provide counsel to their royal patrons, who often had a very vague notion of the Sharīʿa norms and their application.

Nevertheless, in the competition for the rulers' hearts and ears Sufi shaykhs often gained the upper hand over the formally trained religious specialists whose dry casuistry and scholastic corporatism had little appeal to both the rulers and their subjects. The sympathetic attitude toward Sufis that was displayed by the Mamlūk sultans was eagerly imitated by the lesser governors and state officials many of whom generously supported the "poor" (*fuqarā'*), that is the Sufis, by means of charitable bequests (*waqf*) and willingly availed themselves of their advice and therapeutic skills. A tangible material manifestation of Sufism's growing prestige with the Mamlūk sovereigns was the unprecedented proliferation, in that age, of Sufi institutions. These ranged from humble lodges (*zāwiyya*), which housed a master and his few disciples, to large hostels for itinerant Sufis (*ribāṭ*) to the giant Sufi monasteries (*khānaqā*) which accommodated hundreds of Sufis. Such large Sufi institutions were particularly numerous in Egypt, where authorities spent enormous sums on their construction and upkeep. The ideological and physical expansion of Sufism was determined by a number of reasons. It was due perhaps in part to the popular dissatisfaction with the institutionalized religion of religious specialists whose recondite hair-splitting theological debates and constant jockeying for sinecures alienated them from the masses and rendered them irrelevant to their spiritual needs. On the other hand, many Muslims seem to have been attracted to Sufism by the generous donations lavished upon its institutions by the secular rulers who were anxious to flaunt their credentials as supporters of men and women of religion. Be this as it may, there is no denying that a great number of Muslim men, and to a lesser extent women, of that age became "full-time" mystics. They joined a spiritual family established by a renowned Sufi master of old and abandoned gainful employment in order to devote themselves fully to the service of God. Especially prominent in the central and western lands of Islam were such Sufi "families" as Shādhiliyya, Rifā'iyya, Burhāniyya, Khalwatiyya and Qādiriyya and their numerous offshoots. Some of these institutions, especially the Qādiriyya, had their branches throughout the Muslim world, from West Africa to China. On the whole, however, eastern Sufis affiliated themselves with local Sufi orders, namely the Kubrawiyya, the Ni'matullāhiyya, the Yasawiyya, the Chishtiyya, and so on. In time, Sufi orders in the West and in the East developed a vast body of normative literature that dealt with the following major themes:

1. The order's spiritual genealogy (*silsila*), which was traced back from its incumbent head to the Prophet Muḥammad and which consisted of thirty to forty links. Since the chief aim of the genealogy was to assert the legitimacy of a given brotherhood or of its branch, it was subject to forgery, although in most cases its authenticity does not raise serious doubts.

2. Conditions and rituals relating to admission into the order. Some orders were open to both men and women, while others were restricted to men only. Once admitted, the novice owed the shaykh unconditional obedience and was expected to satisfy his every wish. The relationships between, and mutual obligations of, the shaykh and his *murīd*s were carefully detailed in the handbooks of each order.

3. Instructions about the use of the formulas of *dhikr*. They specify the control of breathing, the rhythms in which these formulas must be recited, and the occasions on which certain *dhikr* formulae are to be pronounced.

4. Instructions regarding seclusion (*khalwa*). Members of Sufi orders were often required to withdraw from society for pious meditation and *dhikr* exercises. Such retreats could last from several to forty days and had to be practiced in special small rooms or in isolated places, such as caves, forests, or mountains. As a rule, the mystic's behavior during retreats was regulated by precise instructions that varied from one order to another. These instructions stipulated the site and the arrangement of space, the length of the seclusion, the sequence of the formulae and litanies, the postures to be maintained by the anchorite, and the ways to maintain ritual purity. Spiritual retreats were especially prominent in the ritual of the Khalwatiyya brotherhood, which derives its name from it.

5. Rules and regulations concerning communal life in the Sufi lodges and conduct toward one's fellow Sufis under different circumstances. The manuals of various Sufi organizations were thus all-encompassing collections of rules that covered all aspects of Sufi behavior while in and outside the lodge, such as traveling, interacting with fellow Sufis and laymen, meditating, listening to poetry and music, performing ablutions, fasting. They also spelled out the hierarchy of the states and stations of the mystical path to God, as conceived by the founder of a given order.[4] In other words, the normative

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[4] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 74.

manuals of Sufi orders provided their members with a strong sense
of identity, with a code of behavior, and with the awareness of belong-
ing to a respected and ancient spiritual tradition, complete with its
own rituals, ethos, and doctrinal system. This communal identity was
further reinforced by the hagiographic literature of the order, which
praised its eponymous founders and cast them as paragons of piety
and righteousness to be followed by the rank-and-file members of
the order. In the hagiographic writings, which were diligently stud-
ied within the orders, special emphasis was placed on the miracu-
lous and intercessory powers of the deceased masters. This emphasis
encouraged the rise of the posthumous cult of Sufi saints (*awliyāʾ*)
among their followers and, gradually, among the local population as
well. Generally, members of the Sufi order were physically separated
from the lay masses. They resided in a special building, usually con-
structed for them by a wealthy benefactor, and led a communal life
that was punctuated by strictly defined ritual practices, such as the
recitation of certain litanies (*awrād*; sing. *wird*) at the assigned times
of the day or ritualized acts of piety. Many Sufis believed that these
litanies were communicated to the founding father of their *ṭarīqa* by
the Prophet who appeared to him in a dream. Also widely prac-
ticed were collective spiritual concerts (*dhikr; samāʿ; ḥaḍra*), which were
performed several times a week and required the participation of all
members of a given order. These ritual events were meant to renew
the allegiance of the Sufis to the order and its founder through an act
of collective practice. The use of music, clapping and dancing dur-
ing such concerts were condemned by some puritan Sunnī scholars
(e.g., by Ibn Taymiyya), whilst others declared them to be legiti-
mate, provided their participants exercise self-restraint and avoid
excesses (e.g., al-Ghazālī). The importance of the *dhikr* formulae for
the self-identification of the order's members is attested by the fact
that on admission into the order the teacher solemnly disclosed it
to the novice in the special ceremony called the "recitation of the
dhikr" (*talqīn al-dhikr*).[5]

From the outset, Muslim ascetics and mystics were fascinated
by the Prophet's private piety and pious exhortations, which they
treated as the surest way to moral rectitude and, eventually, to per-
sonal salvation. The Sufi strove not just to imitate every single detail

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[5] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 2d edition, Oxford, 1998, pp. 182–193
and "Index" under "dhikr."

of Muḥammad's behavior (*imitatio Muhammadi*) but also to keep Mu-
ḥammad's image always present in his thoughts and feelings. This
practice was intensified to such an extent that many Sufis claimed
to have witnessed Muḥammad in person by their own eyes. In the
course of such encounters the Prophet communicated to them some
valuable advice or a solution to a difficult moral dilemma or theo-
logical problem. Many Sufi orders claimed to have derived their
training techniques and moral and ethical precepts from what they
called the "path of Muḥammad" (*ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya*).

   In later Sufism, we find two principal types of affiliation between
the master and his adherents. According to the first type, the seeker,
or aspirant (*murīd*), attached himself permanently to the shaykh of a
ṭarīqa, who thereby assumed full responsibility for his education and,
at the end of his study, invested him with the so-called "robe of dis-
cipleship" (*khirqat al-irāda*), which can be seen as the equivalent of a
Sufi diploma. The second type was far less formal. It presupposed
a temporary affiliation of the disciple to a Sufi master with a view
to benefiting from the latter's blessing and charisma which he in
turn derived from his initiatory lineage stretching back to the Prophet.
After a short period of instruction and counseling, the disciple could
obtain the "robe of blessing" (*khirqat al-tabarruk*) from the master and
leave him to join another one.[6] This type of affiliation was open not
only to "full-time" Sufis, but, in principle, to any Muslim, thereby
dramatically expanding Sufism's popular base and facilitating the
recruitment of new members. Frequently, such affiliated members
of the order came from a royal or princely background or occupied
high offices in the state hierarchy. They were therefore in a posi-
tion to lavishly reward their Sufi mentors for their spiritual counsel
and charisma by assigning them revenues from their properties.
Multiple affiliations became a common feature of later Sufism, al-
though some Sufi leaders (e.g., those of the Tijāniyya) prohibited their
followers from seeking blessing outside their order.

   Throughout the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries
the Sufi *ṭarīqa*s grew more complex. They developed into hierarchi-
cal social and economic structures, making it impossible for their
heads to dispense spiritual advice and training directly to all of their
followers. Consequently, the shaykh of a large *ṭarīqa* came to rely

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[6] Ibid., pp. 181–185.

on a group of deputies (called *muqaddams* or *khalīfas*), who were author-
ized to preach and teach on his behalf at the regional branches of
the brotherhood, which were sometimes located at a considerable dis-
tance from the central lodge. Such deputies, who often enjoyed con-
siderable independence and had the right to initiate new members
into the order, were often tempted to establish an independent order,
especially when they disagreed with the shaykh's appointment of his
organizational successor. This situation led to a rapid proliferation
of subsidiary localized brotherhoods that were run by their leaders
as independent organizations. Compared to the Christian monastic
orders, which were organized around the papacy and had to com-
ply with fixed constitutions, the Sufi brotherhoods were more loosely
structured and decentralized. The lack of a rigid subordination ac-
counts for the fissiparous nature of *ṭarīqa* Sufism and for the resultant
tendency on the part of local branches to acquire independence
vis-à-vis the "mother" order. To regulate their activities, secular
rulers tried to bring the orders under state control with various degrees
of success. In the Ottoman Empire, each major city had the "master
of the orders" (*shaykh al-shuyūkh*). Appointed by the local governor,
he presided over the activities of Sufi institutions in the area under
his jurisdiction. In 1227/1812, the Viceroy of Egypt Muḥammad
'Alī established a similar office in Cairo. Its holder was granted au-
thority over all the mystical communities of Egypt as well as over
the country's numerous Sufi shrines and hostels. The competition
among later Sufi orders for spheres influence and new members
encouraged exclusivity and resulted in the emergence of clearly defined
borderlines between a given order and its competitors or between
different organizational branches of the same order. In modern times,
each order was characterized by distinct colors and a specific dress
code, which set its adherents apart from other Sufi institutions.

As mentioned, the physical and institutional spread of Sufism was
accompanied by the diversification of its doctrines and sources. The
spiritual and intellectual needs of Sufism's increasingly diverse con-
stituencies were no longer met by the simple pietist principles out-
lined by the semi-legendary figures of the first centuries of Islam.
Responding to the varied needs and intellectual levels of its audi-
ences Sufism evolved into a complex and heterogeneous system. Thus,
the famous Maghribī Sufi Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) could iden-
tify ten distinctive stands within the Sufi tradition of his epoch. Each
of these strands, according to Zarrūq, had its own set of ascetic and

spiritual exercises, theoretical assumptions, textbooks and authoritative exponents.[7] In the section that follows I will examine the life and work of the greatest Sufi masters of the later period who established lines of teaching and influence that persisted for centuries to come. In undertaking this task one inevitably encounters the problem of Sufism's definition, which arises precisely out of the diversity of its elements. Authors and scholars who are now known as Sufis may or may not have applied the term to themselves. Throughout the later Middle Ages and in modern times, one finds a broad spectrum of doctrinal opinions, beliefs and practices that have been labeled as Sufism by both Muslims and outside observers. Nevertheless, their relevance to the Sufi tradition in the original sense of the word is far from straightforward in so far as later Sufism "served more than any other movement to draw together all strands of intellectual life."[8]

The Grand Masters of Ṭarīqa Sufism

ʿAbd al-Qādir (d. 561/1166) and the Qādiriyya

The sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries saw many momentous developments and personalities that proved to be pivotal for the subsequent history of mystical Islam. The formation of the first Sufi orders was one such critical turning point. This event is usually associated with three Sufi masters whose lives and thought will be discussed in this chapter. The first of them, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, is considered to be the founding father of the influential Qādiriyya brotherhood. Born at Gīlān in Persia, al-Jīlānī came to Baghdad at the age of seventeen to study *ḥadīth* and Ḥanbalī jurisprudence. He subsequently made a pilgrimage to Mecca.[9] Although he had received a Sufi cloak from the Ḥanbalī scholar al-Mubārak al-Mukharrimī, the builder of the first Ḥanbalī college in Baghdad,[10] his conversion to Sufism occurred at the hands of the stern Sufi master Abū 'l-Khayr al-Dabbās (d. 523/1131), who earned his livelihood by selling syrup.

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[7] Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Qawāʿid al-taṣawwuf.* Ed. by Muḥammad Zuhrī Najjār, 2d edition, Cairo, 1976, p. 35.

[8] Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, p. 230.

[9] Ibid., p. 208.

[10] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 247.

This shaykh put ʿAbd al-Qādir through a severe ascetic discipline in order to suppress his pride. After studying with al-Dabbās, ʿAbd al-Qādir continued to practice the austere lifestyle inculcated in him by his master: he kept night vigils, fasted during most of the year, recited the Qurʾān from beginning to end many times over, wandered off in the desert without any provisions, and so on. In 521/1127, when he was fifty years of age, he felt that he had achieved the spiritual maturity he was seeking and decided to return to active social life. Following a dream that urged him to impart his knowledge to the people, he embarked on the career of a popular preacher. A fiery orator, he attracted large audiences of the common folk as well as royalty and wealthy merchants. Shortly before his death the Ḥanbalī ascetic al-Mukharrimī put ʿAbd al-Qādir in charge of his religious school (*madrasa*) in one of the quarters of Baghdad. To this was soon added a hospice (*ribāṭ*) for his large family (he had four wives and forty-nine sons) and disciples, where he lectured on the standard religious subjects: the Qurʾān and its exegesis, *ḥadīth*, and jurisprudence. At least three of his sons and many of his disciples later distinguished themselves as popular preachers and scholars in their own right.

A convinced Ḥanbalī who adhered to the populist and socially active stance of the founder of the movement, ʿAbd al-Qādir's sermons drew large crowds. Even in its extended form his private school could no longer accommodate his numerous admirers who flocked to him from all over Iraq and beyond. To cater to their needs, on Fridays and Wednesdays, he had to preach on the special prayer grounds outside the city, for there was no building in the ʿAbbāsid capital that was large enough to hold his listeners.[11] Finally, the authorities of Baghdad had to erect a special building for him on that site. There he received visitors and issued rulings on various difficult points of Islamic piety and ethic. His extraordinary popularity attracted wealthy donors, who assigned generous endowment funds to his school.

ʿAbd al-Qādir's fiery orations and irresistible charisma encouraged members of the non-Muslim religious communities of Baghdad to convert to Islam *en masse*. He also exerted beneficial influence on his Muslim followers, many of whom repented publicly of their sins in

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[11] Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, p. 208.

the aftermath of his moving sermons. He spoke in simple terms that were accessible to the rank-and-file believers. His moral discourses illuminated their everyday moral problems and provided them with dignifying solutions, which he traced back to the precedents established by the heroes of early Islam. As with al-Ghāzalī's *Iḥya'*, 'Abd al-Qādir's Sufism was driven by a clear communal agenda: to morally uplift his fellow Muslims and to guide them to salvation. In pursuit of this goal he carefully avoided the metaphysical speculations that were advanced by some contemporary Sufi theorists and played down the sensational and individualistic aspects of mystical experience exemplied by al-Bisṭāmī and al-Ḥallāj. And yet, 'Abd al-Qādir's simple piety was thoroughly inward-looking; it gave his listeners room for infinite self-improvement that was aimed at reaching the stage when one's "secret thoughts and evident words and actions will be at one."[12] He called upon the Muslims to embark on the greater *jihād*, one that, in accordance with a famous *ḥadīth*, should be waged against the enemy within every believer, that is, against his lower psyche with its destructive passions and uncontrollable drives which bar man from God's grace. In a similar vein, 'Abd al-Qādir presents the believer's obedience to God's will, as expressed in the Qur'ān and the Sunna, as the only authentic expression of his love for God.

'Abd al-Qādir's principal work, "That Which is Sufficient for the Seekers of the Path to the Truth" (*Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*), became a favorite manual of instruction for the subsequent generations of Ḥanbalīs, Sufis and non-Sufis alike. A standard exposition of the ethical and moral precepts incumbent on the Sunnī Muslim, the *Ghunya* "contains very little that could possibly be condemned by any but the most extreme 'puritans'."[13] Some Ḥanbalī doctors, notably Ibn Taymiyya, indeed criticized the supererogatory acts of piety and mystical litanies that were promoted by the *Ghunya*. They also pointed out, quite rightly it seems, that 'Abd al-Qādir drew heavily on Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's "Nourishment for the Hearts," which served him as a model and source of inspiration. Yet, unlike Abū Ṭālib's work, the *Ghunya* contains a heresiographical section that represents a typical Ḥanbalī position vis-à-vis "deviant" Muslim sects. Incidentally,

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[12] Ibid., p. 209.
[13] Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 85.

it criticizes the teachings of the Baṣran Sālimiyya, with which Abū
Ṭalīb was closely affiliated.[14]

ʿAbd al-Qādir explicitly identified the ideal shaykh of Sufism with
a perfect Ḥanbalī scholar. A sober and responsible individual, he
avoids excesses in theory and practice and guards jealously God's
transcendence that the ecstatic utterances of some Sufi "extremists"
have so blatantly compromised. Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Qādir consist-
ently upheld the supremacy of the prophets over the most perfect
Sufi saints. Somewhat paradoxically, despite his sober and pragmatic
character, ʿAbd al-Qādir became "probably the most popular saint
in the Islamic world, whose name is surrounded by innumerable leg-
ends that scarcely fit the image of the stern, sober representative of
contrition and mystical fear."[15] ʿAbd al-Qādir owes his posthumous
fame to his sons and numerous disciples. One of his enthusiastic
followers, al-Shaṭṭanawfī, writing a century after his death, crafted
a miraculous portrait of ʿAbd al-Qādir that has completely over-
shadowed his historical persona. Al-Shaṭṭanawfī's work gave rise to
numerous apologetic imitations that present ʿAbd al-Qādir as the
supreme saint of his epoch, "whose foot was on the neck of all other
friends of God." In such accounts, ʿAbd al-Qādir is invariably por-
trayed as a great miracle-worker: he extinguishes fire, walks on water,
flies through the air, raises the dead, reads people's thoughts, demol-
ishes mountains, dries up seas, and is miraculously present in sev-
eral places at the same time. He presides over a vast realm stretching
from Istanbul to Delhi and is ever ready to come to the rescue of
the downtrodden and the oppressed. His whole life is seen by his
admirers as a chain of marvels and miracles. In the hagiographical
literature of his order and in the collective imagination of his fol-
lowers, he presents himself as an embodiment of the infinite divine
majesty and a channel through which beneficent divine grace is dis-
tributed among mankind. Little wonder that soon after his death
his tomb in Baghdad came to be seen by the populace as a source
of blessing. Up to the present day it remains a popular pilgrimage
site that attracts numerous visitors. Rebuilt on the orders of the
Ottoman sultan Sülaymān in 941/1535, it is still visited by pilgrims,
mainly from the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, where his ṭarīqa con-
tinues to enjoy a wide following. Among Indian Muslims his name

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[14] Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, pp. 92–97.
[15] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 247.

is invoked whenever cholera or any other epidemic strikes a certain area or city. At such times, the people of the afflicted area take out what is believed to be ʿAbd al-Qādir's flag (which is dark green in color) and process with it, calling upon the saint to intercede before God on their behalf. ʿAbd al-Qādir's festival (*ʿurs*) on the 11th day of Rabīʿ II is marked by special celebrations in Baghdad up to the present day. ʿAbd al-Qādir's great popularity among Muslims of very diverse backgrounds, who lived in different historical epochs, as well as the nature of his affiliation to Sufism have been a puzzle for Western scholars. Summarizing their predicament, J. S. Trimingham wrote:

> It is difficult to penetrate through the mists of legend which formed during the lifetime of ʿAbd al-Qādir . . . and thickened rapidly after his death, and so to discern why he, out of the hundreds of saintly figures of the period, survived in a unique way to become the inspirer of millions, a heavenly receiver of petitions and bestower of benefits, right up to the present day . . . And as for his Sufi reputation there is not the slightest indication that he was a Sufi at all.[16]

Similar misgivings are expressed by J. Chabbi. She viewed ʿAbd al-Qādir as a preacher and director of a religious college *par excellence*, who was later appropriated by the mystics of Shāfiʿī background and portrayed as a model Sufi master and the founder of the Qādirī brotherhood.[17] A more recent study of his written legacy has revealed that ʿAbd al-Qādir had an intimate knowledge of the early Sufi tradition and the teachings of its major exponents. Throughout his writings, he made frequent references to the ideas of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Muḥāsibī, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, al-Bisṭāmī, al-Tustarī, and the Sufis of al-Junayd's circle.[18] Furthermore, he showed a good command of the Sufi terminology current in his age.[19] Finally, his position as the head of a Sufi lodge was shown to have been quite feasible, if we consider the rapid proliferation of such institutions in his epoch and the frequent references to his Sufi disciples (*murīdūn; fuqarāʾ*) in contemporary sources, including his own sermons.[20]

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[16] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, pp. 40–41.
[17] "ʿAbd al-Kadir al-Djilani, personnage historique," in: *StI*, vol. 38 (1973), pp. 65–106.
[18] A. Demeerseman, *Nouveau regard sur la voie spirituelle d'ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī et sa tradition*, Paris, 1988, pp. 13–17.
[19] Ibid., pp. 18–19.
[20] Ibid., pp. 19–34.

The Geographical and Organizational Dimensions of Qādirī Sufism

As mentioned, there is little reason to doubt that ʿAbd al-Qādir was
simultaneously the principal of a school (*madrasa*) of Ḥanbalī law and
the head of a Sufi lodge (*ribāṭ*) in Baghdad. His sermons, collected
in a book titled "Revelation from the Lord" (*al-Fatḥ al-rabbānī*) were
delivered sometimes in the one, sometimes in the other. Both were
notable institutions that were generously supported by state officials
and private individuals. Both appear to have come to an end after
the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1258. Till that time it
is probable that their headship remained in the family of ʿAbd al-
Qādir which was numerous and distinguished. According to his biog-
rapher al-Shaṭṭanawfī, ʿAbd al-Qādir was succeeded in the *madrasa*
by his son ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (552/1151–593/1196), who was followed
by his son ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 611/1214). Another son, ʿAbd al-Razzāq
(528/603–1134/1206–7), was a scholar and ascetic of some renown.
Several members of the family perished during the sack of Baghdad,
when both these institutions were destroyed.

Individuals residing at ʿAbd al-Qādir's *ribāṭ* were subject to a body
of rules and doctrines that were drawn up by its founder. It was
sufficient to constitute a system of ascetic discipline (*madhhab*).[21] By
receiving the Sufi cloak (*khirqa*) from ʿAbd al-Qādir his *murīd*s acknowl-
edged their acceptance of his authority and of his demands and sub-
ordinated their will to that of the master.[22] Al-Shaṭṭanawfī gives a
long list of men who attained various degrees of distinction and who
received the *khirqa* from ʿAbd al-Qādir in recognition of their achieve-
ments. These persons were said to "attach themselves" (*intasaba* or
intamā) to the master and, upon the completion of their studies, were
given permission to bestow the *khirqa* on others as from him. In doing
so they would stipulate that the novice (*murīd*) was to regard ʿAbd
al-Qādir as his shaykh and director after the Prophet. In a tradition
which is likely to be apocryphal (dated 592/1196), ʿAbd al-Qādir
declared that the acceptance of his *khirqa* was not absolutely neces-
sary for entry into his order; personal attachment to himself was
sufficient. It would appear that already during his lifetime several
persons carried on propaganda in favor of his spiritual method: one
ʿAlī b. al-Ḥaddād obtained proselytes in Yemen, and one Muḥam-

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[21] Ibid., pp. 40–52.
[22] Ibid., pp. 45–46.

mad al-Baṭā'iḥī, resident in Baalbek, did likewise in Syria. A Sufi named Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Yunīnī, also of Baalbek, was another famous propagandist, and one Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad in Egypt "followed 'Abd al-Qādir and in treading the Path relied on him after God and His Apostle." Since all of his followers were promised paradise, the order is likely to have been popular. Its popularity has persisted, in some areas, well into the modern period: in the 1920s and 1930s Qādirī missionaries in Africa appear to have had little difficulty in obtaining fresh adherents to it.

That 'Abd al-Qādir's sons had some share in spreading his teachings is likely, though Ibn Taymiyya mentions that he had associated with one of his descendants who was an ordinary Muslim and not a member of the *ṭarīqa*, and so did not agree with those who held fanatical views about his anscestor. Al-Shaṭṭanawfī, however, does not bear out the assertion that in 'Abd al-Qādir's lifetime some of his sons were preaching his doctrine in Morocco, Egypt, Arabia, Turkestan and India.[23] He says much of his son 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 603/1206), but nothing of the "mosque now in ruins, whose seven gilded domes have often served as the subject of description by Arabic historians," which this son is supposed to have built. Nor does his account confirm the statement that this 'Abd al-Razzāq introduced the use of music in the Sufi ritual, and indeed the employment of this was earlier than 'Abd al-Qādir's time. Since 'Abd al-Qādir was of the opinion that the exercises of each *murīd* should be determined by his shaykh in accordance with his individual needs, it is unlikely that he instituted any rigid system of collective worship (*dhikr*) or prescribed specific litanies (*wird*) to his followers. Indeed those in use among different Qādirī communities across the world differ considerably.[24] The initiation ceremonies of various Qādirī communities also vary from one region to another. In some communities, there is a tendency to set 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin, above the Prophet and to insist on the importance of his (i.e., 'Alī's) sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. This simply cannot well represent the views of such a stern Ḥanbalī scholar as 'Abd al-Qādir.

The Qādirī movement seems from an early period to have developed on different lines according to whether 'Abd al-Qādir was

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[23] A. Le Chatelier, *Confréries Musulmanes du Hédjaz*, Paris, 1887, p. 35.
[24] L. Rinn, *Marabouts et Khouan*, Algiers, 1884, pp. 183–185.

regarded as the founder of a system involving rites and practices, or as a worker of miracles and advocate of the poor and downtrodden. In the latter direction it meant the near deification of 'Abd al-Qādir, the extremists holding that he was the greatest saint of all times. His more moderate followers argued however that he was so only in his own age. The latter was the view of Ibn 'Arabī, who treats him the representative of God on earth (*khalīfa*) in his epoch, who made manifest the powers that God had given to him through his miracles, or "charismatic gifts."[25] But there was also a theory that 'Abd al-Qādir continued to exercise his supernatural powers in his grave, which he could leave at will to come to the rescue of those in need. This belief is attested by the initiation ceremonies of some branches of the Qādiriyya: the candidate for admission to a Qādirī community has to see the founder in dreams, in one case so often and so clearly that without having seen 'Abd al-Qādir's portrait he could recognize him among a thousand. The form of Qādirism that encouraged the worship of the founder seems to prevail in North Africa, where it is called Jīlāliyya, and whole communities are called collectively Jīlāla. Their system has been described by some French scholars as the application of Sufi mysticism to beliefs that are seem to be pre-Islamic, and the materialization of that mysticism under the form of a cult of hidden subterranean powers. Here the word "retreat" (*khalwa*) is used for a heap of stones where women attach rags to reeds planted between the stones and where they burn benzoin and styrax in potsherds. Such "retreats" seem to symbolize the saint's invisible presence among his followers in a given area. Similarly, "in the province of Oran on all the roads and on the summits of the chief mountains domed shrines (*qubba*) are to be found in the name of 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlālī."[26] The society of the Genawah in Guinea has placed itself entirely under the protection of Mawlāy (or Master) 'Abd al-Qādir with all his array of male and female demons. In such beliefs French scholars found traces of the powers which, according to the Qur'ān, belonged to Solomon. The cult of 'Abd al-Qādir is most ardently practiced by Arab and Berber women in some areas of Morocco. They come to the *khalwa* for every sort of object, and to satisfy their loves and hates in all the acts of

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[25] W. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, Albany, NY, 1998, p. 376.
[26] E. de Neveu, *Les Khouan: Ordres religieux chez les Musulmans d'Algérie*, Paris, 1845, p. 30.

their existence. The men on the other hand chiefly go to the *khalwa* when they are ill. Some Sunnī scholars, especially Ibn Taymiyya and his followers in Syria and Egypt, attacked such practices. The Qādiriyya consists of loosely structured communities that differ from other orders mainly in ritual, but again this varies widely from one locality to another within the same Qādirī movement. It is, therefore, hardly appropriate to speak of a unified Qādirī order. Perhaps the only feature such disparate regional communities share in common is their allegiance to the saintly founder. Furthermore, though the founder was a Ḥanbalī scholar, membership is by no means confined to that school, and the order is theoretically both tolerant and charitable.

Since historical and geographical works rarely distinguish between the different Sufi *ṭuruq* in their accounts of religious buildings, little can be said with certainty of the date at which the first Qādirī lodge (*zāwiyya* or *khānaqā*) was established in any country save Iraq. The teachings of the order is said to have been introduced into Fez by the posterity of two of ʿAbd al-Qādir's sons, Ibrāhīm (d. 592/1196 in Wāsiṭ, Lower Iraq) and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (who died in Jiyāl, a village of Sinjār, Upper Iraq). Their descendants reportedly had migrated to Spain and shortly before the fall of Granada (897/1492) fled to Morocco, where they still reside. The *khalwa* of ʿAbd al-Qādir in Fez is mentioned as early as 1104/1692–3.

The order was introduced into Asia Minor and Istanbul by Ismāʿīl Rūmī, founder of the *khānaqā* known as the Qādirikhānah at the Ṭopkhāne. This personage (d. 1041/1631), who is called *Pīr thānī*, "Second Master," is said to have founded some forty lodges (*tekiya* or *tekke*) in these regions. The Yemeni scholar Ṣāliḥ b. Mahdī al-Maqbalī mentioned a Qādirī lodge (*ribāṭ*) in Mecca[27] about 1180/1767. The assertion that a branch was established there during the lifetime of ʿAbd al-Qādir[28] is not improbable, since Mecca has a natural attraction for the Sufis.

The Qādiriyya order is mentioned as one that is highly respected but is not included among those recognized in India. It spread into the Subcontinent from Uch, northeast of Multān, in the late ninth/fifteenth centuries; from there it was carried by the Qādirī missionaries

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[27] *Al-ʿĀlam al-shāmikh*, Cairo, 1328 A.H., p. 381.
[28] Le Chatelier, *Confréries*, p. 44.

to Indonesia and Malaysia.[29] Later on, however, the Qādiriyya of India appears to have lost ground to other brotherhoods, especially the Chishtiyya, the Suhrawardiyya and the Naqshbandiyya, and we find no reference to it in a list of Indian brotherhoods from 1166/1752, although 'Abd al-Qādir himself is mentioned.

Some statistics (to be received with caution) of the Qādiriyya and their *zāwiya*s are given by the French colonial officials in the Maghrib, O. Depont and X. Coppolani.[30] Much of its development is admittedly recent, and may be due to the fame won by the namesake of 'Abd al-Qādir, the emir 'Abd el-Kader (d. 1301/1883), a shaykh of the Qādirī order, who for many years resisted the French occupation of North Africa. It is still represented in many Islamic countries, though it would appear that certain derived brotherhoods enjoy greater popularity in many places. Thus the Qādiriyya of Touba in Guinea, which has become a distinct sign whereby the Diakanke tribe can be recognized, is derived through the Sīdiyya from the Qādiriyya of the Kunta (Kounta) of Timbuktū. Although these Kunta groups form an offshoot of the Qādiriyya, some of them prefer to identify themselves with the Shādhiliyya brotherhood, which is especially popular among African Muslims.

The Qādirī communities throughout the Muslim world acknowledge nominal allegiance to the keeper of 'Abd al-Qādir's tomb in Baghdad and share some common rituals of investiture.[31] It would seem however that the actual authority of this personage is chiefly recognized in Iraq and Pakistan, which provided the majority of its visitors in recent times.[32] 'Abd al-Qādir's Pakistani followers periodically send gifts that form the main source of the revenues of this establishment. No wonder therefore that the members of this family in Baghdad find it worth their while to learn Urdu. Under the Ottomans the Qādirī *zāwiya*s in Mecca were subject to the grand master of the Sufi orders (*shaykh al-ṭuruq*), who had the right to nominate their leader (*muqaddam*). Likewise, the Egyptian branch was under the control of a representative of the al-Bakrī family, who was charged by the Egyptian viceroy Muḥammad 'Alī with the supervision of the Sufi *ṭuruq* in his realm.[33]

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[29] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 354.
[30] Depont and Coppolani, *Confréries*, pp. 301–18.
[31] Rinn, *Marabouts*, p. 179.
[32] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 247.
[33] F. de Jong, *Ṭuruq and Ṭuruq-linked Institutions in XIXth Century Egypt*, Leiden, 1978.

In Africa, according to L. Rinn, each *muqaddam* names his successor; in the event of one dying without having nominated anyone, an election is made by the members of a given branch during a collective Sufi worship (*ḥaḍra*). The approval of the head of the order in Baghdad is then solicited, and has never been refused. The organization of the order in North Africa is described somewhat fully by L. Rinn, O. Depont and X. Coppolani in the works cited in the footnotes. The system appears to be in general congregational, that is, the *zāwiya*s are by and large independent, and the relation between them and the central institution in Baghdad is very loose and sometimes nonexistent. The principle whereby the headship of a *zāwiyya* is hereditary is generally recognized, but not always followed.

In Anatolia, the sign of the Qādirī brotherhood was said to be a green rose adopted by its local propagator Ismāʿīl Rūmī. The candidate for admission to the order after a year brought an *ʿaraqiyya*, or a small felt cap, to which if the candidate be accepted the shaykh attached a rose of eighteen yellow, red, white and black petals, arranged in three rings of five, six and seven respectively, with Solomon's Seal in the center. This cap is called by them "crown" (*tāj*). The symbolism of this is explained by L. Garnett[34] and refers, respectively, to the virtues one acquires by joining the order, the indispensable elements of faith, and the number verses in the first Qurʾān chapter, the *Fātiḥa*. The Turkish Qādiriyya preferred the color green, though they allowed others. In nineteenth-century Egypt on the other hand the turbans and banners of the Qādiriyya were white; most members of the order were fishermen, and in religious processions they carried upon poles nets of various colors.[35] There are festivities in honor of ʿAbd al-Qādir on 11 Rabīʿ II, and pilgrimages are made in many places in Algeria and Morocco to the *zāwiya*s and shrines of the saint.[36] The "birthday" of the founder (*mawsim*), celebrated by the Jīlāla at Salé commences on the seventh day of the *mulūd* (*mawlid*), that is, the Feast of the Prophet's birthday, and lasts four days 17–20 Rabīʿ I. Sheep and oxen are presented to the descendants of ʿAbd al-Qādir. French observers in Morocco distinguished between the ceremonies of the Qādiriyya, who recite the

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[34] *The Dervishes of Turkey*, London, 1990, pp. 119–121.
[35] E. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, London, 1978, p. 245.
[36] Rinn, *Marabouts*, p. 177.

order's litany (*ḥizb*), and the Jīlāla, who recite the *dhikr* to the accompaniment of drums and tambourines; and again between the Jīlāla of the country, who use slightly different musical instruments. A performance executed with these instruments sometimes leads to ecstasy. The collective worship of the Jīlāla of the country contains neither the *ḥizb* nor the *dhikr* instituted by the founder of the brotherhood, but a plain *dhikr* of improvised words chanted to the ceremonial rhythm of the tambourines without bells (*banādir*). These improvisations always terminate with the words "Thus spoke Mawlāy ʿAbd al-Qādir" or "O Mawlāy ʿAbd al-Qādir."

Various collections of rituals, which are ascribed to ʿAbd al-Qādir, have been published in Egypt, Turkey and India. In the Qādirī manual "The Divine Outpourings" (*al-Fuyūḍāt al-rabbāniyya*), the *murīd* who is about to enter upon *khalwa* (retreat) is advised to fast in the day and keep vigil at night. The *khalwa* lasts forty days. If, during the vigil, a figure reveals itself to him saying "I am God," he should say "Nay rather thou art in God," and if it be for probation, it will vanish; but if it remain, then it will be a genuine revelation (*tajallī*). Reduction of food during the forty days should be gradual till for the last three days fasting is complete. At the end, the *murīd* returns by degrees to his former diet.

The Jīlāla of Tangier in Algeria, who make vows to ʿAbd al-Qādir in the hopes of securing his assistance in a difficult undertaking or in distress, are in the habit of depositing in the *zāwiyya* white cocks, which are called *muḥarrar*.[37] They do not kill them, but leave them free to rove about the *zāwiyya*, where however they do not long survive, since the descendants of the Prophet who live hard by take them for their food. The head (*muqaddam*) of this *zāwiyya* conducts the ceremonies at which the Qurʾān is repeated without ʿAbd al-Qādir's litany (*ḥizb*) being pronounced, and where some ritual dances are performed. Circumcisions are made at the *zāwiyya* on the first day of the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*). A nightly meeting called *layla* is held on the eve of this day, at which the *ḥizb* of ʿAbd al-Qādir is recited. In some localities of the Maghrib, all the potters belong to the Jīlāla, among whom the richer members of the community are to be found.

The first time that the Qādirīs appear to have played an active political part was during the French conquest of Algeria in the 1830s,

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[37] A reference to Qurʾān 3:35.

when the chief of the local Qādiriyya, Muḥyī 'l-Dīn, having been offered the leadership in the war against the infidel, permitted his son ʿAbd al-Qādir to accept it. A born leader of men, ʿAbd al-Qādir was able to utilize the mobilizational resources and the *shaykh-murīd* discipline of his brotherhood to establish his authority over many regions of Algeria. When his power was threatened by the French, he made astute use of his rank as the *muqaddam* of his order to win fresh recruits and consolidate his authority over the Algerian countryside. After his fall and subsequent exile to France in 1847, the followers of the African Qādiriyya seem to have lost their militancy. From that time onward they often lent their support to the French colonial government of Algeria. During a local insurrection in Aurès in 1879, the shaykh of the Qādiriyya of Menāʿa, Sī Muḥammad b. ʿAbbās, displayed unimpeachable loyalty. The same branch of the order helped the French to extend their influence to the Sahara at Wārgla and to El-Wad. Their leader Sī Muḥammad b. Ṭayyib, fell on the French side at the battle of Charouin on March 2, 1901.[38]

General Observations

The various branches of the Qādiriyya present a typical example of the evolution of Sufism in the later periods. It was no longer simply the individual piety of a few religious virtuosi, but "an elaborate lore and custom based on the relation of disciple and master" that eventually acquired its own organization, the *ṭarīqa* Sufi order. From that time on the *ṭarīqa* has existed "side by side with the mosques and *madrasas* of the regular ulema scholars."[39] The social potentialities of organized Sufism were fully realized with the emergence of the Sufi cloisters and lodges, which gradually became the important foci of social cohesion and popular religiosity. As ʿAbd al-Qādir's example clearly demonstrates, the great Sufi preachers and visionaries enjoyed enormous popular respect. "Living in poverty . . . and scorning the niceties of courtly fashion and the competition for financial and social advantage of the urban tradesmen . . ., they fulfilled the long-standing Irano-Semitic dream of a pure life over against the injustice that seemed built into city life . . ."[40] The moral

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[38] I. Hamid, *Les Musulmans Français du Nord de l'Afrique*, Paris 1906, p. 276.
[39] Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, p. 204.
[40] Ibid., p. 207.

respect which Sufis and their leaders enjoyed among the masses grad-
ually transformed into a wide popular belief in their miraculous pow-
ers and in their ability to intercede before God on behalf of the
ordinary believers. Mixed with the pre-Islamic religious and cultural
substrata of the areas where Sufism was by now firmly implanted,
such popular beliefs produced the peculiar combinations that have
just been described. From then on, Sufi institutions were increasingly
catering to the needs of popular religiosity with its insatiable craving
for the miraculous and the extraordinary. Endowed by the popular
imagination with supernatural therapeutic and intercessory powers
Sufi shaykhs came to provide the much needed spiritual comfort
and ministry to the populations in the rural hinterland as well as in
cities. Their role was especially vital at the time of the decline or
outright collapse of the central authorities in the aftermath of vari-
ous social cataclysms or natural disasters. In accounting for the new
social role of Sufism one Western scholar wrote:

> The Sufi ties at once deepened the local moral resources, and tied
> them in a system of brotherhoods in some ways as universal as the
> old caliphal bureaucracy had been, which had disappeared. . . . Thus
> Sufism supplemented the Sharīʿah as a principle of unity and social
> order, offering the Muslims the sense of spiritual unity which came to
> be stronger than that provided by the remnant of the caliphate. They
> developed . . . a picture of the world which united the whole Dār al-
> Islām [i.e., the Abode of Islam—A.K.] . . . under a comprehensive hier-
> archy of pirs . . . The individual khāniqāhs and saints' tombs to which
> the faithful could come for spiritual guidance and consolation from
> God-dedicated men were part of an inclusive holy order—not merely
> the order of a given ṭarīqah, but that of God's chosen men through-
> out the world.[41]

It is against the background of this new social and ministerial role
of later Sufism that we should view the activities of the saintly indi-
viduals and the institutions that they founded.

Al-Suhrawardī and the Suhrawardiyya

The emergence of another great Sufi order, the Suhrawardiyya, is
closely associated with Abū 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī
(d. 563/1168), a man whose career "embraced both the academic and

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[41] Ibid., p. 221.

the mystical."[42] Born about 490/1097 in Suhraward, in the Persian province of Jibāl, Abū 'l-Najīb traced his genealogy to the first caliph Abū Bakr. Probably in 507/1113, while still a young man, Abū 'l-Najīb moved to Baghdad, where he pursued the study of *ḥadīth*, Shāfiʿī law, Arabic grammar and belles-lettres. A paternal uncle of Abū 'l-Najīb, ʿUmar b. Muḥammad (d. 532/1137–8), was head of a Sufi cloister in Baghdad. It was he who invested the young Abū 'l-Najīb with the Sufi robe (*khirqa*). At about 25, he abandoned his studies at the famous Niẓāmiyya college of Baghdad and devoted himself to a solitary life of asceticism. Soon afterwards, he traveled to Iṣfahān in order to join Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), the younger brother of the great Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who represented an ecstatic, or "drunken," trend in Islamic mysticism.[43] In the words of a biographer, al-Ghazālī "wafted upon him the breath of felicity (*nasīm al-saʿādat*) and guided him along the Sufi Path." Under al-Ghazālī's influence, continues the biographer, "he cut himself off from ordinary society in order to lead a life of seclusion and retreat."[44] On returning to Baghdad he became a disciple of Ḥammād al-Dabbās (d. 525/1131), the holy individual who was already mentioned as a spiritual master of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. During his Sufi training, Abū 'l-Najīb is said to have earned his living as a water-carrier. Later on, he himself acquired a number of disciples and founded a cloister (*ribāṭ*) on the western bank of the Tigris. However, "he did not totally turn his back on the life of academe."[45] In 545/1151 Abū 'l-Najīb was appointed as a professor of *fiqh* at the Niẓāmiyya college. However, two years later, he was dismissed from his office as a result of the power struggle between the caliph and the Saljuq sultan. Both before and after his appointment at the Niẓāmiyya, Abū 'l-Najīb taught *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* at his own *madrasa*, which was situated next to his *ribāṭ*. Simultaneously, he continued to hold teachings session on Sufism. In 557/1161–92, he left Baghdad for Jerusalem, but he could not travel beyond Damascus because of the hostilities between Nūr al-Dīn Zangī and the Crusaders led by

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[42] I. Netton, "The Breath of Felicity: *Adab, Aḥwāl, Maqāmāt* and Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī," in: L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi*, London and New York, 1993, p. 457.

[43] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 66.

[44] Netton, "The Breath," p. 457, apud al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, Cairo, 1905–1906, vol. 4, p. 256.

[45] Netton, ibid.

Baldwin. After being granted an honorable reception in Da-mascus, Abū 'l-Najīb returned to Baghdad, where he died a few years later. Of his numerous students at the Niẓāmiyya one can mention the great historian Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) and the famous tradition-alist al-Samʿānī. Among his Sufi disciples ʿAmmār al-Bidlīsī (d. between 590/1194 and 604/1207) occupies an important place as a teacher of the renowned Central Asian Sufi Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, who will be discussed further on. However, Abū 'l-Najīb's fame is largely due to his disciple and nephew, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, the author of the last classical Sufi manual ʿAwārif al-maʿārif and the true founder of the Suhrawardiyya order.

Abū 'l-Najīb was not a prolific author. Apart from a commentary on a popular ḥadīth collection, his fame as a writer rests on a small Sufi manual titled "The Manners of the Sufi Novices" (Adab al-murīdīn).[46] However, this work became widely known only with the spread of the Suhrawardiyya order that was founded by his nephew ʿUmar after Abū 'l-Najīb's death. The Adab is unique among Sufi compositions in that Sufism in its entirety is viewed here from the standpoint of adab (rules of conduct)[47] to be followed by its adher-ents. Abū 'l-Najīb's manual does not provide a detailed explanation of Sufi doctrine, focusing instead on Sufi ethics and manners. Abū 'l-Najīb's work is addressed first and foremost to the novice who is about to join a Sufi community. It teaches him how to choose only pure food, drink and clothes, to render service to his brethren, not to leave his shaykh before the eye of his heart opens, to associate with people of his kind and those from whom he can benefit.[48] The author makes a careful distinction between the full members of a Sufi congregation, who are expected to undertake the life of rigors and self-imposed deprivation implicit in its rule, and those who seek to partake of its spiritual life without forsaking their material pos-sessions and social obligations. By applying the traditional concept of rukhṣa (a dispensation from some of the severer Sufi requirements for those believers who are unable to observe them to the maxi-mum)[49] in a novel way, Abū 'l-Najīb responds to the phenomenon of attachment to Sufism of lay members of public, called muḥibbūn

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[46] M. Milson, A Sufi Rule for Novices, Cambridge, Mass., 1975.
[47] Ibid., p. 16.
[48] Netton, "The Breath," p. 460; cf. Milson, A Sufi Rule.
[49] Netton, "The Breath," p. 461.

("lovers").[50] The concept of *rukhṣa* allows the associated member of a Sufi congregation to have an income that exceeds his immediate needs, to cultivate friendship with rulers, to wear expensive cloths, to enjoy delicious food, to listen to, and to reward, profane poets, etc.[51] At the same time, he is allowed to share in the spirituality of the Sufi community and in the charisma of its full-time members.[52] In return, he is expected to provide hospitality for itinerant fellow Sufis and to support the local Sufi community through charitable donations. In his book, Abū 'l-Najīb made extensive use of classical Sufi manuals by al-Sulamī, al-Sarrāj and al-Qushayrī. Surprisingly, his primary source seems to have been Ibn Khafīf's "The Just Mean" (*Kitāb al-iqtiṣād*), which he quotes throughout his "Rule." However, he never mentions Ibn Khafīf by name. The reason for this may lie in the fact that Abū 'l-Najīb disagreed with Ibn Khafīf's fundamentally negative view of dispensations (*rukhṣa*), which the latter interpreted as a failure of the *murīd* to meet the requirements of absolute sincerity (*ṣidq*) in his relationship with God. Ironically, regular Sufis gradually began to avail themselves of the dispensations that, in Abū 'l-Najīb's system, were intended for the associated members only.[53] It may therefore be argued that the notion of *rukhṣa* introduced an element of instability into Sufism by lowering the standards of ascetic discipline upheld by early Sufi authorities. Such an attitude could not but encourage unqualified and undeserving individuals to join the Sufi movement—a development that was bemoaned by later Sufi writers.

Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī: Sufism as a Social and Political Factor

Abū 'l-Najīb's nephew, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (539–632/1145–1234), was one of the most important Sufis in Sunnī Islam. He was born and grew up in the town of Suhraward, in the Persian province of Jibāl. He should not be confused with his controversial contemporary Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, a mystical thinker who was put to death in Aleppo in

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[50] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 72.
[51] Ibid., Netton, "The Breath," p. 466.
[52] Milson, *A Sufi Rule*, pp. 19, 53 and 66.
[53] Ibid., p. 20.

587/1191 on charges of harbouring suspect religious and political ideas.

While still a young man Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī came to Baghdad, where he placed himself under the tutelage of his uncle Abū ʾl-Najīb. Abū Ḥafṣ followed his uncle's courses both in the Niẓāmiyya and in the *ribāṭ* on the front of the Tigris River which by that time had become a major centre of the Sufi training. Abū Ḥafṣ's other master in Baghdad was the renowned Ḥanbalī preacher and Sufi ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. He was to have a lasting influence on the religious views of the young al-Suhrawardī by dissuading him from the study of speculative theology (*kalām*) and from the use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) in juridical issues. However, despite his great respect for his teacher, al-Suhrawardī did not formally join the Ḥanbalī school of law. On legal issues, he was a typical tradition-alist Shāfiʿī scholar whose religious attitude was characterised by a deep-seated mistrust of rationalist theology. ʿAbd al-Qādir's influence comes to the fore in al-Suhrawardī's violent attacks against the pro-ponents of Ashʿarī *kalām* later in his career.

After his uncle's death in 563/1168, al-Suhrawardī began to preach to the residents of Abū ʾl-Najīb's *ribāṭ* and in several other places in Baghdad. An eloquent orator, his public speeches often threw his audience into ecstasy or into the state of acute remorse. Under the influence of his oratory skills and powerful personality a number of his listeners reportedly cut their hair as a sign of penitence and turned to ascetic life. Others wept profusely and swooned. His pul-pit was made of clay in order to demonstrate his commitment to the ascetic way of life.

Al-Suhrawardī was on friendly terms with Muʿīn al-Dīn al-Chishtī (d. 633/1236), the founder of the Indian Chishtiyya order that espe-cially in its early period based its teachings on al-Suhrawardī's "Gifts of Divine Knowledge" (*ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*). He maintained par-ticularly close ties with Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, known as al-Dāya, a *murīd* of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā whom he had met in 618/1221 at Malaṭya. Dāya presented al-Suhrawardī with a copy of his famous manual "The Path of God's Bondsmen" (*Mirṣād al-ʿibād*).[54] Not only did al-Suhrawardī give his unconditional approval to this book, he

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[54] H. Algar (trans.), *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return: A Sufi com-pendium by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī*, Delmar, New York, 1982.

also wrote a letter of recommendation on behalf of al-Dāya to the
Saljuq sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād (d. 634/1237) of Konya. Finally,
while on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 628/1231, al-Suhrawardī is said
to have met the great mystical poet of the age Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.
632/1235). His meeting with the great Sufi gnostic Ibn [al-] ʿArabī
(d. 638/1240) must be a legend that was designed to exculpate the
latter of the accusations of unbelief levelled at him by some Sunnī
scholars.[55]

Though he constantly invoked the ways of the "pious forefathers"
of the early Islamic community, al-Suhrawardī occasionally condoned
bold expressions of Sufi experience. He even gave his conditional
approval to the famous "I am the [Divine] Truth" (*anā 'l-ḥaqq*) state-
ment ascribed to al-Ḥallāj. At the same time, early in his career
al-Suhrawardī was deeply suspicious of the intentions of those con-
temporary mystical thinkers who sought to put individual mysti-
cal experience in a metaphysical context. In his classification, they
fell in the same category as the Muslim philosophers whose Greek-
inspired speculations he explicitly condemned.[56]

Al-Suhrawardī's popular teaching sessions attracted the atten-
tion of the caliph al-Nāṣir, who sought to shore up the crumbling au-
thority of the ʿAbbāsid state by rallying around his throne various
religious and social organizations in the lands under his sway. By
patronizing al-Suhrawardī the caliph sought to secure the support
of al-Suhrawardī's numerous followers in the capital and nearby terri-
tories. To demonstrate his high esteem for the popular Sufi leader,
in 599/1203 al-Nāṣir built for him a *ribāṭ* named al-Marzūbaniyya
on the bank of the ʿĪsā river in the western part of the capital. The
construction of the Marzūbaniyya coincided with al-Nāṣir's attempt
to endear himself to his subjects by sponsoring the *futuwwa* (chivalry)
clubs of young men, which had become "a prominent channel for
expressing lower-class interests in the towns."[57] Al-Nāṣir's politics
were aimed at securing an independent power base among the urban
masses of the capital whose support he needed in order to resist the
domination of the Saljuq warlords. According to al-Nāṣir's plan, his

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[55] C. Addas, *The Quest for Red Sulphur*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 240–241; cf.
A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The making of a polemical image in me-
dieval Islam*, Albany, New York, 1998, p. 134 and passim.

[56] Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, p. 281.

[57] Ibid., p. 282.

patronage of the *futuwwa* clubs was to play a critical role in as much
as it gave him control over the urban militias that helped him to
assert Baghdad's autonomy against outside forces. Al-Nāṣir's goal in
cultivating the *futuwwa* clubs and in presenting himself as their patron
was to put these organizations of free citizenry at the service of the
caliphate. Taking advantage of his headship of all the *futuwwa* organ-
izations in his domain al-Nāṣir began to initiate into it his courtiers
and military commanders as well as independent Muslim rulers and
princes who still recognized his authority as the spiritual leader of
Sunnī Islam.[58] Since al-Suhrawardī's public lectures emphasised "that
the *futuwwa* was a part of the Sufi way, set off . . . precisely for the
ordinary folk for whom the full Sufi way was too hard,"[59] he became
the ideological pivot of al-Nāṣir's strategy aimed at reducing the
caliph's dependence on the military might of the Saljuqs and other
warlords. In al-Suhrawardī and his followers the caliph found a
unique political instrument of mass mobilisation that he used to re-
assert his independence vis-à-vis the self-appointed "protectors" of
the caliphate. Due to al-Nāṣir's support, al-Suhrawardī, in his turn,
was able to extend his personal prestige far beyond the confines of
Baghdad, laying the foundations for the subsequent rise to the inter-
national Suhrawardī *ṭarīqa*.

   Al-Suhrawardī's works evince a concerted effort to demonstrate
the underlying affinity between the code of the *futuwwa* and the spir-
itual and ascetic practices of Sufism. In so doing he pursued a dual
objective. By showing the *futuwwa* to be part and parcel of by now
widely accepted Sufi spiritual discipline, he implicitly supported the
caliph's religious legitimacy as the head of the *futuwwa* organizations.
Simultaneously, he gave legitimacy to organized Sufism by linking
it to such a sacrosanct Islamic institution as the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.
Al-Suhrawardī's dual strategy is to the fore in his book "Directing
the Sights Toward the Decisive Proof" (*Idlālat al-ʿiyān ʿalā 'l-burhān*).
It presents the relation between the Sufi teacher (*shaykh*) and his dis-
ciple (*murīd*) as analogous to the status of the caliph with regard to
his Muslim subjects. For al-Suhrawardī, the caliph, like the Sufi
shaykh, is appointed by God to serve as the mediator (*wāsiṭa*) between
him and his subjects (*nās*). In al-Suhrawardī's discourse, the concepts
of *futuwwa, taṣawwuf* (Sufism) and *khilāfa* (caliphate) form a hierar-

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[58] Ibid., p. 283.
[59] Ibid., p. 282.

chical structure: "The supreme caliphate is a script (*daftar*) of which *taṣawwuf* is a part; *taṣawwuf* in its turn is also a script of which the *futuwwa* is a part. The *futuwwa* is characterised by pure morals (*al-akhlāq al-zakiyya*), while *taṣawwuf* includes pious works and devotional recitals and meditations (*awrād*). Finally, the supreme caliphate comprises the mystical states, the pious actions and the pure morals." Implicitly, this hierarchical structure is reminiscent of the famous Sufi triad: *sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa* and *ḥaqīqa*. Here the first element is identified with the initial stage of self-perfection which is followed by a formal entrance upon the Sufi path (*ṭarīqa*). This in turn leads to the realization of the higher mysteries of being. In al-Suhrawardī's schema, however, the usual Sufi order is reversed, since he represents the *sharīʿa* as the culmination of spiritual attainment that he identifies with service to the caliphate.

Al-Suhrawardī's importance for the process of the caliphate's revival instituted by al-Nāṣir is evident from the fact that the caliph sent him as his personal envoy to the courts of the Ayyūbid rulers of Syria and Egypt in 604/1208. Throughout his diplomatic mission al-Suhrawardī was greeted by popular expressions of sympathy: his arrival was celebrated by processions in his honour—a pattern that culminated in his triumphal return to Baghdad after his task was successfully accomplished. However, al-Suhrawardī's newly acquired taste for ostentatious pomp and his departure from his usual frugal lifestyle irritated the caliph who removed him from the direction of the Sufi *ribāṭs* and forbade him to engage in public preaching for a while. These measures caused a public stir in Baghdad, where al-Suhrawardī had a large following. However, the caliph refused to lift these sanctions until the Sufi had repented of his vainglorious pretensions, renounced the property and money that had accrued to him during his service at the court, and returned to the usual Sufi way of life. Satisfied by these signs of remorse, the caliph pardoned his protege and made first steps toward reconciliation. From then on they remained close friends.

Ten years later, when the ʿAbbāsid caliph found himself in a predicament, both militarily and constitutionally, due to the hostile politics of the Khwārazm Shāh, al-Suhrawardī was again entrusted with a diplomatic mission. In 614/1218, al-Nāṣir sent him to Hamadān, where the Khwārazm Shāh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad II was preparing for an assault against Baghdad. The Khwārazm Shāh, who hoped to establish himself as the successor to the Salujq protectors of the

caliphate, had long resented al-Nāṣir's independence. He therefore gave the caliph's envoy a chilly reception in his tent. On the decisive question, whether it was permitted to the caliph, by reason of the public interest, to keep members of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty, namely his own son and the latter's family, in prison, al-Suhrawardī and his royal host failed to reach agreement. Although al-Suhrawardī was unable to persuade the Khwārazm Shāh to reach accommodation with the caliph, the adverse weather conditions eventually forced the ruler of Khwārazm to call off his campaign.

On the other hand, al-Suhrawardī's mission in 618/1221 to the new Saljuq sultan of Rūm (Anatolia), ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād, was a complete success. Acting on behalf of the caliph, the Sufi master presented the sultan with the tokens of rulership: the diploma of kingship, the robe of honour, the sword and the signet ring that symbolized the latter's full authority over the Islamic regions of Asia Minor. Additionally, al-Suhrawardī succeeded in recruiting members for the caliph's *futuwwa* club among Kayqubād's courtiers, military commanders and scholars. Eventually, the ruler himself agreed to accept the robe of *futuwwa* in an initiatory ceremony led by al-Suhrawardī. The atmosphere of friendliness and elation that surrounded this episode is finely captured by the historian Ibn Bībī in his chronicle of the Saljuqs. Whether al-Suhrawardī's *futuwwa* was identical with that promoted by the caliph or represented a concession to the *akhī* ("brotherhood") movement of the Anatolien urban classes remains unclear.

Al-Suhrawardī's Sufi doctrine represents what by then had become a conventional mixture of traditional Sufi concepts with gnostic and neo-Platonic elements. His numerous disciples and friends spread his ideas throughout Syria, Asia Minor, Persia and North India. It was they, rather than al-Suhrawardī himself, who established the foundations of the renowned Suhrawardiyya order. Next to the Chishtiyya, the Qalandariyya and the Naqshbandiyya, the Suhrawardiyya became one of the leading Islamic brotherhoods in India, where it still has a substantial following. Among the most successful propagators of al-Suhrawardī's doctrine were his disciples ʿAlī b. Buzghūsh (d. 678/ 1279–80 in Shīrāz), Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyāʾ, who founded the Suhrawardiyya in Sind and in the Punjab, and Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, who spread its teaching to Bengal. By the eighth/fourteenth centuries, the Suhrawardiyya had become more subdivided than any other order to the extent that one sometimes has difficulty trying to trace its numerous branches.

Al-Suhrawardī left behind many works on Islamic mysticism and religious sciences. Of these, his *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*, dedicated to his royal patron and friend the caliph al-Nāṣir, is by far the most famous. This is a traditional Sufi manual that has had a profound and lasting influence on millions of Sufis and ordinary Muslims until today. Its content evinces influences of earlier Sufi literature, especially the Sufi commentaries on the Qur'ān by Sahl al-Tustarī and Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī. Also frequently mentioned are the Sufi manuals of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī, Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī, and Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī as well as the Sufi treatises by al-Sulamī. The sixty-three chapters of the *'Awārif* deal with such traditional Sufi themes as the relationship between the novice and the shaykh, the Sufi rules of companionship, the ways to achieve a better understanding of one's own self, the inspired unveilings of advanced Sufi masters, the mystical "states" and "stations," etc. The *terminus ad quem* of this seminal work is 612/1216. The first Persian translations of, and commentaries on, the *'Awārif* appeared already during the author's lifetime. In the Persian-speaking world, al-Suhrawardī owes his fame to "The Lamp of Right Guidance and the Key to Contentment" (*Miṣbāḥ al-hidāya wa-miftāḥ al-kifāya*) by 'Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. 'Alī-i Kāshānī (d. 735/1334–5). It provides a lucid account of the *'Awārif* that is sprinkled by Kāshānī's own interventions dealing with Sufi ethics and discipline.

In his later works, al-Suhrawardī seems to have embraced the ideas of his former intellectual adversaries: the philosophers and the philosophically minded theologians, including those with distinctive gnostic propensities. Under the influence of their ideas he developed a peculiar concept of creation that hinges on the myth of the cosmic marriage between spirit and soul that gave rise to the Universe. In a similar vein, he examined the ways in which each individual human being participates in the workings of the universal spirit and of the universal soul. Like many medieval thinkers, al-Suhrawardī saw man as the world in miniature, "in which were combined to their fullest fruition all the elements of the 'macrocosm,' the universe."[60] As for the Universe, he viewed it as a giant human being whose elements correspond to the members and functions of the human body. Al-Suhrawardī adopts other ideas which were usually

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[60] Hodgson, *The Venture*, vol. 2, p. 225.

treated with suspicion by mainstream Sunnī theologians. His cosmology describes a hierarchical series of beings that emanate from God's primordial creature through the Divine Command (*amr*). In an obvious parallel to the *prima causa* of the philosophers, he describes this creature as "the greatest spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-aʿzam*) that sets in motion the multi-stage process of origination culminating in the emergence of the first man. Al-Suhrawardī places God far above creatury existence (*wujūd*). In line with his cosmological scheme, God's first and most beloved creature, the "greatest spirit," assumes the task of the necessitator (*mūjib*) of the world. The first to originate from the necessitator is "the primordial intellect," which al-Suhrawardī identified as the director of the missions of the prophets. He identified the second intellect with the cosmic soul, which he put in charge of the deeds of the saints. Next comes "the creative intellect" (*ʿaql khalqī*), which presides over the thought of the philosophers. The sphere of the third intellect is followed by the heavenly spheres, down to the sphere of the moon. This theology is in many respects similar to that of al-Ghazālī, which could have been its source of inspiration.[61]

Although his later works are focused on metaphysical issues, they nevertheless evince the same political and religious agenda as we observed in the *ʿAwārif*. Al-Suhrawardī attempts to weave together different and at times contradictory trends of theological thought and to create a reformed traditionalist doctrine. This doctrine was explicitly designed by him to strengthen the ideological foundations of the decaying ʿAbbāsid caliphate. On most theoretical and practical issues al-Suhrawardī steers a middle course (*wasaṭ, tawassuṭ*). The only concept on which al-Suhrawardī was not prepared to compromise is the unicity of God (*waḥdāniyya*), which constitutes the fulcrum of the traditionalist creed. In defending God's unity and transcendence al-Suhrawardī mounts an attack on the philosophers with their doctrine of causality which, in his opinion, has made them susceptible to polytheism (*shirk*), that is, to the sin of absolutizing secondary causes. Based on this assumption, al-Suhrawardī declared them the principal enemies of the Muslim Community (*umma*). At the same time, he was rather lenient toward other "heretics," including the Shīʿīs and the Ismāʿīlis. This reconciliatory trend comes to

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[61] Landolt, "Religionswissenschaft," *passim*.

the fore in his attempts to explain to the conservative Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad the theological arguments of the Ashʿarīs regarding the nature of God and theodicy. In other words, the author's chief aim was to promote the unity of the caliphal state in the face of the impending Mongol danger. The educational and pedagogical trend in al-Suhrawardī's work culminates in his epistles and testimonies (waṣīyya, pl. waṣāyā), which he wrote toward the end of his life. Written in response to the requests of his numerous disciples, they admonish them to observe the duties of the Sufi path on the basis of the ethical and moral principles of the Qurʾān and the Sunna. Here again, al-Suhrawardī seeks to link the principles of futuwwa with the knowledge of the Sufi path.

Al-Suhrawardī died in Baghdad, at the age of 90, in Muḥarram 632/November-December 1234 and was buried in the cemetery of the Sufis. Since the eighth/fourteenth century his tomb became an object of worship and the site of an annual festival in his honor. After Baghdad had been re-conquered from the Ṣafawids by the Ottoman sultan Murād IV in 1048/1638, the tomb, by then dilapidated, was restored, together with the tombs of Abū Ḥanīfa and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.

The Suhrawardiyya Order

As was mentioned, the Suhrawardiyya traces its origin back to Abū ʾl-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, who, in turn, was a disciple of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, brother of the great Muḥammad al-Ghazālī. Since two of Abū ʾl-Najīb's students became masters of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, the spiritual genealogy (silsila) of the Kubrawiyya order also goes back to Abū ʾl-Najīb. Some of Kubrā's major disciples, such as Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 654/1256) and Yaḥyā Bākharzī (d. 736/1336), were either linked with Abū ʾl-Najīb's nephew Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar Suhrawardī or were active in the propagation of the latter's spiritual tradition. Abū ʾl-Najīb is also at the origin of the spiritual line of the famous mystical poet of ecstatic propensities Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. probably 635/1238).

However, it is Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar Suhrawardī, trained in his uncle's ribāṭ in Baghdad, who should be regarded as the actual founder of the Suhrawardiyya order. Thanks to his close ties with the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Nāṣir, who employed Shihāb al-Dīn as a court theologian and special envoy, he obtained the privileged position of the head (shaykh al-shuyūkh) of the Sufi congregations of Baghdad.

The caliph had a lodge built for him and designated him as a patron of the *futuwwa* clubs. Upon his death, al-Suhrawardī was succeeded by his son ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad Suhrawardī (d. 655/1257), who presided over the Sufi lodge al-Maʾmūniyya. Upon completion of their Sufi education his numerous disciples returned to their home-lands or settled in new areas, where they propagated the teachings of the Suhrawardīyya order as expounded in the *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*. This book thus can be rightfully regarded as the teaching manual of the order.

In the Indian Subcontinent, the Suhrawardiyya was one of the four major orders, besides the Chishtiyya, the Qādiriyya and the Naqsh-bandiyya. It gained a foothold there at the beginning of the Dehli Sulṭānate (sixth/thirteenth century) thanks to the efforts of three dis-ciples of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. Each of them later founded a regional branch: Ḥāmid al-Dīn Nagawrī (d. 673/1274) in the area of Dehli, Abū ʾl-Qāsim Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī (d. 641–2/1244) in Bangala, and Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyāʾ Multānī (d. 661/1262) in Multān. Bahāʾ al-Dīn, who joined Shihāb al-Dīn in Baghdad after spending some time at Bukhārā, proved to be the most successful propagator of the order's teachings. Under his successors his resi-dence in Multān became the order's principal center in India. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's contemporary and disciple, Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī of Sīstān (Iran), also disseminated the order's doctrine in India. Having settled at Ajmer, he laid the foundations of the pop-ular Chishtiyya order whose members used the *ʿAwārif* as their man-ual of instruction. The Shaṭṭāriyya order, which had strong links to the Suhrawardiyya, was introduced to India at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century.

Of Bahāʾ al-Dīn's disciples mention should be made of Sayyid Jalāl Bukhārī (d. 690/1291) who migrated from Bukhārā to Uch, where he founded the Jalālī branch of the order. The famous Shīʿī dervish order of the Khāksār seems to be a Persian offshoot of this Jalālī suborder. Bahāʾ al-Dīn's most famous disciple was the Sufi and poet Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ʿIrāqī, a native of Hamadān in Persia, who studied in Multān with Bahāʾ al-Dīn and later served as one of his lieutenants (*khalīfa*). Since the appointment of Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿĀrif (d. 684/1286) as his father's successor at the head of the order, its Indian leadership has adhered to hereditary principle. Thus, despite the fact that Ṣadr al-Dīn had many illustrious disciples, including the great Sufi scholar Amīr Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī (d. after 720/1320),

upon his death the headship of the order devolved upon his son
Rukn al-Dīn Abū 'l-Fatḥ (d. 735/1335). The latter, in turn, was suc-
ceeded by either his nephew or, according to the Maghribī traveller
Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, his grandson Shaykh Hūd. Following Hūd's execution
on the orders of the sultan of Delhi, who suspected the shaykh of
embezzlement, the fortunes of Bahā' al-Dīn's imposing *khānaqā* in
Multān suffered a decline which eventually led to its dissipation. The
order's other regional branches, however, continued to flourish in
Uch, Gujarat, the Punjab, Kashmīr and at Dehli.

In Uch, Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī, also known as "Makhdūm-i Jahā-
niyān," succeeded in infusing the *ṭarīqa* with new life. In addition
to his affiliation with the Suhrawardiyya, Makhdūm was also ini-
tiated, by Chirāgh-i Dihlī, into the Chishtiyya order. Although Bahā'
al-Dīn prohibited his disciples from joining any other order, from
the eighth/fourteenth century on many Indian Sufis were members
of both the Chishtiyya and the Suhrawardiyya orders. The reli-
gious policy of a given branch of the Suhrawardiyya order was usu-
ally determined by the personal religious views of its leader. Thus
Makhdūm, who was famous for his puritanism, opposed the influence
of Hindu customs on his fellow Muslims; he also disapproved of
invoking God in Hindi. His brother and successor Ṣadr al-Dīn Raju
(d. after 800/1400) earned the name of "slayer" [of Hindus] (*qattāl*)
on account of his unrelenting hostility toward Hinduism.

Whereas various disciples and descendants of the Makhdūm fam-
ily established themselves in the provincial kingdoms of Kalpi and
also in Gujarat, the Suhrawardiyya branch in Dehli was established
by Samā' al-Dīn (d. 901–2/1496), a follower of Raju Qattāl. Unlike
most of the leaders of the Suhrawardiyya who sought to steer clear
of mystical metaphysics, Samā' al-Dīn was noted as an exponent of
the tradition of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, personified by the Sufi gnostic Ibn
'Arabī and his numerous followers in the eastern parts of the Muslim
world. The leading figure among Samā' al-Dīn's disciples was Ḥāmid
b. Jamālī Dihlawī (d. 942/1536), a widely known poet and traveller.

The Indian Suhrawardiyya had the greatest impact, however, in
Kashmīr. This was partly due to the support they received from
migrant Sufis of the Kubrawiyya order and from the local tempo-
ral rulers. Rinchana, the king of Kashmīr and former Buddhist chief
from Ladakh, who embraced Islam in the eighth/fourteenth century,
is said to have been converted by Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn who was a
disciple of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's emissary (*khalīfa*) in Turkestan.

In the ninth/fifteenth centuries, various Suhrawardī shaykhs, mainly those of the Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān branch, kept Kashmīrī Sufism alive. There were clashes between local Suhrawardī groups and Shīʿīs in the following century, when Kashmīr came under the tutelage of the Chak dynasty that patronised Shīʿism.

The order's relations with temporal rulers varied from area to area and were determined by local political and social circumstances. In the Sulṭānate of Dehli, the Suhrawardiyya established itself as an aristocratic order that encouraged its followers to accumulate wealth and to actively seek state patronage. Like his master Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, Bahāʾ al-Dīn willingly cooperated with sultans in an effort to exercise influence on their politics. Iltutmish, a sultan who belonged to the line of "Slave Kings" of northern India, declared war against the governor of Uch on Bahāʾ al-Dīn's advice. Thereafter, the sultan conferred upon Bahāʾ al-Dīn the title of *Shaykh al-Islām* with authority over the lands of Sind and the Punjab. Bahāʾ al-Dīn's successors also maintained close relations with the rulers. The sultans of Gujarat held the Suhrawardiyya leaders in high regard and many government officials embraced Sufism under their influence. Samāʾ al-Dīn of Dehli blessed the sultan Sikandar Lōdī during his coronation. His disciple Jamālī accompanied the crown prince Humāyūn on his military campaigns. Jamālī's son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Gadāʾī held the powerful post of *Ṣadr al-ṣudūr* under emperor Akbar; the latter eagerly attended his *samāʿ* assemblies. Many Suhrawardī leaders supported the enforced conversion of Hindus. For example, Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī not only actively encouraged Hindus and Buddhists to convert to Islam, but also incited the rulers to demolish Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries and to replace them with Sufi lodges. On the whole, however, it seems that the Suhrawardiyya only succeeded in converting Hindus of the upper castes.[62]

The order played an important part in the preservation and dissemination of prophetic traditions. Its teachings placed emphasis on the classical Sufi legacy, while discouraging metaphysical speculations which in the later period had become a hallmark of the Sufi thought. The order's rules of ascetic discipline also tended to avoid extremes and excessive austerities. The Suhrawardīs emphasized the importance of the canonical prayer, *dhikr* and fasting in Ramaḍān. Modifi-

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[62] A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, New Delhi, 1968, vol. 2, p. 398.

cations of the *dhikr* exercises along the lines of Yogic mysticism, which were practiced by the members of the Chishtiyya, were absent from the Suhrawardī rituals. The practice of prostration before the shaykh (*zamīn-būs*), which was common among the Chishtiyya, was rejected by the leaders of the Suhrawardiyya.

With regard to the *samāʿ* concerts, the Suhrawardiyya shows little appreciation of poetry or music. Already the founder, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, had taken a reserved stance toward the use of music and dancing during Sufi gatherings. Shihāb al-Dīn also criticised Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī for his contemplation of beauty in sensible objects, especially in the unbearded youth, which was often practiced during *samāʿ* assemblies.[63] Nevertheless the poet ʿIrāqī, who studied with Bahāʾ al-Dīn, adopted the latter's favorable attitude toward this practice, known as *shāhid-bāzī*. Many later Suhrawardī leaders also viewed *samāʿ* to be licit, although they restricted it to the order's spiritual elite. These conflicting approaches to *samāʿ* among the order's leadership have persisted up to the present day.

While in recent times the Suhrawardiyya has largely disappeared from such Arab countries as Syria, it continues to enjoy a modest following in Iraq. The leaders of the contemporary Suhrawardiyya in that country traditionally belong to the Ṣāliḥ al-Khaṭīb family. Some of them served as professors at the religious college named after Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī or as public preachers at the mosque attached to it. At one point, one Suhrawardī shaykh is said to have served as the official prayer-leader (*imām*) of the Iraqi army.

Al-Shādhilī and the Beginnings of the Shādhiliyya

In the Muslim West, the fortunes of Islamic mysticism were inextricably tied with the personality and teachings of Abū ʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shādhilī (593/1196–656/1258). This Maghribī Sufi launched a *ṭarīqa* which gave birth to numerous dynamic ramifications in Egypt and North Africa. Later on, the offshoots of the al-Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa* spread throughout the Islamic world, as far as India and Indonesia.

Accounts of al-Shādhilī's life are known to us through the works of his disciples. These works usually follow a standard hagiographic canon that makes it hard to distinguish his historical personality from

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[63] H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele*, Leiden, 1955, pp. 473–476.

the conventions of pious legend. Its creators consistently cast him as an exemplary saint of the age (*walī*). Yet, despite the unbridled partisanship of such hagiographic sources, especially those written by members of his *ṭarīqa*, one can still try to reconstruct the main stages of his career. The most important of these sources are "The Delicacies of the Divine Gifts" (*Laṭāʾif al-minan*) of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) and "The Pearl of the Secrets" (*Durrat al-asrār*) of Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 724/1323). These works, in turn, were summarized by one Ibn ʿIyād or Ibn ʿAyyād (or even Ibn ʿAbbād) in the standard biography of the founder of the Shādhilī order entitled "The Exalted Virtues in al-Shādhilī's Legacy" (*Mafākhir al-ʿaliyya fī ʾl-maʾāthir al-shādhiliyya*).

Al-Shādhilī was born in northern Morocco, in the Ghumara country, between Ceuta and Tangiers, around 583/1187. He claimed descent from the Prophet through the line of ʿAlī's elder son al-Ḥasan. Upon completing his religious studies at Fez, he for some time considered the career of an alchemist, but eventually abandoned this idea in favor of the mystical path. Seeking instruction from the great Sufi masters of his time and anxious to meet the spiritual pole (*quṭb*) of the age, al-Shādhilī set out on a journey to the Muslim East. Upon his arrival in Iraq, in 615/1218, he studied under the guidance of Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Wāsiṭī (d. 632/1234), the principal disciple and deputy of the founder of the Rifāʿiyya brotherhood, Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī.[64] He was, however, unable to meet the spiritual pole of the epoch until someone advised him to return to the Maghrib and to seek him there. In Morocco, al-Shādhilī finally recognized the pole in the person of the famous hermit and visionary, ʿAbd al-Salām b. Mashīsh (d. 625/1228), who, according to Shādhili sources, became his spiritual master *par excellence*. He stayed with Ibn Mashīsh for several years, whereupon he traveled to Ifrīqiya (present-day Tunisia). It seems likely that al-Shādhilī's departure for the East was precipitated by political disturbances which soon afterwards resulted in Ibn Mashīsh's murder on the orders of a local tribal ruler. In Ifrīqiya, al-Shādhilī settled in the village of Shādhila, halfway between Tunis and Qayrawān. This village gave him the name under which he became known among his followers. His preaching and ascetic lifestyle soon won him a great fame in the land. The

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[64] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 45.

locals came to credit him with numerous miracles and his prayers were thought to be granted by God. His popularity irritated the Mālikī ulema of Qayrawān who hastened to accuse him of harboring messianic tendencies (on account of his descent from ʿAlī and Fāṭima) and of claming to be the pole of his age. Despite the support of the Ḥafṣid sultan Abū Zakariyyāʾ, al-Shādhilī finally decided to leave Ifrīqiya with a departing pilgrimage caravan. Upon arriving in Egypt, he settled in Alexandria in 642/1244 or perhaps only as late as 650/1252. His preaching attracted to him not only the populace but some established scholars as well. Numerous pupils flocked to his lodge in Alexandria from far and wide to attend his lectures and partake of his blessing.[65] A meticulous and uncompromising observer of the duties of Islam, al-Shādhilī made the point of performing a pilgrimage to Mecca as often as he could. It was on one such journey that he died at al-Ḥumaythira, a village in the Upper Egyptian desert on the Red Sea coast.

Al-Shādhilī left behind no doctrinal writings, except for a few letters to his followers,[66] litanies and prayers. The core of his teachings was transmitted and systematized by his pupils in the form of collections of sayings, witticisms and edifying and miraculous anecdotes. They demonstrate his indebtedness to the precepts of classical Sufism as well as his solicitude for the spiritual and material needs of his disciples. The pivot of his teaching is the strictest possible observance of the of Sharīʿa law which he prescribes equally to the Sufis and to the ordinary believers. By fulfilling the requirements of the Divine Law the Muslim, in the words of al-Shādhilī, purifies the mirror of his soul and becomes fit to undertake a mystical journey to his Lord.[67] No person who is remiss in implementing the rulings of the Sharīʿa can be seen as a Sufi (*faqīr*). When faced with mystical experiences, the Sufi should exercise humility and caution. "If, says al-Shādhilī, your mystical unveiling (*kashf*) diverges from the Qurʾān and the Sunna, hold fast to them and take no notice of your unveiling; tell yourself that the truth of the Qurʾān and the Sunna is guaranteed by God Most High, which is not the case with unveiling, inspiration and mystical perceptions."

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[65] Ibid., p. 48.
[66] Ibid., pp. 48–49.
[67] This idea was not original to al-Shādhilī; we find it in the works of earlier Sufis, including al-Ghazālī.

Al-Shādhilī's maxims and moralistic dicta reflect recurrent themes of classical Sufism: one must abandon earthly concerns, struggle against the carnal soul and be content with whatever fate God has in store for him. These maxims and dicta are not confined to "full-time" ascetics and Sufis but are addressed to the believers at large, including those who are engaged in gainful employment and lead an active social life. According to al-Shādhilī, "the [Sufi] Way does not involve monasticism (*rahbāniyya*), nor living off barley and flour-siftings; the Way requires patience in the accomplishing of the divine commands and the unshakable faith in divine guidance." Many of al-Shādhilī's sayings emphasize the importance of man's internal development over against his external behaviour and ostentation, in a clear parallel to the Malāmatiyya tradition discussed earlier in this book. As with the Malāmatiyya, al-Shādhilī took a negative attitude toward begging and wearing a distinctive clothing. He himself is said to have dressed with elegance, especially toward the end of his life. Al-Shādhilī was critical of the use of music during *samāʿ* sessions and did not take part in the gatherings that induced trances or involved spectacular phenomena (e.g., walking on fire or piercing the flesh), as was common with the Rifāʿiyya dervishes. His Sufi discipline hinged on the constant remembrance of God by means of prayers and litanies, recited collectively or individually. He also tried to instill in his followers fortitude in the face of trials and hardships of daily life.

Al-Shādhilī's spiritual method emphasized the practical aspects of mysticism over against the more metaphysically oriented mysticism of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers. Although himself an accomplished theologian, he saw little value in the speculative exercise of reason. Al-Shādhilī's biographers often mention his polemic against Muʿtazilīs, some of whom are said to have abandoned their teaching under his influence. In al-Shādhilī's discourse, God is presented as the original source of the believer's conscience, not an object of human knowledge. Nor can he be comprehended through an analysis of concrete things, for it is only through his mercy that these things are known to men. Contrary to Sufi theorists who sought to explore the metaphysical dimensions of mystical experiences, al-Shādhilī emphasized their purely personal and subjective character. He recommended that his disciples be discrete while speaking about their spiritual advancement in order not to be puffed up with pride, thereby hurting the sensibilities of the ordinary believers: "If you wish to reach the irreproachable Way, speak like someone who is apart from God,

at the same time keeping union with Him present in the secret recesses of your heart.''

Al-Shādhilī set great store by the prayers (*adʿiyā*) and litanies (*aḥzāb*) the texts of which he passed on to his disciples. Most of these prayers relate to specific situations, e.g., spiritual anguish, fear, uncertainty or distress. Of these by far the most popular among the members of the order are the *Ḥizb al-baḥr*, which is said to have been communicated to al-Shādhilī directly by the Prophet, the *Ḥizb al-kabīr* (or *Ḥijāb sharīf*), the *Ḥizb al-barr*, the *Ḥizb al-nūr*, the *Ḥizb al-fatḥ* and the *Ḥizb al-Shaykh Abī 'l-Ḥasan [al-Shādhilī]*. The liturgical functions of these prayers were often overshadowed by their magical usage. The ordinary members of the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* believe in their miraculous power to heal from illnesses or to protect from misfortunes. This usage is contrary to al-Shādhilī who opposed popular superstitions, including worship at the tombs of saints, which he condemned as a form of idolatry. In his opinion, the fact that the saint's prayers are sometimes granted by God simply shows that in that particular moment he happened to be the locus of divine mercy that operates continually among mankind. Intrinsically, however, no human being, except the Prophet, can claim to be able to intercede on behalf of ordinary believers. Nevertheless, already in his own lifetime, al-Shādhilī acquired the reputation of a miracle worker. Upon his death, the members of his order came to attribute thaumaturgic powers to his tomb where prayers are believed to be especially beneficial and efficacious.

One issue on which al-Shādhilī seems to have departed from mainline Sunnism is sainthood. He saw the Sufis as the true heirs to the Prophet's legacy, which most of the Sunnī scholars held to be their exclusive preserve. In al-Shādhilī's view, the accomplished saint can achieve the same degree of knowledge as the prophets (*anbiyāʾ*) and the messengers (*rusul*). However, he is inferior to them in two respects: on the one hand, his knowledge is, in most cases, less complete than theirs; and on the other, his mission is neither to bring a new version of the Divine Law, nor to abrogate the old one. Nevertheless, in time, al-Shādhilī's teaching came to perceived by his followers as a continuation of Muḥammad's prophetic mission. Closely allied with this notion is the idea of the invisible hierarchy of saints presided over by the head of the Shādhiliyya brotherhood. As we have seen, from the outset, al-Shādhilī was preoccupied with the search for the spiritual pole of the universe. Later on, his disciples came to treat

him as the *qutb* of the age—a belief that he not only did not try to
dispel, but may have actively promoted. Shortly before his death, he
designated his chief disciple Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī as his successor.
Since that time the Shādhilī tradition insists that the *qutb* of the age
should of necessity belong to their brotherhood, until the Judgement
Day. In al-Shādhilī's teaching, the function of the *qutb* acquired uni-
versal dimensions in that it was not confined to a specific religious com-
munity or a people, but to the human race as a whole. Al-Shādhilī
provides a list of fifteen characteristic features of the office of the
spiritual pole. They include infallibility, clairvoyance and knowledge
of the unseen.

Even though al-Shādhilī may have not planned to form a Sufi
brotherhood, objectively his teaching responded to the need for a
Sufi teaching that would serve as a foundation of communal life.
The subsequent success of the order was secured by al-Shādhilī's
successors, the Andalusī Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287) and
the Egyptian Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309). They ex-
panded the popular base of the order through active recruitment in
the masses, refined and systematized al-Shādhilī's tenets, codified
the ritual of the *dhikr*, and founded a number of Shādhilī *khānaqās*
which came to serve as centers of recruitment and training of new
followers. The Shādhilī order soon spread throughout Egypt, Ifrīqiya,
Morocco, al-Andalus as well as Syria and the Ḥijāz. This process
continued during the subsequent centuries which witnessed the emer-
gence of numerous branches and subdivisions of the order. As for
the founder, he is commemorated during the annual festivals at his
tomb in the eastern desert of Upper Egypt, as well as in Ifrīqiya,
at Sīdī Belḥassen (on the outskirts of Tunis), Menzel Bouzelfa (Cape
Bon) and on the mount Zaghwān.

The Shādhiliyya

As an institution the Shādhiliyya owed its existence to the organi-
zational skills of al-Shādhilī's disciples who considered him to be the
pole (*qutb*) of the Universe in his age. Upon the death of the founder,
the leadership of the nascent order devolved upon his deputy, the
Andalusī mystic Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287). The latter
was able not only to maintain the cohesion of the Shādhilī com-
munity but also to expand its base among the Egyptian population.
Al-Mursī was succeeded by another able and dynamic leader, Ibn

'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī, who was also a prolific writer. Ibn 'Aṭā'
Allāh's works gave a distinctive articulation to al-Shādhilī's spiritu-
ality, forming the ideological basis of the expanding Shādhilī broth-
erhood. Especially popular among the followers of the order was his
"Delicacies of the Divine Gifts" (*Laṭā'if al-minan*), the principal state-
ment of the Shādhilī teaching. Equally important is his collection of
pious dicta, the "[Words] of Wisdom" (*al-Ḥikam*). Its readership was
not restricted to the members of the order; the *Ḥikam* was studied
and memorized all over the Muslim world and became an object of
several commentaries by such eminent Sufi scholars as Ibn 'Abbād
of Ronda (d. 792/1390), Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) and Ibn
'Ajība (d. 1224/1809).[68]

The formative period of the brotherhood remains somewhat obscure.
Throughout the eighth/fourteenth centuries it secured a foothold
in Egypt and the Maghrib. Although in the ninth/fifteenth centuries
it became the major North African Sufi order, it did not acquire a
centralized and hierarchical structure. Rather it was dissolved into
a multitude of local subdivisions that were rarely connected with one
another. Each of these was led by a spiritual master who empha-
sized a specific strain within the rich and variegated Shādhilī tradi-
tion. Some of these branches were confined to a particular region,
while others had their centers in different areas. But in all cases, the
Shādhilī tradition presented itself more as a school of spirituality
than as a rigidly structured and cohesive organization. This feature
greatly facilitated its adaptation to diverse ethnic and regional con-
texts, while preserving the integrity of its formative ideas in the face
of the inevitable vagaries of leadership succession. The original Shā-
dhiliyya was born into an urban milieu (Alexandria, Cairo, Tunis)
and counted among its members many renowned scholars such as
the Andalusī *faqīh* Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda (d. 792/1390) and the out-
standing ninth/fifteenth-century Egyptian polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-
Suyūṭī.[69] However, as time went on, it made inroads into rural areas,
especially in the Maghrib. There it was often represented by popu-
lar charismatic leaders with little or no formal education, such as
the tenth/sixteenth-century mystic 'Alī al-Sanhajī and his pupil
'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Majdhūb. In the Maghrib as well as in the Nile

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[68] P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh et la naissance de la confrérie šādilite*, Beirut, 1972; Eng.
tr. V. Danner, *Ibn Ataillah's Sufi Aphorisms*, Leiden, 1973.
[69] P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbād, un mystique prédicateur à la Qarawiyin de Fes*, Beirut, 1961.

valley, the Shādhiliyya actively encouraged the cult of the departed saints by inviting their followers to seek blessing from their tombs.

The Shādhilī tradition had a profound impact on the subsequent development of institutionalized Sufism in Egypt. Its influence can be observed in the theory and practice of such great Egyptian brotherhoods as the Badawiyya, the Wafāʾiyya and the Dasūqiyya.[70] In the twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries, some Shādhilī tenets were appropriated and redefined according to changing times by the Tijāniyya and by the various branches of the Idrīsiyya. In Syria, the Shādhiliyya was propagated by the Moroccan Sufi ʿAlī b. Maymūn al-Fāsī (d. 917/1511) and his disciples.

In the Maghrib, the spread of the Shādhilī teaching was associated with the activities of Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Burnusī, known as al-Zarrūq (d. 899/1494). This Moroccan scholar was introduced to the doctrines of the Shādhiliyya during his studies in Egypt. Upon his return to the Maghrib, he engaged in active propaganda of the Shādhilī ideas and rituals, breathing fresh life into the order's spiritual heritage. His writings gained wide popularity among North African orders, including the Darqāwiyya, the Rashīdiyya and its branches, the Shaykhiyya, Karzaziyya and Nāṣiriyya.[71] Another dynamic movement of Shādhilī inspiration was initiated by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Jazūlī who came from southern Morocco. Upon completing his studies at Fez, he traveled to the East where he is said to have stayed almost forty years before returning to Morocco. After spending some time in retreat, he began to disseminate his spiritual teachings among the local population. The success of his preaching irritated some rulers, who suspected him of fomenting a popular revolt against the state. They had him poisoned around 869/1465, shortly before the fall of the Marīnid dynasty of Morocco. Upon his death, his body was interred at Marrakesh, where he became one of the seven patron saints of the city. Al-Jazūlī's career marks the rise of a new form of popular Sufism that was centered upon a single-minded allegiance of the followers to a charismatic Sufi leader rather than to a given Sufi tradition or institution. Al-Jazūlī's example inspired a number of similar charisma-oriented movements, including the ʿArūsiyya and the ʿĪsāwiyya. The latter, which owed its name to Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Mukhtār (d. 931/1524),

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[70] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 49.
[71] See Depon and Coppolani, *Les confréries*, "index".

added to the Shādhilī-Jazūlī tradition shamanistic practices reminiscent of the Rifāʿiyya. Members of the ʿĪsāwiyya had a totem animal, practiced faith healing and, in a trance, devoured snakes or pierced their own bodies with sword blades.[72] The members of the related Moroccan order Ḥamdūshiyya practiced similar spectacular, if controversial acts.[73]

The Shādhilī Path owed its historic success to several factors. In the fissured and often acephalos society of North Africa, which was going through a protracted economic and political crisis, it provided the local population with a much needed sense of solidarity and belonging. Cognizant of the popularity of the Shādhiliyya among the urban and rural masses, the Marīnids of Morocco and the Ḥafṣids of Ifrīqiya actively supported the order by patronizing its leaders and by building and endowing new Shādhilī lodges (*zāwayā*; sing. *zāwiyya*) in the territories under their control. Paradoxically, with time these lodges became seats of opposition to the central power, as was the case of the al-Dilāʾ *zāwiyya* in Morocco, which almost succeeded in wresting power from the local sultan in the middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century. However, on the whole, the Shādhilī lodges usually served as centers of social stability by securing the allegiance of local tribes or villages to one or the other Shādhilī leader. As a result, the Shādhilī leaders could keep a lid on internal factional strife. These regulatory and mediatory functions no doubt added to the prestige of the Shādhilī leadership in the eyes of the local communities. The historical success of the Shādhiliyya was also due to the specificity of its rituals and ideology. Its emphasis on the strict observance of the Sharīʿa and its inconspicuous social profile (namely, absence of a distinctive garb or of spectacular public festivals as well as discouragement of mendicancy) secured the Shādhilī brotherhood a wide acceptance among different sections of the society, from the peasant communities to the sophisticated scholars in urban centers. This acceptance was further enhanced by the active role of the brotherhood in resisting European encroachments on Muslim lands. Thus the Shādhiliyya-Jazūliyya branch of the order distinguished itself by organizing resistance to the Portuguese invasion of Morocco in the ninth–tenth/fifteenth–sixteenth

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[72] R. Brunel, *Essai sur la confrérie des Aïssaouas au Maroc*, Paris, 1926.
[73] V. Crapanzano, *The Hamadsha: A study in Moroccan ethnopsychology*, Berkeley, 1973.

centuries, at a time when the temporal rulers were divided and
unable to repulse the conquerors.

More recently, the Shādhilī tradition underwent several attempts
at institutional and ideological revival.[74] Of these the case of the
Darqāwiyya was especially spectacular. It was launched by Abū
Ḥāmid al-ʿArabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1239/1823) of Fez, who relied on
the works of Aḥmad Zarrūq in order to cleanse the Shādhiliyya of
the material and spiritual corruption that had adhered to it in the
course of its long history. The great moral and political influence
that he enjoyed during his lifetime survived after his death and gave
rise to a number of new branches of the order which were active
throughout the thirteenth–fourteenth/nineteenth–twentieth centuries.
Prominent among those was the Bū-Zīdiyya *ṭarīqa* to which belonged
the great Sufi theorist Ibn ʿAjība (d. 1224/1809).[75] One should also
mention the Yashrūṭiyya branch, founded by the Tunisian shaykh
ʿAlī al-Yashrūṭī (d. 1309/1891). It became particularly popular in
Syria, Palestine and Jordan. His biography came down to us though
the works of his daughter, Fāṭima al-Yashrūṭiyya. A significant recent
episode in the order's history is associated with the ʿAlawiyya, a
branch of the Shādhilī brotherhood that was founded in 1914 by
the charismatic Sufi master Aḥmad b. ʿAlīwa (d. 1353/1934). His
reforming dynamism and original interpretation of the tradition's
foundational ideas won him many disciples, including a number of
Western intellectuals.[76]

It is not easy to discuss such movements under the common head-
ing of the Shādhilī tradition. Very often their links to it are rather
obscure and indirect. Furthermore, the founders of various branches
and subbranches of the Shādhiliyya were often steeped in several
Sufi traditions and received their Sufi robes from many different
masters. These multiple affiliations, which became quite common in
the Maghrib in the modern period, make it difficult to attribute a
given shaykh to just one tradition. Thus, Nāṣir al-Darʿī, the founder
of the famous Nāṣiriyya order, was initiated into both Zarrūqī and
Jazūlī branches of the Shādhiliyya. On the other hand, the Sufi

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[74] See, e.g., B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, Cambridge,
1976, pp. 152–158.

[75] J.-L. Michon, *Le Soufi marocain Aḥmad ibn ʿAjiba et son miʿraj*, Paris, 1973.

[76] M. Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, 2d edition, London, 1972.

Muḥammad b. ʿArūs, who had studied under both Shādhilī and Qādirī masters, refused to be associated formally with any of them.[77]

At present, most of the numerous divisions of the Shādhilī order are located in North Africa, where it forms, along with the Qādiriyya and the Khalwatiyya, the chief living Sufi tradition. Some Shādhilī branches remain active in Egypt and in the Sūdān. However, one should not regard the Shādhiliyya as an exclusively North African *ṭarīqa*. Its branches can be found throughout the whole Muslim world,[78] especially in Syria, Turkey, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Subcontinent as well as in Indonesia and China.

In matters of ritual practice and doctrine most of the branches of the Shādhilī brotherhood are characterized by their strong attachment to Sunnī orthodoxy and strict observance of the letter of the Sharīʿa. Its exponents tended to play down the importance of saintly miracles, preaching instead self-restraint and sobriety in word and deed. Although leaders of the Shādhiliyya generally tolerate music and dancing during *samāʿ* sessions, they advise their followers against an outward display of ecstasy that constitutes the trademark of the ʿĪsāwiyya and the Ḥamdūshiyya. Members of the Shādhiliyya advocate an active social stance and discourage excessive asceticism as being contrary to the idea that man should be grateful to his Lord for his beneficence and mercy. In line with this precept, al-Shādhilī and some of his successors deliberately dressed themselves in an elegant fashion.

The Shādhiliyya can hardly be regarded as an intellectual order. Its exponents consistently placed accent on practice rather than doctrinal sophistication. This does not mean that individual members of the Shādhiliyya did not engage in theological and metaphysical speculations. Many of them embraced Ibn ʿArabī's teachings and wrote commentary on his works. This was part of the Shādhilī strategy aimed at reaching out to different layers of Muslims, including "highbrows." However, most of the Shādhilī literary output consists not so much of theoretical treatises as of collections of prayers and litanies. Constantly recited during acts of collective worship, these homiletic texts inculcated in the Shādhilīs the sense of belonging to a great

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[77] For details see E. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels*, Damascus, 1995.

[78] E.g., on the Comoro Islands and in Zanzibar, Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 152–158.

and glorious spiritual tradition that stretched back to its semi-legendary founding father.

Bahā᾽ al-Dīn Naqshband and the Naqshbandiyya

Bahā᾽ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Naqshband (718–91/1318–89), the eponymous founder of the Naqshbandiyya order, derived his name from the craft of embroidering. He is said to have assisted his father in weaving the embroidered Bukhāran cloaks known as *kīmkha*. More commonly, however, his name is taken to refer to the practice of the fixing, in the purified tablet of the heart, of the imprint of the name *Allāh* by means of a silent and permanent re-collection (*dhikr*). To the people of Bukhārā, whose patron saint he became, Bahā᾽ al-Dīn was known posthumously as *hāja-yi balā᾽-gar-dan* ("the averter of disaster"). This name referred to the protective powers bestowed upon him during his years as a Sufi novice. Elsewhere, especially in Turkey, he is popularly called *Shāh-i Naqshband*.

Descent from the sixth Shī῾ī Imām Ja῾far al-Ṣādiq has been attributed to Bahā᾽ al-Dīn, but although the Imām does always appear in his spiritual genealogy (*silsila*), contemporary and near-contemporary sources make no mention of his kinship with the Prophet's family. They stress rather the position of Bahā᾽ al-Dīn as the seventh in a series of Central Asian masters (*khwājagān*) of Sufism that was inaugurated by Abū Yūsuf ῾Alī Hamadānī (d. 534/1140 in Merv). Soon after his birth in Muḥarram 718/March 1318 in the Bukhāran hamlet of Qaṣr-i Hinduwān (later renamed Qaṣr-i ῾Ārifān, i.e., "the Castle of the Gnostics," out of deference to him), Bahā᾽ al-Dīn was adopted as the spiritual son (*farzand*) of Khwāja Muḥammad Sammāsī, the fifth descendant of Hamadānī. Sammāsī immediately assigned the infant's spiritual training to his principal disciple (*murīd*), Khwāja Amīr Kulāl, a spiritual advisor to Tīmūr, who enjoyed the ruler's complete trust.[79] In the Naqshbandī tradition, Amīr Kulāl counts as Bahā᾽ al-Dīn's immediate predecessor in the *silsila*, for it was he who transmitted to Naqshband the essentials of the mystical path: the link of companionship (*nisbat-i ṣuḥbat*), instruction in the customs of the path (*ta῾līm-i ādāb-i ṭarīqat*), and the inculcation of *dhikr* (*talqīn-i dhikr*).

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[79] T. Graham, "Shāh Ni῾matullāh Walī, Founder of the Ni῾matallāhī Sufi Order," in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London and New York, 1993, p. 180.

Nonetheless, as befitted the founder of a new order, Bahā' al-Dīn kept the company of a wide variety of spiritual instructors. Early during his association with Amīr Kulāl, he had a vision in which he saw his six predecessors in the *silsila*, beginning with Khwāja 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghijuwānī, or Ghujduvānī (d. 617/1220), a successor of Hamadānī. This vision amounted to a second initiation, for Ghijuwānī enjoined on Bahā' al-Dīn—among other things—the exclusive practice of silent *dhikr*, as opposed to the vocal *dhikr* in which Amīr Kulāl and his circle customarily engaged. Once back in the world of external reality, Bahā' al-Dīn began to comply with this command, but Amīr Kulāl continued to hold him in high esteem. He ultimately pronounced his spiritual guidance to be at an end and freed Bahā' al-Dīn to seek out other masters, "both Turk and Tājīk."

The ethnic and linguistic differentiation between Turks and Tājīks was reflected, in eighth/fourteenth-century Transoxanian Sufism, in the dichotomy between the Yasawī order—founded by the Turkoman saint Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1167), another disciple of Hamadānī—which flourished among Turkic speakers, and the Persian-speaking *khwājagān* and their adherents. Since the Naqshbandiyya was destined to spread to almost every region of the Turkish world in the space of a few generations, it was appropriate that Bahā' al-Dīn should spend part of his apprenticeship with the Yasawī masters who were known to their contemporaries as the "Turkish masters" (*mashāyikh-i turk*).

First, however, Bahā' al-Dīn spent seven months in the company of another Tājīk shaykh, Mawlānā 'Ārif Dīkgarānī, perfecting under his guidance the practice of the silent *dhikr*. He next spent two or three months with Qutham Shaykh, a Yasawī master resident in the Persian city of Nakhshab, before joining the following of a second Yasawī shaykh, Khalīl Atā, for a full twelve years.

The chronological problems posed by the sources (works of hagiography, the Tīmūrid chronicles, and the "Travels" of the Maghribī traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa) are impossible to resolve, but it seems certain that Khalīl Atā is identical with Kaḍān/Ghazān Khān, a singularly ferocious individual who ruled over the Chaghatayid khānate for roughly a decade. It is tempting to see in Bahā' al-Dīn's association with Khalīl Atā the origin of the penchant of several later Naqshbandīs for establishing ascendancy over rulers, but such an interpretation is excluded by a careful reading of the sources.

After the overthrow of Khalīl Atā, Bahā' al-Dīn retired to his birthplace to begin training his own disciples, most of whom came

from Bukhārā and its environs. He left the region himself only three times, twice to perform the *ḥajj* and once to visit Herat. There he met with the ruler, Muʿizz al-Dīn Ḥusayn, and explained to him the principles of his path.

He died in 791/1389, and was buried at Qaṣr-i ʿĀrifān. Surrounded by a continually expanding complex of buildings, the tomb became a place of pilgrimage for Muslims from all over Asia as well as the site, for Bukhārans, of spring festivities known as *ʿīd-i gul-i surkh* ("red rose festival").

Bahāʾ al-Dīn's principal successors were Khwāja ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 802/1393), whom he had honored with marriage to his daughter; Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1419), a prolific author who counts as founder of the learned traditions of the Naqshbandī order; and Mawlānā Yaʿqūb Charkhī (d. 851/1447), who originated in the region of Ghaznī. ʿAṭṭār was the leading figure among these three, but it was Charkhī who proved the most important for the continuation of the Naqshbandī line; he was the preceptor of Khwāja ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār (d. 896/1490), under whose auspices the Naqshbandiyya established its supremacy in Central Asia and began its expansion in the wider Muslim world.

Bahāʾ al-Dīn left behind no writings (with the possible exception of the litany named after him, *Awrād-i Bahāʾiyya*), and he even discouraged his disciples from recording his sayings. The precise outlines of his teachings are, then, hard to discern, not because of the profusion of hagiographic legend that enshrouds so many Sufis, but because of the exiguous and sometimes elliptic nature of the sources. It is particularly difficult to establish why he should have become an eponymous figure, the central link in the *silsila* of which he is a part, instead of, for example, Ghijuwānī. The eight principles of spiritual conduct (*kalimāt-i qudsiyya*) first enunciated by Ghijuwānī have, after all, been reiterated in Naqshbandī handbooks down to the present; precisely the fact that Bahāʾ al-Dīn added three further principles to the eight would seem to reinforce the primacy of Ghijuwānī. These three were: *wuqūf-i zamānī* ("temporal awareness"), the constant examination of one's spiritual state during *dhikr; wuqūf-i ʿadadī* ("numerical awareness"), the enumeration of the times *dhikr* is performed in order to discourage the intrusion of distracting thoughts; and *wuqūf-i qalbī* ("awareness of the heart"), the direction of attention to the physical heart in order to make it participate in the work of *dhikr*. All three principles relate, then, to *dhikr*; combined

with the fact that Bahāʾ al-Dīn set himself apart from the other disciples of Amīr Kulāl through insistence on silent *dhikr*, this suggests that the question of *dhikr* was crucial for the early coalescence of the Naqshbandī order.

Other features of early Naqshbandī practice were also linked to the concern for sobriety and anonymity implied by the choice of silent *dhikr*. Among them are the repudiation of music and dance (*samāʿ*); the deprecation of charismatic feats and saintly miracles (*karāmāt*); the avoidance of retreats in favor of the keeping of pious company (*suḥbat*); and the shunning of distinctive forms of dress. As with the Shādhiliyya, all these features are highly reminiscent of the Malāmatī movement of Nīshāpūr, and it may be suggested that Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband was an heir to the traditions of the Malāmatiyya although not in a formal, initiatic sense.

Other recurrent features of the Naqshbandī path, such as fidelity to the Sharīʿa in the political and social spheres as well as in devotional life, and a marked hostility to Shīʿī Islam, were established in later periods; they cannot be traced directly to Bahāʾ al-Dīn. Similarly, the mildly critical attitude to Ibn ʿArabī adopted by some Naqshbandīs of the Mujaddidī line cannot be attributed retroactively to Bahāʾ al-Dīn and his circle. Although there is no trace of acquaintance with the concepts of Ibn ʿArabī in the dicta of Bahāʾ al-Dīn, both ʿAṭṭār and Pārsā were enthusiastic exponents of his work.

The Naqshbandiyya in Persia

It is a paradox of Naqshbandī history[80] that although this Sufi order first arose among Persian-speakers and virtually all its classical texts are written in the Persian language, its impact on Persia has been relatively slight. This statement requires qualification only for the period of the genesis of the Naqshbandiyya movement when, it might be argued, Transoxania and the eastern reaches of Khurāsān still counted as parts of the Persian world. The rise of the Naqshbandiyya to supremacy in Transoxania appears to have begun already in the time of the founder, Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband himself, although the nascent order did not yet exercise political influence. Furthermore,

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[80] For a comprehensive account of the order's history and doctrines see M. Gaborieu, A. Popovic and T. Zarcone (eds.), *Naqshbandīs: Cheminements et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique*, Istanbul-Paris, 1990.

in the Kubrawiyya order, which will be discussed further on, it faced
a still formidable competitor. Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/
1419), sole adherent of Bahā' al-Dīn among the ulema of Bukhārā,
had to endure the hostility of his colleagues for a number of reasons,
not least being his enthusiasm for the works and concepts of Ibn
'Arabī. However, it was also in connection with Pārsā that the Tīmūrid
rulers of Central Asia established their links with the Naqshbandī
order, when Mīrzā Shāhrūkh secured the return of Pārsā to Bukhārā
after a period of banishment. Those links, important for the ascend-
ancy of the order, were consolidated in the time of Khwāja 'Ubayd
Allāh Aḥrār (d. 896/1490), who several times intervened decisively
in the political sphere (according both to the chronicles and to the
hagiographic sources) and through his numerous disciples made the
Naqshbandiyya supreme in most regions of Transoxania. The influence
of the Naqshbandiyya spread during the same period southward to
Herat, partly through the influence of Aḥrār and partly through that
of Sa'īd al-Dīn Kāshghārī (d. 860/1456), a third-generation descend-
ant of Khwāja Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. Together with the Zayniyya
order, with which it came to enjoy fraternal relations in Istanbul as
well as Herat, the Naqshbandiyya dominated the religious and cul-
tural life of late Tūmūrid Herat. The principal initiate of Kāshghārī
was the great poet and mystic 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492),
whose life and work were discussed earlier in this book. His rich
and varied oeuvre contains a treatise devoted to the principles of
the Naqshbandī path, as well as many references to the order and
its personalities scattered throughout his works. The closeness of Jāmī
to his Naqshbandī preceptor may be measured by the fact that the
two men lie buried in a single enclosure in the Khiyābān district of
Herat. Averse by temperament to the formal training of *murīd*s, Jāmī
nonetheless initiated at least two persons into his line of the Naqsh-
bandī order: 'Abd al-Ghafūr Lārī (d. 912/1507) and one of his own
sons, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Yūsuf (d. 919/1513). He also brought about the
adherence to the order of the well-known littérateur and states-
man Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī (d. 906/1501), and inclined the Tīmūrid
sultan Ḥusayn Mīrzā Bāyqarā to look favorably upon it.

The presence of the Naqshbandiyya in Transoxania and Herat
has proved permanent. By contrast, the implantation of the Naqsh-
bandiyya in northwestern Persia, which took place in the late ninth/
fifteenth century, was relatively short-lived. The Naqshbandiyya was
brought to Qazwīn, in north western Persia, by a disciple of Aḥrār,

Shaykh ʿAlī Kurdī, who spent a number of years serving Aḥrār as tutor to his children before settling in that city. Kurdī was put to death by the Ṣafawids in 925/1519. At least one of his six deputies (*khalīfa*) suffered the same fate, while several others fled before the Ṣafawid onslaught. However, Naqshbandī influence remained strong in Qazwīn for several decades and may have been one of the reasons for the relatively long resistance put up by the people of the city against the imposition of Shīʿism. Tabrīz, the first capital of the Ṣafawid Empire, was also a center of Naqshbandī activity, stemming from the presence there of Ṣunʿ Allāh Kūzakunānī (d. 929/1523), a disciple of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Maktabdār (d. 892/1486), one of the deputies of Saʿīd al-Dīn Kāshghārī in Herat. He enjoyed some influence at court of the Aq Qoyunlu dynasty and evidently managed to survive the Ṣafawid conquest. His son, known as Abū Saʿīd-i Thānī, was imprisoned and tortured by the Ṣafawids, but was able to escape and ultimately to migrate to Istanbul, where he found favor with sultan Sülaymān. Another successor of Kūzakunānī, ʿAlī-Jān Bādāmyārī, established himself in the village of Bādāmyār near Tabrīz, where his initiatic line continued for two more generations.

There are also traces of the Naqshbandiyya in Sāwa and Hamadān in the immediate pre-Ṣafawid and early Ṣafawid period. In general, however, the rise of the Ṣafawid state sounded the knell for the Naqshbandī order in northern and western Persia, for with their strong loyalty to Sunnism the Naqshbandiyya became a special target of persecution. Mīrzā Makhdūm Sharīfī, a Sunnī scholar who took refuge with the Ottomans, writes that whenever anyone was seen engaging in *dhikr*, it would be said, "This is a Naqshbandī; he must be killed." The Naqshbandiyya probably survived for a time in Urūmiyya and possibly in other Kurdish-inhabited areas of Persia. Otherwise, the order was so thoroughly extirpated that Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1110/1699) felt safe in declaring, towards the end of the Ṣafawid period, that the names of the Naqshbandī masters listed by Jāmī in *Nafaḥāt al-uns* were unknown to all but "the ignorant Uzbeks" (*uzbaqān-i nādān*).

When in the thirteenth/nineteenth century Naqshbandīs again became visible in Persia, it was exclusively in the Sunnī-inhabited regions on the fringes of the country. Resistance to Persian attempts at establishing control over Herat (in present-day Afghanistān) was led by a certain "Sufi Islam," a Naqshbandī dervish from Bukhārā. Although he died in battle in 1222/1807, the branch of the order

he founded at Karrūkh, outside Herat, continued to exercise an influence across the frontier among the Ḥanafī Sunnīs of Persian Khurāsān. Six years after the death of Sufi Islam, Khwāja Yūsuf Kāshghārī, a Naqshbandī master from Eastern Turkestan, led an unsuccessful uprising of the Yomut and Göklan Turkomans against Qājār rule. A similar Naqshbandī-led Turkoman revolt was quashed in Astarābād in 1257/1841. It was also in the first half of the century that Khwāja Muḥammad Yūsuf Jāmī established a still active center of the Mujaddidī branch of the order at Turbat-i Jām near the Afghan border.

Infinitely more important than all these developments in the east was the rise of the Khālidī branch of the Naqshbandī order, established by Mawlānā Khālid Baghdādī (d. 1243/1827), a Kurd from Shahrāzūr. The Khālidiyya supplanted almost entirely all other branches of the Naqshbandiyya in the Middle East, and in Kurdistān it wrested supremacy from the powerful Qādiriyya to become the chief order of the region. Although the principal Kurdish *khalīfa*s of Mawlānā Khālid all resided in Ottoman territory, their influence was considerable among the Kurds of Persia, not least during the great Kurdish uprising of 1880. Led by Shaykh ʿUbayd Allāh of Shamdīnān, it engulfed much of Azerbaijān as well as most of Kurdistān. In addition, the Khālidiyya expanded from Kurdistān to Ṭālish, the Shāfiʿī enclave on the shores of the Caspian: Shaykh ʿUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn of Tawēla—a *khalīfa* of Mawlānā Khālid—initiated into the order a certain Mullā ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Qiziljī from the village of ʿAnbarān in central Ṭālish and instructed him to spread the order in his homeland, which he did with great success. Most Shāfiʿīs in Ṭālish retain to this day an allegiance to the Khālidī Naqshbandī order.

In 1958, after the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, a namesake of ʿUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn quit Biyāra to establish himself at the village of Durū on the Persian side of the frontier. With the active encouragement of the Pahlawī court, he sought to bring under his sway all three areas of Naqshbandī presence in Persia—Kurdistān, Ṭālish and Turkoman Ṣaḥrā. In this he had some success, but his activities were brought to an end by the Islamic Revolution of 1978–9. Shaykh ʿUthmān organized an army to combat the revolutionary government, but it was soon defeated and he withdrew to Iraq. Despite this removal of Shaykh ʿUthmān, the Naqshbandī order

remains strong among the Kurds of Persia, particularly in the region of Mahābād and in Ṭālish (especially Hashtpar and its surroundings). By contrast, it is now moribund among the Turkomans.

The Naqshbandiyya in Turkey

The first implantation of the Naqshbandiyya among the western Turks took place in the ninth/fifteenth century, less than a hundred years after the death of its eponym. This was an important part of the general expansion of the Naqshbandiyya outside its Transoxanian homeland, for the order was well placed to gain the loyalty of the Ottoman Turks with its emphatically Sunnī identity and insistence on sober respect for the Sharī'a.

The first Ottoman Naqshbandī was Mullā 'Abd Allāh Ilāhī of Simav, who traveled to Samarqand where he became a disciple of Khwāja 'Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār. After his training was complete, he returned to his birthplace for a number of years before reluctantly accepting an invitation to settle in Istanbul. There, at the Zeyrek mosque, he established the first Naqshbandī center in Turkey and found himself surrounded by a large number of devotees. Preferring, however, a life of seclusion and scholarship, he left Istanbul for Vardar Yeñičesi in Thrace, where he died in 895/1490. Ilāhī's principal successor was Amīr Aḥmad Bukhārī (d. 922/1516), who had accompanied him back from Samarqand. Under Bukhārī's auspices, three Naqshbandī lodges were established in Istanbul and the order attracted numerous scholars and littérateurs, the most famous of whom was the poet Maḥmūd Lāmi'ī Chelebī (d. 933/1532) of Bursa. Although the lodges founded by Bukhārī continued functioning into the early twentieth century, the initiatic line he inaugurated appears to have died out in the space of a few generations.

Considerably younger than Ilāhī, but like him a *murīd* of Aḥrār, was Bābā Ḥaydar Samarqandī (d. 957/1550), for whom sultan Sülaymān Qānūnī founded a *tekke* at Eyyüb. This served as a hostel for Naqshbandīs coming from Central Asia until it was destroyed by fire in 1912. Naqshbandīs continued to migrate from Central Asia to Istanbul and other points in Turkey for several centuries, as is indicated by the names of certain *tekke*s such as Bukhārā, Kāshghar and Özbekler. Among them were men of distinction, such as Khazīnī, a dervish of triple Naqshbandī, Yasawī and Kubrāwī affiliation. He

arrived from Bukhārā during the reign of sultan Murād III. Also
famous was ʿAbd Allāh Nidāʾī, an eleventh/seventeenth-century
migrant from Kāshghār who established a *tekke* near Eyyüb.

In general, however, the history of the order in Turkey came to
reflect the developments it underwent in India, which was its prin-
cipal intellectual center from the time of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī,
the "Renewer" (*mujaddid*) (d. 1034/1624), whose contribution to the
Naqshbandī tradition will be discussed further on. The Mujaddidī
branch of the order established by Sirhindī was first transmitted to
Turkey by shaykh Muḥammad Murād Bukhārī (d. 1141/1729), a
murīd of Khwāja Muḥammad Murād Maʿṣūm, Sirhindī's son and
principal successor. Muḥammad Murād spent about five years in the
Ottoman capital toward the end of the eleventh/seventeenth-century,
during which time he gained numerous ulema, including the *Shaykh
al-Islām* Fayḍ Allāh Efendī, as his followers. The next thirty years
were spent primarily in Damascus, but he returned to Istanbul in
1141/1729, dying shortly thereafter. The *tekke* that was established
next to the tomb of Muḥammad Murād Bukhārī in the Nishānjï
Pasha district became a fountainhead for the Mujaddidiyya, not only
in Istanbul but also in Anatolia and the Balkans.

A second transmission of the Mujaddidiya to Turkey came by way
of Mecca, which remained until the late nineteenth century an impor-
tant center for the diffusion of the Naqshbandiyya among pilgrims
coming from Turkey as well as many other regions. The represen-
tative of Khwāja Muḥammad Maʿṣūm in the Holy City was shaykh
Aḥmad Jūryānī Yakdast, who initiated into the Mujaddidiyya shaykh
Muḥammad Amīn of Tokat (d. 1158/1745). When Muḥammad Amīn
returned to Istanbul in 1129/1717, he took up residence at one of
the lodges founded by Amīr Aḥmad Bukhārī and began initiating
members of the Ottoman bureaucracy. Particularly noteworthy among
the *murīd*s of Shaykh Muḥammad Amīn was the polymath Sulaymān
Saʿd al-Dīn Mustaqīm-zāde (d. 1202/1787), who translated the let-
ters of both Sirhindī and Khwāja Muḥammad Maʿṣūm into Otto-
man Turkish. The letters of Sirhindī have remained popular among
Turkish Naqshbandīs down to the present, although it is now more
commonly an Arabic translation that is used. Several of the early
Turkish Mujaddidīs also had affiliations with the famous Mawlawī
order of "Whirling Dervishes," among them being Pertew Pasha and
Ḥālet Efendī, both of whom exerted considerable political influence
during the reign of sultan Maḥmūd II. An entirely new era in the

history of the Naqshbandiyya in Turkey begins with the rise of the Khālidī branch in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Before the emergence of the Khālidiyya, the Naqshbandīs were certainly prominent and respected, both in Istanbul and elsewhere, but they never came close to enjoying the near-monopoly on Sufi activity that they exercised in Central Asia. The Khālidīs, however, made the Naqshbandiyya the paramount order in Turkey, a position it has retained even after the official dissolution of the orders.

Mawlānā Khālid Baghdādī (d. 1242/1827)[81] was a Kurd from Shahrāzūr who obtained initiation into the Naqshbandiyya in Dehli at the hands of Ghulām ʿAlī Dihlawī (d. 1240/1824), a shaykh of the Mujaddidī line. Although Mawlānā Khālid was hostile to the local secular rulers in Kurdistān and acted there as an advocate of Ottoman power, the first appearance of the Khālidiyya in the Ottoman capital was greeted with suspicion. Mawlānā Khālid's first representative there, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, made matters worse by attempting to exclude non-initiates from public mosques during the performance of Khālidī rituals. The next representative, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Sūsī, was, however, able to make inroads among the Ottoman élite. Like other key figures in the history of the order in Turkey, he recruited numerous ulema, bureaucrats and men of letters. Of these mention may be made of Mekkī-zāde Muṣṭafā ʿĀṣim, several times *Shaykh al-Islām* of the Ottoman Empire; Gürjü Nejīb Pasha and Mūsā Ṣafwetī Pasha; and Kechejī-zāde ʿIzzet Mollā, the chief *qāḍī* of Istanbul. It was suggested to sultan Maḥmūd II by Ḥālet Efendī, a Mujaddidī-Mawlawī, that this swift expansion of the Khālidiyya posed a danger to the state, and in 1828 all prominent Khālidīs were in fact banned from the city. This period of disfavor was temporary, for in 1833 Mekkī-zāde was re-appointed *Shaykh al-Islām.*

Much of the impetus behind the early propagation of the Khālidiyya in the Ottoman lands had been political; it was the wish of Mawlānā Khālid to reinforce the allegiance of the Ottoman state to the Sharīʿa and thus to make of it a viable focus for Muslim strength and unity. This aim gradually slipped beyond reach, and even in the period of sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, the shaykhs of other orders were more

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[81] For a history of the Khālidiyya see B. Abū-Manneh, "The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century," in: *Welt des Islam,* N.S., vol. 22 (1982), pp. 1–36.

intimately associated with the sovereign than were the Naqshbandīs. Nonetheless, the Khālidī branch of the Naqshbandiyya possessed a wide popular appeal; it struck root throughout Anatolia, and even in Konya, the hallowed ground of the Mawlawī order, the Khālidīs were supreme. By the close of the nineteenth century, they had more *tekke*s in Istanbul than any other order.

Among the Naqshbandī leaders of the second half of the century, shaykh Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Gümüshkhānewī (d. 1312/1894) may be singled out for mention both because of the size and nature of his following and because of the prolongation of his initiatic line down to the present. His *tekke* in the Chaghaloghlu district of Istanbul was probably the most frequented of all Sufi meeting places in the city, being visited not only by members of the Ottoman élite but also by many Muslims from abroad. In addition, Gümüshkhānewī wrote extensively, in both Arabic and Turkish, and by compiling a collection of *ḥadīth*, *Ramūz al-aḥādīth*, he inaugurated a tradition of active *ḥadīth* study still continued by his initiatic descendants in present-day Turkey.

Gümüshkhānewī further distinguished himself by fighting, together with his followers, in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. This example of military engagement was followed by several other Naqshbandī shaykhs who fought on various fronts during the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence. Nonetheless, the Naqshbandīs found themselves denied all legitimacy under the dispensation brought in by the Turkish Republic, when all the Sufi orders were prescribed in September 1925. The immediate pretext for the ban was furnished by the uprising led in the same year by shaykh Saʿīd of Palu, a Khālidī master of eastern Anatolia. However, the rebellion was more an expression of Kurdish grievances and aspirations then it was of fidelity to the traditional political ideals of the Khālidiyya. Frequently cited as another exemplar of militant Naqshbandī opposition to the Turkish Republic is shaykh Muḥammad Asʿad (Mehmed Esad, d. 1931). Originally from Irbīl, a physical as well as spiritual descendant of Mawlānā Khālid, he took up residence at the Kelāmī *tekke* in Istanbul in 1888 before being banished to his native city by sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. He returned in 1908 to take his place among the leading shaykhs of the Ottoman capital. In 1931, he was arrested on charges of complicity with those responsible for the notorious Menemen incident. Although the evidence of his involvement was exceedingly slight, his son was executed and he himself died in prison hospital.

Initiatic descendants of Mehmed Esad as well as other Khālidī shaykhs continue to be active in Turkey; among those who have died in recent times one can mention Sāmī Ramaẓānoglu (d. 1984) and Meḥmed Zāhid Kotku (d. 1401/1980). Arrests of Naqshbandīs and other forms of harassment have remained common, but the subversive potential and aspirations often ascribed to the Naqshbandīs in contemporary Turkey are, at best, grossly exaggerated. It can even be said that certain Naqshbandīs have integrated themselves into the political structure of Turkey by their involvement in ventures such as the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) and its successor, the Prosperity Party (Refah Partisi). The present-day significance of the Naqshbandīs in Turkey is to be sought not so much in their political activity as in the support they provide for traditional religiosity, a support greatly weakened by the debilitating trends of more than half a century.

The Naqshbandī Order in India

Introduced into India by Khwāja Bāqī Bi-'llāh (972–1012/1564–1603) during the closing years of the tenth/sixteenth century, the Naqshbandiyya order became an influential factor in Indo-Muslim life and for about two centuries it was the principal spiritual order in India. Though some Naqshbandī leaders had visited India during the reign of Bābur (937/1530) and his son Humāyūn (963/1556), the credit of establishing the first Naqshbandī *khānaqā* in India goes to Khwāja Bāqī Bi-'llāh who came to Dehli from Kabul and, in his own words, "planted the *silsila* (i.e., the brotherhood) in India." He died at the age of only forty, but he made deep impact on the lives of the people by his unassuming ways and deep humanitarian spirit. Bāqī Bi-'llāh attracted both religious and political figures to his fold. A believer in the underlying unity of being, he gave expression to his feeling of unity with God and the Universe in spirited verses that show his indebtedness to Ibn 'Arabī's monistic doctrine. Among his disciples two persons acquired great renown. The first was shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), generally known as *Mujaddid-i alf-i thānī* ("Renewer of the Second [Islamic] Millennium"), who expanded the order so successfully that, according to one observer, his disciples reached every town and city of India. The second was shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq of Dehli (d. 1052/1642), who came to be known as "the Teacher of *ḥadīth*" (*muḥaddith*) on account of his contribution

to *ḥadīth* studies in India. A native of Sirhind (East Punjab), Aḥmad Sirhindī spent a few years in the capital, Āgra, where he made friends with the chief minister to the Mogul Emperor named Abū 'l-Faḍl. After having been initiated into the Naqshbandiyya, he set out to redefine its doctrine along more radical and militant lines. He also gave the order an effective organization that made it a social force to be reckoned with. He broke away from the earlier mystic tradition in India by rejecting the doctrine of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). His religious views were marked by a strong opposition to all doctrines he regarded as deviating from orthodox Sunnism. On this account he attacked Indian Shī'īs and tried to present them as a danger to the Muslim state in India. He adopted a similar intolerant position toward certain trends within contemporary Sufism, especially toward the unitive vision of God and the world associated with Ibn 'Arabī and his followers. As an alternative to this vision, which, in his opinion, overemphasized God's immanent presence in this world, he advanced the doctrine of the unity of witnessing (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). He viewed this doctrine as being more in line with the mainstream Sunnī theory that posited God's absolute transcendence vis-à-vis the created Universe. He also condemned the innovations in practice and ritual (*bid'a*) introduced by some Sufi masters, the religious syncretism of the emperor Akbar (r. 972/1564–1014/1605) and the misdeeds of the worldly ulema, who, in his mind, had failed to stem the spread of these detrimental ideas and practices. Sirhindī vigorously opposed Akbar's attempts to work out a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim religious attitudes. He declared that "Muslims should follow their religion, and non-Muslims their ways," in accord with the Qur'ānic injunction prohibiting any compromise in matters of religious faith. On the theoretical plane, Sirhindī took a dim view of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. He considered it to be a cause of the corruption of the precepts of primeval Islam. This corruption, in turn, had paved the way for the emperor Akbar's attempts to impose upon his subjects a new religion called *dīn-i ilāhī*, which one modern Muslim scholar described as "a hodge-podge of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Jainism."[82] Although recent studies have called in question the traditional Muslim view of Sirhindī as a

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[82] F. Rahman, "Akbar's Religion," in: *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* (Karachi), vol. 10 (June 1965), p. 126.

reformer and activist *par excellence*,[83] he did seem to have struggled hard to bring about a change in the outlook of the ruling classes. To this end, he carried on a brisk correspondence with Mughal nobles like ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān, Mīrzā ʿAzīz Kōkā, Farīd Bukhārī and others, and succeeded in winning them over to his point of view. Thus, when the emperor Jahāngīr ascended the throne, Farīd Bukhārī, who had taken Sirhindī's admonitions seriously, requested that the ruler take a solemn oath never to break the rulings of the Sharīʿa. Sirhindī's arguments however are purely moralistic, and are not necessarily indicative of his desire to get involved in the affairs of the state, not to mention reform its policies. Yet, his activities and preaching were seen by rulers as being dangerous enough to warrant his imprisonment. In 1029/1619, acting on the slanderous reports of Sirhindī's opponents, Jahāngīr threw him in prison. Soon afterward the emperor changed his mind and ordered the Sufi to be released. After that episode, Sirhindī continued to preach on themes like maintaining proper religious morals, prophethood, the Day of Judgement, the inadequacy of reason as a means to obtain religious truth, and on various moral dilemmas faced by his correligionists. His numerous adherents treated him as the supreme saint of the age, its spiritual pole on whom the whole world depended for its proper functioning. In modern times, his image as a religious reformer and a courageous critic of the powers-that-be who was opposed to any compromise with Hinduism and with various "deviations" from Sunnī Islam, especially Shīʿism, was propagated by a number of Pakistani scholars, including Abū 'l-Kalām Azad, Burhān Aḥmad Farūqī, and Muḥammad Miyān.[84]

Aḥmad Sirhindī's teaching was zealously carried forward by his sons and descendants. The emperor Awrangzīb came under the influence of Naqshbandī masters and showed deep respect to Khwāja Maʿṣūm (whose collections of letters contain several epistles addressed to that ruler), Khwāja Sayf al-Dīn, Khwāja Muḥammad Naqshband and others. The Naqshbandīs played an important role in replacing the policy of conciliation between Islam and Hinduism, instituted by Akbar, by the anti-Hinduist attitude that characterized Awrangzīb's reign.

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[83] E.g., Y. Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī*, Montreal, 1971.
[84] Ibid., pp. 106 and 109–110.

The Naqshbandī teachings differed from those of other Indian
mystic orders in several respects. In contrast to the quietist social
stance advocated by the Chishtiyya, the order developed a dynamic
and, at times, militant outlook. It took a negative approach to other
religions and energetically rejected Ibn ʿArabī's theory of *waḥdat al-
wujūd* as conducive to religious pluralism. On this issue they ran
afoul of Ibn ʿArabī's Indian supporters and initiated a long theolog-
ical controversy that has continued up to the present day. The parties
to this controversy periodically exchanged legal opinions (*fatwās*),
issued in defense or refutation of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas. The Naqshbandī
belief in the need to provide guidance to the state and its officials
caused the Naqshbandī leaders to maintain close ties with the Indian
rulers and courtiers. While other Indian brotherhoods propagated
their teachings in the form of authoritative oral statements (*malfūẓāt*),
which they traced back to their founders, the Naqshbandīs tended to
disseminate their views through epistles (*maktūbāt*), which Naqshbandī
shaykhs addressed to their lieutenants and followers at large. Such
epistles were written, for example, by shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, Khwāja
Maʿṣūm, Khwāja Naqshband, Shāh Ghulām ʿAlī and others.

In the eleventh-twelfth/eighteenth-nineteenth centuries two Naqsh-
bandī masters made significant contributions to the ideology of the
order by restating some of its basic premises. The first, Shāh Walī
Allāh (d. 1176/1762), sought to bring about a reconciliation between
the religious views of Ibn ʿArabī and shaykh Aḥmad. He eventually
declared that difference between their approaches was one of per-
spective. Both express the same underlying truth, although they make
use of different metaphors. The second master, Mīrzā Maẓhar
Jān-i Jānān (d. 1197/1782) revived the legacy of the emperor Akbar
by adopting a tolerant attitude towards Hinduism and accepting the
Vedas as a revealed book. Shāh Walī Allāh played an important
role in revitalizing the traditional Islamic sciences, particularly the
study of *ḥadīth*. In an effort to reach out to the masses he translated
the Qurʾān into Persian to make it accessible to Muslim soldiers,
artisans, and other townsfolk. He developed a new scholasticism with
a view to infusing a fresh spirit into the Islamic dogma and to bring-
ing it in harmony with changing times. Shāh Walī Allāh played a
significant role in the political developments of his time. His letters
addressed to his peers Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī, Muḥammad Shāh, Niẓām
al-Mulk and others reveal a clear understanding of the contempo-
rary political situation.

Another prominent Naqshbandī teacher, the *qāḍī* Thanā' Allāh Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810), who studied under Mīrzā Maẓhar, made significant contribution to religious literature. His book on the fundamentals of *fiqh* (*Mā lā budd minh*) and his commentary on the Qur'ān titled *Tafsīr-i Mazharī* became standard works in their respective fields of scholarly inquiry. His treatise "Guidance for the Seekers" (*Irshād al-ṭālibīn*) contains a concise exposition of the Naqshbandī principles. Other spiritual descendants of Mīrzā Jān-i Jānān, such as Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, Shāh Abū Sa'īd, and Shāh Aḥmad Sa'īd distinguished themselves as active propagators of the Naqshbandī ideology. The descendants of Shāh Ghulām 'Alī resisted the British occupation of the country and supported anti-British attitudes and activities.

Of the many Sufi orders of India, the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī branch was the only one to gain a large following among the Sunnī Muslims of Afghanistān, Turkey and Syria. The *khānaqā* of Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (d. 1240/1824) attracted thousands of visitors from different Asian and African countries. As was mentioned, his Kurdish disciple shaykh Khālid Baghdādī-Shahrazūrī spread the teachings of the order in Damascus and made it a significant factor in the life of the Ottoman Muslims and those of the Caucasus. Shāmil (d. 1287/1871), a Dāghestānī follower of shaykh Khālid, led a long and bloody struggle of the Dāghestānī and Chechen mountaineers against the Russian conquest of the Caucasus from 1250/1834 until 1276/1859, when he was captured by the Russian forces.

Another member of the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī sub-order Khwāja Mīr Nāṣir (d. 1172/1758) founded a new order called "the Path of [the prophet] Muḥammad" (*ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadī*). His son Khwāja Mīr Dard (1199/1785) wrote the famous "Knowledge of the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān]" (*'Ilm al-kitāb*)—a fresh insight into the mystical tradition that gave a new orientation to the Naqshbandī discipline. Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd of Rāē Barēlī (d. 1247/1831) was also originally a member of the Mujaddidī order. However, later in his life he established a new mystical path, called the *ṭarīqa-yi nubuwwat*. Nevertheless, the ideology of this new movement remained within the general framework of the Naqshbandī teaching. An important aspect of the Naqshbandiyya order was its originality of thought and the ability of its exponents to give new creative interpretations to the tradition formulated by its founders. As we have seen, shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī differed from his mentor, shaykh Bāqī Bi-llāh, who was an admirer of Ibn 'Arabī and his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

In a like vein, Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān, contrary to the opinions of Sirhindī and Shāh Ghulām ʿAlī both of whom insisted on the suppression of the Hindu religion, was an advocate of reconciliation with Hinduism. Likewise, Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd disagreed with Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1239/1823) on the important concept of visualizing the master in spiritual practices. Despite these occasional departures from the original tradition, the Naqshbandiyya of India has remained strongly opposed to innovations in religious theory and practice and sought to suppress them by winning temporal rulers over to their side.

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Kubrawiyya

The eponymous founder of the famous Kubrawiyya Sufi order of Central Asia and Khurāsān, Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Abū 'l-Jannāb Aḥmad b. ʿUmar derived his nickname "Kubrā" from the Qurʾānic expression "the major disaster" (*al-ṭāmmat al-kubrā*).[85] He earned it through his formidable talent in polemic and disputation, which enabled him to defeat the most skillful controversialists of his age.

Born at Khīva, in Khwārazm, in 540/1145, he began his career as a scholar of *ḥadīth* and speculative theology (*kalām*), travelling extensively in the cultivation of these disciplines. His interest in Sufism was awakened in Egypt, where he became a *murīd* of the Persian shaykh Rūzbihān al-Wazzān al-Miṣrī (d. 584/1188), an initiate of the Suhrawardiyya order. After a number of years in Egypt, he went to Tabrīz, in Persia, to pursue his studies of *kalām*, but came instead under the influence of a certain Bābā Faraj Tabrīzī who persuaded him to abandon his concern with the "external" religious sciences and to devote himself fully to the search of the inner wisdom by embarking on the Sufi path.[86] Kubrā then spent some time in the company of two other preceptors, ʿAmmār b. Yāsir al-Bidlīsī and Ismāʿīl al-Qaṣrī, from both of whom he received a Sufi robe (*khirqa*), before returning to shaykh Rūzbihān in Egypt. By then, Rūzbihān evidently regarded Kubrā as fully mature, for in about 540/1145 he sent him back to Khwārazm with full authority to train and initiate disciples. Kubrā swiftly gathered a large following, including a remarkable number of individuals who attained prominence in their

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[85] See Qurʾān 79:34.
[86] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 55.

own right as spiritual masters of and writers on Sufism. On this account, Kubrā is frequently designated as *walī-turash*, the "manufacturer of saints." Among his foremost disciples were Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī (d. 616/1219), the master of the great Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭar; Najm al-Dīn Dayā Rāzī (d. 654/1256), the author of the celebrated Sufi compendium "The Path of God's Bondsmen" (*Mirṣād al-ʿibād*);[87] Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya (d. 650/1252), Bābā Kamāl Jandī, Sayf al-Dīn Bākharzī (d. 658/1260), and Raḍī 'l-Dīn ʿAlī Lālā (d. 642/1244). Kubrā is said to have fallen victim to the Mongol conquest of Khwārazm in 617/1220. According to the traditional accounts, he refused an invitation by the Mongols to leave the city before they proceeded with their massacre of its inhabitants and died at the head of a band of followers while engaged in hand-to-hand combat. He is reputed to have been buried at the site of his *khānaqā* outside the city, and his tomb, located in what subsequently became known as Köhne-Urgenj, became a center of pious visitation, retaining this function even under Soviet rule.[88] His followers did not form a tightly knit organization but rather a congeries of small Sufi communities that rallied around one or the other of his chief deputies.[89] Kubrā left behind a number of brief but important works in Arabic that show his concern with the analysis of visionary experiences. He discussed, among other issues, the signi-ficance of various types of dreams and visions; the degrees of luminous epiphany that are manifested to the mystic; the different classes of conceptions and images (*khawāṭir*) that engage the mystic's attention; and the nature and interrelations of the "subtle centers" of man's body (*laṭāʾif*). Among the most important of Kubrā's treatises are "The Fragrance of [Divine] Beauty and the Unveiling of the [Divine] Majesty" (*Fawāʾiḥ al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl*),[90] "The Ten Principles" (*al-Uṣūl al-ʿashara*) and "The Epistle to the Fearful One, Who Seeks to Escape the Reprimand of the Scold" (*Risālat al-khāʾif al-hāʾim min lawmat al-lāʾim*).[91] In addition to these short works dealing with the

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[87] For an English translation of this book see H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, Delmar, NY, 1982.

[88] G.P. Snesarev, *Relikty domusul'manskikh verovanii i obryadov u uzbekov Khorezma*, Moscow, 1969, pp. 269 and 433.

[89] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 56.

[90] Edited with a comprehensive introduction to the life and work of Kubrā by F. Meier, Wiesbaden 1957.

[91] Edited, together with other lesser treatises, by M. Molé under the title of *Traités mineurs*, in: *Annales Islamologiques (Cairo)*, vol. 4 (1963), pp. 1–78.

Sufi path, Kubrā undertook to write a monumental Sufi commentary on the Qur'ān. When he died without completing it, the project was carried on first by his *murīd* Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and then by another Kubrawī shaykh, 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī.[92] Of all these works Kubrā's *Fawā'iḥ al-jamāl* is by far the most famous. It can be described as a spiritual dairy that its author designed as a guidebook to help the Sufi wayfarer to progress successfully along the mystical path. Here Kubrā provided a detailed description of the psychological phenomena and spiritual states that the seeker experiences on the way to God, with special reference to the ocular and auditory perceptions one encounters during retreat and meditation. In describing his own progress toward the mystical goal, Kubrā gave the Sufi novice a helpful clue to the meaning of such experiences and phenomena. He also highlighted the possible pitfalls of such sensations. In his shorter treatises, especially in "The Ten Principles," Kubrā laid down the code of behavior to be followed by the novices. Expanding on the eight Sufi principles outlined by al-Junayd, Kubrā recommended that his disciples practice ritual purity, fasting, silence, seclusion, the constant remembrance of God, a bare minimum of sleep and observe moderation after the breaking of the fast. In addition, the novice was expected to concentrate fully on the personality of his spiritual master and to discard all vain thoughts and impulses the instant that they appear.[93] Such works formed the foundation of the Kubrawī spiritual discipline.[94]

The teaching of Kubrā was perpetuated by his disciples. Sayf al-Dīn Bākharzī (d. 658/1260), a native of Bākharz in present-day Afghanistān, established a well-endowed Kubrawī *khānaqā* in Bukhārā, where he spent his whole life preaching to his numerous followers.[95] His popularity, however, spread far beyond his immediate circle of his disciples. He was held in great esteem by the population of Bukhārā, which referred to him as "The Master of the Universe"

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[92] H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, Paris 1972, vol. 3, pp. 175–176 and 276 n. 90.

[93] M. A. Waley, "A Kubrāwī Manual of Sufism: The *Fuṣūṣ al-adab* of Yaḥyā al-Bākharzī," in: L. Lewisohn (ed.), "*The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*," London and New York, 1992, pp. 289–290.

[94] Ibid., p. 290.

[95] Documents relating to this *khānaqā* were published by C. D. Chekhovich', *Bukharskie dokumenti XIV v.*, Tashkent, 1965; cf. Waley, "A Kubrāwī Manual of Sufism," p. 291.

(*shaykh-i ʿālam*).⁹⁶ It was at Bākharzī's *khānaqā* that Berke Khān, the fifth ruler of the Golden Horde, proclaimed his allegiance to Islam.⁹⁷ Badr al-Dīn Samarqandī, a *murīd* of Bākharzī, traveled to India and established there a branch of the Kubrawiyya that came to be known as the Firdawsiyya. Its most important figure was Aḥmad Yaḥyā Manērī (d. 772/1371), the author of the widely read "Writings" (*Maktūbāt*). Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya established a *khānaqā* at Baḥrabād in Khurāsān. It was headed by his son, Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, who in 694/1295 presided over the conversion to Islam of Ghazān Khān, the Īlkhānid ruler of Iran. The Kubrawiyya's involvement in the conversion of the Mongol rulers bears an eloquent testimony to their high prestige and political clout. Another *murīd* of Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya, ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. 661/1263), was the author of several important treatises on various aspects of Sufi thought, which served as a theoretical starting point for many later Sufi writers.⁹⁸

The principal branches of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's *ṭarīqa* were Firdawsiyya, Nūriyya, Rukniyya, Hamdāniyya, Istighāsiyya (Dhahabiyya), and Nūrbakhshiyya.⁹⁹ Of these, the most long-lived and prolific initiatic line was probably that descending by way of Raḍī 'l-Din ʿAlī Lālā and two further links of the chain to ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla Simnānī (d. 736/1336). A prolific writer, Simnānī further elaborated the analysis of Kubrā's subtle spiritual centers (*laṭāʾif*) and also formulated a critique of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* that was to have much influence on the Indian Naqshbandī circles.¹⁰⁰ He also attacked the excessive belief in saintly miracles which he observed among some contemporary Sufis. At the same time, he condoned various *dhikr* practices and meditation techniques as long as they allowed the Sufi to communicate with the spirits of his deceased predecessors and to seek advice from them.¹⁰¹

ʿAlī Hamadānī, a *murīd*, successively, of two of Simnānī's followers, Taqī 'l-Dīn Akhī and Maḥmūd Mazdaqānī, introduced the

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⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 292.

⁹⁷ J. Richard, "La conversion de Berke et les débuts de l'islamisation de la Horde d'Or," in: *Revue d'Etudes Islamiques*, vol. 35, (1967), pp. 173–9.

⁹⁸ Published by Molé under the title *Kitāb al-Insān al-kāmil*, Tehran and Paris 1962; cf. H. Landolt, "Le paradoxe de la 'face de Dieu'," in: *StI* (Paris), vol. 25/2 (1996), pp. 163–192.

⁹⁹ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, pp. 56–57.

¹⁰⁰ H. Landolt, "Die Briefwechsel zwischen Kāšānī und Simnānī," in *Der Islam*, vol. 50/1 (1973), pp. 29–81.

¹⁰¹ Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 58.

Kubrawī order to Badakhshān (present-day Tājīkistān) and Kashmīr.
However, the center of his career as a Sufi master was in Khuttalān
(present-day Kulāb, Tājīkistān),[102] and his disciples were recruited
primarily from the eastern reaches of Khurāsān and Transoxania.
He died in 786/1385, and is variously reputed to have been buried
in Khuttalān and Srīnagar.[103] A descendant of the Prophet through
Fāṭima and ʿAlī, he designated himself as the "second ʿAlī." Although
the branch of the Kubrawī order that he introduced to Kashmīr
remains purely Sunnī to the present day, it is not surprising that
descendants of Hamadānī adhered to various trends within Shīʿism.
Isḥāq al-Khuttalānī, who succeeded ʿAlī Hamadānī as the head of
the order, was murdered by emissaries of the Tīmūrid ruler Shāhrūkh
in about 826/1423. Before dying, he appointed as his successor
Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh. The majority of Khuttalānī's followers
accepted Nūrbakhsh, but a minority gave their loyalty to ʿAbd Allāh
Barzishabādī instead. This schism gave rise to two separate deriva-
tives of the Kubrawiyya, each with its own name, but having in
common an adoption of Shīʿism. One was the Nūrbakhshiyya, which
survived in Persia into the Ṣafawid period; the other came to acquire,
at a date and in a fashion unknown, the designation of Dhahabiyya,
and has survived down to the present in Iran, where its chief center
is Shīrāz.[104]

The latter history of the Kubrawiyya in its Central Asian home-
land is not well known. It is probable that it was almost universally
displaced, even in Khwārazm, by the Naqshbandiyya from the early
ninth/fifteenth century onwards. The small town of Saktari near
Bukhārā remained, however, an active center of the Kubrawiyya
until at least the early eleventh/seventeenth century.[105] At some point,
the Kubrawiyya seems to have spread eastwards from Central Asia
into the Muslim regions of China. Finally, there are traces of the
Kubrawiyya in Turkey—a Kubrawī shaykh by the name of Muṣṭafā

[102] D. DeWeese, "Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī and Kubrawī Hagiographical Tra-
ditions," in: L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London and New
York, 1992, p. 124.
[103] J. Teufel, *Eine Lebensbeschreibung des Scheich ʿAlī-i Hamadānī*, Leiden, 1962.
[104] R. Gramlich, *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, Wiesbaden, 1965, vol. 1, pp.
14–26.
[105] For a list of works produced by the shaykhs of Saktari, see A. A. Semenov,
Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR, Tashkent 1955, vol. 3, pp.
327–8.

Dede is recorded to have fought in the ranks of the army that con-
quered Constantinople, but no lasting implantation of the order
appears to have taken place either in Turkey or in the Arab lands.
Only a nominal existence of the Kubrawiyya persisted in the west-
ern Islamic world as one of the multiple secondary affiliations claimed
by Naqshbandīs of the Mujaddidī-Khālidī line.

Sufism in a Shīʿī Context: The Niʿmatullāhiyya

The Niʿmatullāhī Sufi order first took root in south-eastern Persia,
where it continued to prosper until the time of the Ṣafawid ruler
Shāh ʿAbbās (978/1571–1038/1629). For the next two centuries, it
survived only in the Indian Subcontinent (Deccan), and was rein-
troduced into Persia with considerable vigor in the early thirteenth/late
eighteenth century. From that time on, the Niʿmatullāhiyya became
the most widespread Sufi order in the country.

The founder of the order Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Walī was born in
Aleppo ca. 730/1330. His father was a descendant of the Prophet
via the seventh Shīʿī/Ismāʿīlī imām Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar. His mother was
of Persian descent. During his early youth Niʿmat Allāh studied in
Shīrāz. Among his teachers was one of the greatest theologians of
the age ʿAḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). Niʿmat Allāh was initi-
ated into Sufism by the famous Yemeni historian and Sufi ʿAbd
Allāh al-Yāfiʿī (d. 768/1367), who, in turn, derived his spiritual
genealogy from the great Maghribī saint and the spiritual forefather
of the Shādhiliyya order Abū Madyan Shuʿayb (d. 590/1197). Niʿmat
Allāh joined al-Yafiʿī's circle in Mecca at the age of twenty-four and
stayed with this master until his death, whereupon Niʿmat Allāh
embarked on a long series of journeys. After spending some time in
retreat in the cave on Mount Muqaṭṭam in Egypt,[106] he traveled
through Syria and Iraq to Azerbaijān. En route, he met many dis-
tinguished Sufi masters, including the eponymous founder of the
Ṣafawid order, shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn. It was in Transoxania that Niʿmat
Allāh first presented himself as an independent Sufi teacher. His suc-
cess, which found its most dramatic expression in the establishment
of several Niʿmatullāhī lodges in various locations throughout Central
Asia, attracted the hostile attention of the all-powerful Tīmūr, who

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[106] T. Graham, "Shāh Niʿmatullāh," p. 174.

suspected the Sufi of conspiring against his rule under the guise of
Shīʿism. Some sources argue that Tīmūr's hostility was due in part
to the influence of his Sufi advisor Amīr Kulāl, the progenitor of
the Naqshbandiyya, who was probably envious of Niʿmat Allāh's
wide popularity.[107] On the other hand, Niʿmat Allāh must have him-
self contributed to such suspicions by his intemperate statements that
could have been interpreted as his laying claim on political as well
as religious authority.[108] In any event, this episode demonstrates the
acute rivalry between the nascent Naqshbandiyya and Niʿmatullāhiyya
brotherhoods, which may have facilitated the adoption of Shīʿī ide-
ology by the Niʿmatullāhiyya leadership at a later stage. As a result,
Niʿmat Allāh was expelled from Transoxania and had to seek refuge
in Persia and Afghanistān. After spending a number of years at
Herat, he settled in the province of Kirmān, which had the advan-
tage of being remote from the main centers of power of the day.
He died there at the village of Māhān in 834/1430.

This last period of Niʿmat Allāh's life was by far the most fruit-
ful. Apart from his disciples in Kirmān, he had several thousand of
devotees in the prosperous Persian province of Shīrāz, including a
few eminent scholars and poets. Niʿmat Allāh himself was a prolific
writer who is credited by his followers with many hundreds of trea-
tises. His writings include exegetical essays on the Qurʾān and the
utterances of the early Sufi authorities and well as expositions of Sufi
metaphysics along the lines of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of
being. Even more popular among Niʿmat Allāh's followers were his
poetic works that revolve around the theme of the underlying unity
of being and the resultant impossibility of ontological multiplicity.
The most frequently cited poems of his poetic corpus are his vague
predictions of prophetic and apocalyptic nature. They were later
interpreted as pointing to such diverse events as the rise of the
Ṣafawid dynasty, the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan and
the Islamic revolution in Iran.

There can be little doubt that Niʿmat Allāh Walī remained a Sunnī
throughout his life. His master al-Yāfiʿī was a bona fide Shāfiʿī scholar
and he himself often cited the reports of the Prophet's companions
who are normally rejected by Shīʿī scholars. Yet his teaching does

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[107] Ibid., pp. 176 and 180–182.
[108] Ibid., pp. 182–183.

contain chiliastic and messianic elements that may have facilitated
the subsequent transition of the Niʿmatullāhiyya order to Shīʿism.

Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Walī was succeeded by his son Shāh Khalīl
Allāh, then fifty-nine years of age. Not long after his father's death,
he was summoned to the court of the Tīmūrid ruler Shāhrūkh in
Herat. Although this invitation was later interpreted as a gesture of
respect, it seems more likely that Shāhrūkh sensed a danger to his
rule in the ideological and numerical strength of the Niʿmatullāhiyya.
The existence of certain tensions in the relations between the ruler
and the charismatic Sufi leader is attested by the fact that between
836/1432 and 840/1436 Khalīl Allāh decided to leave Persia for
the Deccan. The ruler of the Deccan, Aḥmad Shāh Bahmān, a
great friend of Sufi saints who was aware of Khalīl Allāh's high
prestige among the masses, invited the master to settle in his king-
dom and to become his spiritual master and confidant. Although
Niʿmatullāhiyya's links with Persia were not entirely broken by this
move, the leadership of the order was now located in India. Despite
their influence among the Deccani aristocracy, the Niʿmatullāhiyya
never succeeded in put-ting down roots among the Deccani popu-
lation at large.

The branch of the Niʿmatullāhiyya that stayed in Persia initially
enjoyed good relations with the new rulers, the Ṣafawids. One of
the Niʿmatullāhī shaykhs, Mīr Niẓām al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Bāqī was pro-
moted to the post the chief religious authority of the Ṣafawid Empire
by Shāh Ismāʿīl in 917/1512. There were also several marriages
between the Nimatullāhī family and the Ṣafawid house. The rela-
tionship began to sour in the time of Shāh ʿAbbās I, when one of
the family, Amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mīrmīrān, became involved in a
rebellion against the Ṣafawids in the province of Kirmān. For a time,
the Niʿmatullāhiyya lost its influence on the dynasty's rulers and sank
into oblivion.

A revival of the Niʿmatullāhiyya in Persia in the twelfth-thirteenth/
eighteenth-nineteenth centuries is associated with a certain Maʿṣūm
ʿAlī Shāh Dakkānī (d. 1214/1799), who was sent by the order's
incumbent head in the Deccan with the mission to propagate its
teachings among the Persians. His emotional, and at times ecstatic
way of preaching swiftly gained him a large following throughout
Persia, particularly in Shīrāz, Iṣfāhān, Hamadān and Kirmān. The
resurgent Niʿmatullāhiyya, however, soon encountered the hostility
of many Shīʿī scholars, who viewed themselves as the only genuine
exponents of the Shīʿī dogma and were not prepared to share their

authority with the newcomers. Maʿṣum ʿAlī Shāh fell victim to their
hostility in 1212/1797, when he was captured and executed en route
from Najaf to Meshhed on the instance of the influential Shīʿī scholar
Bihbahānī, who was popularly known as "Sufi killer" (*ṣūfikush*).

Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh's principal companion was Nūr ʿAlī Shāh of
Iṣfāhān, a prolific author in both poetry and prose. His works are
replete with ecstatic paradoxes similar to al-Bisṭāmī's and themes
characteristic of "extremist" Shīʿism. In addition, Nūr ʿAlī Shāh
severely criticized the exoteric Shīʿī ulema who were responsible for
the death of his master. The presence of these "radical" elements in
the resurgent Niʿmatullāhiyya indicates that it must have departed
from the mystical precepts of its founder, Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Walī and
his immediate descendants and embraced the ideology of "extreme"
Shīʿism. Particularly disconcerting for the ulema was Nūr ʿAlī Shāh's
assertion that the perfect Sufi master is the true deputy (*nāʾib*) of the
Hidden Shīʿī Imām. Eventually, the ulema succeeded in putting Nūr
ʿAlī Shāh out of the way. He was poisoned by the agents sent to him
by Bihbahānī.

Following the death of Bihbahānī four years later, the antagonism
between the Niʿmatullāhiyya and the their learned opponents among
Shīʿī ulema began to decline. The rapprochement between the two
groups was facilitated after the Niʿmatullāhiyya leadership prudently
adopted more circumspect doctrines and practices. As it was no
longer seen as subversive by the Shīʿī scholarly and political estab-
lishment of the age, the Niʿmatullāhiyya flourished under the Qājār
rulers of Persia. One of them, Muḥammad Shāh, himself became an
initiate of the order. Its influence on the Persian masses and élite
continued to grow throughout the thirteenth/nineteenth centuries.
However, its physical and numerical expansion was accompanied by
its division into mutually hostile branches only the more important
of which will be mentioned here.

Muḥammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1238/1823) was the last
leader to exercise undisputed control over the whole order. Three
separate claimants to the leadership arose after his death: Kawthar
ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1247/1831), Sayydī Ḥusayn Astrābādī, and Zayn
al-ʿĀbidīn Mast ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1253/1838). The first founded a sub-
order known as the Kawthariyya, which has survived down to the
present, although with a very small membership. Its most famous
leader in modern times was Nāṣir ʿAlī Shāh (still living in the late
1970s). The line that descended from Astrābādī also reached into

the twentieth century, producing one of the most celebrated Persian
Sufis of recent times, Sayyid Ḥusayn Ḥusayanī Shams al-'Urafaʾ
(d. 1353/1935). His followers formed a distinctive group that came
to be known as the Shamsiyya. The main line of succession in the
Ni'matullāhiyya passes through Mast 'Alī Shāh, a prolific writer and
author of several apologetic treatises in defense of the order against
the attacks of mainstream Shī'ī divines. After the death of his suc-
cessor Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh in 1278/1861, his followers formed three
suborders. The leader of the first group, Sa'ādat 'Alī Shāh (d. 1293/
1876), was a typical ecstatic Sufi, the clarity of whose heart was
unclouded by any formal learning. His successor, Sulṭān 'Alī Shāh
of Khurāsān, was a man of a quite different type, who had studied
Islamic philosophy before embarking on the mystical path. Even
after he assumed the headship of the order, he continued to train
his Khurāsānī *murīd*s in the intricacies of the formal religious sci-
ences. Upon his death in 1327/1909 at the hand of an unknown
assailant, he was succeeded by his son, Mullā 'Alī Gunābādī Nūr
'Alī Shāh-i Thānī (d. 1337/1918). The introduction of hereditary
succession gave rise to a new suborder, the Gunābādiyya, with ref-
erence to the area surrounding Sulṭān 'Alī Shāh's place of origin.
Mullā 'Alī Shāh was succeeded by Ṣāliḥ 'Alī Shāh (d. 1386/1966)
and then by Riḍā 'Alī Shāh Tābanda (still living in 1992). Although
the Gunābādiyya generally did not regard themselves as represent-
ing the main line of the Ni'matullāhiyya order, they have, for sev-
eral decades, constituted the largest Ni'matullāhī community in Persia.
It is due in part to the sober, Sharī'a-oriented nature of their mys-
tical discipline that they have been able to retain their position after
the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979.

Another offshoot of the Ni'matullāhiyya, the Ṣafī-'Alī-Shāhiyya,
which emerged from the dispute over the succession to Raḥmat 'Alī
Shāh, developed in a quite different direction. Its eponymous founder,
Ḥājj Mīrzā Ḥasan Ṣafī 'Alī Shāh, spent some time in India looking
after his father's mercantile interests before returning to Persia and
becoming a disciple of Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh. Soon after the death of
his master, he declared himself the immediate successor of Raḥmat
'Alī Shāh and proclaimed his independence from another candidate.
A writer on a variety of religious subjects, he was severely criticized
for his nonconventional approach to them. On Ṣafī 'Alī Shāh's death,
the leadership of the order was assumed by Ẓahīr al-Dawla Ṣafā
'Alī Shāh, minister of the court and brother-in-law of the ruling

monarch, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh. Ṣafa ʿAlī Shāh sought to impose
some structure on the order's activities. To this end, he established
a twelve-man committee to supervise its operations, which functioned
very much like a Masonic lodge. In time, this society abandoned
virtually all the traditional rites of Sufism, but continued to flourish
in the certain quarters of the Persian society until the rise of the
Islamic Republic, when its activities were brought to an end together
with those of all other Masonic organizations. Its last leader was
ʿAbd Allāh Intiẓām, who died in 1982.

It is the line of the third claimant to the succession of Raḥmat
ʿAlī Shāh, Muḥammad Āqā Munawwar ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1310/1884)
that has the best claim to be regarded as the bona fide descendants
of the original Niʿmatullāhiyya. Munawwar ʿAlī Shāh was succeeded
in turn by Wafāʾ ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1336/1918), Ṣādiq ʿAlī Shāh (d.
1340/1922) and ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Muʾnis ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1372/1953).
A man of great erudition, Muʾnis ʿAlī Shāh enjoyed great respect
during the thirty years that he directed the order. However, on his
death another split occurred in its ranks. The traditional pattern of
discord reasserted itself as thirteen claimants to the succession came
forward. The most successful of them was Dr. Jawād Nūrbakhsh, a
psychiatrist by profession. He managed to recruit many members of
high society in Tehran and to build a chain of new lodges through-
out Persia. A prolific author, he endeavored to popularize and to
reinvigorate the Niʿmatullāhī tradition. When the Iranian revolution
of 1978–1979 began, Nūrbakhsh left the country for the West, where
he continues to promote the Niʿmatullāhiyya among Iranian émi-
grés and Western converts.

SUFI INSTITUTIONS IN REGIONAL CONTEXTS
OVER THE LAST SIX CENTURIES

After we have examined the rise and subsequent evolution of the major Sufi brotherhoods, it would be helpful to consider their respective roles in various geographical areas of the Muslim world over the last six centuries. Given the vastness of material at hand, I have to limit my discussion to the history of Sufi institutions in the Maghrib, Africa, India, Indonesia, the Turkic lands (from Anatolia to Central Asia), the Caucasus and the Balkans. Developments in Persia,[1] China and Arabia will be touched upon briefly.

Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods in the Maghrib

In discussing the history of the Shādhiliyya order it was pointed out that, in the Maghrib, the rise of institutional Sufism dates back to the eighth/fourteenth century. From the outset, Sufi activities in that area of the Muslim world were centered in small lodges (*zāwiyya*) or in military outposts (*ribāṭ*). They were manned by volunteer fighters for religion (*murābiṭūn*) many of whom had ascetic and mystical propensities. In a sense, therefore, the situation in the medieval Maghrib seems to mirror that in the Muslim East, where, as we have seen, early ascetics also spearheaded hostilities against their Christian, Buddhist and pagan neighbors. As time went on, the Maghribī lodges and military outposts became part of the local religious and social landscape, both in towns and in the countryside. The progressive integration of Sufism and its institutions into the religious culture and social life of the area is attested by the fact that fundamentals of Sufi science were often taught in the local religious colleges (*madrasa*). In a similar way, Islamic theology and jurisprudence

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[1] For a comprehensive study of Sufism in Persia see L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London and New York, 1992; idem (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism: From its origins to Rumi*, London and New York, 1993.

became part and parcel of the curricula of the Sufi institutions, the
*zāwiyya*s and *ribāṭ*s. In many remote areas of the Maghrib, especially
in Morocco, Sufi *zāwiyya*s and, from the eighth/fourteenth century,
Sufi orders became an important factor of social and political life.
The leaders of the Sufi institutions were well positioned to secure
social cohesion of local communities in times of political anarchy
and breakdown of the central power, when the sovereignty of the
state was often confined to a few urban centers, leaving the rest of
the country at the mercy of tribal chiefs and local warlords. In such
circumstances, Sufi leaders often acted as mediators between war-
ring parties and tribes and frequently stepped in to protect the local
agricultural population from their depredations.[2]

On the doctrinal and practical level, most of the later Maghribī
Sufis looked to a group of semilegendary masters of the sixth/twelfth-
seventh/thirteenth centuries as their spiritual forebears, namely, the
Andalusians Ibn al-ʿArīf, Ibn Barrajān, and Abū Madyan, and the
Maghribīs Abū Yaʿzā, Ibn Ḥirzihim, and Ibn Mashīsh. The legacy
of these Sufi leaders left its indelible mark on Maghribī Sufism. As
noted, Abū Madyan and Ibn Mashīsh were of special importance
for the subsequent history of Sufism in the Maghrib and Africa as a
whole: they are often seen as the principal masters of the founder
of the great Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa*.[3]

Throughout the Middle Ages and up to modern times, relations
between the Sufi brotherhoods and the secular rulers of the Maghrib
were ambivalent and at times tense. While the latter welcomed the
consolidating and stabilizing role of the brotherhoods and lavishly
endowed Sufi *zāwiyya*s and *ribāṭ*s, they were suspicious of their
autonomous tendencies. Such suspicions were not always groundless,
as some popular Sufi leaders were often prone to entertain political
ambitions. Others were vocal critics of the loose lifestyles and "un-
Islamic" administrative practices of the temporal rulers. The most
dramatic example of a Sufi bid for political power was an attempt
of the Sufi leadership of the Shādhilī *zāwiyya* at Dilāʾ to wrest power
from the Saʿdid dynasty of Morocco in the eleventh/seventeenth
century. While the founders of the *zāwiyya* were typical Sufi mas-
ters who concerned themselves primarily with training Sufi disciples

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[2] Cf. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 1–8.
[3] See V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and authority in Morocco*, Austin, TX,
1998.

and educating the local population, their successor, Muḥammad
al-Ḥajjī (d. 1082/1612), took advantage of the *zāwiyya's* wealth and
of the rapid decline of the Saʿdid dynasty to carve out an independ-
ent principality for himself in northwestern Morocco. After he had
foiled several Saʿdid attempts to quell his movement, in 1061/1651
al-Ḥajjī proclaimed himself the sultan of Morocco and established
diplomatic relations with a number of European powers. However,
following a decade and a half of hostilities and political turmoil, he
was finally defeated by the ʿAlawī sultan of Morocco Mawlāy Rashīd
in 1079/1668. Al-Ḥajjī was captured and exiled to Tlemsen; his
zāwiyya was sacked and razed to the ground by the victorious sul-
tan's troops. His descendants abandoned political ambitions and
reverted to their traditional role as scholars and educators: they can
still be found in many towns and cities of Morocco, especially in
Fez, Casablanca and Rabat.

The pervasive influence upon the social and political life of the
Maghrib exercised by various branches of the Shādhiliyya has al-
ready been discussed in the chapter dealing with this order. Of its
numerous offshoots, one should mention the powerful and influential
Maghribī *ṭarīqa* founded by the charismatic recluse al-Jazūlī (d.
869/1465 or later). Born of the Berber tribe of Jazūla in Moroccan
Sūs, he was educated in Fez. Upon completing his studies, he trav-
eled to the Ḥijāz and spend, according to some of his biographers,
almost forty years in the holy cities. He then returned to the Maghrib,
where he was initiated into the Shādhiliyya brotherhood and went
into a protracted retreat from which he emerged as an accomplished
Sufi master. Surrounded by numerous disciples and admirers, he
settled in the town of Aṣfī. His popularity grew to such an extent
that he came to be seen by some as the awaited messiah (*mahdī*).
Apprehensive of the possible social and political consequences of al-
Jazūlī's presence, the governor of Aṣfī expelled him from his realm.
He was later poisoned, reportedly on the orders of the same gov-
ernor. Seeking to avenge him, one of al-Jazūlī's disciples nicknamed
al-Sayyāf led a popular revolt of which al-Jazūlī became, quite lit-
erally, the banner. The rebels carried his body around in a special
litter during their military campaigns and placed it under an armed
guard during the night. The rebellion ended after al-Sayyāf's death
in 890/1485.

Al-Jazūlī's popularity sprang, among other things, from his aboli-
tion of Sufi novitiate. Those who wanted to join his movement, the

Jazūliyya, had simply to declare their allegiance to the founder or to his successors. Thanks to the "streamlined" admission procedure and to the simplicity of the rituals, the ranks of the Jazūliyya soon swelled, although it never coalesced into a centralized Sufi order.[4] Rather, we are dealing with a broad and unstructured devotional school. It derived its identity from a number of rituals that revolve around the recitation of the litanies that were collected in al-Jazūlī's manual titled "The Guide Toward Good Deeds" (Dalā'il al-khayrāt). Full members of the Jazūliyya were required to recite the text of the "Guide" twice during the day and once during the night in addition to reciting one quarter of the Qur'ān daily. Affiliated members contented themselves with reciting a few litanies from al-Jazūlī's book. The Jazūliyya gave birth to several popular brotherhoods, including the Hansaliyya and the Ṭayyibiyya, which enjoyed substantial followings in the territories of present-day Algeria and Morocco.

The thirteenth/nineteenth century witnessed an attempt to breathe new life into Maghribī Sufism and its institutions. A movement for Sufi revival was led by the popular shaykh of the Shādhilī order named al-Darqāwī (d. 1239/1823), who attacked various popular superstitions that had adhered to Sufism in the course of its long history. Although al-Darqāwī himself stressed quietism and non-involvement in the affairs of this world,[5] his spirited preaching of a Sufi revival gave rise to a number of new ṭarīqas, such as the Būzīdiyya and the 'Alawiyya. Thanks to his powerful personality, the founder of the latter, Aḥmad b. 'Alīwa (d. 1353/1934), managed to attract to his teaching a number of French intellectuals, namely R. Guénon, F. Schuon, T. Burckhard, and M. Vâlsan, who spread his teaching to France and Britain.[6] Born at Mostaganem, Algeria, of a noble but impoverished family, he at first joined the miracle-working 'Īsāwa brotherhood. Disaffected by its populist style of piety, he became a disciple of shaykh Būzīdī, the founder of the Būzīdiyya In 1327/1909, upon the death of his master, Ibn 'Alīwa founded his own ṭarīqa. A faithful follower of Ibn 'Arabī and his monistic commentators, Ibn 'Alīwa was criticized by the local reformers led by Ibn Bādīs, who viewed Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines as being inconsistent with the Islam of the "pious forefathers."

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[4] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, pp. 84–85.
[5] Ibid., p. 85.
[6] M. Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century*. 2d edition, London, 1972.

We have already discussed the history of another great spiritual tradition of the Maghrib, the Qādiriyya. One can only add that, like many other Maghribī orders, it usually did not constitute a cohesive, centralized movement. Rather, we are dealing with a spiritual and devotional tradition that was practiced by a number of local communities.[7] A few branches of the Khalwatiyya, especially the Raḥmāniyya order, gained some prominence in the territories of present-day Tunisia and Algeria from the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century.

A number of later Maghribī shaykhs sought to integrate several established Sufi lines into a new order. Of these, the most striking example is Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1230/1815), the founder of the popular Tijāniyya *ṭarīqa* that was active in Morocco, the Western Sahara and the Sūdān.[8] An adherent of both the Shādhiliyya and the Khalwatiyya, al-Tijānī adopted the ritual practices of both orders. Later, the Tijāniyya made inroads into various parts of Ethiopia, where it was embraced by some members of the local elite. As with the Darqāwiyya, al-Tijānī imposed no special penances or spiritual exercises upon his followers, emphasizing "above all the need for an intercessor between God and man, the intercessor of the age being himself and his successors."[9] Although al-Tijāni himself belonged to several orders, he strictly prohibited his followers from joining any other spiritual traditions current in the Maghrib. He encouraged the quiet *dhikr* and looked down upon visits to saints' graves in search of blessing (*baraka*). Acting through a network of emissaries (*muqaddams*), he managed to spread his teaching across the Maghrib. Under his successors the Tijāniyya penetrated into the western and central Sūdān, where it was spread primarily among Fulbe and Tokolor.

Brotherhoods that combined shamanistic and animistic practices with *ṭarīqa* ideology and organization constitute a special group. The most prominent among them is the controversial ʿĪsāwa *ṭarīqa*, founded by Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Mukhtār (d. 931/1524), an ascetic of the Shādhilī-Jazūlī tradition. Its members practiced spectacular *dhikr* sessions and faith healing that were often accompanied by trances and communication with the spirits of the local folklore. Similar

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[7] For the political role of the Qādiriyya in nineteenth-century Africa see Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 15–67.

[8] J. M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijāniyya: A Sufi order in the modern world*, London, 1965.

[9] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 108.

practices were cultivated by the related Moroccan order named the
Ḥamdūshiyya, which originated in the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Leaders of most of the Maghribī brotherhoods demanded that their
followers, regardless of their degree of spiritual advancement, strictly
observe the conventions of Sunnī Islam. Excessive asceticism was dis-
couraged on the assumption that one should focus on improving one's
internal state, while at the same time fulfilling one's social and fam-
ily obligations. On the ritual plane, the spiritual discipline of the
Maghribī orders hinged on the frequent recitation of the litanies that
were instituted by their founders, e.g., al-Shādhilī's *Ḥizb al-baḥr* and
al-Jazūlī's *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt*. Although the Sufi leaders of the Maghrib
generally discouraged miracles, trances and ecstatic behavior, they
were part and parcel of the local spiritual landscape along with faith-
healing and seeking the *baraka* of the deceased Sufi masters.

Since the middle of the thirteenth/nineteenth century until today,
the *ṭarīqa*s of the Maghrib remain the favorite target of reformist
Islamic movements, of Muslim modernists and of Maghribī repre-
sentatives of secular ideologies, especially those of Marxist leanings,
and liberals. Yet, the brotherhoods' hold on some segments of the
Maghribī population remains strong and is likely to grow in view of
the wide-spread disillusionment with Western secular doctrines.

An important movement for revival of Sufism in various parts of
Africa, including the Maghrib, is associated with Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d.
1253/1837), a native of Morocco who was educated at Fez. Upon
completion of his studies Ibn Idrīs moved to the East, first to Upper
Egypt and later on to the Ḥijāz.[10] He died in ʿAsīr, present day
Saudi Arabia. Ibn Idrīs was not a prolific writer; nor did he make
any concerted effort to organize a new Sufi order. His importance
lies in his numerous students, who converted Sufism into a power-
ful instrument of mass mobilization, instituting several consequential
religio-political movements in northeastern and eastern Africa. Standing
out among Ibn Idrīs's numerous followers is Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-
Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859), who founded the powerful Sanūsiyya order
in Cyrenaica and the Central Sahara.[11] Another disciple, Muḥammad

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[10] R. S. O'Fahey, *The Enigmatic Saint: Aḥmad Ibn Idrīs and the Idrīsī Tradition*,
Evanston, IL, 1990.
[11] See K. Vikør, *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī and
His Brotherhood*, London, 1995.

ʿUthmān al-Mīrghānī (d. 1268/1852) was the founder of the influential Khatmiyya (Mīrghāniyya) brotherhood, who spread Ibn Idrīs's teaching among the Muslims of the Sūdān, Egypt, Yemen, and some parts of Ethiopia and Eritrea. From Ibn Idrīs's third disciple, Ibrāhīm b. Ṣāliḥ al-Rashīd (d. 1291/1874), stem a series of popular orders, namely Rashīdiyya, Ṣāliḥiyya, and Dandarāwiyya, which were active in Egypt, Somalia and South East Asia (Malaysia).

Such was the importance of Sufism for the history of nineteenth-century African societies that scholars sometimes refer to this period as Africa's "Sufi century." The Sufi orders that were active in that age exhibit two major characteristics. First, some popular Sufi leaders organized and led movements of resistance to the colonial expansion of European powers in various parts of Africa. Of these, Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir of Algeria, Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Sanūsī of Libya, and Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh Ḥassān of Somalia deserve special mention. Another important function of the Sufi orders was their missionary activities. Sufis were instrumental in spreading Islam among African tribes of the Sūdān, Somalia, Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria, and Mali. Having incorporated into their structures pre-existent holy lineages, the Sufi brotherhoods of Africa gradually developed into hierarchical institutions that were administered by a complex network of lieutenants, emissaries, and attendants who reported to the supreme shaykh of the order. The orders built and maintained Qurʾānic schools and organized weekly *dhikrs* that usually took place on Thursdays. Each brotherhood had its own distinctive banners, musical instruments, and regalia; the brotherhoods built and maintained the mausolea of the founders and their successors and organized annual festivities in their honor. The orders were also involved in the local economies and trans-African trade.

Sufism in sub-Saharan Africa

Sufism in sub-Saharan Africa exhibits many common features with that of the Maghrib. In fact, it is sometimes hard to draw a crisp geographical borderline between these regions: many Maghribī shaykhs propagated Sufi teachings among the populations of sub-Saharan Africa. In many cases, the same brotherhood had its branches in both areas; most of the sub-African orders derived their genealogy from one or the other Maghribī shaykh.

On the doctrinal plane, two major trends are discernible in African Sufism. The first is the pervasive influence of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings on the leaders of African Sufism. Whether by direct reading of Ibn ʿArabī's works or filtered through secondary renditions of his ideas, such as those by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 963/1565) and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731), his teachings gained wide currency among many African Sufis. His influence is particularly evident in the teachings of Aḥmad al-Tijānī and of his Sudanese disciple al-Ḥajj ʿUmar (d. 1280/1864), who led a holy war against the pagan rulers of the Central Sūdān, Senegal, Mali, and Guinea. It can also be found in the writings of such diverse and consequential figures of African Sufism as Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir,[12] the Qādiri leader Māʾ al-ʿAynayn, Muḥammad Aḥmad the Mahdī of the Sūdān, Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-Darqāwī, and ʿAbd al-Salām al-Fītūrī, founder of the Libyan order named ʿArūsiyya.

Familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī's thought is also to be found in Aḥmad b. Idrīs, though he is more typically representative of the second trend, which emphasizes the role of the primordial Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*) and of the imitation of the Prophet in word and deed as well as seeing him in a waking state as essential to Sufi training. This trend, however, can also be traced to Ibn ʿArabī's "Meccan Revelations," further confirming his pervasive influence on the African Sufi élite. Moreover, Aḥmad b. Idrīs adopted, perhaps via ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (973/1565), Ibn ʿArabī's negative stance vis-à-vis the legal sectarianism that led to the fruitless and petty bickering among representatives of the Sunnī schools of law. To counter these divisive tendencies, Ibn Idrīs advocated individual resort to the Qurʾān and the Sunna in matters of personal conduct. These lines of thought were perpetuated by Ibn Idrīs's disciple Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī, who gives the following definition of the role of the Muḥammadan Reality: "This Way is the inward immersion of the adept in the contemplation of Muḥammad's person, whereby he imitates the Prophet in word and deed, occupies his tongue with pronouncing blessings upon him at all times, whether in retirement or when appearing in public, so that honoring the Prophet dominates his heart to such an extent and penetrates his interior so deeply that when he merely hears the Prophet's

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[12] M. Chodkiewicz, *The Spiritual Writings of Amir ʿAbd al-Kader*, trans. by J. Chrestensen and T. Manning. Albany, N.Y., 1995.

name, he begins to shake, his heart is overwhelmed beholding him, and the physical appearance of the Prophet manifests itself before the eye of his inner vision."[13]

A third trend, quite unrelated to the two previous ones, has already been noted in the section on the Maghrib. It manifested itself in the increased incorporation into certain popular Sufi orders, such as the 'Isāwiyya and the Ḥamādsha of Morocco, of rituals of blood sacrifice, spirit exorcism and trance, at least partly under the influence of freed slaves of West African origin. Another manifestation of the amalgamation of Sufism and African spirit cults is to be observed in the rites of Sīdī Bilāl of Algeria, of the Gnāwa of Morocco, of the Stambalī of Tunisia and of the Umbura of the Sūdān. Similar rituals were also found among African slaves in Mecca.[14]

The Tijāniyya

In the course of the thirteenth/nineteenth and the first half of the fourteenth/twentieth century, Sufi teachings were disseminated over vast areas of the continent through the activities of both Maghribī and Egyptian brotherhoods; in many cases they were conduits for conversion to Islam. The Tijāniyya gained a considerable number of adherents in Morocco and Algeria, and its *zāwiyyas* were established in Egypt and the Sūdān. But it is in Mauritania and West Africa that its spread has been most noteworthy. In southern Mauritania it was taken up by the powerful clan Idaw 'Alī under the influence of Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 1247/1830), a disciple of al-Tijānī, who was sent to proselytize in Senegal.[15] From there it spread to Senegal and Guinea.

The great Tijānī leader al-Ḥajj 'Umar (d. 1280/1864) of the Tokolor tribe of Senegal had studied with Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ before he left Africa to perform a *ḥajj*. In Mecca, al-Ḥajj 'Umar became a student of another Tijānī shaykh, Muḥammad al-Ghālī, who gave him special instruction in the rituals of the Tijāniyya and made him a *khalīfa* of the order. A man of exceptional talent, 'Umar's "interests oscillated between spiritual commitement, mysticism and theology on

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[13] B. Radtke, "Ijtihād and Neo-sufism," in: *Asiatische Studien*, 48/3 (1994), p. 915.
[14] C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, Leiden, 1931, pp. 11–12.
[15] Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 69.

one hand, and political aspirations of major dimensions on the other."[16]
On returning to Africa al-Ḥajj ʿUmar set about preaching Tijānī
ideas among his countrymen and the population of Sokoto, Bornu,
Masina, Kankan and his native region of Futa Toro (Senegal). He
was able to recruit many men among the lower classes, including
slaves and ex-slaves.[17] His successful recruiting made many local reli-
gious leaders envious. Apprehensive of their intentions, al-Ḥajj ʿUmar
withdrew to a place called Dingiray. There he began preparations
for a *jihād* by stockpiling arms and by fortifying his headquarters.
He called his supporters "Helpers" (*anṣār*), in imitation of the Prophet's
followers in Medina. Likewise, he described his withdrawal to Dingiray
as a *hijra*.[18] When al-Ḥajj ʿUmar consolidated his power, he started
to raid nearby kingdoms and tribes under the pretext of converting
them to Islam. His mission received a divine sanction in 1268/1852,
when, after the night prayer, he heard a voice commanding him to
wage a holy war against his pagan neighbors. When he eventually
started hostilities against the Muslim ruler of the Fulani tribal con-
federation, he would explain his actions by the necessity to convert
them to the correct Islam of the Tijānī *ṭarīqa*. The remaining years
of al-Ḥajj ʿUmar's life, from 1855 to 1864, were taken up with war.
His rapid conquests of nearby tribal kingdoms demonstrated his supe-
rior generalship and his ability to organize large scale military cam-
paigns. In the course of his *jihād* he clashed with the local French
detachments, but his principal adversaries were the Muslim Fulani
armies of Aḥmadou Aḥmadou, against whom al-Ḥajj ʿUmar waged
a long and, for the most part, successful series of campaigns. As a
result, he was able to assemble a short-lived Tijānī "empire" stretch-
ing from Masina to Faleme and from Tinkisso to Sahel. In the end,
al-Ḥajj ʿUmar fell victim to his successes, which made him overconfi-
dent and sapped his judgement. After suffering a series of shattering
defeats at the hands of a coalition of local rulers affiliated with the
rival Qādirī brotherhood, he found himself besieged in the village of
Ghoro, where he is said to have taken his own life.[19]

   Al-Ḥajj ʿUmar's followers viewed him as a great saint and mir-
acle worker. He claimed to have direct contact with the Prophet
and with Aḥmad al-Tijānī, both of whom visited and advised him

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[16] Ibid., p. 68.
[17] Ibid., p. 79.
[18] Ibid., pp. 81–82.
[19] Ibid., pp. 97–98.

during his retreats (*khalwa*). He was also credited with the knowledge of God's "Greatest Name" and clairvoyance. A renowned religious scholar, he wrote a number of works that are held in high regard by the adherents of the Tijāniyya *ṭarīqa*. His nephew, Muḥammad al-Hāshimī b. Aḥmad b. Saʿīd, known as Alfa Hāshim (d. 1349/1931), fled French colonialism and established a base in the Ḥijāz that catered to African Tijānīs; because of its location in the lands of pilgrimage, it was instrumental in the propagation of the Tijāniyya among Muslims from other areas of the world (e.g., Indonesia, Iraq and the Balkans). In the fourteenth/twentieth century, the chief African propagandist for the order has been the Senegalese shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse (d. 1396/1975), who has made the Tijāniyya an order of mass participation not only in Senegal but also in northern Nigeria and Ghana. His teachings, which emphasize spiritual training and growth under the tutelage of an accomplished Sufi master, have also found favor with the populations of Mauritania, Chad and the Western Sūdān.

The Idrīsī Tradition

Equally influential and widespread in sub-Saharan Africa were the brotherhoods that derived their identity from the teachings of Aḥmad b. Idrīs. The Sanūsiyya established a network of *zāwiyya*s in eastern Libya and throughout Chad as far as Kano in northern Nigeria. The Khatmiyya, founded by Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Mīrghānī (d. 1268/1852), a Meccan who came to Africa from Arabia to propagate the teachings of Aḥmad b. Idrīs, gained many adherents in the Sūdān and Eritrea. Another brotherhood stemming from Ibn Idrīs, the Rashīdiyya-Ṣāliḥiyya, was also successful in the Sūdān, and in Somalia, where it was propagated by the anti-colonial leader Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ḥassān, whom his British opponents called "Mad Mulla." This Somalian equivalent of the famous Mahdī of the Sūdān deserves special mention. Born of the Ogaden clan, which inhabits the presently disputed area of eastern Ethiopia-western Somalia, Muḥammad received a traditional religious training. Still a young man, he manifested signs of extreme piety and religious zeal. He traveled widely in search of religious instruction, visiting Harar, Mogadishu and, according to some sources, also the Sūdān. In 1311–12/1894, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he joined Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Rashīdī's order, called the Ṣāliḥiyya. Through

this order he was linked to the spiritual tradition associated with Ibn Idrīs.[20] On his return home, Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh began to preach Ibn Idrīs's ideas among his countrymen. His activities drew the hostile attention of the established Qādiriyya order and of the British colonial regime that controlled the Somalian coast. Their opposition, combined with the increasing Ethiopian encroachment on the lands of the Ogaden tribe, prompted Muḥammad to proclaim a holy war (*jihād*) against the Christian intruders and to storm a recently established Ethiopian post in the Ogaden region. During 1321/1904 Muḥammad and his followers, who came to known as "Dervishes," had to wage war against the British expeditionary force. Although not decisively defeated, the Dervishes prudently withdrew to the Italian sector of Somalia, where they signed a peace treaty with the Italians. By 1325–26/1908, the Dervishes had recovered their strength and pursued their campaign with increasing ferocity during World War I, until their final defeat by a concerted air, sea, and land operation in 1338/1920. The leader of the movement died later that year at the age of fifty-six. Paradoxically, the end of this guerilla war waged to free Somalia of foreign domination found the British, Ethiopian, and Italian colonizers more firmly entrenched than they had been at the start. While Sayyid Muḥammad, as the Dervish leader styled himself, sought to unite his countrymen in defense of their freedom irrespective of their clan allegiances, he inevitably drew heavily upon traditional kinship and marriage ties in forming alliances. He was bitterly opposed by the Sufis of the Qādiriyya order, whose leader in southern Somalia was assassinated by a party of his dervishes. His strongest support came from his own clan, while the western Somalian clans, more firmly under British influence, never rallied fully to his call and in fact denounced him as a tyrant and fanatic. All, however, recognized his qualities as the leading Somalian poet of his epoch and admired his brilliant command of Somalian rhetoric. Sayyid Muḥammad left behind a legacy of patriotism that inspires Somalians to this day. He is often seen by his countrymen, somewhat anachronistically, as the leader of the movement for national liberation and even as the founder of the Somalian nation.[21]

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[20] Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ's father was a disciple of Ibn Idrīs; see Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 179.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

The Mahdī of the Sūdān

Another powerful Sufi movement was launched by Muḥammad Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh, better known as the Mahdī, in the Egyptian Sūdān. It came in response to the profound changes in the Nilotic Sūdān that were caused by the Egyptian ruler Muhammad ʿAlī, who, having conquered the Sūdān in 1338–39/1820–21, sought to impose on the Sūdānese tribes a centralized and autocratic administrative system with its heavy fiscal burdens. In the process, he undermined the political and social status of the local men of religion, who in the previous three centuries had fulfilled a range of social functions as teachers of the Qurʾān and the Sharīʿa, Sufi leaders, arbitrators in tribal conflicts, and advisors to the rulers. The situation was further aggravated by the attempts of the Egyptian successors to Muḥammad ʿAlī to suppress the bustling slave trade and by their appointment of Christians, primarily Europeans and Americans, to high offices. It is against this complex background of popular dissatisfaction and simmering tensions between the British-Egyptian colonial government and its Sūdānese subjects that we should consider Muḥammad al-Mahdī's movement. Born in the province of Dongola of a family of a boat builder, Muḥammad was brought up in the place called Karari, a few miles north of Khartoum. Unlike his brothers, who followed in their father's footstep, Muḥammad Aḥmad showed interest in religious studies and adopted an ascetic lifestyle. In 1861, he attached himself to shaykh Muḥammad Sharīf Nūr al-Dāʾim, the grandson of the founder of the Sammāniyya *ṭarīqa* of the Sūdān. When his brothers moved to the Aba island on the White Nile, he accompanied them there. His pious reputation soon won him many followers, including his most intimate friend and successor at the head of the movement, ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad. At the same time, Muḥammad Aḥmad's success caused a rift between him and his Sammānī Sufi master, who must have been jealous of his popularity. At that age, messianic expectations were rife in the Egyptian Sūdān, which was undergoing a painful social and political transformation under the corrupt and oppressive Egyptian rule. Responding to these expectations, in 1881 Muḥammad Aḥmad experienced a spiritual crisis in the aftermath of which he proclaimed himself the Expected Mahdī of the age. The news was first secretly communicated to his disciples, whereupon letters were sent to local notables and tribal chiefs, urging them to rally around the divinely

guided leader. Although Muḥammad al-Mahdī presented himself to
his followers primarily as a religious reformer and restorer of Islam,
his movement had a clear political and social agenda that was aimed
at liberating the Sūdān from the oppressive Egyptian rule. Like other
Muslim reformers of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, e.g., Shāmil
of the Caucasus and Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb of the Najd, Muḥammad
al-Mahdī sought to restore the pristine homogeneity and enthusiasm
of the first Muslim community (umma) at Medina, which was gov-
erned by the Prophet, the supreme and ultimate exponent of the
divine will. However, in contrast to Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's staunch
opposition to all manifestations of Sufism, Muḥammad al-Mahdī
viewed Sufism as a consummation of Islamic piety and made fre-
quent use of its terminology and imagery in his preaching. In al-
Mahdī's community, the Prophet's guidance was symbolized by a
strict adherence to the letter of the Qurʾān and the Sunna, which
the Sūdānese leader tried to enforce among his adherents. He viewed
his movement not merely as another revival of the primeval Islam
of the pious forefathers, but also as a reenactment of the life and
structure of the Prophet's umma through which the whole Muslim
history was to come full circle. Inspired by this understanding of his
religious mission, Muḥammad Aḥmad declared himself to be the
only true Successor of the Messenger of God (khalīfat rasūl Allāh).
Likewise, he presented his closest lieutenants as the Rightly-guided
caliphs: ʿAbdallāh was identified with Abū Bakr, another early fol-
lower, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, was proclaimed a re-incarnation of ʿUmar,
while his son-in-law, Muḥammad Sharīf, was named the successor
of the caliph ʿAlī. Seeking to secure the support of the powerful
Sanūsiyya brotherhood of Libya, led by Mu-ḥammad al-Mahdī,
Muḥammad Aḥmad invited him to assume the role of the caliph
ʿUthmān. However, the Sanūsiyya refused to recognize Muḥammad
Aḥmad's claims and declined his offer. To further emphasize the
close correspondence between his movement and the primitive Muslim
community of Medina, Muḥammad Aḥmad styled his followers
"Helpers" (anṣār). In responding to the criticism of official scholars
who were skeptical about his claims to be the Mahdī of the age, he
changed his name to Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh (the name of the
Prophet), thereby bringing it in line with that attributed to the final
Muslim messiah by certain traditions (ḥadīth).

The colonial authorities of the Sūdān at first underestimated al-
Mahdī's threat. Only after a small expeditionary force sent against

him in 1881 was soundly defeated, did they recognize his power.
In the meantime, al-Mahdī and his *anṣar*, retreated into the Nuba
Mountains. The remote location and rugged terrain of his new head-
quarters rendered them nearly impregnable to the government forces.
From his mountain fastness, al-Mahdī sent raiding troops to Kordofan.
He found an eager support among the Arab pastoralist tribes known
as Baqqāra, whose propensity to raiding settled populations found a
religious justification when al-Mahdī declared his war against the
government to be a *jihād*. In a series of successful military campaigns,
al-Mahdī captured a number of governmental strongholds in Kor-
dofan and established his own state with El Obeid as its adminis-
trative center. After the British occupied Egypt in September 1882,
they sent an Egyptian expeditionary force against al-Mahdī. When
it was wiped out by the *anṣār* in November 1883, al-Mahdī became
the undisputed master of the western provinces of the country. At
that juncture, General Gordon was sent to Khartoum to protect the
capital from the impending assault of al-Mahdī's army. However,
after a long siege, the city fell to the rebels in January 1885 and
General Gordon was killed in the battle. With the capital firmly in
the rebels' hands, al-Mahdī was now the master of most of the
Egyptian Sūdān. His career, however, was cut short by his untimely
death after a short illness, in June 1885.

Following al-Mahdī's death, the leadership of the movement devolved
upon his closest lieutenant, 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad. Anxious to
whip up support among the war-like Baqqāra tribes, 'Abdallāh empha-
sized the parallel between his succession to al-Mahdī and the rule
of Islam's first caliph, Abū Bakr. He called upon his followers to
keep faith in al-Mahdī's cause and to continue his efforts to restore
Islam to its original purity. On the practical level, he continued war-
fare against the neighboring Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, while
at the same time pursuing a *jihād* against Egypt, now firmly under
British rule. A massive invasion of Egypt, however, ended in disas-
ter in 1889, when a Mahdist force was annihilated at Toski. Some
provinces under the caliph's rule made a bid for independence, which
had to be suppressed by military force. The year 1889 marks the end
of the military phase of the Mahdiyya movement. In the subsequent
years the caliph attempted to consolidate his authority over the state
that consisted of the Muslim regions of the northern Sūdān. He
succeeded in putting down several revolts against his rule, one of
which was led by the "caliph 'Alī," that is, Muḥammad Sharīf. The

subsequent decade saw the escalation of European encroachment
on the Mahdiyya borders and communications. Having lost some of
his border strongholds, the leader of the Mahdiyya was now confronted
by the Egyptian expeditionary force led by Kitchener. In 1886 the
province of Dongola was occupied by his troops, and the following
year an Egyptian-British army was poised to attack the Mahdiyya
capital at Omdurman. The Mahdiyya army led by Maḥmūd Aḥmad
was routed at the battle of Atbara, whereupon Kitchener's expedi-
tionary force dealt a deathblow to the Mahdist state at the battle of
Omdurman (September 2, 1899). Although the caliph managed to
flee from the besieged city during the final assault of the enemy
force, later that year he was killed in a skirmish on the White Nile.

   Despite the defeat, the Mahdiyya remained a powerful force espe-
cially in the western Sūdān. The British administration led by Reginald
Wingate did its utmost to stamp out its influence among the local
population. The surviving leaders were thrown in prison, while the
reading of al-Mahdī's devotional manual (*rātib*) was strictly proscribed.
During World War I, the Mahdiyya experienced a revival under
the able leadership of al-Mahdī's posthumous son, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.
Many of his followers conferred upon him the title of the prophet
ʿĪsā (Jesus), implying that he was the final messiah who was des-
tined to preside over the end of the world. Others, however, viewed
him as a nationalist leader and a symbol of liberation from colonial
rule.

Sufism as a Vehicle of Missionary Movement

Older brotherhoods also enjoyed increased influence in the thir-
teenth/nineteenth century and served as agents for conversion to
Islam. The Qādiriyya enjoyed considerable success in West Africa
through its Mukhtāriyya branch deriving from the Kunta scholars
of the late twelfth/eighteenth and the thirteenth/nineteenth centuries.
The Kunta were a highly ramified Arabic-speaking tribe that was
widely dispersed over the southern Sahara from present-day Mauritania
to eastern Mali. Despite their claim to be descendants of an noble
Arab stock, their own accounts acknowledge their predominantly
Berber background. This is further confirmed by their Berber eponym.
In the second half of the twelfth/eighteenth century, the leader of
one of the Kunta branches named Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kabīr (d.
1226/1811), who combined qualities of sanctity with political astute-

ness and commercial acumen, established a center of study and
propagation of the Qādiriyya Sufi order. It is from the suborder
that he established, the Mukhtāriyya, that most of the Qādiriyya
groups in West Africa derive their affiliation. Sīdī al-Mukhtār's role
as a respected Sufi leader and his prestige as a scholar enabled him
to mediate between the warring Arab and Tuareg tribes of the area
and to heal the rift between competing subdivisions of the Kunta. He
undertook far-ranging missionary tours in the Sahara and his *zāwiyya*
at al-Ḥilla attracted disciples from distant areas. It was supported by
the income from participation in the trans-Saharan salt and tobacco
trade. Al-Mukhtār's teachings emphasized leniency. He advised his
followers to overlook people's faults and to win their hearts through
"*jihād* of the tongue" rather than "*jihād* of the sword." He sought
to enhance his authority among the local tribes by proclaiming him-
self the sole "revivifier" or "regenerator" (*mujaddid*) of the thirteenth
century of the Hijra (1200/1786), although for earlier centuries he
admitted a multiplicity of revivifiers in different spheres of religion
and religious politics, e.g., *fiqh, ḥadīth, zuhd*, etc. Al-Mukhtār is cred-
ited with over sixty works on various Islamic sciences.

Al-Mukhtār's son, Sīdī Muḥammad (d. 1241/1826), inherited his
position as the leader of the Mukhtāriyya-Qādiriyya and was himself
a prolific author. He wrote a history of the Kunta tribe and a hagio-
graphical account of his father, which contains a detailed spiritual
genealogy of the order. It features the names of such Muslim lumi-
naries as al-Thaʿālibī, al-Suyūṭī, and Ibn ʿArabī. On Sīdī Muḥam-
mad's death, the leadership of the order passed to his eldest son,
Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Saghīr (d. 1264/1847), who was actively in-
volved in regional politics and was instrumental in saving Timbuktū
from the worst excesses of the Fulbe tribal forces. His brother and
successor, Aḥmad al-Bakkāʾī (d. 1281/1865), was a prolific writer
and a vigorous critic of the rival Tijāniyya order, whose founder's
"excessive" claims and alleged plagiarism he denounced in a series
of pamphlets.[22] At the end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, two
grandsons of Sīdī Muḥammad distinguished themselves by their
differing attitudes to the French penetration of the central southern
Sahara. While Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn declared a *jihād* against the French
after they had occupied Timbuktū in 1894 and continued to challenge
the French throughout the first two decades of the fourteenth/

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[22] Ibid., pp. 75–76 and 92–93.

twentieth century, the other Kunta leader, Sīdī Bāy b. Sīdī 'Umar, encouraged the local Tuareg tribes to avoid conflict with the French. The spiritual influence of the Kunta was far-reaching. Disciples of the Kunta shaykhs carried their teachings to the savanna and forests, and were proselytizers for the faith. Two powerful Fulbe leaders, Shaykh 'Uthmān b. Muḥammad dan Fōdio, or Ibn Fūdī (d. 1232/1817), and Shaykh Aḥmad Lobbo (d. 1260/1844), trace their *ṭarīqa* lines through the Kunta *silsila*.[23] They propagated its devotional practices in many areas of West Africa. Through Shaykh 'Uthmān, the Qādiriyya became the quasi-official *ṭarīqa* of the state he founded in northern Nigeria, and through his *jihād* many were converted to Islam. Aḥmad Lobbo (also known as Seku Aḥmadu), the Fulani fighter for religion (*mujāhid*), spread its teaching in Masina (Mali).

Sufi Role in Political and Social Spheres

Other branches and subbranches of the Qādiriyya order were famous for their involvement in the political life of West Africa. In Senegal, Aḥmad Bamba (d. 1346/1927) founded an entirely new order derived from the Qādiriyya, the Murīdiyya, which, by preaching the doctrine of *laborare est orare*, has played an important role in developing local agriculture. Through its spectacular economic success the Murīdiyya leaders have acquired powerful national political influence.[24] There has also been a Qādirī revival in Nigeria in recent years led by Muḥammad al-Nāṣir b. Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-Kabarī of Kano (locally known as Nāṣiru Kabara). In addition to their role in political affairs, many Sufi brotherhoods have been agents of "reconversion," that is, the diffusion among rural or nomadic Muslims of a normative urban Islam. This was usually achieved by establishing a network of elementary Qur'ānic schools in remote areas, which were staffed by the representatives of a given order. Such was the case with the Qādiriyya-'Uthmāniyya in Nigeria, the Sanūsiyya in Libya and Chad, and the Majdhūbiyya-Shādhiliyya in the eastern Sūdān. Many Sufis of sub-Saharan Africa were also scholars of *fiqh*, notably the Kano Tijānīs of the Salgha tradition. In addition to what has been noted above, Sufi movements worked on the one

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[23] Ibid., pp. 24–25.
[24] D. Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourids of Senegal*, Oxford, 1971; idem. *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, Oxford, 1988.

hand to resist colonial penetration, and on the other, at least in some cases, to establish a working relationship with colonial régimes. Some of the more striking examples of Sufi involvement in armed struggle against colonialism are as follows: resistance to French penetration of Algeria led by the Qādirī shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir of Algeria; resistance to the penetration of Chad by the French and later Libya by the Italians, which was spearheaded by the Sanūsiyya brotherhood; resistance to the French colonial encroachment on Mauritania led by the Qādirī shaykh Māʾ al-ʿAynayn (who founded a new branch of the order, the ʿAyniyya);[25] resistance to British colonialism in Somalia from 1900 to 1920 led by Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh Ḥassān; the movement against Egyptian and British colonialism led by Muḥammad al-Mahdī and his successors. During the colonial period, relationships between brotherhoods and colonial régimes were in some cases good, even close, while in others they were cold or downright hostile. In North Africa, the Tijānī leaders were on amicable terms with the French, as was in Senegal, where Seydou Nourou Tall became a virtual mouthpiece of the French colonial order in West Africa. On the other hand, the Ḥamālliyya Tijānīs of Senegal were fiercely opposed to the French, and the Tijāniyya leadership of Kano was under constant British surveillance. The French exiled both Ḥamāllāh and the Murīdiyya leader Aḥmad Bamba. In the Sūdān, the Khatmiyya under Sayyid ʿAlī al-Mīrghānī established its own political party, the National Unionist Party (ḥizb al-ittiḥād al-waṭanī) in opposition to the Umma Party of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī, a descendant of Muḥammad al-Mahdī of the Sūdān, who organized his followers (anṣār) along ṭarīqa lines. In Tanzania, the Qādiriyya brotherhood has played a significant role in national politics since independence.

In Africa, as elsewhere, some aspects of Sufism and its institutions were occasionally attacked by local Sunnī scholars. Usually their criticisms were aimed at certain controversial aspects of Sufi practice or at individual Sufi leaders rather than Sufism as a whole. The teachings of the Tijāniyya brotherhood seem to have drawn the lion's share of invectives from both Sufi and non-Sufi scholars. Many of them resented Aḥmad al-Tijānī's claims that he had received direct authorization for his teachings from the Prophet Muḥammad, that he was the greatest and ultimate spiritual leader of all times (quṭb

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[25] Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 125.

al-aqṭāb), that reciting certain Tijānī litanies (notably *Ṣalāt al-fātiḥ*) brought more merit than reciting the Qur'ān, and that those who see him or serve him would enter paradise without judgment. There has been a virtually constant stream of polemic in Mauritania since the brotherhood reached there. An attack on al-Tijānī by the poet Idyayj al-Kumlaylī (d. 1271/1854) was responded to by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr al-Tashītī in his *al-Jaysh al-kāfil bi-akhdh al-tha'r mimman salla ʿalā 'l-shaykh al-Tijānī sayf al-inkār*. This was then attacked by Muḥammad al-Khaḍir al-Jakānī (d. 1344/1925), a Qādiri adept, in his *Mushtahā 'l-kharīf al-jānī fī zalaqāt al-Tijānī al-jānī*. Several scholars wrote rejoinders to this work, most importantly Muḥammad Niasse (d. 1379/1959) in his *al-Juyūsh al-ṭullāʿ*. In Nigeria in the 1970s and 1980s, both Tijānīs and Qādirīs came under attack in sweeping denunciations of Sufism led by a neo-Wahhābī scholar Abū Bakr Gummī (d. 1414/1994), whose *al-ʿAqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa bi-muwāfaqat al-sharīʿa* (publ. Beirut, 1972) drew numerous responses. More specifically directed against the Tijāniyya were the writings of an ex-Tijānī adept, Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr Māi Gārī, whose attacks elicited rebuttals from two Mauritanian scholars as well as from Nigerian Tijānīs.

A Turkish Face of Sufism: The Khalwatiyya and Other Turkic Orders

The Khalwatiyya Sufi order is said to have been founded by ʿUmar (Ömer) al-Khalwatī of Gīlān in Persia, who died in Tabrīz in 800/1397. However, some later Khalwatī authors trace the origins of the order to ʿUmar's shaykh, Muḥammad [ibn] Nūr, who had earned the sobriquet "al-Khalwatī" because of his habit of practicing frequent retreats.[26] Yet, in Khalwatī literature, ʿUmar is usually described as the first master (*pīr*) of the Khalwatiyya, the second being Yaḥyā al-Shirwānī al-Bākuvī of Shemākha in Shīrwān (present-day Azerbaijān), who propagated the teaching of the order at Bākū, where he died in 869/1464. Al-Shirwānī's most significant contribution to the development of the Khalwatī tradition, apart from his numerous followers, is his collection of litanies titled *Wird al-sattār*, which was to became a standard prayer book for most of the branches of the Khalwatiyya. Some Western scholars have argued

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[26] N. Clayer, *Mystique, état et société: Les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du Xe siècle à nos jours*, Leiden, 1994, p. 5.

that al-Shirwānī should be considered the real founder.[27] His deputies
(*khalīfa*s) ʿUmar Rūshanī (d. 892/1486 in Tabrīz) and Yūsuf al-
Shirwānī, whose date of death is unknown, were instrumental in
spreading the order's teachings in Anatolia and Khurāsān and even-
tually as far as Egypt.[28] The former was patronized by the ruler of
the Aq Qoyunlū dynasty, Uzun Ḥasan, in Tabrīz. Rūshanī initiated
into the Khalwatiyya such consequential teachers as Muḥammad
Demirdāsh al-Muḥammadī (d. 929/1524) and Ibrāhīm Gulshānī,
who founded their own orders, al-Demirdāshiyya and al-Gulshāniyya
respectively, both with their centers in Cairo. Two branches of the
latter order gained some renown: al-Sezāʾiyya, founded by Ḥasan
Sezāʾī (d. 1151/1738 in Edirne) and al-Ḥaletiyya, founded by Ḥasan
Ḥaletī ʿAlī Aʿlā (d. 1329/1911 in Edirne). Among the *khalīfa*s suc-
ceeding Yūsuf Shirwānī the most notable are Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad
Sīvāsī (d. 1006/1597 in Sīvās) and ʿAbd al-Aḥad Nūrī Sīvāsī (d. 1061/
1650 in Istanbul). Both established their own suborders, known as
Shamsiyya and Sīvāsiyya.

Initially, the order spread in Anatolia mainly in the Amasya region,
when it was governed by the future Ottoman sultan Bāyazīd II.
Here we find the most notable shaykh of the order Meḥmed Jamāl
al-Dīn al-Aqsarāʾī, known as Chelebī Efendī, who died ca. 903/1497
near Damascus. This branch of the Khalwatiyya was called al-
Jamāliyya after him. After the death of his successor, Yūsuf Sünbül
Sinān al-Dīn (d. 936/1529 in Istanbul), it came to be known as al-
Sünbüliyya. The stages of the order's early history are as follows.
The order spread westwards during the reign of Bāyazīd II (886–
918/1481–1512), when its center shifted from Amasya to Istanbul. The
order experienced stagnation during the reign of Selīm I. During
this period, which was marked by the Ottoman Empire's bloody war
with the Shīʿīs of Persia, the order sought to reassert its Sunnī iden-
tity and thereby to dissociate itself from the Shīʿī enemy. As a result,
its leadership dropped the names of five Shīʿī imāms from its spir-
itual genealogy (*silsila*). During the reign of Sülaymān the Magnificent
(926–74/1520–66) and Selīm II (974–82/1566–74) the order entered
a period of revival. Many high-ranking officials in the Ottoman
administration of that time (e.g., the Jamālzādes and the Grand
Vizier Luṭfī Pasha, d. ca. 970/1562) had links with the order and

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[27] Clayer, *Mystique*, pp. 5–6.
[28] Ibid., p. 7.

favored it over its rivals. It received substantial donations in cash
and property which allowed it to recruit more members.

During this epoch, many new branches of the Khalwatiyya mush-
roomed throughout the Ottoman realm. One such branch, the
Shaʿbāniyya, became particularly prominent. It was established
by Shaʿbān Walī al-Qastamūnī, who, after a period of study at
Istanbul, settled in Kastamonu, where died in 976/1568. Although
he himself left behind no written works, his successors actively prop-
agated his spiritual way among the population of Anatolia. How-
ever, its influence soon spread far beyond this region and reached
the Ottoman capital, where Shaʿbān Walī's lieutenant Shaykh Shujāʿ
(d. 996/1588) had influence on the mystically minded sultan Murād
III (r. 982/1574–1003/1595) and his courtiers. The Shaʿbāniyya
gained fresh impetus under the leadership of ʿAlī Qarābāsh Walī
(d. 1097/1685), who established the Qarābāshiyya branch of the
Shaʿbāniyya-Khalwatiyya that was active in central Anatolia (Kas-
tamonu and Ankara areas) and in Istanbul. He was the author of
numerous works on Sufi theory and practice, including an influential
commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's "Bezels of Wisdom" and an apology
for the whirling dance during Sufi concerts. His teachings had a long-
lasting impact on the development of the Khalwatiyya not just in
Anatolia, but also in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.
There it contributed to the revival of the Khalwatiyya tradition which
began at the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century under the leader-
ship of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī and his successors.[29] Qarābāsh Walī's pupil
Nasūḥī Meḥmed (d. 1130/1718 in Istanbul) established his own *ṭarīqa*,
al-Nasūḥiyya, which in turn gave birth to the Cherkeshiyya, named
after Cherkeshī Muṣṭafā (d. 1229/1813). Cherkeshī, who resided in
the town of Cherkesh, southwest of Kastamonu, was responsible
for a number of innovations aimed at lightening the ritual and spir-
itual obligations of the order's followers. Thus, he reduced the twenty
precepts of Qarābāsh Walī to just three, namely, the complete and
unquestioning loyalty of the disciple to his master; the ritualized
acceptance by the disciple of the master's blessing and initiation at
the end of the study period; and the incessant performance of the
dhikr. Two other masters of the Shaʿbāniyya, Ḥājjī Khalīl (d. 1247/

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[29] F. de Jong, "Mustafa Kamal al-Bakri (1688–1749): Revival and reform of the
Khalwatiyya tradition", in: N. Levtzion and J. O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal
and Reform in Islam*, Syracuse-New York, 1987, pp. 117–132.

1831) and Ibrāhīm Qushadalī (d. 1283/1866) founded respectively, the Khalīliyya and the Ibrāhīmiyya branches of the *ṭarīqa*. The latter broke off the tradition of residing in an isolated lodge (*tekke*), which characterized the Khalwatiyya since its inception, arguing that it became subject to corruption. By advising his followers against spectacular displays of piety and encouraging them to take up a gainful employment, he aimed at reviving the Malāmatī tradition, which continued to be popular with many Ottoman brotherhoods. The second half of the thirteenth/nineteenth century witnessed a rapid proliferation of the Shaʿbāniyya branches in the Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and in Bulgaria. However, they entered a period of decline and eventually disappeared, soon after these countries had gained independence from the Ottoman Empire. Nowadays, various branches of the Shaʿbāniyya are found only in Turkey. In Istanbul alone there are at least fifteen mosques where Shaʿbānī dervishes meet for their weekly *dhikr*. Members of the Shaʿbāniyya wear a distinctive garb that consists of a robe and a white, tall turban falling on to the back. At Kastamonu, Shaʿbān Walī's tomb is still being in evidence. It constitutes the center of a large complex of buildings that is still being visited by the adherents of the order from far and wide. In the first half of the twelfth/eighteenth century a new branch of the Qarābāshiyya emerged under the leadership of Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī. It was called al-Bakriyya after him. One of his *khalīfa*s, ʿAbd al-Karīm Kamāl al-Dīn (d. 1199/1784 in Gaza), established his own branch, al-Kamāliyya. Another *khalīfa*, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Sammān (d. 1189/1775 in Mecca), founded the popular Sammāniyya branch of the order that spread to the Sūdān and Ethiopia. From Mecca, the teachings of the Sammāniyya order penetrated into South East Asia. A branch of this *ṭarīqa*, al-Fayḍiyya, named after Fayḍ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ghunaym, was active in Istanbul, where its founder lived most of his life and died in 1309/1891. Al-Bakrī's foremost lieutenant and direct successor in Egypt was Muḥammad b. Sālim al-Ḥifnī (d. 1181/1767 in Cairo). The spectacular spread of the Khalwatiyya in Egypt in the thirteenth/nineteenth and fourteenth/twentieth centuries is due in large part to his students and their *khalīfa*s.[30]

Out of a Syrian branch of the Jamāliyya, which was introduced into Damascus by Uways al-Karamānī, a *khalīfa* of Chelebī Efendī,

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[30] For the branches of the Khalwatiyya in post-Ottoman Egypt see F. de Jong, *Ṭuruq and Ṭuruq-linked Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Leiden, 1978.

there emerged two new brotherhoods: al-ʿAssāliyya, named after Aḥmad
b. ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī al-ʿAssālī (d. 1048/1638 in Aleppo) and al-Bakh-
shiyya, founded by Muḥammad al-Bakhshī al-Ḥalabī al-Baqfalūnī
(d. 1098/1686 in Mecca), which had its center at the Ikhlāṣiyya lodge
(*tekke*) in Aleppo. The *silsila*s of the remaining Khalwatiyya branches
stretch back to Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn b. ʿĪsā al-Marmarāwī al-Jigitbāshī
(d. 910/1504 in Maghnisa, a town in west Anatolia). He was the
founder of his own order, al-Aḥmadiyya, which had spread mainly in
and around Maghnisa.

In 1921 the Khalwatiyya was represented by the following branches
that were located in Istanbul: Jarrāḥiyya, which had ten lodges (*tekke*),
Shaʿbāniyya with twenty five *tekke*, Sünbüliyya with eigthteen *tekke*,
Sināniyya with three *tekke*, and ʿUshshāqiyya with five *tekke*. In addi-
tion, sources mention *tekke* of a few unspecified branches of the Khal-
watiyya. All these branches of the Khalwatiyya still exist today.[31]

On the doctrinal plane, the works of the Khalwatī masters man-
ifest in various degrees the influence of Ibn ʿArabī and his follow-
ers. Some of them embraced his idea of the underlying oneness of
being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*); others advised caution and insisted that it
should be applied only to certain levels of existence. The great Khalwatī
reformer Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī rejected Ibn ʿArabī's monis-
tic tendencies altogether,[32] stressing the unbridgeable chasm between
divine and human natures. For him, the union between God and
man presupposed a conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of two distinct essences—an
implication that he found unacceptable and heretical. Although some
Shīʿī conceptions have occasionally been incorporated and elabo-
rated by some members of the order, most of its branches advo-
cated the Sunnī ideal of the leadership of the Muslim community.
Its exponents usually emphasized that the teachings of the order can
be traced back to al-Junayd, who embodied a moderate type of
Sufism. On the practical level, special emphasis was placed on vol-
untary hunger (*jūʿ*), silence (*samṭ*), vigil (*sahar*), seclusion (*iʿtizāl*), the
recollection of God's name (*dhikr*), meditation (*fikr*), permanent ritual
cleanness and the tying (*rabṭ*) of one's heart to that of the master.

The hallmark of the Khalwatiyya *ṭarīqa* and its numerous subdi-
visions is periodic retreat (*khalwa*) that is required of every novice.

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[31] For details see Clayer, *Mystique*, passim.
[32] E. Bannerth, "La Khalwatiyya en Egypte," in: *MIDEO*, vol. 8 (1964–6), pp.
1–74.

The shortest period recommended is at least three days. However, it can last for as long as forty days. Over the centuries, sets of rules regulating the *murīd*'s behavior before, during and after the period of *khalwa* have been elaborated. They vary from one branch of the order to another.[33] According to some offshoots of the Khalwatiyya, the *khalwa* is essential in preparing the *murīd* for initiation into the order. Others hold it to be appropriate only for those who have reached a certain stage of spiritual progress, usually the fifth. To those on the lower stages Khalwatī masters recommend a lesser retreat (*'uzla*) that prepares the novice for the rigors of the *khalwa*. The Khalwatī mystical path consists of seven stations (*maqāmāt*), each of which is associated with the recollection of a given liturgical formula or one of God's major names, for example, "There is no deity but God" (*al-tahlīl*), *Allāh*, "He" (*hū*), "The Living" (*ḥayy*), "The Real" (*ḥaqq*), "The Everlasting" (*qayyūm*) and "The Overpowering" (*qahhār*). According to Khalwatī theorists, the first four *maqāms* form a preparatory stage. Beginning with the fifth the novice enters the advanced stage of spiritual progress that puts him in direct contact with the True Reality of God. The subsequent stations cannot be reached through one's personal effort (*ijtihād*) but only through divine grace.

The Khalwatī personal *dhikr* is surrounded by a number of ritual conventions that are defined in the manuals of the order. The collective *dhikr* (*ḥaḍra*) of the Khalwatiyya branches tend to follow similar rules, although the ritual and the formulas recited differ from one branch to another. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn b. 'Īsā al-Marmarāwī is credited with having added five divine names, or "branches" (*al-furū'*) to the standard Khalwatī formula, namely *Wahhāb, Fattāḥ, Wāḥid, Aḥad, Ṣamad*. They are recited after the completion of the other seven names, which are known as "roots" (*al-uṣūl*). This practice is found in the Aḥmadiyya offshoots of the order. Later on, it was incorporated by some Bakriyya branches as well. Members of different Khalwatī communities disagree over which of the God's names can be recited during the *dhikr*. Some insisted that any name should be allowed, while others restricted them to those which the shaykh had entrusted to his *murīd*. Still others argued that, apart from the names stipulated by the Khalwatī canon, only one, that of Allāh, is permissible. Requirements as to the prayer-tasks, fasting and night vigils

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[33] See a discussion of *khalwa* in chapter ten of this study.

differ considerably between different branches. One common ele-
ment of the ritual that is shared by all branches of the Khalwatiyya
is the reading of Yaḥyā al-Shirwānī's *Wird al-sattār* during set times
and occasions. It consists of three sections that glorify the oneness
of God, the Prophet and his mission, and the Companions. The
Khalwatī reformer Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī viewed it is the
pivot of the Khalwatiyya ritual. It should be read aloud by a single
person to an audience of devotees; this is held to be more beneficial
than a collective reciting. It equals the silent *dhikr*, which is called
the *dhikr* of the heart. The sense of communion that the members
of the congregation experience on these occasions is believed to lead
to an internal union, which, in its turn, allows them to experience
a direct witnessing of God (*mushāhada*). In other words, its is through
participation in the communal rites and rituals that one reaches a
more advanced stage of awareness, one that the theorists of the order
described as a face-to-face encounter with God. Here lies a basic
difference between the Khalwatiyya and other *ṭarīqas*, such as the
Naqshbandiyya, in which the novice is deemed to achieve the *mushāhada*
through the guidance of his shaykh. Some Khalwatiyya groups hew
closer to the latter position, e.g. al-Jūdiyya, whose members believe
that the *murīd's* spiritual progress is proportionate to his trust in
his shaykh. In Turkish Khalwatiyya branches, notably within the
Qarābāshiyya, the role of the shaykh in guiding the *murīd* is con-
ceived of as necessarily a passive one. He is for the *murīd* what the
spirit (*rūḥ*) is for the body. If it departs, the body dies too. However,
the shaykh is not expected to actively interfere with the *murīd*'s
progress, nor to approve or disapprove his behavior, even if the dis-
ciple were to fall away from Islam and to become an unbeliever. Some
branches of the order placed restrictions on the qualifications of the
potential member. Thus the Aḥmadiyya and its branches refused to
initiate the illiterate on the assumption that illiteracy may diminish
the light of gnosis that God pours into the heart of the devotee.

   The present situation of the order varies from region to region.
In 1945, the government of Albania recognized the principal *ṭarīqas*
as independent religious communities with their own leaders. For
some time, ʿAlī Hormova was head of all the Khalwatī branches in
that country. This arrangement came to an end after the Albanian
Cultural Revolution in early 1967. In Macedonia and Kosovo twenty-
five Khalwatiyya *tekke*s were attested in 1939. As late as 1971 Khalwatī
gatherings (*ḥaḍra*s) took place regularly in *tekke*s in Ohrid, Struka,

Kichevo, Shtip, Pech, Djakovice, Orahovac and Prizren. In Greek Thrace active groups with a *tekke* existed in Xanthi, Komotini and Echinos.

No data are available on the status of the Khalwatiyya in Turkey after 1925, when the orders were abolished and all *tekke*s and *zāwiya*s were closed and their possessions confiscated by the government of Ataturk. In the Middle East, various Khalwatiyya groups are active in Lebanon (Beirut, Tripoli) and Syria (Aleppo, Damascus). Some of these groups trace their origins back to Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad b. al-ʿAzūz, the founder of the Raḥmāniyya *zāwiya* at Nafṭa (Tunisia). The Egyptian Khalwatiyya-Junaydiyya claims substantial membership in Syria. Many branches of the Khalwatiyya are still active in Egypt. Of these, mention should be made of the Sammāniyya, which has the supreme shaykh of all its branches, who oversees its activities in Egypt. Some Egyptian Sammāniyya, however, consider themselves to be part of one or the other of the Sūdānese branches of this order. In Ethiopia, the Sammāniyya is the only active Khalwatiyya branch. Little is known about its present functioning beyond what is reported by Trimingham.[34] Nothing is known about the present state of al-Sammāniyya in Indonesia. According to some writers, the Raḥmāniyya branch of the Khalwatiyya in Algeria (in the 1960s) counted as many as 230,000 members.

The Yasawiyya

Apart from the Khalwatiyya brotherhood, several other orders played an important role in the Turkic-speaking territories that stretch from Anatolia to Eastern Turkestan. If we were to look for a typical Turkic order, the Yasawiyya of Transoxania and Eastern Turkestan would fit the bill. From the sixth/twelfth century onward this loosely structured initiatic line was active in disseminating Islam among the Turkic peoples and the Mongol rulers of the Golden Horde. Its founder, Aḥmad Yasawī, or Yasevī (d. 562/1162), was probably a disciple of the great charismatic leader Abū Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 534/1140), who, in turn, traced his spiritual genealogy back to Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī. Yasawī's poetic collection in a Turkic vernacular, called "Wisdom" (*Ḥikmet*), became the ideological foundation of his loosely structured order. Passages from the *Ḥikmet*

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[34] J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1952, p. 247.

were chanted during Yasawī assemblies which were often accompa-
nied by frantic dances and ecstatic behavior.[35]

Emissaries and disciples of Aḥmad Yasawī, such as Ḥakīm Ata
(d. 582/1183) and Saʿīd Ata (d. 615/1218), spread his teachings in
the regions of Syr Darya, Volga, Khwārazm and as far as Eastern
Turkestan. The expansion of the Yasawiyya went hand-in-hand with
the Islamization of the Central Asian Steppes.[36] However, following
the Mongol invasions of the Steppes in the seventh/thirteenth cen-
tury a number of prominent leaders of the Yasawiyya arrived in
Anatolia, fleeing from Mongol rule. Already in Central Asia and later
in Anatolia the Yasawiyya became associated with the free-booting
Qalandariyya movement.[37] In Anatolia, it was particularly close to
the branch of the Qalandariyya known as the Ḥaydariyya. From the
tenth/sixteenth century on, the Central Asian Yasawiyya lost its
influence to the powerful Naqshbandiyya order with which it was
closely associated. The principal branch of the Yasawiyya, called
ʿAzīziyya, was established by Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAzīzān (d. 912/1507) in
the region of Samarqand. It lacked a rigid hierarchical structure that
was common to more centralized *ṭarīqa*s and was focused on the
tombs of the Yasawī shaykhs scattered across Central Asia, espe-
cially in the southern areas of Kazakhstan, Dasht-i Kipchaq, Turkestan
and Chimkent.

The Qalandariyya

Already in the sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth centuries we find
references to wandering dervishes (*qalandars*) who had become part
and parcel of the local religious landscape in both Central Asia and
Anatolia. The Qalandars usually did not organize themselves in cen-
tralized orders; however, they donned distinctive garments, practiced
itinerancy and followed the unwritten rules that set them apart from
the rest of the Sufis. By the tenth/sixteenth century, the Qalandariyya
groups disappeared from Anatolia, yet they survived in Central Asia
and in Eastern Turkestan until the beginning of the twentieth cen-
tury C.E.[38]

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[35] T. Zarcone, "Le Turkestan Chinois," in: A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.),
Les Voies d'Allah, Paris, 1996, p. 270.
[36] D. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion of the Golden Horde*, University Park,
Pennsylvania, 1994.
[37] Zarcone, "Le Turkestan," p. 270.
[38] Ibid., pp. 268–270.

Although the Qalandariyya movement originated and spread primarily in the eastern lands of Islam,[39] they asserted themselves as a recognizable trend within Sufism in Damascus and Damietta (Egypt) in the early decades of the seventh/thirteenth century. The founder of the movement, the Persian Jamāl al-Dīn Sāwī or Sāvī (d. ca. 630/1223), provided his followers with a distinctive identity that rested on such practices as shaving the hair, beard, moustache, and eyebrows and leading an itinerant life. Jamāl al-Dīn started his career as a conventional Sufi master, preaching Sufism "from a golden pulpit richly studded with jewels" in a generously endowed Sufi lodge in Iraq.[40] Later, Jamāl al-Dīn grew disgusted with the trappings of institutionalized Sufism, abandoned his comfortable position at the *khānaqā* and began to roam the land in the company of forty dervishes. In accordance with the famous prophetic dictum "die before you die," Jamāl al-Dīn turned his back on this world, gave up his property and severed himself "from both the rights and duties of social life," including gainful employment, marriage and even friendship.[41] Contrary to the individualistic message preached by Jamāl al-Dīn and his reclusive lifestyle, his disciples formed a community of wandering dervishes. In the process, concessions were made to the exigencies of everyday life and the necessity to sustain the nascent Qalandarī community. Contrary to Jamāl al-Dīn's early advice that encouraged the Qalandars to survive on wild weeds and fruits and to go around naked with only leaves to cover the loins, he later issued a dispensation that allowed his numerous followers to accept pious donations and to wear heavy woolen garments to cover their private parts. At the end of his life, Jamāl al-Dīn, who was no longer willing to take care of the growing number of his disciples, left them under the cover of the night and settled at a cemetery in the vicinity of Damietta, where a Sufi lodge (*zāwiyya*) was later built around his tomb.[42]

Jamāl al-Dīn's legacy, transmitted mainly in an oral form, stressed a reclusive lifestyle, an extreme asceticism, the unimportance of learning and a deep contempt for all established patterns of social

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[39] J. Baldick, "Les Qalenderis," in: A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Les Voies d'Allah*, pp. 500–501.

[40] A. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, Salt Lake City, 1994, p. 40.

[41] Ibid., p. 41.

[42] Ibid., pp. 43–44.

life and for both secular and religious authorities. His followers
eschewed hypocrisy, despised precious metals and valuable objects,
but worshipped beautiful faces, which they, in line with the doctrine
of the Ḥulmāniyya, viewed as manifestations of the eternal divine
beauty in a human guise. Jamāl al-Dīn's followers in Anatolia came
to be known as "the wearers of sack-cloth" (*jawlaqiyya*). Since the move-
ment was anti-establishment by its very nature, it formed a number
of small localized groups that were found, apart from Anatolia, in
Persia and India. In India, a few famous Sufi leaders and intellectu-
als, such as the poet Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 686/1287) and Amīr
Ḥusaynī (d. 718/1318), were, at some points in their lives, attracted
to the uncompromising piety of the Qalandariyya and embraced
their anti-establishment attitudes. An extreme version of Qalandarī
piety is represented by the Ḥaydariyya brotherhood that flourished in
the Ottoman domains in the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth
centuries. They "covered themselves with sacks, coarse felt, or sheep-
skins" and wore "iron rings on their ears, necks, wrists, and genitals."[43]
They took a dim view of the official religion and regularly flouted
all rules of social conduct. Ottoman scholars routinely accused them
of such vices as pedophilia, the smoking of cannabis and drunkenness.[44]

The Bayramiyya and the [Neo-]Malāmatiyya (Melamilik)

Closely related to the Qalandariyya in spirit and in body is the Bay-
ramiyya *ṭarīqa* that was founded in the ninth/fifteenth century at
Ankara by Ḥājjī Bayram (d. 833/1429), who presented himself to
his followers as a spiritual descendant and restorer of the Malāmatiyya
tradition of Khurāsān. In line with the precepts of the original
Malāmatiyya, he prohibited his followers from engaging in a public
dhikr. Although his teaching gained some popularity among the pop-
ulation of Central Anatolia, it failed to conquer the Ottoman capi-
tal, which placed it at disadvantage vis-à-vis the orders with a foothold
in Istanbul. A splinter group of the Bayramiyya, led by 'Umar (Ömer)
the Cutler (Sikkīnī; d. 880/1476) refused to recognize the authority
of Ḥājjī Bayram's successor, Aq Shams al-Dīn, and formed an inde-
pendent branch known as Malāmatiyya-Bayramiyya. This split found
an outward expression in 'Umar's abandonment of the distinctive

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[43] Ibid., p. 68.
[44] Baldick, "Les Qalenderis," p. 501.

garment, namely the *khirqa* and the "crown" (*tāj*) that had so far char-
acterized the followers of the Bayramiyya. Apart from that, little is
known about the disagreement between the two branches of the
Bayramiyya. It may have been caused by the personal rivalry between
two groups of Ḥājjī Bayram's disciples. Later sources tended to
describe this disagreement in doctrinal terms. While the followers of
Aq Shams al-Dīn adopted a mainline Sufi doctrine that stressed the
vast gap between God and his creatures, the Malāmatiyya seem to
have upheld al-Ḥallāj's idea that God can manifest himself in the
personalities of some perfect friends of God, namely in the leaders
of the Malāmatiyya sect. This concept aroused the suspicions of
many mainstream Sunnī ulema of the Ottoman Empire, who inter-
preted it as an implicit denial of the Sharī'a and the blurring of the
all-important line between what is permitted and what is prohibited
by the Muslim Law. Some statements of the Malāmatī masters show
their apparent indebtedness to the teachings of the Ḥurūfiyya—a
cabbalistic sect whose leaders claimed to have achieved divinity, to
have superceded the Muslim revelation and to have instituted a new,
esoteric religion. As a result, the Malāmatiyya fell victim to perse-
cutions that provided them with their first martyrs. These persecu-
tions forced the Malāmatiyya to go underground and conceal their
true beliefs from the uninitiated masses, including the ruling class,
who were proclaimed mere "animals" undeserving of the higher
truths that were known only to the Malāmatī shaykhs. Leaders of
the Malāmatiyya insisted that their followers refrain from any exter-
nal display of piety; they wore regular dresses and practiced no rites
that would identify them as members of the same religious group.[45]

Until the first quarter of the tenth/sixteenth century the Malāmatiyya
was confined to Central Anatolia. However, the dynamic new leader
Oghlān Shaykh began to preach the Malāmatī teachings among
the soldiers and civilians of the Ottoman capital, until he was appre-
hended, accused of heresy and put to death in accordance with a
condemnatory *fatwā* of the great Ottoman scholar and statesman
Kemāl Pashazāde (d. 940/1534). Another Malāmatī, Shaykh Aḥmad
the Cameleer (d. 952/1545), introduced the Malāmatiyya into the
Balkans. The order became especially deep-rooted in Bosnia, where
it adopted an anti-government stance by refusing to recognize the

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[45] T. Zarcone, "Muḥammad Nūr al-'Arabī et la confrérie Malāmatiyya," in:
A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Les voies d'Allah*, p. 480.

legitimacy of the incumbent Ottoman sultan. This region produced
the next Malāmatī martyr, Shaykh Ḥamza (d. 968/1561), who, like
Oghlān Shaykh, attempted to spread the order's teachings in Istanbul.
So great was Ḥamza's stature with his disciples that following his
death they came to be known as the Ḥamzawiyya. The authorities'
efforts to eradicate the Malāmatiyya both in the capital and in the
provinces had only a limited success. The last Malāmatī martyr,
Beshīr Agha, was executed in Istanbul together with forty disciples
in 1073/1662. By that time, some branches of the Malāmatiyya had
begun to drift away from their original esoteric beliefs and adopted
a moderate doctrinal position that stressed the primacy of the Sharī'a.
This transformation attracted to the Malāmatiyya members of the
Ottoman ruling élite, who were instrumental in consolidating its
orthodox credentials.

    To the Egyptian Sufi Muḥammad Nūr al-'Arabī (d. 1306/1888)
goes the credit of breathing new life into the Malāmatiyya tradition.
A well traveled man with numerous Sufi affiliations, Muḥammad
Nūr al-'Arabī settled in Macedonia from which he made periodic
trips to Mecca and Istanbul. Although the Ḥamzawiyya of the Balkans
considered him to the spiritual "pole" (*quṭb*) of his age, he adhered
closely to the teachings of the Naqshbandiyya. Muḥammad Nūr
al-Dīn interest in the intellectual legacy of Sufism added a new
doctrinal dimension to Balkan Sufism. A champion of Ibn 'Arabī's
doctrine of the oneness of existence, he composed a number of trea-
tises on the subject in both Turkish and Arabic. On the practical
level, he was an ardent proponent of the Malāmatī prohibition of
any public display of piety. To became a Malāmī one had to fulfil
three requirements: to combat the passions of one's lower soul
(*mujāhede*), to engage in a constant silent *dhikr* (*dhikr-i dā'im*) and to
draw aside the veil of duality that prevents man from seeing the
underlying unity of all being.[46]

    Thanks to Muḥammad Nūr al-'Arabī's efforts, his version of the
Malāmatī teaching gained a wide acceptance in Macedonia, espe-
cially in Monastir and Skoplije. At Strumica, his daughter headed a
small community of female Malāmīs. A number of Malāmī *tekke*s
were found in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. During his frequent
visits to Istanbul, Muḥammad Nūr al-'Arabī managed to attract to

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[46] Ibid., p. 481.

his teaching a number of members of the Ottoman ruling élite, including the Young Turks. Due to its lack of a complex institutional superstructure that characterized the other *ṭarīqas* of the late Ottoman Empire, the Malāmatiyya emerged practically unscathed from Ataturk's 1925 campaign to abolish Sufi organizations and to confiscate their property. Muḥammad Nūr al-'Arabī's disciples continued to spread his teaching among those who were eager to hear it. Even today, some representatives of the Ottoman artistic and religious élite continue to identify themselves as Malāmīs.[47]

The Bektāshiyya

The history of the Bektāshiyya begins with the arrival in Anatolia from Khurāsān of its semi-legendary founder Ḥājjī Bektāsh Walī in the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century. Little is known about his background, although some researchers associate him with the *bābās*, that is, the itinerant preachers who spread Islam in Anatolia among the recently immigrated Turkic nomadic and seminomadic tribes.[48] According to some reports, Ḥājjī Bektāsh was a follower of Bābā Ilyās and Bābā Isḥāq, who led a popular revolt that shook the Saljuq State in 638/1240. When the rebel troops were demolished by a Saljuq army in 638/1240, Ḥājjī Bektāsh was one of the few survivors, who continued to propagate his version of Islam—a peculiar mixture of Sufism, Shī'ism, and Turkic folk beliefs[49]—among the nomadic and settled Turkic tribesmen of Anatolia. Despite the overall obscurity and unreliability of the sources, his links to the Turkic tribal milieu do not cause serious doubts. While Ḥājjī Bektāsh provided the movement with his name, its true organizational founder was Bālim Sulṭān, who was appointed as the head of the chief Bektāshī *tekke* by the Ottoman sultan Bāyazīd II in 907/1501. Around that time or later, the order split into two factions. One faction, the Ṣofiyān, was associated with the presumed descendants of Ḥājjī Bektāsh, called Chelebī, who occupied the order's main lodge between Qirshehir and Qayseri. The other faction, known as Bābāgān, was ruled by the so-called Dede-Bābā ("grand master"), who was elected

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[47] Ibid., p. 483.
[48] I. Mélikoff, "L'ordre des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach," in: A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya*, Istanbul, 1995, p. 3; cf. S. Faroqhi, "The Bektashis: A report on current research," in: ibid., pp. 9 and 13–15.
[49] Mélikoff, "L'ordre," p. 4.

from among the eligible celibate Bektāshī preachers (*bābās*). Members of this faction derived their genealogy from Bālim Sulṭān.[50] The Ottoman administration was concerned first and foremost with Ṣofiyān-Chelebī faction that controlled most of the order's *zāwiyyas* and all but ignored the Bābāgān, who are practically absent from official records.[51] The Chelebīs were particularly active in the provinces, e.g., in Albania, which was home to many prominent members of the order.[52] Most of the *zāwiyyas* were run by local Chelebī families, who, by and large, acknowledged the tutelage of the chief *zāwiyya* of Ḥājjī Bektāsh. The headship of all such *zāwiyyas* was, some exceptions apart, hereditary, although the successor had to secure the approval of the Ottoman administration and of the shaykh of the chief *zāwiyya*. This centralized control was essential to prevent the local branches of the order from being "hijacked" by all manner of "extremist" religious groups, which were lumped together under the name of "Kizilbāsh" or "Ghulāt." These groups, which operated in the countryside and which were notorious for their heterodoxy (e.g., they held ʿAlī, the cousin of the Prophet, to be a manifestation of God), can be called "the rural Bektāshīs."[53] The requirement to seek approval from the shaykh of the chief Bektāshī *zāwiyya* allowed him to weed out candidates with perceived or real "extremist" tendencies and thereby to assure the acceptance of the order by the powers-that-be.[54]

The major Bektāshī *tekke*s consisted of the following parts: the lodge proper with an oratory; the bakery and the women's quarters; the kitchen; and the hostel for travelers and visitors. The *tekkes* and *zāwiyyas* were supported through pious endowments, usually tracts of land. For the most part, such endowments were barely enough to provide for the needs of the *tekke's* inhabitants and their visitors, although there were several wealthy *tekke*s that exported large quantities of grain.[55]

The order's political importance was determined by its close links to the Janissary Corps, whose warriors regarded Ḥājjī Bektāsh as

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[50] J. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, London, 1937, pp. 56–58; N. Clayer, "La Bektachiyya," in: A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Le voies d'Allah*, Paris, 1996, pp. 468–469.

[51] Faroqhi, "The Bektashis," p. 19.

[52] Clayer, "La Bektachiyya," p. 470.

[53] Mélikoff, "L'ordre," p. 6.

[54] Faroqhi, "The Bektashis," pp. 19–20.

[55] Idem., *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien*, Vienna, 1981, pp. 53–55.

their patron saint. When the sultan Maḥmūd II decided to disband the Janissaries in 1241/1826, many of the Bektāshī centers were closed and their properties confiscated by Ottoman officials or given to other orders, primarily the Naqshbandiyya.[56] For several decades the Bektāshīs led a semiclandestine existence until they experienced a revival under the sultan 'Abd al-Majīd in the middle of the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Its openness to different belief systems made it a vehicle for the reforms instituted first by the "Young Ottomans" and later by the "Young Turks". After the nationalist revolution of 1908, the branches of the order in the Balkans parted company with their fellow Bektāshīs of the metropolis, signaling the advent of nationalist ideology as the new source of allegiance and social mobilization.[57]

Although during the Turkish War of Independence the Bektashis threw in their lot with Muṣṭafā Kemāl Ataturk, they were not spared during his anti-Sufi campaign of 1925. The order's possessions in Turkey, including the chief *zāwiyya*, were confiscated by the government. In Albania, up to 80% of the Bektāshī institutions were destroyed during the Greek occupation of 1912; many of its leaders were murdered or sent into exile. After a brief revival, the Bektāshīs of Albania fell victim to the Albanian communist coup of 1944, which led to the massive confiscation of the order's property and the execution of some of its leaders. An Albanian shaykh, Bābā Rejebī, who had fled from Albania to Cairo, later founded a Bektāshī *tekke* in the Detroit area (USA), which was, until the Albanian anti-Communist revolution of 1990, one of the two or three remaining Bektāshī centers in the entire world.[58] Following the collapse of the atheist regime in Tirana, the Bektāshiyya of Albania has been experiencing a revival that is, however, impeded by the drastic economic and political conditions of the post-revolutionary period.

The origin of many Bektāshī beliefs and practices is still an object of heated scholarly debates. While all students of the Bektāshiyya agreed that the most salient feature of its teachings is their syncretism, they emphasized the role of different elements in the formation of its world-outlook. Some scholars stressed Christian elements, which are evident in the Bektāshī initiation rituals (e.g., the distribution of

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[56] Idem, "The Bektashis," p. 21; Clayer, "La Bektachiyya," p. 469.
[57] Ibid., p. 470.
[58] Ibid., pp. 471–472.

cheese, wine and bread) as well as in its everyday practices (e.g., the confession of sins before the spiritual leader). Others have traced its beliefs back to Shīʿism, pointing to the Bektāshī veneration of ʿAlī and the other ʿAlid martyrs as well as to the Bektāshī secret belief that ʿAlī, Muḥammad and God form a trinity. Still others have emphasized the similarity between Bektāshī teachings and the secret cabbalistic speculations of the heretical Ḥurūfiyya sect and the order's affinity with the radical groups of the Kizilbāsh Turkomans that believed in the divinity of their leaders.[59] Finally, all investigators agree that the Bektāshiyya integrated many pre-Islamic Turkic cults, which were current among its first Turkoman followers, with various Sufi trends, for instance, a belief in the Sufi path as a means to attain perfection and to enter into the presence of God. This intricate intertwining of diverse elements has given the Bektāshiyya its recognizable Turkic character and its unique syncretism.

Sufi Institutions in Moghul India

Here, as in the other parts of the Muslim world, we find a great variety of names for Sufi practices and institutions with slight variations of nuance: *ṭarīqa, maslak, sulūk, khānwāda, silsila, dāʾira, ṭāʾfa,* and *ḥalqa.* The word *ṭarīqa* may signify a specific mystical discipline and method, for instance, *ṭarīqa-yi mujāhada* (exerting oneself on the mystical path) and *ṭarīqa-yi mushāhada* (the path of contemplation leading to a vision of God), or a mystical school and organization (e.g., the Chishtī *silsila,* the *ṭarīqa-yi Khwājagān,* the *dāʾira* of Shāh ʿAlam Allāh or Rāē Barēlī). Finally, it may denote any minor trend within a major mystic order, such as "Muḥammad's path" (*ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadī*) or the "Zubayrī" branch (*ṭarīqa-yi Zubayriyya*) of the Naqshbandī brotherhood. Interestingly, the very term "Sufism" was first coined for European languages by British Orientalists based in India.

The following main brotherhoods have been particularly active and popular in India: Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Qādiriyya, Shaṭṭāriyya, Naqshbandiyya, Kubrawiyya, Madāriyya, Qalandariyya and ʿAydarūsiyya.[60] In the course of their development, these major orders gave rise to numerous subbranches. Thus from the Chishtiyya there

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[59] Mélikoff, "L'ordre," pp. 4–5; Faroqhi, "The Bektashis," pp. 23–26.
[60] For a comprehensive tableau of Indian Sufism see A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India,* New Delhi, 1978.

arose the Niẓāmiyya, the Ṣābiriyya, the Gīsūdarāziyya, the Ḥusāmiyya, the Mīnāʾiyya and the Fakhriyya branches; the Kubrāwiyya *ṭarīqa* gave birth to the Hamadāniyya of Kashmīr and the Firdawsiyya of Dehli and Bihār; the Naqshbandiyya gave rise to the Baqiyya, Muḥammadiyya, Zubayriyya, Maẓhariyya, etc.

While such *ṭarīqa*s as the Chishtiyya and the Naqshbandiyya were spread all over the country, there were also regional, localized brotherhoods. Thus, the Suhrawardiyya were active mainly in the Punjab and Sind; the followers of the Shaṭṭāriyya concentrated in Mandu, Gwāliyār and Aḥmadabād; the Firdawsiyya *ṭarīqa* was for the most part confined to Bihār; the ʿAydarūsiyya order recruited its adherents in Gujarat and the Deccan; and the Mādariyya and the Qalandariyya orders developed mainly in parts of the Punjab and Awadh.

The Chishtiyya and the Suhrawardiyya were the first *ṭarīqas* to reach India. Introduced by Khwāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Ḥasan Chishtī (d. 634/1236), the Chishtiyya order thrived under the leadership of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ of Dehli (d. 725/1325), who gave it an all-India status. His numerous disciples set up Chishtiyya centers all over the country.[61]

Niẓām al-Dīn's grandfather migrated to India from Bukhārā in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion. He was brought up by his pious mother Bībī Zulaykha, who molded his thought and character. After completing his studies in various parts of India and receiving a Chishtī *khirqa*, Niẓām al-Dīn settled at Delhi, where he spent the next fifty years propagating the teachings of the Chishtiyya order. According to one testimony, he had a large following and sent some seven hundred deputies to different parts of the country, where they established numerous Chishtī *khānaqā*s. Upon his death, Muḥammad Tughluq, the Turkic ruler of the Delhi sultanate, built an imposing mausoleum over his tomb.

Niẓām al-Dīn preferred to stay aloof from the court and the ruling classes. His deputies were strictly prohibited from entering the sultan's service. A sophisticated scholar with a profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, Niẓām al-Dīn was held in high regard not only by Sufis, but by established ulema as well. Niẓām al-Dīn's originality lies in his social attitudes. For instance, he emphasized the

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[61] C. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, history, and politics at a South Asian Sufi center*, Albany, NY, 1992.

service of the poor and the needy over against engaging in formal prayers and spiritual exercises. His own lodge became a welfare center where free meals were served to all visitors. He also distributed money to the poor and the needy on a very large scale. His charitable activities and sympathy for the needs of the masses earned him great popularity in the Delhi sultanate and beyond. Niẓām al-Dīn left many disciples, who propagated his ideas in various provinces of India: shaykh Chirāgh in Delhi, shaykh Munawwar in the Panjab, Burhān al-Dīn Gharīb in the Deccan, Mawlānā Ḥusām al-Dīn in Gujarat, and Mawlānā Sirāj al-Dīn in Bengal.

The Suhrawardiyya *ṭarīqa*, which was introduced into India by Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā' (d. 661/1262), reached the peak of its popularity under Shaykh Rukn al-Dīn Abū 'l-Fatḥ (d. 735/1334) and Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān (d. 788/1386). Though both Indian *ṭarīqas* looked to Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī's *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* as their guide, they differed in their organization of communal life and relations with the state. While the early Chishtī shaykhs refused to accept endowments of land or donations from the government and relied exclusively on the pious gifts of private individuals, their Suhrawardī counterparts had no compunctions about mixing up with the members of the ruling class and benefiting from their largesse.[62]

The Firdawsiyya *ṭarīqa*, which traced its genealogy back to the Kubrawiyya of Central Asia, was introduced into India by Shaykh Badr al-Dīn of Samarqand. Initially, its shaykhs were based in Dehli, but later moved to Bihār Sharīf. There the order enjoyed great popularity under shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manērī (d. 782/1381), who was both a meticulous collector and transmitter of *ḥadīth* and a sophisticated exponent of Sufi categories and concepts. His most comprehensive work was a commentary on the popular Sufi catechism, the *Adab al-murīdīn* by Abū 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, which was discussed earlier in this study.

The Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* was established in India by Sayyid Muḥammad Makhdūm Gīlānī (d. 923/1517), and flourished under shaykh Dāwūd Kirmānī (d. 982/1574), Shāh Qumays Gīlānī (d. 998/1584), Miyān Mīr (d. 1045/1635) and Mullā Shāh (d. 1072/1661).

The Shaṭṭāriyya *ṭarīqa* was introduced into India by Shāh 'Abdallāh (d. 890/1485), a descendant of shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī.

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[62] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 342 and 352.

On reaching India, Shāh ʿAbdallāh undertook a lightning tour of the country. Clad in royal dress, he was accompanied by a throng of his disciples wearing military garb. His arrival in a given locality was announced by the loud beat of drums. Ultimately, he settled at Mandu, where he established the first Shaṭṭārī *khānaqā*. Under his disciples the *ṭarīqa* acquired a great following in Bengal, Djawnpūr and in northern India. Under shaykh Muḥammad Ghawth of Gwāliyār (d. 970/1562) the *ṭarīqa* received a compact organization and a distinctive ideological direction. A prolific writer and eloquent preacher, he established good relations with the Hindus, whom he sought to accommodate by inviting them to his *khānaqā* and by cultivating bulls and cows. Among his lieutenants was shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn ʿAlawī, whose seminary at Aḥmadabād attracted students from all over the country. His teaching was based on the *daʿwat-i samāʾ* (control of heavenly bodies that influence human destiny) and recommended internalization of religious rites. The Shaṭṭāriyya maintained friendly relations with secular rulers and was involved in local politics. Shaykh Muḥammad Ghawth helped Bābur in his conquest of Gwāliyār; in a similar vein, he and his elder brother shaykh Bahlūl were on friendly terms with Bābur's successor, Sultan Humāyūn (r. 937/1530–963/1556), whom they instructed in the intricacies of *daʿwat-i samāʾ*. Emperors Akbar and Jahāngīr built imposing shrines over the tombs of some Shaṭṭārī shaykhs. However, after the death of Muḥammad Ghawth, the influence of the Shaṭṭāriyya was overshadowed by its principal rivals, the Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya. In the later history of Sufism it played only a marginal role.

In the tenth/sixteenth century, the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa* was introduced into India by Khwāja Bāqī Bi-llāh (d. 1012/1603). It reached its high watermark under his chief disciple, shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, whose career we have discussed earlier in this study. For about two centuries it was the most influential and popular *ṭarīqa* in India and many of the eminent figures of the time like Shāh Walī Allāh, Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān, Shāh Ghulām ʿAlī and others, belonged to it. A member of the Naqshbadniyya, Khwāja Mīr Nāṣir (d. 1172/1758), founded a new branch of the order called *ṭarīqa-yi muḥammadī*. Another prominent Naqshbandī teacher, Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd of Rāē Barēlī (d. 1247/1831) instituted a new way of mystical discipline, known as *ṭarīqa-yi nubuwwat*. It encouraged its followers to emulate the Prophet's behavior through a close study of *ḥadīth*. Under Shāh Ghulām ʿAlī, the influence of the Indian branch of Naqshbandī order, which had

come to be known as the Mujaddidiyya, reached many other Islamic countries. As we have mentioned in the chapter on the Naqshbandiyya, his Kurdish disciple, Khālid Shahrazūrī, played an important role in popularizing the Mujaddidiyya teaching in Syria, from whence it spread to other parts of the Muslim world, including the Caucasus.

Apart from these major *ṭarīqa*s, which have determined the physiognomy of Islamic mysticism in India, we find some minor Sufi groups, such as the Maghribī brotherhood of shaykh Aḥmad Khattū Maghribī of Aḥmadabād (d. 851/1447) and the Nūrbakhshī order that was spread in Kashmīr.

The heyday of the Indian *ṭarīqa*s falls on the Moghul period. Contemporary sources mention about 2,000 Sufi *ribāṭ*s and *khānaqā*s in Dehli and its surroundings during the tenth/sixteenth century. They also provide long lists of prominent Sufi masters who belonged to various spiritual lines and local Sufi organizations.

Indian *ṭarīqa*s have a number of distinguishing features. First, except for the Naqshbandiyya, most of them adhered to the doctrine of the oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which they traced back to Ibn ʿArabī and his commentators. To counter what they regarded as the dangerous social implications of this doctrine, some Naqshbandī leaders propounded the doctrine of "oneness of witnessing" (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). It emphasized that the unitive experiences of the mystic do not necessarily reflect the real state of affairs in the universe and that a strict distinction must be maintained between God and his creatures. Second, except for the early Chishtī masters, the leaders of all the *ṭarīqa*s were eager to maintain close relations with the rulers and the bureaucracy in an effort to influence state politics and as a means of gaining access to state donations. Third, while the Naqshbandiyya required of its followers to engage in rigorous self-negating exercises aimed at subduing one's ego, one's flesh, and one's base instincts, the Chishtiyya and Suhrawardiyya were more concerned with inculcating in their followers the feeling of underlying unity of the cosmos and of tranquility in the face of adversity through complex meditation techniques. Some Sufi authors compared the rigorist attitude that prevailed among the Naqshbandiyya with the strict discipline of the British Army. Fourth, whereas the Chishtiyya relied on the oral teachings of their founders for the propagation of their teachings, the Naqshbandiyya tended to use epistles (*maktūbāt*) to propagate their tenets among their actual and potential followers. The Qādiriyya, on the other hand, made extensive use of poetry to disse-

minate their ideas. Fifth, the Chishtiyya *ṭarīqa* stressed communal
living in special dormitories (*jamāʿat khāna*), whereas other *ṭarīqa*s
constructed *khānaqā*s and hospices with provision for individual accom-
modation. Sixth, the Chishtiyya looked upon effort for social wel-
fare and helping the needy as a means to achieve spiritual progress
and to obtain the pleasure of God; other *ṭarīqa*s, particularly the Naqsh-
bandiyya, believed in rigorous individual discipline and arduous ascetic
exercises to help them to reach God. As a result, the Indian Chishtīs
are sometimes described as going from Man to God; in contrast, the
Naqshbandī path is described as leading from God to Man. Seventh,
the Indian *ṭarīqa*s practiced different types of *dhikr*. While the Naqsh-
baniyya insisted on the silent *dhikr* "of the heart," the Qādiriyya prac-
ticed both the loud recitation of God's names (*dhikr-i jahr*) and the
quiet *dhikr* (*dhikr-i khāfī*). Eighth, the Shaṭṭāriyya sought to internal-
ize mystical discipline and to work out an ideological integration of
Hindu and Muslim mysticism. The vivid example of an attempt at
Hindu-Muslim rapprochement was shaykh Muḥammad Ghawth's
translation of the *Amritkund* as "The Sea of Life" (*Baḥr al-ḥayāt*). It
endeavored to provide an ideological foundation for the integration
of two religious traditions. Ninth, in the beginning, each Indian Sufi
belonged to a single *ṭarīqa* and structured his spiritual life according
to its principles. "Hold one door and hold it fast" was the motto of
shaykh Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyāʾ, who was approvingly quoted by the
great Indian Sufi Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ. In the subsequent centuries,
*murīd*s started to join several brotherhoods and spiritual lines at a
time—a practice that impaired the stability of Sufi institutions. As
multiple membership became common among Indian Sufis, attempts
were made at reconciling conflicting points of different Sufi teach-
ings and practices. Amīr Abū ʾl-ʿUlā Akbarabādī tried to combine
the doctrines and practical teachings of the Chishtiyya and the
Naqshbandiyya. In the similar vein, Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi viewed
the difference between *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* as merely
a difference of perspectives that refer to the same underlying truth.
This great Muslim reformer provided an illuminating comparison
between the doctrines and practices of different Indian *ṭarīqa*s in his
books *al-Intibāh fī salāsil-i awliyāʾ Allāh* and *al-Qawl al-jamīl*. Almost
every *ṭarīqa* had one central book on which its ideology was based:
the *Fawāʾid al-fuʾād* for the Chishtiyya; the *Maktūbāt-i Imām Rabbānī*
for the Naqshbandiyya; the *Jawāhir-i khamsa* for the Shaṭṭāriyya; and
the *Maktūbāt* of Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manērī for the Firdawsiyya.

Sufism In Indonesia

The first concrete evidence of Sufi practices in Indonesia are attested
in the sources from the late tenth/sixteenth century, that is, at least
three centuries after the spread of Islam to this part of the world.
This and the following century (eleventh/seventeenth) witnessed a
rapid spread of Sufi values and practices among the local popula-
tions, especially in the flourishing Muslim sultanate of Acheh (Atjeh)
in northern Sumatra. Here we find the first prominent exponent of
Sufism in the Indonesian Archipelago, Ḥamza Fanṣūrī, who was
active in the second half of the tenth/sixteenth century.[63] An adher-
ent of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and of the seven stages of exist-
ence, as expounded by Ibn ʿArabī and his follower ʿAbd al-Karīm
al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428), Fanṣūrī is famous for his mystical poems of
great lyrical power. Apart from his native Malay, he had a masterly
grasp of both Arabic and Persian, which he used to disseminate Sufi
doctrines among his compatriots. He also wrote his own reflections
on such standard themes of speculative Sufism as the four stages of
the mystical path (*sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa*, *ḥaqīqa* and *maʿrifa*), the nature of
existence (*wujūd*), the divine attributes, and mystical rapture. His ter-
minology reveals his indebtedness to the Sufi discourses of al-Ghazālī,
Ibn ʿArabī, Rūmī, and Jāmī.[64] Fanṣūrī's precise Sufi affiliation remains
obscure, although his own comments suggest that he belonged to the
Qādiriyya order.[65] Commentaries on several of Ḥamza Fanṣūrī's works
were written by his disciple Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrāʾī (d. 1039/1630).
Little is known about his life until his quick rise to prominence in
the first decade of the eleventh/seventeenth century. During that
time, Shams al-Dīn served as a religious advisor and spiritual direc-
tor of the powerful sultan Iskandar Muda of Atjeh, whom he inducted
into the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood. On the death of Iskandar
Muda in 1046/1636 and the accession of Iskandar II in 1048/1637,
Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrāʾī lost his position to the Indo-Arab scholar
Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (d. 1068/1658). An ardent adherent of the
Indian Sufi reformer Aḥmad Sirhindī, al-Ranīrī vigorously attacked
both al-Samatrāʾī and his shaykh, Ḥamza Fanṣūrī, on account of
their espousal of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of oneness of being (*waḥdat*

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[63] For a possible date of his death see S. M. Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamza
Fansuri*, Kuala Lumpur, 1970, pp. 11–14.
[64] Ibid., pp. 14 and 142–175.
[65] Ibid., pp. 10–11.

al-wujūd). Citing the dangerous social and political implications of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, al-Ranīrī ordered Shams al-Dīn's writings to be burned and several of his disciples to be executed.[66] Some of the works, however, have survived and come down to us. They were written in both Arabic and Malay. Of his Arabic corpus, his "Jewel of True Realities" (*Jawhar al-ḥaqā'iq*) is especially important. Written in the Ibn 'Arabī tradition, it breathes a spirit of intense religious devotion and shows a wide range of Sufi learning, including what may be the earliest citation of the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in South East Asian literature. This summary of the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī and his school of thought played a major role in popularizing the latter's legacy in Sumatra, Java and in the Indonesian region generally. It gained greater currency in this part of the Muslim world than the more complex system of his teacher, Ḥamza Fanṣūrī, who relied on the version of Ibn 'Arabī's teaching that was mediated by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī. From the eleventh/seventeenth century onward, the orders in Indonesia developed under the influence of teachers in Arabia, like the Medinan scholars Aḥmad Qushāshī (d. 1071/1660), Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1102/1691), and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sammān (d. 1189/ 1775). These scholars had multiple Sufi affiliations, which they passed on to their numerous students from the Indonesian Archipelago. Among these students we find 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (d. end of the eleventh/seventeenth century), who spent nineteen years in the Ḥijāz. Upon his return to the Sultanate of Atjeh, he became a vigorous propagator of the teachings of the Shaṭṭāriyya order. His best-known work, "The Support of Those in Need" (*'Umdat al-muḥtājīn*), is a textbook of practical Sufism that provides detailed information about the methods of *dhikr*, the formulas of Sufi litanies (*rawātib*), and breath-control to be used by the participants in mystical concerts. On the doctrinal plane, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf was a moderate follower of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators (especially 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī), whose concepts of the seven stages of existence and of the perfect man he discussed in his works written in both Malay and Arabic. His written legacy includes a book on Shāfi'ī *fiqh* and a Malay translation of al-Bayḍāwī's popular commentary on the Qur'ān, which is still used in Sumatra and Malaya today.

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[66] For a discussion of the nature of Ranīrī's opposition to both Ḥamza and his followers see ibid., pp. 31–65.

Initially, the followers of the Indonesian brotherhoods seem to have been restricted to court circles, where the mystical concepts of Ibn ʿArabī and his school, like that of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), were used by the rulers to legitimate their power. Only from the twelfth/eighteenth century onward the *ṭarīqa*s seem to have acquired more adherents among the common people. Although in themselves not politically oriented, in the thirteenth/nineteenth century the *ṭarīqa*s sometimes provided organizational networks for anti-colonial rebellions. As a result of this, the mystical orders were much feared by the Dutch colonial administration. However, this political function of the *ṭarīqas* was drastically diminished by the rise of the nationalist movements at the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century.

By the turn of the century, the brotherhoods came under the attack of reform-oriented Muslims in Indonesia, whose critique of their teachings and practices led to fierce debates, for instance between adherents and opponents of the Naqshbandiyya. Despite these anti-Sufi campaigns, around 1930 new orders were introduced into the Archipelago, namely the Tijāniyya and the Idrīsiyya, which were regarded as being more compatible with the values advocated by Islamic reformism.

In addition to the *ṭarīqa*s that are known throughout the entire Muslim world, in Indonesia there are also a number of indigenous orders that have sometimes indulged in pre-Islamic and non-Islamic practices. This led the largest Muslim organization in the country, the traditionalist *Nahdatul Ulama*, to establish the *Jamʿiyyah Ahli Tarekat Muʾtabarah* in 1957. This association unites all brotherhoods in Indonesia of which the *silsila*, or chain of affiliation, is regarded as sound, and which do not advocate non-Islamic, anti-Sharīʿa practices. This association, insists that a person can no longer be regarded as Muslim if he participates in an order that is not officially recognized.

In present-day Indonesia, some *ṭarīqa*s have assumed new functions to provide for contemporary needs; among the most well-known is the use of *ṭarīqa* practices to overcome drug addiction and to cure certain mental diseases. Furthermore, the *ṭarīqa*s may serve as the replacement of the traditional social networks that have disappeared through migration to the cities. Although no quantitative data are available, nowadays, possibly as a result of these new functions, the orders seem to have gained a new vitality.

Sufism in the Caucasus

Sufism was a comparative latecomer to the Caucasus, where it had practically no influence among the local population until the late twelfth/eighteenth century. Although some historians insist that already the first revolt of the local tribal societies against the Russian conquest of the Northern Caucasus led by the Chechen Manṣūr Ushurma (1199/1785–1206/1791) was inspired, at least in part, by Sufi (Naqshbandī?) ideology, there is practically no evidence to support this assumption. At the turn of the thirteenth/nineteenth centuries, some local Muslims, who had undergone a course of Sufi training in Iran or in Central Asia, started to propagate Sufi teachings and practices among local tribal societies. In the case of the later rebellion against the Russians, which was led by the Dāghestānī Imām Shāmil (1250/1834–1276/1859), Sufi influences are indeed undeniable. The whole resistance movement initiated by this talented Dāghestānī (Avar) leader came to be known among his Russian opponents as "muridism," implying that his warriors ("murīds") were simultaneously his Sufi disciples.

Born in the village of Gimrāh (Gimry) to a family of an Avar peasant, Shāmil was named ʿAlī at birth. A sickly child, who was often ill, his original name, according to a local belief, was changed to Shamūīl (i.e. Samuel) to "repel" sickness. This was the name Shāmil used in his letters and official documents. Contemporary sources, however, usually styled him Shāmil—a name under which he is known in Russia and in the West. Already in his youth he overcame his ailments and grew into an exceptionally strong, tall (over six feet) and athletic young man, famed for his fencing skills, bravery, and horsemanship. He also showed remarkable talent for religious learning: by the age of twenty Shāmil had successfully completed an elementary course of Arabic grammar and rhetoric under the guidance of renowned Dāghestānī ulema. He then proceeded to study Qurʾān interpretation, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and speculative theology (*kalām*) with his friend and distant relative Ghāzī Muḥammad. Both young men were introduced to the Sufi teachings of the Nashbandiyya-Khālidiyya, which were propagated in Dāghestān by Muḥammad al-Yarāghī and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumuqī. Yet, in contrast to their quietist teacher Jamāl al-Dīn, both Ghāzī Muḥammad and his younger friend Shāmil were anxious to enforce the Sharīʿa actively among the mountaineers who were still attached to their tribal customs

('*ādāt*). Presenting themselves as religious reformers, they attacked such widespread vices as drunkenness, the use of tobacco, "indecent" intermingling of the sexes, and similar "non-Islamic" practices. With the Russian forces inexorably closing in on Dāghestān, Ghāzī Muḥammad, against the express wish of his Naqshbandī master Jamāl al-Dīn, declared a *jihād* against the infidel Russians. When in late 1829 several Avar communities proclaimed him the first imām of Dāghestān, Shāmil became his trusted lieutenant. In 1832, after three years of fierce fighting, Ghāzī Muḥammad and his closest followers known as *murīdūn* (Russ. *myuridi*) were surrounded and slaughtered in their stronghold at Gimrāh—an episode from which Shāmil emerged as one of only two survivors. Under the second imām, Ḥamza(t) Bek, Shāmil waged a pitiless struggle against the local nobility and their Russian backers. Following Ḥamza's assassination in 1834 by the vengeful Avar nobles, Shāmil was proclaimed the third imām of Dāghestān by Avar ulema and dignitaries at 'Ashilṭa. In 1834–1836, despite the stiff resistance of the local ruling families and the continuing Russian intervention, he managed to establish firm control over most of Dāghestān. His military talents were recognized by his Russian foes who declared him "enemy number one" of the Russian colonial administration in the Caucasus. Apprehensive of Shāmil's growing influence on the warlike tribes of nearby Chechnya, the Russians launched a massive military expedition against his mountain stronghold at Akhulgoḥ. After a series of bloody engagements en route, the Russian troops finally besieged Shāmil and his men in the fortress of Akhulgoḥ. When he refused to surrender after several week of fighting, the irate Russians massacred his garrison. Miraculously, Shāmil again made an almost incredible escape down the lofty cliffs under the enemy's very nose. Of the two wives with him during the siege one was killed alongside his best men. Contrary to the Russians' expectations, his spirit was far from broken and he found powerful allies among the warlike Chechens who were enraged by the continued Russian encroachment on their independence. In a matter of months Shāmil recovered and even further expanded his power, whereupon together with his lieutenant Tāshū Ḥājjī he delivered several shattering blows to the Russians in Chechnya and Dāghestān in 1840–1842. Exasperated by these reversals, tsar Nicholas I ordered an all-out campaign to crush Shāmil's resistance in 1844. Organized and led by Prince Vorontsov, the 10,000-strong expedition against Shāmil's stronghold at Dārghiyya

was an almost total disaster, showing that the Imām had learned
well the lessons of Akhulgoḥ and adjusted his strategy accordingly.
With his prestige at its peak, Shāmil endeavored to extend his rule
to Kabarda and to unify the mountain tribes of the Caucasus against
the Russians. His ambitious plans, however, were frustrated by the
brilliant strategy of general Freytag, the inaptitude of his lieutenant
Nūr ʿAlī, and the resultant failure of the Kabardians to join his
army. More importantly, this campaign demonstrated the vast dis-
parity between Shāmil's resources and those of the Russian Empire—
a disparity that would eventually lead to his undoing. Having realized
the futility of the "one-blow" strategy, the Russians started to imple-
ment a more methodical, if less offensive strategy, known as "the
system of the axe." It consisted in steadily encircling Shāmil by a
network of defensive lines and military posts aimed at cutting him
off from Chechnya—his major source of food supplies and man-
power. Throughout 1846–1849, the Russians were erecting fortifications
in, and cutting roads through, the impenetrable forests of Greater
Chechnya. Simultaneously they "pacified" the population of the fer-
tile Chechen plains, chasing those who refused to submit into the
barren mountains. In the meantime, another Russian force attempted
to destroy Shāmil's strongholds in Central Dāghestān—a goal for
which they paid an enormous price in money, ammunition, and
human lives. The Russian successes, however, proved short-lived.
Once the Russian troops had withdrawn, the Imām quickly rebuilt
his fortifications and invaded Southern Dāghestān, where he found
support among the local free communities that hoped to get rid of
the oppressive Russian rule. In a dramatic reversal of roles, Shāmil
invested several Russian fortresses, and was poised to achieve a deci-
sive victory. However, his plans were frustrated by the heroic stand
of a small Russian garrison at Akhty, whose dogged resistance gave
the Russians the opportunity to regroup and to repel Shāmil's levies.
On the Chechen front, Shāmil tried to forestall Russian clearing
operations by strengthening his line of defense and by deploying
against the Russian troops his cherished regular infantry corps built
on the model of the Ottoman *niẓām-i jadīd*. The latter were soundly
defeated on March 11th, 1851 by colonel Baryatinskii, forcing Shāmil
to revert to the tried guerilla tactics and to relinquish any hope of
defeating the Russian army in a pitched battle. Turning his atten-
tion to Dāghestān, Shāmil sent his best military commander and life-
long rival Ḥajjī Murād to Russian-controlled Qaytaq and Ṭabasarān

in an attempt to rouse their "pacified" populations. This campaign
brought little result, but further aggravated the long-standing distrust
between the Imām and his chief lieutenant (*mudīr*), whose valor was
celebrated in Tolstoy's novel. Sentenced to death on Shāmil's instance,
Ḥajjī Murād defected to Russians but was soon killed during an
attempt to escape back to the mountains, relieving the Imām of the
unpleasant necessity to execute one of his most popular command-
ers. In 1851–1853, the hostilities, in which Shāmil took part per-
sonally, were centered on Chechnya with results generally favorable
for the Russians. Throughout 1853, faced with the prospect of a war
with the Ottomans, the Russians were unable to capitalize on their
earlier successes, giving Shāmil a much-needed respite which he spent
in his fortified headquarters at Vedān (Vedeno). Rumors about an
impending Russo-Turkish war infused the Imām and his followers
with the determination to continue their struggle under the leader-
ship of, and with the help from, the Ottoman sultan. In his letters
Shāmil assured the Ottoman ruler of his full support and even
promised to effect a junction with the Ottoman troops at Tiflīs.
Although somewhat offended by the haughty tone of the sultan's
replies, who treated Shāmil as his minor vassal, the Imām remained
loyal to the person whom he viewed as the supreme ruler of all
Muslims. Before and during the war, he kept the Russians on their
tiptoes by raiding the territories under their control. On July 15,
1854 the Imām's troops led by his son Ghāzī Muḥammad swept in
on the Alazān valley and Tsinandali, carrying off a rich booty and
many prisoners. Among them were the granddaughters of the last
Kart'lo-Kakhet'i tsar George XII, princesses Tchavtchavadze and
Orbeliani. This raid, in which Shāmil took no direct part, brought
him great notoriety not only in Russia but in the West as well. On
the positive side, he was able to exchange the princesses for his elder
son Jamāl al-Dīn, who had been surrendered to the Russians as a
hostage during the desperate defense of Akhulgoḥ in 1839. However,
this episode proved to be extremely damaging to Shāmil's reputa-
tion in Europe, where his treatment of the royal captives was per-
ceived by many as an act of "a fanatic and a barbarian with whom
it will be difficult for us, and even for the Porte, to entertain any
credible or satisfactory relations." Offended by the insulting repri-
mands he received from the Ottomans and their European allies in
the aftermath of this affair, Shāmil relinquished any hope of obtain-
ing their support in his struggle against the Russians. The result of

the Crimean War, though by no means favorable to Russia, came as a shock to Shāmil and his following, who could no longer count on Ottoman military support and were left face-to-face with their formidable foe. The Russian command, on the other hand, could now turn their undivided attention to the Caucasus. In the spring of 1857, the Russians led by the newly appointed viceroy of the Caucasus prince Baryatinskii and several talented generals, started methodically to mop up Shāmil's strongholds in Chechnya. As a result, Shāmil's power-base was drastically reduced, and the few Chechen warriors still loyal to him had to seek refuge in the mountains. The majority of the war-weary Chechens and many Dāghestānī communities abandoned him and submitted to Russian rule. Amidst the general despondency that overcame even his most committed followers, his desperate pleas for help to the Ottomans, the British and the French were left without reply. With the rapid collapse of the mountaineers' resistance, the Imām had no option but to constantly retreat before the Russian advance, abandoning one by one his fortified positions at New Dārghiyya and Vedān. He made his last stand on the top of Mt. Ghunīb surrounded by his family and 400 loyal *murīd*s. Faced with an inevitable destruction, he unconditionally surrendered to the Russians on September 6 (August 25 Old Style) 1859.

In contrast to the earlier leaders of the anti-Russian *jihād* in the Caucasus, namely the Chechen Shaykh Manṣūr and the Avar Ghāzī Muḥammad, Shāmil received an unusually lenient treatment by the jubilant tsar Alexander II and his subjects. With his "misdeeds" against the Russian state all but forgotten, he was paraded through Moscow, St. Petersburg and many lesser Russian cities, repeatedly honored by the tsar, photographed, painted by artists, introduced to Russian high society, and praised in numerous books and articles. A "culture hero" of sorts, he was everywhere greeted by admiring crowds and a curious nobility. For many Russians, still reeling from the Crimean debacle, Shāmil became an emblem for military and colonial victory that reaffirmed Russia's status as an enlightened, powerful, and successful nation. Shāmil, genuinely touched by the attention and hospitality accorded to him by his former foes, seems to have accepted his role of a subdued "noble savage" and even volunteered to swear allegiance to the tsar. He marveled at, and praised, the technological and cultural achievements of Russian civilization and wrote letters to his former supporters, urging them to

stop their resistance and to submit to Russian sovereignty. Upon completing his tour of Russia, he was assigned to residence in Kaluga—a town about 120 miles southwest of Moscow. He lived there in a luxurious mansion with his two wives, three surviving sons, four daughters and their families. In 1866, he was permitted to move to Kiev and in 1869 his request to make a pilgrimage to Mecca was finally granted. En route, he visited the Ottoman sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and the Egyptian vice-roy Ismāʿīl, both of whom gave him a cordial reception and showered him with gifts and money. He died and was buried at Medina in Dhū ʾl-ḥijja 1287/March 1871. Of his three surviving sons (Jamāl al-Dīn died three years after he had returned to his father from Russian captivity), the eldest Ghāzī Muḥammad entered Ottoman service and fought against the Russians in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–78. He died in Mecca in 1903. Shāmil's other son, Muḥammad Shāfiʿī, became a major-general of the Russian army and took up residence in Kazan. His grandson by his youngest son Muḥammad Kāmil, Saʿīd Bek, took an active part in the mountaineers' struggle for independence from Soviet Russia in 1920–1921.

Shāmil and "Muridism": Methodological Problems

Whether Shāmil's struggle (*ghazawāt*) against the Russian conquest of the Caucasus was related to, or directly inspired by, his Sufi background remains a hotly debated issue. Like his predecessors Ghāzī Muḥammad and Ḥamza(t) Bek, who had tried to create a theocratic Sharīʿa state ("imāmate") and to unite the fiercely independent mountaineers against their common Russian enemy, Shāmil was affiliated with the Khālidī branch of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood. The initiatic line of all three imāms stretches back to the Kurdish shaykh Ḍiyā al-Dīn Khālid al-Shahrazūrī (d. in Damascus in 1243/1827), who, in turn, belonged to the influential Mujaddidiyya subdivision of the Naqshbandiyya *ṭarīqa*, founded by the Indian Sufi master Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624). One of Khālid's disciples, shaykh Ismāʿīl al-Kūrdumīrī, propagated the Khālidiyya teaching in the Khānate of Shīrwān in the late 1810s. Ismāʿīl's local deputy shaykh Khāṣṣ Muḥammad al-Shīrwānī introduced the Khālidiyya *ṭarīqa* into Dāghestān, where it won an enthusiastic following. Around 1823, his deputy (*khalīfa*) Muḥammad al-Yarāghī (Mulla Magomet) began

to preach among the Dāghestānī Muslims, exhorting them to adhere strictly to the Sharīʿa, to avoid innovations in religious practice (*bidʿa*), to fight against the enemies of Islam, and, if defeated, emigrate to Islamic lands. All these precepts appear to be in full accord with the central tenets of the Khālidiyya order, although it is not clear whether Muḥammad al-Yarāghī also called the Dāghestānīs to a *jihād* against the Russians. His chief concern was to extirpate the "un-Islamic" customs and beliefs that were still prevalent among the mountaineers and to inculcate in them respect for the norms of the Sharīʿa. Paradoxically, it was not the militant Muḥammad al-Yarāghī, but his retiring and pacifist disciple, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn, who formally initiated Ghāzī Muḥammad and the young Shāmil into the Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya. Shāmil's emphasis on meticulous observance of the Sharīʿa, his open hostility to the "accursed Christians and the despicable Persians (i.e., the Shīʿīs of Persia)," his political activism and unswerving loyalty to the Ottoman sultan, seem to be in line with the teachings of the Khālidiyya as expounded by its founder. Yet, as Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn's opposition to Shāmil's *ghazawāt* and his focus on inward self-perfection rather than on armed struggle show, Shāmil's interpretation of the Khālidī tenets was not the only possible one.

Allied with the issue of Shāmil's motivation is the problem of Neo-Sufism—a term that was coined by Pakistani-born U. S. scholar F. Rahman to describe some activist Sufi-based movements of the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries.[67] Given the Sufi background of the three Dāghestānī imāms as well as of their successors among the Chechens and the Ingush, Caucasian *muridism* may be construed as a regional manifestation of Neo-Sufi ideology. To answer these questions, one has to re-examine the historical sources at our disposal.

Unfortunately, as with many vanquished peoples, the mountaineers of the Caucasus have, until recently, been deprived of the possibility to develop their own concept of history. For more then a century, the history of the Caucasus mountaineers was written for them by their Russian and later Soviet masters, who were, for the most part, biased, patronizing and often outright ignorant of the Muslim subjects' real motives. Moreover, the Russian officers and colonial

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[67] R. S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," in: *Der Islam*, vol. 70 (1993), passim.

administrators, who produced most of the accounts of the Caucasus
and its inhabitants, were captives to the European and Christian
stereotypes and anxieties about Islam and the Muslims, which were
as rife in their age as they are today. Like the French colonial officials
of North Africa who produced a vast body of the *littérature de sur-
veillance*, their Russian counterparts in the Caucasus tended to see
Sufi-led resistance to Europe's "civilizing mission" as the underlying
raison d'être and ultimate goal of mystical brotherhoods. Yet, despite
their ignorance of Sufism's history and doctrines, these colonial writ-
ers were well aware of the remarkable discrepancy between the oth-
erworldly tenets of classical Islamic mysticism and the militant political
activism of some of the orders. In accounting for this discrepancy,
the colonial historians came to view contemporary Sufism as a new
development and a part of the grand Islamic conspiracy against
Europe's mission to pull the Muslim world out of its perceived
stupor and stagnation. No wonder that European colonial adminis-
trators and even some European academics constantly referred to
the contemporary Sufis as "secret societies," "retrograde sectarians,"
"bastards of Islamism," "Islam's Freemasons," or even Muslim
"Jesuits'"—terms that are far more indicative of the metropolis's
obsessive concern with anti-government conspiracies than of the real
Sufi movements on the ground. One consequence of this conspira-
torial view of organized Sufism was the tendency among both European
and Russian writers to juxtapose it with the so-called "scriptural
Islam" of the urban élites, which they considered to be more "civ-
ilized" and consequently more "manageable." This epistemological
dichotomy had an important, if not readily obvious, practical impli-
cation—to drive a wedge into the Muslim anti-colonial resistance,
in accord with the "divide and rule" principle. Hence, numerous
attempts on the part of colonial officials to discredit Shāmil and
other Sufi leaders (e.g., those of the Maghrib) by circulating con-
demnatory *fatwās* that accused them of deviating from the letter of
the Islamic Law or of violating the pious precepts of early Sufis.
Such *fatwās* were usually signed by collaborating ulema or rival Sufi
shaykhs. The perceived disparity between Sufism and "scritural"
Islam is thrown into a high relief in the colonial taxonomy of Sufi
movements that emphasized the purportedly unbridgeable gap between
them. Thus, French colonial administrators continually spoke of the
ordres, khouan or *ikhwān, marabouts* (*murābiṭūn*) and what they dubbed
confrerisme, which "doit être considéré comme une sorte de religion

nouvelle née de l'Islam."[68] In a similar vein, their Russian colleagues railed against "the blind zealotry" of *myuridizm, zikrizm* and *dervishestvo*, all of which were seen as a uniquely Caucasian (and innately militant) version of Islam. Whether a sincere self-deception or a calculated discursive strategy aimed at sowing discord in the enemy camp, this dichotomy, along with a panoply of other divisive concepts (e.g., Berbers versus Arabs; Dāghestānīs versus Chechens; Naqshbandīs versus Qādirīs) dominated the literature that originated in the Russian, French, and British colonies.

Since indigenous historical documentation was scarce and until recently inaccessible (which is especially true of Shāmil and his Dāghestānī and Chechen successors) or it was impersonal and unrevealing of the motives of its creators (e.g., standard hagiographies, Qur'ānic exegesis, formulaic litanies, trite moral precepts and legal glosses), one was willy-nilly forced to rely on the biased accounts of modern Sufi movements that were produced by hostile and ignorant colonial observers. This reliance, however, was not without a cost, since even the most critically minded investigator of these movements was not immune from the subtle prejudices and hidden agendas inherent in the colonial discourses about Sufism and Islam.

As far as Caucasian Sufism is concerned, M. Gammer's recent book *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar*[69] is a case in point. In a forceful historiographical chapter of his study, he sets out to deconstruct the concept of *muridism* that pervades the works of Russian and Soviet historians of the Caucasus wars. Gammer correctly observes that most of these writers were ignorant of Sufism's history and doctrines, which resulted in their blind reliance on the notion of *muridism* to account for the specificity of Sufi-led movements in the Caucasus and beyond. In seeking to rectify their errors, Gammer emphasizes the militant and Sharī'a-oriented nature of the Khālidiyya-Mujaddidiyya *ṭarīqa*, which, in his view, made it an ideal ideological and institutional foundation for Shāmil's *ghazawāt*. In other words, he sees the roots of Shāmil's uprising in the unique characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood. This assumption seems to jibe well with the reconciliatory rhetoric of Kunta Ḥājjī Kishiev—a Chechen shepherd who propagated the Qādirī *ṭarīqa* among his tribesmen in 1861–1863,

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[68] P. Marty, *Etudes sur l'Islam au Sénégal*, Paris, 1917, vol. 1, p. 261.
[69] London, 1994.

following the defeat of Shāmil's imāmate at the hands of the Russians. Kunta Ḥājjī, a Qādirī, indeed propagated peace with the Russians and emphasized an internal (moral) *jihād* that should help its practitioners to achieve self-perfection and spiritual uplift. The war-weary Chechens, whose morale was undermined by the Russian victory, were eager to heed his conciliatory message.

However, Gammer's argument concerning the alleged militancy of the Naqshbandiyya is belied by the later evolution of the allegedly pacifistic Qādiriyya. Goaded by the Russian overbearing and anti-Islamic policies (despite his pacifist message, Kunta Ḥājjī was arrested and died in a mental institution in Russia and hundreds of his followers were executed), the Qādiriyya, which found an eager following among the Chechens of mountainous Ichkeria, departed from its original principles to become the mainstay of anti-Russian resistance. Conversely, the Naqshbandiyya order, which retained its predominance among the Chechens of the plains who were more vulnerable to Russian reprisals, tended to shun active confrontation with the colonial authorities. On occasion, the Naqshbandī Chechens could join hands with their activist Qādirī tribesmen, however, the initiative usually belonged to the warlike highlander clans (*taips*), who were better organized and almost impregnable in their mountain fastness. Here, it appears, the respective political positions of the Naqshbandī and Qādirī Chechens were determined not by the intrinsic characteristics of their orders, but by geopolitical and social factors, such as the rugged terrain as opposed to the open plains and the lineage-based, egalitarian and warlike organization of the isolated mountain taips as opposed to the stratified and Russified communities of the plains.

Significantly, during the Russo-Chechen war of 1994–1996, many Chechens with Naqshbandī connections, especially those on the plains, initially opposed the nationalist government of President Dudaev (which was dominated by the militant highlander clans, including the kinsmen of the late president) only to be pushed into his embrace by the Russian military bungling. In other words, the respective military and political positions of the Chechen Naqshbandīs and Qādirīs can hardly be seen as being determined by the ideological tenets of their respective orders. It appears that, in this case at least, the kinship factor outweighed allegiance to a *ṭarīqa*, if, for a moment, we forget that, in the Chechen taip, loyalties to one's lineage group and to its *ṭarīqa* cannot be easily separated.

Despite frequent references in scholarly literature to the "Pan-Islamic character of the Sufi message" in the Caucasus and to "the

well-organized structure of the *ṭarīqat*," which allegedly made it a natural rallying point for the Caucasian national fronts,[70] we find remarkably few traces of Sufi ideology in the recent Russo-Chechen war. Apart from the ubiquitous presence of Shāmil's portraits, Islamic headbands, spirited Qādirī dances, and collective prayers what we actually see is nothing but trappings of a Sufi movement. Its political and military potential seems to have been blown out of proportion by the overenthusiastic Western Sovietologists who were anxious to secure government funding to support their obsessive quest for clandestine Sufi movements. Furthermore, the same conspicuous scarcity of references to Sufism strikes anyone who cares to consult the chronicles of Shāmil's wars written in Arabic by indigenous authors such as Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qarākhī.

And yet, Western investigators continue to adhere to the nineteenth century European stereotypes about the intrinsically subversive potential of Sufi-based movements—a potential that they hoped to exploit to topple their Cold War adversary. One thinks primarily of Ch. Lemercier-Quelquejay, A. Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush, and M. Bennigsen-Broxup whose "half-a-million strong army"[71] of Caucasian dervishes existed only in their imagination and failed to materialize during the recent war that was led by professional, if highly motivated, soldiers and secular intellectuals. Their lip service to Sufism in oral interviews, essays as well as in a spate of revisionist historical studies published shortly before the war reveal a remarkable ignorance of both Sufism and Islam as a whole. This is hardly surprising given the seventy years of a thorough atheistic brainwashing and the recurrent purges of local men of religion, who, in Chechnya at least, embraced Islam too late to make any significant contribution to Islamic learning.

In sum, the explanatory paradigm that emphasizes the Sufism/*muridism* factor in launching and sustaining movements of popular resistance is too crude and narrow to account for the complex dynamics of Sufism's interaction with Muslim societies in crisis. Neither in the Caucasus and North Africa nor in the Sūdān and Somalia do we find a homogenous and recognizable Neo-Sufi movement with a readily identifiable set of characteristics. Likewise, we are hard put

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[70] M. Bennigsen (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier*, London, 1992.

[71] Ch. Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Le Caucase" in: A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Les voies d'Allah*, Paris, 1996, pp. 300–308; A. Bennigsen and S. E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, 1985.

in trying to detect any clear-cut correlation between the doctrinal fundamentals of a Sufi order and its political stance vis-à-vis European colonial powers. On the contrary, these fundamentals often appear to be accidental to the course of political action taken by Sufi leaders in different circumstances, even though they may belong to the same mystical tradition. This point is graphically illustrated by the collaborationist stance of the Tijāniyya of Algeria, which was the opposite of that taken by the warlike followers of this order in Senegal; another example is the militant members of the originally pacifistic Kunta Ḥājjī brotherhood in Chechnya or the anti-*jihād* position of the chief Naqshbandī shaykh of the Caucasus in Shāmil's epoch, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumuqī, who repeatedly refused to endorse the militant policy embraced by his disciple.

Incidentally, Jamāl al-Dīn's unwillingness to endorse violence is in line with the thoroughly traditional teaching of the founder of the Naqshbaniyya-Khālidiyya, shaykh Khālid, who carefully avoided any conflict with the oppressive and suspicious Ottoman authorities of his time. The fact that his teaching became a vehicle of Shāmil's *jihād* may, therefore, appear to be purely accidental. Yet, it does implicitly demonstrate the extraordinary challenges faced by the Sufis of the age—challenges that called for radical responses. In the face of the colonial encroachment on their land and traditional lifestyle, the options of the Muslim leader (Sufi or not) were determined by a complex array of objective and subjective factors such as geography, social organization, local traditions, peer pressure, personal disposition, international situation as well as the economic and military resources at his disposal.[72] If there is any characteristic feature the diverse Sufi movements of the thirteenth/nineteenth century have in common, it is probably their reactive nature. Their leaders were faced with two options: to resist or to collaborate with the encroaching colonial power. However, those Sufi leaders who were compelled to choose active resistance by forces beyond their control, could rely on the uniquely resilient and flexible institutional framework of Sufism, its vast spiritual resources, its efficient propaganda techniques, its influence and prestige with the masses, and, last but not least, on the time-tested *shaykh-murīd* discipline, which provided the Sufi leader and his followers with a sense of identity, brotherhood and a common goal.

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[72] Cf. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 8–11.

MAJOR SUFI CONCEPTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Departing from the personality based and geographical principle that informed the narrative of the previous nine chapters, I will now turn to some critical concepts of the Sufi *Weltanschauung*, which will be examined in a historical perspective. Logically, one should begin with the fulcrum of Sufi theory and practice—the notion of the Sufi way, or path, and the "states" and "stations" associated with it.

The Path: Ṭarīq(a)

Many Sufi theorists divide the Sufi path (*ṭarīq* or *ṭarīqa*) into three major parts. The first consists in a scrupulous observance of the precepts of the Revealed Law (*sharīʿa*). After fulfilling the basic requirements of this stage, the wayfarer (*sālik*) is ready to embark on the path to God (*ṭarīqa*) per se. Having reached the end of the *ṭarīqa*, he enters the stage of the ultimate Reality, or God (*ḥaqīqa*). This tripartite spiritual itinerary roughly corresponds, and is often compared to, to the *via purgativa, via illuminativa* and *unio mystica* of Christian mysticism.[1] In Sufi literature, the three stages of the mystic path are sometimes associated with distinct religious attitudes: *islām, īmān*, and *iḥsān*. While *islām* is identified as a complete and unconditional surrender of the seeker (*murīd*) to the will of God, as expressed in the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet, *īmān* implies his realization of their inner meaning. As a result, the mystical wayfarer acquires the unshakable serenity and certitude that allow him to overcome the most severe tribulations that he faces in his external life. When the seeker enters the state of *iḥsān*, he begins to serve God, "as if you see Him." This state is usually explained by Sufi authors as one that presupposes a final internalization of the true realities of faith: in each instance of his existence the seeker feels himself to be in the direct and unmediated presence of God, who observes his every

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[1] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 4.

action.[2] Whether this experience may eventually result in a union
with the Divine and a total dissolution of the Sufi's self was a hotly
debated topic among Sufi theorists.

While most Sufis agreed that the *ḥaqīqa* in one or another form
represents the goal of the mystic path, they varied as to the means
of achieving it and as to the number of stages or stations to be tra-
versed by the wayfarer. At the same time, there was a general con-
sent among the Sufis that the *ṭarīqa* constitutes the framework within
which the mystic's spiritual progress—psychical, ethical and spirit-
ual—was expected to unfold. This progress was accompanied by
the mystic's "spiritual struggle" (*mujāhada*) against his lower ego and
a series of inner unveilings (*kashf*) and mystical "states," which along
with the "stations" (*maqāmāt*) became the foundation of mystical life
in Islam. In traversing the numerous stations of the path the way-
farer was expected to observe the requirements and rules of proper
conduct that were peculiar to each of them. These requirements and
rules varied from one Sufi teacher to another. It is in this sense that
Sufi writers came to speak of the *ṭarīqa* of a given master or broth-
erhood. In this context, the term *ṭarīqa* denotes the unique "method"
of spiritual and psychological training peculiar to a certain Sufi school
or fraternity. It was usually traced back to its alleged or real founder,
e.g., the "method of al-Shādhilī" (*al-ṭarīqa al-shādhiliyya*), the "method
of Naqshband" (*al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandiyya*), and so on. By extension,
it came to be applied to the entire organization or institution which
adopted this method. Subsequently, this new meaning of *ṭarīq(a)* coex-
isted with the original sense of the word. The spread of different
devotional techniques and styles of spiritual guidance, which often
varied only in matters of detail and accent, gave rise to a wide array
of Sufi "ways" that served as sources of identity for various Sufi
groups. The Persian Sufi Yaḥyā Bākharzī (d. 736/1336) discerned
as many as nine methods, which placed emphasis on one or another
aspect of devotional practice, e.g., asceticism and frugality; retreat
and isolation; itinerancy; charity and altruism; spiritual struggle
against one's passions and mundane temptations; humility and self-
abasement before people; deliberate helplessness and weakness; and,
finally, a diligent study of religious sciences and keeping the com-
pany of scholars. Each of these devotional styles, according to Bākharzī,

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[2] Ibid., p. 29.

entailed the observance of special rules and etiquette that harked back to a respected early Sufi master.

Descriptions of the stages of the Sufi path in later Sufi works usually identify its goal as the mystic's self-annihilation in God, leading to the ultimate realization of the principle of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*). In the process, the temporal identity of the wayfarer is dissolved in God and the human self is replaced by divine presence. At this point of the *ṭarīq*, wayfaring (*sulūk*) ceases, giving way to what many mystics described as life, or subsistence, in God (*baqā' bi-llāh*).

The "States" and "Stations" of the Mystical Path

Closely allied with the Sufi idea of the mystical path are the concepts of "spiritual state" (*ḥāl*) and "station" (*maqām*). According to most Sufi writers, a classical formulation of these concepts was first provided by the Egyptian mystic Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859) and further elaborated by his contemporary in Baghdad, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857). As we have seen, the doctrine of the mystical "stations" and "states" may have emerged somewhat earlier.[3] The term *ḥāl* figures prominently in the technical vocabulary of the grammar-ians, the physicians and the jurists. It seems possible that al-Muḥāsibī borrowed it from the medical science of the time, where it signified "the actual functional (physiological) equilibrium" of a human organism. Al-Muḥāsibī and later Sufis treated it as a product of the mystic's direct "encounter" (*wajd*) with the Divine Reality that produces in his soul a sense of equilibrium and tranquility or, conversely, a rapture. In any event, the *ḥāl* results in a drastic reassessment of his view of his personal condition, of his self and of his relations with God and the world. In the grammatical theories of the time, *ḥāl* denoted the state of the verb in relation to the agent, that is, its "subjective" state. The grammatical usage of the term had a direct influence on the vocabulary of Islamic speculative theology (*kalām*) in which it came to signify an intermediate mode of being that is neither existence nor non-existence. In the Muʿtazilī doctrine, *ḥāl* could also mean a specific mode of [divine] existence, a more-or-less constant state of the Divine Essence, or, in other words, its attribute. In general, in Islamic theology the term "state"

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[3] See the section on Shaqīq al-Balkhī in Chapter 1 of this study.

signifies different modalities of action, which are essentially "instantaneous" and transtemporal. When applied to Sufi analysis of the mystical consciousness, the word "state" may describe the subjective condition of a human subject that is confronted with a higher reality or an awareness that comes directly from God.

In Sufi manuals, the term *ḥāl* is often juxtaposed with the opposite and complementary notions of "station" (*maqām*), "instant" (*waqt*) and "fixity" or "stability" (*tamkīn*). Especially pervasive in Sufi literature is the juxtaposition of *ḥāl* and *maqām*. These two notions form a pair in which the transience and fleeting nature *ḥāl* is contrasted with the stability and constancy of *maqām* (pl. *maqāmāt*). The latter are usually described as a series of progressive stages that the Sufi wayfarer must conquer in order to reach the terminus of the mystic path. Most Sufi authors insist that one "obtains" or "conquers" the *maqām* through his own effort and strenuous self-exertion. The *ḥāl*, on the other hand, is bestowed upon him by God regardless of his degree of spiritual or intellectual attainment. In spite of the obvious similarities between the *ḥāl*/*maqām* dichotomy of Sufi theorists and the "active" as opposed to "passive" states of Christian mysticism, the equivalence is never total. Generally, the stations and the states can be seen as two parallel series of mystical experience. The stations are acquired by the sweat of one's brow, while the states are received *gratis* from God. Perhaps this is why in the manuals and in descriptions of the soul's ascent, the stations often precede the states. But the difference between them is one of perspective. Some writers, e.g. ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089) and his commentators, lump the states and stations together under name of "abodes" or "resting-places" (*manāzil*) along the way. Others consistently mix up states and stations, implying that the borderline between them is elusive. The *maqām* is often described as the traveler's "halt," which he was free to revisit at any moment. In fact, once conquered, the station remained his possession throughout his life. Furthermore, reaching a new *maqām* does not automatically abolish the preceding one. Conversely, the *ḥāl* is by its nature "instantaneous" and cannot co-exist with any other state or sensation. There can, however, be a succession or alternation of states. Under certain conditions they may stabilize and become quasi-stations. However, there can be no concomitance of several different states: the heart possessed by a *ḥāl* is seized entirely, even though it can be succeeded by another one that either brings it to perfection or totally denies it. In fact, the states often come in pairs: "fear"/"hope,"

"drunkenness"/"sobriety," "contraction"/"expansion," "annihilation"/
"survival" [in God], etc. The seemingly fluid nature of some sta-
tions resulted in disagreement among Sufi authors as to whether a
given experience should be classified as a *ḥāl* or a *maqām*. A typical
example is the concept of love of God (*maḥabba*). While al-Kalābādhī
viewed it as the loftiest of the *maqāmāt*, al-Anṣārī treated it as the
first of the states. A classical list of stations is provided by Abū Naṣr
al-Sarrāj who mentions repentance, scrupulous discernment, asceti-
cism, poverty, patience, trust in God, and contentment with the
divine decree.[4] Other Sufi writers add piety, humility, sincerity, and
so on. In most Sufi treatises, these *maqāmāt* are arranged in pro-
gressive order, the next station being more advanced than the one
that precedes it.

The states, on the other hand, have no visible hierarchy. They
describe a wide variety of sensations experienced by the wayfarer in
his quest for God. They occur regardless of the rank or maturity of
the seeker. The same *ḥāl* can visit both the elderly Sufi master and
the beardless *murīd*, although its intensity may vary according to their
respective degrees of perfection. According to al-Sarrāj, the most
common states are ten in number: watchfulness, nearness [to God],
love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquility, contemplation, and,
finally, certainty.[5] Different lists of states and stations can be found
in practically every treatise on Sufism.

Some Sufi writers maintained that under certain conditions a *ḥāl*
that was received through divine grace can become a *maqām*. The
ḥāl that persists may become the mystic's possession (*milk*), in which
case it is transformed into a *maqām*. In other words, the mystic can
earn and appropriate a *ḥāl* in the same way in which he earns and
appropriates a *maqām*. This transformation is more likely when the
mystic has reached an advanced stage of mystical quest. This dynamic
is captured in al-Hujwīrī's famous phrase, "the fleeting state of the
saint is the permanent station (*maqām*) of the prophet."[6]

Unlike the *maqām*, which is often described as the opposite of the
ḥāl, the mystical "instant" or "moment" (*waqt*) bears close resem-
blance to the state. Both result from a direct encounter between God
and his mystical lover. *Waqt* must not be understood as a temporal

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[4] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 55.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Nicholson, *The Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 236.

measure; it transcends measured and measurable time and can thus be seen as "a unit of psychic measure" of this encounter, or of its absence. One can therefore describe *waqt* as a spiritual or psychological aspect of time. As such, an instant (*waqt*) is in need of a *ḥāl*, which, in the words of al-Hujwīrī, "descends upon it and adorns it, as the spirit adorns the body."[7] Thanks to *ḥāl*, the seeker can capture and prolong a mystical instant; at the same time, it is through *waqt* that the soul is able to receive and appropriate the *ḥāl*. According to the degree of completeness of one's spiritual experience, emphasis is placed on either the one or the other. It is said that Jacob (Yaʿqūb) was the possessor of *waqt*, while Abraham (Ibrāhīm) possessed *ḥāl*. Similarly, *ḥāl* refers to the object of search (*murād*), while *waqt* is determined by the maturity and spiritual perfection of the seeker (*murīd*). As an inner state that is received directly from God, *ḥāl* cannot be expressed in words. Nevertheless, the beginners frequently attempt to describe it—an exercise that sometimes brings upon them accusations of heresy and unbelief that are imputed to them by scholars who have not shared their experience.

At the start of spiritual life, states tend to be transient and unstable. As the wayfarer progresses along the mystic path, states become stabilized. Such a stabilized state was sometimes described as "fixity" (*tamkīn*). In spite of its permanence, *tamkīn* cannot be transformed into a regular station (*maqām*). Rather, Sufi writers defined *tamkīn* as an enduring spiritual phenomenon that combined the characteristics of the states and stations. In Sufi manuals, *tamkīn* is usually paired not with *ḥāl*, but with *talwīn*—a term that connotes change, vacillation and transition. Moreover, *maqām*, exactly like *ḥāl*, can and must be strengthened by fixity (*tamkīn*). The weak and inconstant soul of a novice cannot normally retain its spiritual state, which "attacks" it unawares, then vanishes or gives way to a new *ḥāl*. The soul that has reached the level of *tamkīn* retains its states and is unperturbed by any change in its outward condition. According to al-Anṣārī, the stabilized states can progressively turn into saintly character traits (*wilāyāt*), then into "true realities" (*ḥaqāʾiq*), and finally into the goals of mystical quest (*nihāyāt*).

To attain the goal of mystical quest one has to observe certain conditions that are spelled out in Sufi manuals and treatises. Prominent among such conditions are "truthfulness" (*ṣidq*) and "sincerity" (*ikhlāṣ*),

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[7] Ibid., p. 369.

both of which are considered to be absolutely indispensable for any mystical wayfarer, no matter how advanced. As with other Sufi terms, the choice of these words as the mainstays of Sufi ethics and morality was determined by their frequent occurrence in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. They were treated as cornerstones of mystical self-discipline by such early Sufi masters as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), al-Junayd (d. 297/910), al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) as well as the anonymous author of *Adab al-mulūk* (the late fourth/tenth century). The purity of *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* was routinely contrasted with the foulness of lie (*kidhb*), this "menstruation of the souls" (*ḥayḍ al-nufūs*), as it was allegorically described by some Sufi authorities. The importance of truthfulness in the Sufi lore is attested by the fact the Sufi classic Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) dedicated to it a special tract titled *Kitāb al-ṣidq*. He discusses truthfulness in conjunction with the other moral qualities requisite for a successful progress along the Sufi path, namely sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), contentment (*riḍā*) and patience (*ṣabr*). The notions of truthfulness and sincerity received further elaboration in the works of the systematizers of the classical Sufi tradition al-Sarrāj, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, al-Qushayrī, and al-Hujwīrī. Later, it was discussed in the writings of al-Ghazālī, al-Suhrawardī, Ibn ʿArabī, and other Sufis.

From the outset, the pair *ṣidq/ikhlāṣ*, which many Sufi authors defined as a complete agreement of one's inner convictions with one's outward acts, was held to be an indispensable condition of the true worship of God and a hallmark of the genuine Sufi. Mystics stress that any good work is futile unless it springs from a sincere and disinterested desire to obtain God's pleasure. Therefore, both truthfulness and sincerity should "adorn" all of the "stations" of the mystical path. The early Sufi master Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) mentioned truthfulness among the five principal pillars of Sufism alongside generosity, resoluteness, fear of God, modesty, and scrupulousness in food. The elevated rank that the Sufis accorded to *ṣidq/ikhlāṣ* is thrown into sharp relief by al-Sarrāj, who considered them to be part of the "foundations of religion" (*uṣūl al-dīn*) together with the affirmation of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), intuitive knowledge of God (*maʿrifa*), faith (*īmān*), and blissful certainty (*yaqīn*). In a similar vein, the anonymous author of the Sufi treatise *Adab al-mulūk* counted *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* among the five principal ways of achieving the mystical goal, the other being abstinence (*zuhd*), the desire to obtain God's pleasure, and the taming of one's lower self (*mujāhadat al-nafs*).

Likewise, Ibn ʿArabī included *ṣidq* in his list of the nine principal conditions of the mystical path together with hunger, vigil, silence, retreat, trust in God, patience, determination, and certainty, which he dubbed "the Mothers of Virtue."

The centrality of sincerity and truthfulness for Sufi piety is further attested by such statements as "nothing beatifies man more perfectly than *ṣidq*," and "sincerity is the sword of God on the earth that cuts everything it touches," that is, man's attachment to this world par excellence. In the latter dictum, as elsewhere, sincerity/truthfulness are associated with sturdiness (*shidda*) and firmness (*ṣalāba*)—qualities which, according to Sufi writers, rendered it both an effective offensive weapon in attaining self-perfection and a reliable shield against devilish temptations.

As time went on, Sufi psychology provided increasingly detailed accounts of sincerity and truthfulness. A typical example is al-Ghazālī's treatment of these concepts in the special chapters of his momentous "Revival of the Religious Sciences." In dealing with the notion of *ṣidq* he identified six different types of truthfulness: in word, in intention and volition, in determination, in commitment, in deed, and finally, in fulfilling the requirements of the mystical path (*ṭarīq*). Yet, despite its overriding importance for Sufi self-disciple, adherence to truthfulness was not considered absolute. According to al Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī, it is always contingent on concrete circumstances. For instance, telling truth about someone in his/her absence amounts to backbiting and will be judged accordingly in the hereafter. The same goes for those who speak publicly of their sexual life, although their accounts may be accurate. On the other hand, a pious lie that helps to save the life of a Muslim or to protect a state secret may, in God's eyes, be a meritorious deed.

Basing themselves on Qurʾān 5:108–120 and 3:81, some Sufi exegetes mused over the "question of sincerity" (*suʾāl al-ṣidq*) which God poses to Qurʾānic Jesus (ʿĪsā) on the Judgement Day. In response, ʿĪsā squarely disowns his misguided worshipers who took him and his mother for deities. In so doing he successfully passes the test, showing both "pure sincerity" and "saintly humility."

Although man shares the attribute of *ṣidq* with God, who is sometimes described as "Truthful" (*al-ṣādiq*), human sincerity is of an imperfect, inferior nature, unless, in accordance with the famous *hadith*, the mystic has reached the exalted spiritual state in which God "becomes his hearing . . ., his sight . . ., his hand . . ., and his foot"—

that is, his sole *raison d'être* and mover. This is, in the view of Ibn ʿArabī and some other later Sufis, the utmost degree of sincerity and truthfulness that signifies that the wayfarer has reached the stage of perfect servanthood (*al-ʿubūdiyya*).

The Goal of the Mystical Path: fanāʾ/baqāʾ

Mystics in most religious traditions argue that the ultimate goal of mystical quest is not to *know about* God, but to achieve some sort of union with him. In different religious traditions and in various mystical schools within one and the same tradition, union with God "can mean different things, from literal identity, where the mystic loses all sense of himself and is absorbed into God, to the union that is experienced as a consummation of love, in which the lover and the beloved remain intensely aware both of themselves and of the other."[8] How mystics of different religions and schools interpret the goal of their quest and the nature of union with the Divine depends on their overall concept of God and the world. In early Sufism, especially in the classical period of al-Junayd, the goal of the mystical quest was often described as the passing away, or annihilation, of the mystic's self (*fanāʾ*), which is followed by the survival, or subsistence, in God (*baqāʾ*). Al-Junayd and his followers treated these experiences as both complementary and antithetical. They are related to similar pairs that describe the dialectic of the mystical vision of God and world, namely "intoxication" (*sukr*) and "sobriety" (*ṣaḥw*), "unity" (*jamʿ*) and "separation" (*tafriqa*), "negation" (*nafy*) and "affirmation" (*ithbāt*), and so on.[9] The doctrine of *fanāʾ/baqāʾ* developed in response to the intoxicated type of mysticism that was associated with the ecstatic utterances of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and al-Ḥallāj, who tended to emphasize the first member of the pair. By introducing the concept of *baqāʾ*, Sufi theorists endeavored to show that the ecstatic identification of the human self with God is but a transient state that is supplanted by a more advanced experience permitting the simultaneous vision of both God and the world. Even though Sufis continued to claim unity with God, especially in their poetry, in the subsequent history of Sufism a consensus was achieved that

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[8] A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Oxford, 1981, p. xv.
[9] For details see Gardet and Anawati, *Mystique musulmane*, pp. 97–106.

such claims do not necessarily presuppose a merger of two essences, human and divine, or a dissolution of the temporal human ego in God. Gradually, there developed two complementary definitions of *fanāʾ* that were accepted by the majority of Sufis and by many non-Sufi scholars. The first definition presents *fanāʾ* as the passing away of all things from the consciousness of the mystic, including self-perception; this experiential vacuum is filled by a pure consciousness of God that precludes any perception of the other. In the second definition, *fanāʾ* is described as the "falling away" of the imperfect attributes of the fallible creature and their replacement by the perfect attributes of the Divine Self. Unlike Nirvana, with which *fanāʾ* is often compared in Western studies of Sufism, these definitions of *fanāʾ* present it not as a mere cessation of individual experience, but as the development of a more ample and perfect selfhood that is adorned by divine presence. This transformation cannot be accomplished through one's personal effort or will, but is granted to select men by their Lord as a grace. In any case, many Sufi theorists insisted that *fanāʾ* should never be construed as a fusion of divine and human essences, which was seen as the root of the "erroneous" doctrine of incarnation espoused by the Christians.

In keeping with the aforementioned definitions of *fanāʾ*, Sufi theorists since al-Junayd have described *baqāʾ* as man's continual existence in God, after he (that is man) has acquired some of the divine attributes (*baqāʾ bi-llāh*). This existence, in turn, is portrayed as the mystic's renewed consciousness of the plurality of the created world that coexists with his perception of its underlying unity and of the common origin of all things. Put differently, being with God necessarily means being with the world, which was created by God and in which God continues to manifest himself in an infinite variety of forms and guises. This line of Sufi thought tended to present the state of *baqāʾ* as being more perfect than that of *fanāʾ*. It found its terse expression in a famous Sufi dictum that places "sobriety" (= *baqāʾ*) above "intoxication" (= *fanāʾ*). The mystic's "return" to the world in the state of *baqāʾ* is not a simple regaining of his pre-*fanāʾ* consciousness of the world's plurality and multiplicity. Through his experience of *fanāʾ* he acquires an altogether new insight that allows him to better perceive its imperfections. This causes him to seek to make his *fanāʾ* more perfect by communicating his precious new experience to the uninitiated in order to alert them to the beauty of a life that is graced by divine presence. In Sufi teachings, the

state of *baqā'* is often presented as being similar, or even equivalent to, prophetic consciousness. Whereas the ordinary ecstatic mystic is tempted to stop at the unitive vision and rapture that springs from the experience of *fanā'* and thus to abandon any effort to change this world for the better, the prophet, as a paradigmatic mystic, lives with both God and the world, seeking to reform the latter by disseminating in it the divinely inspired moral truth.

Sufi Epistemology: Kashf

At the center of Sufi epistemology lies the notion of a supersensory, revealed knowledge that is confined to the select few. In Sufi manuals, this kind of knowledge is variously described as "direct vision" (*mushāhada*), "flashes" (*lawāqiḥ*), "gnosis" (*maʿrifa*), "illumination" (*ishrāq*), "direct tasting" (*dhawq*), "verification" (*taḥqīq*), etc.[10] Here I will limit my discussion to the type of cognition known as "unveiling" (*kashf*). Frequently invoked in Sufi writings from different periods, it denotes the act of tearing away the veil that separates man from the extra-phenomenal world. This meaning appears to be an elaboration of the Qur'ānic usage of the verb *kashafa* in the sense of "to uncover [part of the body]" or "to prevent [an impending misfortune, evil, danger, or torment]." However, it was the following two Qur'ānic passages that proved to be particularly conducive to the later elaboration along mystical lines: "We have lifted thy covering off thee (*kashafnā*), and today thy sight is sharp" (50:22); and "The Last Day is near at hand; short of God, there is no one to unveil it" (53:57–8). Once "the veil" of ignorance has been drawn apart, one becomes aware of the ultimate mysteries of being and of one's human condition without the intermediary of a reflection or of a sacred tradition. In fact, one can now dispense with all the intermediaries, because one acquires direct access to the very source of divine revelation. Sufi authors describe this unmediated knowledge as "a light which God throws into the heart of whomsoever He will."[11] The experience of *kashf* brings about *mukāshafa*, that is, "the lifting of the veil" in the sense of "illumination" or "epiphany." These two notions are

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[10] W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics of imagination*, Albany, N.Y., 1989, pp. 147–170.

[11] Ibid., p. 170.

usually juxtaposed with those of "veiling" (*satr*) or "concealment" (*istitār*) that connote the act of being barred from the knowledge of the divine mystery and, consequently, of God.

In early Sufi texts, the term "divine self-revelation" (*tajallī*) was used as the opposite of "veiling" (*satr*) or "concealment" (*istitār*). This indicates that it was perceived as a synonym *kashf*.[12] For al-Kalābādhī, *tajallī* constitutes the essence of *mukāshafa*. This idea receives further elaboration in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*. In describing the principal stages in man's progression towards the Creator, he identifies the first as positioning oneself vis-à-vis God (*muḥāḍara*). The mystic in the state of *muḥāḍara* still remains "behind the veil" of the discursive proof (*burhān*) and of the workings of his intellect (*ʿaql*). In other words, he can only apprehend God through his manifestations and signs in the empirical world (*āyāt*). The second stage, according to al-Qushayrī, is the lifting of the veil (*mukāshafa*). At this stage, discursive reasoning (*burhān*) gives way to the irrefutable and ultimate proof (*bayān*). One no longer observes God's signs, but his attributes. But even this stage is still only the prelude to an even more lofty one: while it does "raise the curtain" that conceals the divine mystery, it does not disclose it in its entirety. Under favorable conditions, the seeker may attain the third stage, that of "direct vision" (*mushāhada*), which places him in the "presence of the reality" (*ḥaqīqa*) without the intermediacy of any proof. It is this experience that opens the seeker up to the direct outpourings of divine knowledge.

The famous Ḥanbalī Sufi of Herat ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī treats *kashf* and *mukāshafa* as a prelude to the ultimate and unmediated divine illumination. In his classification, *kashf* marks the rise to the degrees of certainty (*yaqīn*) that results in the unquestioning assent to the Word of God and in the realization of the most subtle truths of being. Divine self-revelation (*tajallī*) descends upon the seeker like "dawn," giving him an immediate and certain knowledge that surpasses all arguments and proofs, be they rational or traditional.

Sufi writers consistently describe *kashf* as a lightning-flash that allows them an insight into the world of mystery, where rational arguments are replaced by God's "evidential proof" (*bayān*). The lat-

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[12] Arberry, *The Doctrine*, pp. 117–119 ("The Doctrine of Revelation and Veiling").

ter was seen as being far superior to any form of cognition or rational demonstration. Thus, the experience of *kashf* and *mukāshafa* puts the mystic into direct touch with the superior worlds, the realms of "divine power" (*jabarūt*) and "divine sovereignty" (*malakūt*), where the truth shows itself in all its glory. The ordinary mortals, on the other hand, remain confined to the world of changeable empirical appearances (*mulk*), which their imperfect modes of perception are unable transcend. The importance of the concept of *kashf* is evidenced by the frequency with which it appears in the titles of Sufi works. A typical, and by far the best known example, is al-Jullābī al-Hijwīrī's "The Unveiling of That Which Is Hidden" (*Kashf al-mahjūb*). Here the author presents the mystic's advance along the Sufi path as a progressive removal of the veils that hide from him the true reality. For al-Hujwīrī, the raising of the veil anticipates the supreme state of enjoyment in Paradise, when God will reveal himself to his faithful servants; it is the state of *kashf* that makes possible the miracles of saints (for example, it allows them to read the thoughs of their disciples and foresee the future). This sublime state is constantly contrasted with the misery of occultation of the truth that bars the ordinary believer from enjoying the beatific vision of God (= the Truth) in this life.

The notion of *kashf* plays an important role in the works of al-Ghazālī. For him, *kashf* lays the foundation of a perfect knowledge (*yaqīn*) as opposed to that received purely through an authoritative tradition (*taqlīd*). He likens this type of knowledge to the light (*nūr*) which God "casts into the heart" of his elect servant. In line with this idea, al-Ghazālī draws a distinction between the knowledge of ritual observances, social customs, jurisprudence and ethical rules (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*) and the knowledge of the ultimate truths (*ʿulūm al-mukāshafa*), which reveals the true essence of all things. This knowledge pertains to the "veracious ones" (*siddīqūn*) and those who are "brought near to God" (*muqarrabūn*). It is a light that enters the heart after it has been purified and freed from its reprehensible qualities. This knowledge springs from neither argumentation, nor a simple assent. Rather it is an intuitive and sure grasping of the truth without the mediation of either the tradition or reason. According to al-Ghazālī, "by *ʿilm al-mukāshafa* we mean the drawing aside of the veil so that the Real One would show Himself in all His splendor; and this is effected with a clarity which sets the object present right before

the eyes, without any possible grounds for doubt.''[13] In other words,
for al-Ghazālī, *kashf* is a light, a grace from God, which grants its
possessor a sure knowledge of God. Similar concepts of *kashf* can be
found in the works of later Sufi theorists, including those who adhered
to a Shīʿī version of Sufism, e.g., Ḥaydar Amolī (the eighth/four-
teenth century). They also viewed *kashf* as a superior cognitive method
that allowed its possessors to unravel the mysteries of being encoded
in the Scriptures and in the world around them. In accord with
their Shīʿī convictions, Shīʿī mystics ascribed *kashf* to their leaders
(*imāms*) or to their representatives in the contemporary Shīʿī com-
munity. A similar understanding of this concept can be also found
in the Ismāʿīlī doctrine that emphasizes that the Qurʾān is nothing
but a collection of symbols that hides the authentic, hidden mean-
ing of the divine of revelation.[14]

Methods of Inducing Mystical States: khalwa, dhikr, and samāʿ

Seeking to achieve a mystical state, to overcome mundane tempta-
tions, to subdue one's egotistic soul and to open oneself to the out-
pourings of divine truths, Sufis resorted to various techniques and
spiritual exercises, which are carefully detailed on the pages of mys-
tical works. In what follows I will discuss the most common meth-
ods of Sufi self-discipline: *khalwa, dhikr* and *samāʿ*.

Khalwa

In Sufi practice, the term *khalwa* in the meaning of "retirement, seclu-
sion, retreat" (from the verb *khalā* "to be alone") occupies a promi-
nent place. More specifically, it denotes "isolation in a solitary place
or cell," which was often accompanied by intense meditation, self-
imposed strictures, vows of silence, and spiritual exercises. *Khalwa*
and its numerous synonyms (*ʿuzla, waḥda, infirād, inqiṭāʿ*), which con-
note voluntary seclusion or retreat, constitutes one of the funda-
mental principles of asceticism (*zuhd*). The predilection of the early
Muslim ascetics for a solitary, secluded way of life is amply illus-
trated by Sufi hagiographic literature. Whether or not the example

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[13] F. Jabre, *La notion de certitude selon Ghazali*, Paris, 1958.
[14] H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi*. Trans. by M. Bonner, Leiden, 1994, pp.
16–17.

of Christian asceticism exercised a certain influence on the forma-
tion of this ideal, there is no doubt that it was actively promoted by
many heroes of early Islam. One can cite the example of Sufyān al-
Thawrī (d. 161/778), who reportedly championed a life in separa-
tion from society and, especially, the avoidance of any contact with
the corrupt temporal rulers.[15] Similar ideas were often expressed
by early Sufis. Thus, Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860) is said to
have learned from a Syrian hermit about the "sweetness of seclu-
sion, the invocation [of God's name] (*dhikr*) and the intimate con-
versations with God in the privacy of one's retreat (*al-khalwa bi-
munājātih*)."[16] He is also frequently quoted as saying that he knew
"of no better incitement to bring about spiritual sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) than
khalwa." Another celebrated Sufi, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/945),
is said to have given the following advice, "Cleave to solitude, abol-
ish your name from the [memory of the] people, and face the wall
[of prayer] until you die!" Generally, the statements of the classical
early Sufis quoted by al-Qushayrī and al-Ghazālī reflect a wide spec-
trum of opinions as to the virtues of solitude as opposed to the life
in a community (*ṣuḥba, mukhālaṭa*). Spiritual isolation and mental aloof-
ness from the world was considered higher than a mere physical
seclusion. Most Sufis practiced periodic retreats rather than perma-
nent seclusion. Sufi writers tried to strike a delicate balance between
the necessity of seclusion and the exigencies of communal life. Although
they recognized the merit of the former, they encouraged their read-
ers to form small ascetic communities and to take into account the
interest of society at large. According to an early mystic Abū Yaʿqūb
al-Sūsī of Baṣra (fl. *ca*. 300/900), "only the strong ones are able to
support solitude, whereas life in a community (*ijtimāʿ*) is more beneficial
for people like us, so that each individual's behavior could be con-
trolled by his fellow."[17] The communal tendency grew particularly
strong following the formation of the first Sufi orders in the seventh/
thirteenth centuries. According to Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/
1234), it is communal life that distinguishes the Sufis from the ascetics.
He claims that the Sufis prefer community because, by virtue of
their spiritual "health," they are free from the temptations that the
ascetics try to combat by adopting a solitary lifestyle. Moreover, even

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[15] Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, vol. 6, p. 376.
[16] Ibid., vol. 9, p. 356.
[17] Al-Sarrāj, *Lumaʿ*, p. 207.

though the Sufis live in a community, they strive to maintain spiritual solitude by concentrating their thoughts on God. When they pray in the "common room" (*bayt al-jamā'a*) of a Sufi *ribāṭ*, they sit on their individual prayer rugs, which symbolize their isolation from society. Sufi institutions often had individual cells, where mystics could engage in their meditation and ascetic exercises undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of the external world. As time went on, such cells came to serve as the venues of periodic retreats. The retreats, in turn, became an essential element of Sufi education (*tarbīya*), which was surrounded by a complex set of rules and regulations. Already al-Suhrawardī devoted three chapters of his *'Awārif* to the description of these rules. *Khalwa* played an important role in the practices of the Kubrawiyya, the Shādhiliyya, the Qādiriyya and, of course, the Khalwatiyya, which derives its name from it. This institutionalized *khalwa* was occasionally described as the "greater *jihād*" against one's egoistic soul. It involved strict self-control, vigils, gradually increased fasting, and concentration of the mind on God, mainly by means of *dhikr*. On entering *khalwa*, one was expected to free oneself from worldly possessions and be in a state of ritual purity. Since a protracted stay in the cell was sometimes compared with being in the grave, the cell was usually a dark room with little or no light. Its purpose is described as "the shutting of the external senses" and the "opening of the internal senses"[18] in order to prepare oneself for mystical experiences. However, many Sufi masters warned their disciples against setting too much value upon such experiences: the guidance of a spiritual director was always considered vital. According to al-Suhrawardī, visionary experiences and extrasensory perceptions in general may serve a certain purpose on the mystical way, but the ultimate goal of *khalwa* is rather to allow the light of the Divine Essence to shine in one's inner heart.

The practice of seclusion in Sufi orders is normally limited to periods of forty days, which is why it is also called *al-arba'īniyya*, or *chilla* (from Persian *chihil*). It should not be interrupted except for the communal prayers, and it should be repeated once every year. It is conceived to be an instance of *imitatio prophetae*: in this case, the prophet Muḥammad's custom to seclude himself in a cave on Mount Ḥirā'

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[18] M. Molé, "Traités mineurs de Naǧm al-Din Kubra," in *Annales Islamologiques*, vol. 4 (1963), p. 25.

in anticipation of revelation. However, the number forty is linked to the example of other prophets as well, especially Mūsā.[19] It also symbolizes the "forty stages" of the universe, which was seen as the arena of the mystical "journey."[20] Ideally, *khalwa* should continue throughout the Sufi's entire life. Physical retreat is only a means to an end, the goal being the "seclusion in spirit" (*khalwat al-maʿnā*). This state implies being with God spiritually in disregard of the trappings and allure of the outside world. The same idea is expressed in the famous Naqshbandī maxim *khalwat dār anjumān* ("solitude in the crowd"). Similarly, when Ibn ʿArabī speaks of *khalwa* he refers not to the common practice of retreat but to the absolute existential emptiness (*khalāʾ*) of the perfect mystic, which is "filled" with divine presence.

Dhikr

As was mentioned in the previous section, spiritual retreat was often combined with intense meditation and remembrance of God's name (*dhikr*). As with many Sufi notions, this word is derived from the Qurʾān. Here it is mentioned on several occasions, notably in the phrases "Remind thyself (*udhkur*) of thy Lord when thou forgettest" (18:24) and "O ye who believe! Remember (*udhkurū*) God with much remembrance (*dhikran kathīran*)" (33:41). In the later Sufi tradition, *dhikr* came to denote the ritual act of reminding oneself about God's presence in this world. This act could be performed either in private or at a special gathering (*majlis al-dhikr*). In the latter case, *dhikr* approaches a ritual litany that was often accompanied by special rituals, bodily movements and postures and, on occasion, an ecstatic dance. In Sufism, *dhikr* is possibly the most common form of prayer that is often juxtaposed with *fikr*, in the meaning of (discursive) reflection, meditation. In describing Muḥammad's "nocturnal ascension" (*miʿrāj*) al-Ḥallāj declares that the way to God, which runs through "the garden of *dhikr*," is equal to "the way of intellectual reflection" (*fikr*). This view was not shared by the majority of later Sufis, who consistently gave preference to the former over the latter.

As an ejaculatory litany tirelessly repeated by the pious practitioner, *dhikr* exhibits many parallels with the "Jesus Prayer" of the

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[19] Qurʾān 7: 141–142.
[20] H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele*, Leiden, 1955, pp. 18–20.

Eastern Christians of Sinai and Mount Athos in Greece. It also resembles the *japa-yoga* of India and the Japanese *nembutsu*, although there is no historical evidence to prove their common origin.[21] Without denying possible influences and causal relations between these modes of prayer, one may argue that we are dealing with a universal tendency that cuts across geographical regions and religious confessions.

Originally an individual practice, various types of collective, ritualized *dhikr* were later developed in Sufi brotherhoods. Some of them prescribed to their followers a loud *dhikr* (*jalī*). Others recommended the so-called "silent" *dhikr* (*khafī*), that is, one that was to whispered in a low voice. The former was usually recited collectively, while the latter was practiced as part of individual training and self-discipline. The loud *dhikr* is often described in Sufi manuals. According to al-Ghazālī, before performing a silent *dhikr*, the Sufi must retire to his cell (*zāwiyya*), where he should sit in solitude, uttering continuously "God (*Allāh*)" until this word begins to permeate his whole being. Several brotherhoods (such as Shādhiliyya, Khalwatiyya, Darqāwa, etc.) stress the advantages of a solitary *dhikr*, which they describe as the *dhikr* of the select [people of God] (*dhikr al-khawāṣṣ*)—those who have reached the advanced stages of the mystic path. Others, e.g. the Raḥmāniyya of Algeria and Tunisia,[22] stress the dangers of the solitary *dhikr* and recommend that it be intermingled with the collective *dhikr* that is to be performed during Sufi "sessions" (*ḥaḍra*) or in small "circles" (*ḥalqa*) of devotees. The rules of the collective *dhikr* in some Sufi brotherhood prescribe certain bodily postures and stipulate a distinctive respiratory rhythm to be observed by the participants. The sessions generally take the form of a ritualized liturgy that begins with the recitation of Qur'ānic verses or the prayers composed by the founder of the brotherhood. This recitation is usually called *ḥizb* or *wird*. It is often accompanied by a "spiritual concert" (*samā'*), which will be discussed further on. The elements and rules of *wird*, *samā'*, and the bodily postures during the recitation of the *dhikr* vary from one brotherhood to another. Probably the best summary of the *dhikr* practices is *al-Salsabīl al-muʿīn fī 'l-ṭarā'iq al-arbaʿīn* ("The Wellspring of Assistance in [the Knowledge of] the Forty

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[21] Anawati and Gardet, *Mystique musulmane*, pp. 187–194.
[22] Ibid., pp. 208–212; on this offshoot of the Khalwatiyya see Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, p. 77.

ṭarīqas") Written by the founder of the Sanūsiyya brotherhood of Libya, Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859),[23] it gives a concise account of the essential characteristics of the *dhikr* as practiced by forty different brotherhoods. The author declares his own order to be successor to all these brotherhoods, since it integrated the elements of *dhikr* pertaining to them.

Whether collective or solitary, the recitation of the *dhikr* presupposes preparation. This function is performed by the *ḥizb* and *wird* recitations that open sessions of *dhikr*. However, in addition to this preamble, practitioners of *dhikr* are expected to have accomplished a general preparation which consists, according to al-Ghazālī, in renouncing the world and adopting an ascetic lifestyle. This, in turn, is to be preceded by a sincere intention of the heart (*niyya*), which prevents the Sufi from complacency and making *dhikr* an end in itself. Here the spiritual director of a given group of Sufi devotees plays an important part. In directing and overseeing the recitation of *dhikr* during collective sessions, he prevents his followers from indulging in faked ecstatic behavior and from various other excesses.

While engaging in a solitary *dhikr*, the beginner is recommended to detach himself completely from his surroundings and to place the image of his shaykh before his mind's eye. Sufi manuals specify the bodily posture of the reciter (he is enjoined to sit with legs crossed or on his heels) and the position of his hands. He should perfume himself with benzoin and wear a ritually pure clothing.

The *dhikr* formula varies according to different traditions as well as according to the spiritual stage of the reciter. Normally, it opens with the first part of the *shahāda*, namely, "there is no deity but God" (*lā ilāh illā 'llāh*). The Shādhilī method recommends that the recital begin from the left side of the chest, which is described as "the niche containing the lamp of the heart and the center of spiritual light." One then moves the formula from the lower part of the chest upwards and then back to the initial position. The formula thus describes a circle in the chest of the reciter.

Another common formula of *dhikr* is the "Name of Majesty," that is *Allāh*. The utterance of God's name is to be accompanied by two movements. First, while pronouncing it, one has to strike one's chest with the chin; second, one then divides the formula into two

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[23] Gardet and Anawati, *Mystique musulmane*, p. 202.

syllables, the first of which consists of the *ḥamza* (i.e., the sound "a")
and the second of the "*llāh.*" The articulation of these syllables is
accompanied by the rhythmical raising and lowering of the head
down to the navel and back.[24] Another popular formula of *dhikr*,
which is traced back to al-Ḥallāj and his followers, elides the *al* in
the name of Allāh, thereby reducing it to the exclamation *lāha, lāhi,*
or *lāhu.* Al-Sanūsī warns that this formula is to be practiced with
caution and only by those who are "aware of its possible result."
The other *dhikr* formulae usually consist of one of God's "beautiful
names," namely *Huwa, al-Ḥaqq, al-Ḥayy, al-Qayyūm, al-Qahhār,* and
so on.[25]

The duration of *dhikr* is regulated either by the shaykh, who pre-
sides over the session of *dhikr*, or, by the individual Sufi himself, with
or without the help of a rosary (*subḥa*). It may include varying num-
bers of repetitions, such as 300, 3,000, 6,000, 12,000, 70,000. With
time, the reciter may loose track of the number of invocations, where-
upon his *dhikr* may become unceasing and spontaneous.

The nature and specificity of *dhikr* as an individual experience
receives an exhaustive treatment in the *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ* ("Key to
Salvation") of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh of Alexandria, the third Grand Master
of the Shādhilī order.[26] His discussion of *dhikr*, in turn, summarizes
the lore on this practice that was accumulated by the earlier gen-
erations of Sufi masters from al-Kalābādhī to al-Ghazālī. Most Sufi
writers distinguished three main stages of invocation. First, the *dhikr*
of the tongue with "intention of the heart;" the absence of the proper
intention and concentration invalidates *dhikr*, which becomes a sense-
less routine. At this stage, the reciter tries to "implant the One who
is mentioned (i.e., God) into the heart" by following closely the rules
and procedures prescribed by the shaykh. Once this has been achieved,
the recitation becomes spontaneous and continues without any effort
on the reciter's part. One can still discern three elements involved
in the performance of the *dhikr*: the subject conscious of his experi-
ence (*dhākir*), the recitation (*dhikr*), and the One mentioned (*madhkūr*).

After the first stage has been passed, one enters the stage of the
dhikr of the heart. Here, according to al-Ghazālī, "the Sufi reaches
a point where he has effaced the trace of the word on his tongue;"

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[24] Ibid., pp. 202–203.
[25] Ibid., p. 200.
[26] Ibid., pp. 195–196 and passim.

it is now his heart that takes over as the enunciator of *dhikr*. This stage falls into two substages. At first, the reciter has to apply his efforts in order to make his heart articulate the prescribed formula. This exercise may result in a pain felt in the physical heart. Subsequently, the same effect is achieved without any effort, as the formula becomes integrated into the beating of the physical heart. The name of God now pulsates in unison with the pulsation of the blood in the veins and the arteries without finding any perceptible verbal or mental expression. This is the state of God's "necessary presence" in the heart of the reciter who becomes completely oblivious of the surrounding world. This state lays the groundwork for the third stage, that of the *dhikr* of the "inmost heart" (*sirr*). As the seat of divine knowledge, the heart is best suited of all human organs to become the arena of the "direct vision" of God (*mushāhada*). Here the experience of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) and of the unification of the human self with the Divine Essence reaches its apogee. Sufi writers often associate this third stage of *dhikr* with the state of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*) that comes on the heels of the state of external submission [to God's will] (*islām*) and that of internal faith (*īmān*). For the Sufi who has attained this sublime condition, *dhikr* becomes the essential part of his identity. Moreover, his whole being becomes, sometimes against his wish, "the tongue that utters *dhikr*." As a result, a union between the reciter, the recitation and the One whose name is recited, is effected. All duality disappears in the act of the voluntary self-annihilation of the reciter in the presence of God (*fanā' 'an al-dhākir bi- 'llāh*). The personality of the Sufi is thus dissolved in the all-encompassing divine unity that no longer allows any duality within it.

Some Sufi manuals describe the audio and visual phenomena that correspond to various stages of *dhikr*. In one such description, the *dhikr* of the heart is likened to "the buzzing of the bees" that is accompanied with various ocular and colored sensations. Thus, al-Ghazālī spoke of the apparition of "lights," which "sometimes pass like a flash of lightning and sometimes stay, sometimes last and sometimes do not last, sometimes follow one another . . ., and sometimes blend into a single mood." He explains them as "gleams of truth" that are released by God's good will. However, later Sufi authors describe them as being intrinsically and obligatorily bound up with the *dhikr* experience. They also argue that the luminous phenomena are more resplendent at the stage of the *dhikr* of the innermost heart, of which they become a characteristic feature. Here, according to

Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī, "the fire of *dhikr* does not go out, and its lights do not fail . . . You see some lights going up and others coming down; the fire around you is bright, very hot, and it burns."[27] These rising and falling lights are held to be a "divine illumination" which is instigated by *dhikr*. In this context, the *dhikr* of the inmost being can be seen as liberating the divine element in the human spirit directly (the "trace of the One" of Plotinus).

Sufi writers provide varying explanations of the place of *dhikr* in Islamic spirituality. Thus al-Ḥallāj and al-Kalābādhī describe *dhikr* as a *method* of reminding oneself of God and of helping the soul to live in God's presence. Al-Ghazālī portrays *dhikr* as *the* way of the Sufis that prepares the *murīd* for the outpourings of divine mercy. For Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī, it is not just a preparatory stage of the mystical path, but also an effective technique that gives the mystic direct access to the domain of divine mysteries (*lāhūt*). Later works pay more attention to the technical aspects of *dhikr*, such as voice, breath control, bodily posture, and so on.

On the psychological plane, the objective of *dhikr* lies in instigating and sustaining monoideism, that is, a total and undivided concentration of one's thoughts and aspirations on the object of recollection. This, in turn, should lead the mystical seeker to a direct encounter with God followed by an intuitive realization of the mysteries of being. As time went on, certain brotherhoods sought to replace the complicated rules and requirements of *dhikr*, described in classical Sufi manuals, by convenient shortcuts that rested on purely physical procedures aimed at inducing altered states of conscience. As examples of this phenomenon one can mention the ecstatic dances of the Mawlawiyya, the pitched cries of the "Howling Dervishes" of the Rifāʿiyya brotherhood as well as the use of stimulating and stupefying drugs by some marginal Sufi groups. Such practices became targets of the attacks on the Sufi lifestyle, teachings and practical "excesses" that were launched by some nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Muslim reformers, including Muḥammad ʿAbdūh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā.

Samāʿ

This term is derived from the Arabic root *s-m-ʿ* which signifies the act and process of hearing. By extension, it often denotes "that which

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[27] Ibid., pp. 221–226.

is being heard," for example music. The word *samāʿ* is not found in the Qurʾān, but it is often employed in pre-Islamic Arabic with the meaning of song or musical performance. Although frequently used in many Islamic disciplines, such as grammar and theology, it plays a special role in Sufism. Here it generally denotes the hearing of music or audition, especially a Sufi spiritual concert that follows certain ritual conventions. For many Sufis, *samāʿ* is the "nourishment of the soul," in other words, a devotional practice that, according to Sufi authors, can induce intense emotional transports (*tawājud*), states of grace (*aḥwāl*), and direct encounters with the Divine Reality (*wajd; wujūd*). These may be accompanied by ecstatic behavior and visions.

Such spiritual phenomena often find outward expressions in movements, physical agitation or dance which could be performed individually or collectively and which often follows certain ritual conventions. The wide spread of *samāʿ* in the medieval Muslim world is richly attested by Persian miniatures that depict the various forms it took in different epochs and geographical areas.

On the theoretical level, the term *samāʿ* implies more than a simple hearing of poetry or music, accompanied by a dance or other bodily movements. It refers first and foremost to the understanding, comprehension and acceptance of the Revelation by its practitioners. Not just a simple ecstasy or rapture, it is described by some Sufi authors as an unveiling of mysteries and a means of attaining a higher spiritual state and awareness.

Samāʿ in the Sufi sense of the term did not appear until the middle of the third/ninth century. Registered for the first time among the Sufis of Baghdad, its origins in the ecstatic rites and practices of the earlier Middle Eastern religions cannot be ascertained. Within Islam, *samāʿ* can be seen as a natural development of the devotional practices associated with the public recitation of the Qurʾān. Its subsequent development was determined, in part, by the secular concerts (*ṭarab*) and artistic declamations of secular poetry which were cultivated by the caliph and by provincial rulers in Iṣfahān, Shīrāz and Khurāsān. Initially, *samāʿ* appears to have been an "oriental" phenomenon which was promulgated by the Persian disciples of al-Nūrī and of al-Junayd. By the same token, almost all of the early writers on *samāʿ* were Persians, with the exception of Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Makkī (d. 386/996). Subsequently, *samāʿ* spread to the other areas of the Muslim world and found an eager and enthusiastic acceptance among Arab, Turkish and Indian Sufis. The first

writings on *samāʿ* were composed one century after the emergence of
that practice. They were written in response to the attacks on *samāʿ*
by traditionalist scholars, such as Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā (d. 281/894),
the author of the "Condemnation of Amusement" (*Dhamm al-malāhī*),
which denounced music as being contrary to the precepts of primeval
Islam. Writings of this genre constitute the following three groups,
arranged chronologically:

(1) The fourth/tenth century: Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, whose
    Kitāb al-samāʿ is the first monograph devoted specifically to that
    practice. Chapters on *samāʿ* were composed by al-Makkī, al-Sarrāj,
    and al-Kalābādhī. All of them base their defense of *samāʿ* on
    prophetic *ḥadīths* and on the statements ascribed to early mystics
    (e.g., Dhu ʾl-Nūn al-Miṣrī).
(2) In the fifth/eleventh century apologies for *samāʿ* were written by
    such eminent theorists of Sufism as Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī
    and al-Ghazālī.
(3) In the seventh-eighth/thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, detailed trea-
    tises on *samāʿ* were composed by such eminent Sufis as Najm al-
    Dīn Kubrā, Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī (d. 606/1209), Aḥmad-i Jām,
    Najm al-Dīn Baghdādī, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī and Aḥmad
    Ṭūsī (all lived in the eighth/fourteenth centuries). They focus on
    the social and devotional implications of *samāʿ*, which they pre-
    sent in a more rational and well-argued manner than their pre-
    decessors. These and some other writers extolled the benefits of
    samāʿ as a means to achieve spiritual progress and elaborated on
    its symbolic meaning. A few Sufi theorists went as far as to con-
    sider it an obligation for the beginners on the mystic path. Their
    efforts were not in vein: from that time on, *samāʿ* was accepted
    as a legitimate practice by the majority of Muslim scholars. After
    the tenth/sixteenth centuries debates around *samāʿ* subsided; al-
    though it was widely practiced by many Sufi brotherhoods, espe-
    cially the Mawlawiyya and the Chishtiyya, we find practically no
    original discussions of the issue.

As time went by, *samāʿ* increasingly became a means of quickly work-
ing oneself into trance without paying much attention to the require-
ments and necessary decorum that were spelled out by the earlier
Sufi masters. For some Sufis, it became a form of entertainment and
sensual pleasure. Often participants in *samāʿ* placed more emphasis
on the dance and on the subsequent sumptuous meal than on its

spiritual and pedagogical dimensions. Such "profane" *samāʿ* often involved "gazing at beardless youths" (*nazar ilā 'l-murd*) by the participants, who claimed that they sought to contemplate glimpses of divine beauty in human form. Although this practice was severely condemned by many scholars and Sufis, it seemed to have become more widespread in the later period, as attested by classical Persian poetry. Poets often sang praises to the ties of love that developed in the course of *samāʿ* between a mature Sufi master and a beardless boy.[28]

Countering the criticisms of the opponents of *samāʿ*, Sufi writers tried to impose some regulations and rules of propriety on the performers and participants of the mystical concerts. On the theoretical plane, they came to discern several types of *samāʿ*, namely, the *samāʿ* of one's lower soul, the *samāʿ* of the heart, and the *samāʿ* of the spirit. While for the first category music was prohibited, the more advanced Sufi were allowed to enjoy it in moderation, keeping in mind that *samāʿ* was just a means to attain purity, serenity and nearness with the Divine Beloved. Other Sufi masters strictly discouraged their followers from engaging in *samāʿ*, arguing that it might be dangerous for beginners, while being useless for more advanced travelers on the mystical path. Some authors tried to limit the musical accompaniment of *samāʿ* to such instruments as the tambourine (*daff*; *bendīr*) and the flute (*nay*), while proscribing those considered profane. A number of Sufi orders prohibited music altogether, while allowing their followers to chant or sing the litanies of the order, which usually went back to its founder. When romantic and erotic poetry was chanted during *samāʿ* gatherings, Sufi masters warned that it should be interpreted metaphorically as pointing to a spiritual object or the person of the Prophet.

In view of the extraordinary diversity of the forms and techniques of *samāʿ* across the Muslim world, one can hardly speak of a uniform "*samāʿ* music." One feature that is shared by most of the local versions of *samāʿ* is its close association with *dhikr*. Apart from the intensity of performance and the profound psychological effects it has on its participants, we can detect few common features of Sufi *samāʿ* in different geographical regions and historical periods.

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[28] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, p. 20.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In seeking to provide a broad survey of the history of the major
Sufi ideas, personalities and institutions I have perforce dispensed
with many significant details and unresolved problems of Sufi studies.
My task was further complicated by the vagueness of Sufism's posi-
tion vis-à-vis other practices, disciplines, and intellectual trends within
Islam. However, even a cursory and incomplete review of Sufism's
evolution across the ages and geographical areas shows that it has
been inextricably entwined with the overall development of Islamic
devotional practices, theological ideas, esthetics, and religious and
social institutions. Any attempt to discuss Sufism in isolation from
these broader religious, social and cultural contexts, which varied
significantly in different epochs and in different geographical areas,
will result in serious distortions. Seen from this historical perspec-
tive, the recent accounts of Sufism that introduce the Western reader
to what their authors present as its trans-historical and unchange-
able spiritual essence appear inadequate and misleading.[1] Sufism's
cardinal ideas and values have been continually re-interpreted, re-
articulated and re-adjusted in accordance with changing times and
historical circumstances by each new generation of its practitioners.
Although new interpretations and articulations of Sufism were always
informed by, and bore traces of, earlier ones and historical conti-
nuity between old and new ideas and practices cannot be denied,
attempts to posit an immutable essence of Sufism can hardly be
treated as a serious academic exercise. As the other trends and schools
of thought in Islam, the uniform and harmonious Sufi tradition is
but a carefully assembled ideal construct that was first articulated by
its classical exponents and subsequently refined by later Sufi apolo-
gists. As any such construct, it rests on a selective appropriation of
certain elements of a given religious tradition, which is driven by
the polemical agendas and personal spiritual and intellectual com-
mitments of its creators. One important implication of this construct

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[1] See, e.g., the works by I. Shah; cf. J. Fadiman, *Essential Sufism*, San Francisco,
1997; S. Sviri, *The Taste of Hidden Things*, 1997; M. Jaoudi, *Christian and Islamic
Spirituality*, New York and Mahwah, N.J., 1993.

is that it ignores the astounding diversity of religious and intellectual attitudes that fall under the blanket category of Sufism. As a result, diverse ascetic and mystical trends in Islam may appear much more monolithic and unchangeable than historical evidence shows them to be. If this study has succeeded in alerting the reader to the internal diversity of Islamic asceticism and mysticism, which contained vastly disparate if not diametrically opposed views and principles, then it has achieved its task. It cannot however pretend to have exhausted this vast topic which will continue to be re-assessed and re-examined in scores of academic and popular articles and monographs.

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