

The Sufis of Baghdad

Sufism, the major mystical tradition in Islam, emerged from within renunciatory modes of piety (*zuhd*) during a period that extended from the last decades of the second/eighth to the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. The earliest mystical approaches appeared in the first half of this period, but these were likely disparate and heterogeneous in nature and, more significantly, they remain obscure to modern researchers owing to sparse documentation. From the mid-third/ninth century onwards, however, Sufis of Baghdad came into full view as members of a distinct mode of mystical piety. In the same time period, other mystical movements took shape elsewhere, notably in lower Iraq, north-eastern Iran, and Central Asia. Mystics who belonged to these latter movements were not initially known as Sufis, and in their thought and practice, they differed from Baghdad Sufis and from each other in many ways, but they gradually blended with the Baghdad mystics, and in time, like them, they too came to be identified as Sufis.

Renunciants, the inward turn and the term *ṣūfī*

During the first century of 'Abbāsid rule, renunciation was a widespread form of piety in Muslim communities.¹ Renunciants (*zāhid*) and pietists ('*ābid*, *nāsik*) of this period were not organised into a single homogeneous movement but came in different colours and stripes. Some, like the early figure Ibrāhīm ibn Adham al-Balkhī (d. 161/777–8), had a 'radical aversion' to mainstream social life, voluntarily adapted the life of poverty characterised by 'a search for exteme purity, especially in dietary matters', and literally moved to the margins of society by living at the frontiers, where they engaged in warfare.² Others, scholar-ascetics who cultivated Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* studies, spent time at a special retreat (*ribāṭ*) in 'Abbādān (then an island close to Basra on the river Tigris) founded by disciples of the famous preacher Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), perhaps around 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. c. 150/767).³ Some, specifically identified as 'wool-wearers', were social activists associated with the practice of *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*, 'commanding right and forbidding wrong'.⁴ Still others,

like Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 188/803) and Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi (c. 152–227/c. 766–841), were scholars who turned into renunciants and gave up scholarship.⁵ Some renunciants of all these types are known to have worn wool (*ṣūf*).

In this same period, a remarkable development was underway among renunciants. Whatever their approach to renunciation and to the question of how far to detach themselves from mainstream social life, some prominent renunciants and the renunciant communities that formed around them began to direct their energies increasingly to the cultivation of the inner life. This inward turn manifested itself especially in new discourses on spiritual states, stages of spiritual development, closeness to God, and love; it also led to a clear emphasis on 'knowledge of the interior' (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) acquired through ardent examination and training of the human soul. The proponents of the inward turn explored the psychological aspects of the standard renunciant themes of repentance and turning toward God (*tawba*) and placing one's trust in God (*tawakkul*) through scrupulous observation of the divine commands (*wara'*), and they reached the conclusion that true repentance could not be achieved without a rigorous examination of the conscience and the soul. For these 'interiorising' renunciants, the major renunciatory preoccupation of eschewing this world (*dunyā*, literally, 'the lower, nearer realm') in order to cultivate the other world (*ākhirā*, 'the ultimate realm') was transformed into a search for the other world within the inner self.⁶

Interestingly, the 'discovery' and cultivation of the inner dimensions of the human person was concomitant with a similar inward reorientation among the same circles of renunciants in the attempt to achieve a true understanding of the divine revelation. The concern with attaining knowledge of the inner self was evidently accompanied by a parallel effort to discern the inner meaning of the Qur'ān and the Sunna, a 'method of interpretation from within ... often described as *istinbāṭ* (inference)'. Moreover, in a further intriguing twist, these interiorising epistemic developments were gradually also bundled up with a certain doctrine of selection, whereby knowledge of the soul as well as understanding of the inner meanings of divine speech and prophetic example were thought to be 'God-given' as opposed to being the fruit of human effort. According to this increasingly conspicuous doctrine, only God's elect, designated most notably as 'friends' and 'protégés' of God (*walī*, pl. *awliyā'*), could attain ultimate self-knowledge and thus have access to aspects of divine knowledge. This idea of divine selection in the post-prophetic era, later normally expressed by the term *walāya/wilāya*, was most prominent among Shī'īs, but it seems to have been in circulation also among proto-Sunnīs, especially in the form of *ḥadīth* reports about various categories of God's *awliyā'*, often designated by terms such as *abdāl* (literally 'substitutes' but exact derivation is not clear) and *ṣiddiqūn* ('righteous ones').⁷

The exact origin and trajectory of these trends are obscure, but some of the pioneering figures in this process – some of them not renunciants – can be identified: the female renunciant Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185/801) in Basra, Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810) in northern Khurāsān, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830) in Syria, Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860) in Egypt, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) in Baghdad, Yaḥyā ibn Mu'adh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872) in central Iran, and Bāyazīd Ṭayfūr ibn 'Isā al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) also in Khurāsān.⁸ Since the historical record on these figures is particularly difficult to disentangle, it is not always possible to establish associations between particular trends and specific figures. Nevertheless, we can be more specific about the legacy of some of these 'interiorising' renunciants and early mystics. By way of illustration, let us review briefly the cases of Rābi'a, Bāyazīd (a contraction of 'Abū Yazīd') and Muḥāsibī.

Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya (perhaps d. 185/801) was one of the numerous female renunciants of this early period, but she achieved greater fame in posterity than her counterparts.⁹ Even though she most certainly existed as a historical figure, her personality is wrapped in later stories that are impossible to substantiate.¹⁰ The earliest writer to mention her, the famous *littérateur* al-Jāḥiẓ (160–255/776–868/9), gave no details of her biography and simply referred to her among renunciants of Basra, reproducing two statements of hers that demonstrate her asceticism as well as her irrepressible fear of God. Upon being told, 'If you were to speak to the men of your family, they would buy a servant for you, and he would save you the trouble of your housework', Rābi'a replied, 'I should be ashamed to ask for this world from Him to Whom it belongs, so how should I ask for it from him to whom it does not?'¹¹ And when she was asked 'Have you ever performed any act that you think will be accepted [by God]?' she responded by saying 'If there was any such [act], I would still fear that it would be rejected!'¹² After al-Jāḥiẓ, there is a century-long period of silence on Rābi'a in the sources that is broken only in the second half of the fourth/tenth century with several notices on her in works composed by Sufi authors. It is clear that by that time the spiritual portrait of Rābi'a had been almost fully drawn, at least partly under the influence of legends of 'early Christian penitent courtesans'. The evolution of her hagiographical profile was rendered even more complicated by a certain degree of confusion between her and other Rābi'as, most notably her contemporary Rābi'a bint Ismā'il of Syria. The historical life of this latter, said to be the wife of the prominent renunciant Aḥmad ibn Abī'l-Ḥawārī, is even more obscure than her more famous namesake from Basra, and it appears that the stories about the two women were sometimes blended together.¹³

In the later accounts about her, Rābi'a of Basra was depicted most commonly as a pious woman who rose from slavery to become a saintly figure. Her unswerving devotion to God was exemplified by her saying 'First the neighbour, then the

house' ('*al-jār thumma al-dār*'), which was normally interpreted to mean that God deserved worship for His own sake and that Paradise and, by extension, Hell were secondary. Her relentless focus on God reportedly took the form of love (*maḥabba*) and intimacy (*uns*). Even though it has been proven that some verses about love that were attributed to her in these sources are in fact from an originally secular love poem, it is possible that she was one of the first 'to teach the doctrine of Pure Love, the disinterested love of God for His own sake alone, and one of the first also to combine with her teaching on love the doctrine of *kashf*, the unveiling, to the lover, of the Beatific Vision.'¹⁴

Little is known about the biography of Bāyazīd, who seems to have spent his life as a celibate in his native Baṣṭām, to the east of Nishapur.¹⁵ He was the earliest mystic to have left behind a substantial number of 'ecstatic utterances' (*shaṭḥ*), most famously 'Glory be to Me! How great is My majesty!' (*subḥānī! mā a'ẓama sha'nī!*) and 'I am He' (*anā huwa*). How he thought God could talk through him in such fashion was explained by him in the following words:

Once He raised me up and caused me to stand before Him and said to me, 'O Abū Yazīd, My creatures desire to behold you.' I answered, 'Adorn me with Your unity and clothe me in Your I-ness and raise me to your Oneness, so that when Your creatures behold me they may say that they behold You, and that only You may be there, not I.'¹⁷

Bāyazīd evidently thought that this request was granted, since many of the sayings attributed to him evince complete erasure of his human subjectivity and its total replacement with God, conceived as the absolute 'I', the only true subject in existence. In an early Arabic text of uncertain attribution, Bāyazīd reportedly recounted his 'heavenly ascent' (*mi'rāj*, thus paralleling the celebrated night journey and ascent of Muḥammad) through the seven heavens to the divine throne where he experienced such intimacy with God that he was 'nearer to him than the spirit is to the body.'¹⁸ His often shocking, even outrageous, utterances became the subject of commentary by later mystics, who considered them to be verbal overflow of experiential ecstasy.¹⁹ Departing from Qur'ānic usage, where reciprocal love between God and humans is expressed by the word *maḥabba* (Qur'an 5 [al-Mā'idā]: 59), Bāyazīd characterised the relationship of love between the mystic and God as '*ishq* ('passionate love'), a term normally used for love between humans. Through his powerful expressions of love for God, Bāyazīd later came to symbolise the insatiable, intoxicated lover:

Yahyā ibn Mu'adh [al-Rāzī, d. 258/872] wrote to Abū Yazīd [Bāyazīd], 'I became intoxicated by the volume that I drank from the cup of his love.' Abū Yazīd wrote to him in his reply, 'You became intoxicated and what you drank were mere drops! [Meanwhile] someone else has drunk the oceans of the heavens and the earth and his thirst has still not been quenched; his tongue is hanging down from thirst and he is asking, 'Is there more?''²⁰

We possess no clues as to how Bāyazīd achieved his experiences of proximity to God; reportedly, he was scrupulous in his observance of regular Islamic rituals, but he apparently rejected renunciation as an option (he said, 'This world is nothing; how can one renounce it?'), and advocated inner detachment from everything other than God instead.²¹ In spite of the obscurity that surrounds his thought and practice, Bāyazīd achieved lasting fame as the clearest example of the possibility of direct, albeit mystical, communication with God even after the completion of the mission of Muḥammad.²²

Muḥāsibī too was a key figure in the development of early Islamic thought.²³ His imprint was in the area of 'introspection', a rigorous inner probing and examination of the conscience (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*, from which his name Muḥāsibī was derived), especially as articulated in his work *Kitāb al-ri'āya li-ḥuqūq Allāh* (*The Book on the Observance of God's Rights*). This introspection took the form of detailed psychological analysis of the various forms of egoism originating from the lower self (*nafs*) – these included 'egoistic self-display' (*riyā'*), 'pride' (*kibr*), 'vanity' (*ujb*) and 'self-delusion' (*ghirra*) – and the ways in which such egoism stood in the way of fulfilling the terms of 'what is due to God' (*ḥuqūq Allāh*).²⁴ Muḥāsibī thought that the lower self, 'the seat of the appetites and of passion', blocked the functioning of the heart, which he regarded as the core of human self-consciousness. The resolution of this conflict came through intense self-examination conducted with the light of reason, a 'natural disposition or instinct' (*gharīza*) bestowed by God upon His creatures' that served to orient humans towards God by discerning what God loved and what He detested.²⁵ Significantly, Muḥāsibī did not argue that reason could discern the principles of morality as such; reason had no moral autonomy, and its role was to adhere to the moral code contained in the revelation.²⁶ But reason was capable of exposing the tricks of the lower self through intellectual meditation on the Qur'ān and the Sunna and thus of orienting the heart to God. Muḥāsibī's distinctive introspective gaze was thus focused on disentangling and taming the lower self, and his theological psychology was elegant testimony to the depth and sophistication of the examination of the human soul that had become increasingly conspicuous during the first half of the third/ninth century.

Although similar portraits can be drawn for each of the other 'interiorising' figures listed above, here it will be sufficient to point to their connection with the major themes of the 'inward turn' identified above. The tradition of examining the soul seems to have been especially strong in Basra among the followers of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, especially 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd, and it culminated in the thought of Muḥāsibī in Baghdad (Muḥāsibī was originally from Basra). The attempt to fathom the inner meaning of the Qur'ān also had deep roots in Basra among the same circles, but it was cross-fertilised by similar trends originating from the sixth Shī'ī *imām* Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) in Medina and perhaps

further developed by Dhu'l-Nūn.²⁷ The idea of spiritual states and of a spiritual path consisting of different stages was nurtured by Dārānī in Syria, Shaqīq in Khurāsān, and by Dhu'l-Nūn in Egypt. Rābi'a al-'Adawīyya in Basra, also Bāyazīd, exemplified love of God as a central preoccupation. Moving outside the boundaries of 'sober' renunciation, Yaḥyā ibn Mu'adh epitomised joyfulness as an outcome of reliance on God's mercy. Experiences of closeness to God were, as noted above, famously verbalised in the ecstatic utterances of Bāyazīd. The idea that God appoints special agents from amongst the believers is not unambiguously connected with any early renunciant or mystic of this period.

While the trends of inner knowledge and divine selection of *awliyā'* were certainly in the air and were cultivated especially by some eminent renunciants and early mystics of the first half of the third/ninth century, they did not form a coherent and unified whole but could only be found as correlated and occasionally intertwined strands of piety. In the second half of that century, however, and especially in Baghdad, which had emerged after its foundation in the mid-second/eighth century as the indisputable cultural capital of the 'Abbāsīd domains, they coalesced with several other elements of religiosity to form a distinct type of piety that became the foundation of what would prove to be one of the most durable pietistic approaches in Islam. Furthermore, for reasons that remain obscure, the members of this Baghdad-centred movement came to be known as *ṣūfis* and the new movement itself was given the name *ṣūfiyya*.

Both 'Sufi' and 'Sufism' are terms adopted from Arabic. In Arabic texts dating from the first few centuries of Islam, especially in the earliest major manuals of Sufism composed during the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries, we come across the terms *ṣūfi* and *mutaṣawwif* (pl. *ṣūfiyya* and *mutaṣawwifa*) that refer to devotees of a particular type of piety. This mode of pious living was most commonly referred to by the name *taṣawwuf*, which is the Arabic equivalent of the modern English name Sufism. There was controversy over the origins of the term *ṣūfi* among the authors of these early texts, and even though modern scholars have reproduced this controversy at different levels in their own writings, there is considerable agreement among both early authors and modern scholars that the word *ṣūfi* most probably comes from *ṣūf*, the Arabic word for 'wool' and that it was originally used to designate 'wearers of woolen garments'.²⁸

The word *ṣūfi* was first coined as early as the second/eighth century to refer to some renunciants and pietists who wore wool as opposed to other renunciants and the majority of Muslims who wore linen and cotton.²⁹ The practice of wearing wool, a form of 'self-deprivation and self-marginalization as moral and political protest', was most certainly bound up with social and cultural negotiations that took place around the concepts of renunciation (*zuhd*), earning a living (*kasb*) and trust in God (*tawakkul*) that were prevalent especially during the second half of the second/eighth century among Muslims.³⁰ The details are

hard to assemble, but it appears that some interiorising renunciants who can be described as mystics expressed their special form of piety by wearing wool, and hence the word 'wool-wearer' came to carry the connotation of 'devoted, radical renunciant/mystic'. However, the words *zāhid*, *nāsik*, and *ābid* continued to be the primary signifiers of renunciation.³¹ In the second/eighth and roughly the first half of the third/fourth century, then, the term *ṣūfī* designated 'nascent mystics' who were commonly viewed as 'radical renunciants'. In as much as the collective term *ṣūfiyya* is attested for this period, it designated not one distinct social group but several different social types, or, more properly, it was the name of a particular orientation towards piety marked by the socially unconventional, and thus remarkable, habit of donning woollen garments.³²

However, from the middle of the third/ninth century, the term *ṣūfī* came to be used increasingly as a technical term to designate a group of people who belonged to a clearly identifiable social movement in Baghdad that was based on a distinct type of piety. The process through which the earlier term *ṣūfī* became the preferred name for Baghdad mystics remains obscure, though one can speculate that the term *ṣūfī* had a certain 'avant-garde' or 'cutting-edge' resonance among both renunciants and others, and that this 'hip' quality facilitated its application to the new movement. Also, unlike the other terms commonly used to designate renunciants such as *zāhid* and *nāsik*, which could hardly be dissociated from renunciation as a form of piety, the term *ṣūfī* was of more recent coinage and could be redeployed to point to a new cultural development. In time, the Baghdad Sufis themselves adopted this name and began to use it for themselves, and the word no longer signified 'wool-wearing radical renunciant/mystic' but came to be applied exclusively to the members of this new group. In this way, an epithet that had been the name of some mystical trends of renunciatory origins now became the name of a distinctive form of pious living that could no longer be characterised simply as renunciation.³³

Prominent Sufis of Baghdad

In order to identify the salient themes and features of Sufism after its emergence as a full-fledged movement in the 'Abbāsid capital, let us first review some of its prominent representatives whose views are preserved for us in their own works that have survived to this day.

Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or a few years earlier)

Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz was one of the best-known members of the Sufi circles in Baghdad during the middle decades of the third/ninth century. We know practically nothing about his life beyond a few details: he travelled extensively, including to Basra, Jerusalem, Mecca, Egypt as well as Qayrawān in present-

day Tunis; he had to leave his native Baghdad and later also Mecca because of unspecified conflicts with some local scholars concerning his teachings; and, if his name was indicative of his profession, he may have been a cobbler at some point in his life. Several of his writings are extant, and they make it possible for us to capture some aspects of Kharrāz's thought.³⁴

The Book of Truthfulness (Kitāb al-ṣidq), possibly addressed to disciples of Kharrāz, is a decription of the stations on the Sufi path. Kharrāz starts by linking the concept of truthfulness to sincerity and patience; he then proceeds to discuss the following stations that God-seekers traverse: repentance, knowledge of the lower soul, knowledge of the devil, scrupulousness, knowledge of God's commands and interdictions, renunciation of the world, trust in God, fear, shame, knowledge of God's bounties and gratitude, love, acceptance, desire and intimacy.³⁵ The seeker's mount on the path is recollection of God, and when he succeeds in rendering this recollection into a perpetual act, then

his heart gains a quick understanding, and his thoughts become clear, and light lodges in his heart: he draws near to God, and God overwhelms his heart and purpose. Then he speaks, and his heart surges with the recollection of God: the love of God lurks deeply hidden in his inmost heart, cleaving to his mind, and never leaving it. Then his soul is joyfully busied with secret converse with God.³⁶

We get a better view of this state of intimacy in five short epistles of Kharrāz that have survived in a single manuscript.³⁷ In the *Book of Light (Kitāb al-dīyā')*, Kharrāz characterises the advanced seekers who come face to face with the essence of divine reality ('ayn al-'ayn) and are thus possessed by an absolute confoundment of spirit as 'people of bewilderment and perplexitude' (*ahl tayhūhiyya wa-ḥayrūriyya*). Kharrāz classifies these into seven groups: (1) *ahl al-ishārāt*: these search God through 'allusions and signs'; (2) *ahl al-'ilm*: these search God through 'discursive knowledge'; (3) *ahl al-mujāhada*: these practise 'spiritual combat', and their states are subject to change (*talwīn*); (4) *ahl al-khuṣūṣiyya*: these come to God through God by being 'specially' pulled by Him; (5) *ahl al-tajrīd*: these are 'isolated' from everything other than God; (6) *ahl istilā wa-tamkīn*: these are 'masters' of their own states, who achieve 'permanence' in the state of being absent to the sensible world and present to the unknowable world; and (7) *ahl al-muḥābāt* 'people of courtesy': these are the special elect, who, moreover, know their special status. They are taken by God to where 'there is no "where"' (*min ḥaythu lā ḥaythu*) or taken by Him in a placeless manner. They lose all their attachments and their own attributes. Significantly, Kharrāz makes it clear that while the first six groups are all temporally limited, in that even though they all achieve intimacy with God they always 'return' (*rujū'*) from such a state, the people of courtesy remain perpetually absorbed in God's majesty.

Kharrāz addresses the last stage of intimacy in greater detail in the *Book of Serenity (Kitāb aṣ-ṣafā')*, which is squarely about the notion of proximity (*qurb*).³⁸

He introduces his topic with a fourfold classification of humankind according to their response to God's call. First are those who choose this world over the next; they will depart from this life in a sorry state. Second, there are those who heed God's commands and interdictions, but since their eyes are firmly fixed on the promised rewards of obedience, they are veiled from God and cannot begin to love Him. Third are the sincere ones who orient their spirits toward God and, in return, have been granted certainty by Him. Yet, they remain preoccupied by talk of 'stations' on the path (*maqāmāt*) and are thus veiled and distracted from the Truth (*al-Haqq*). Only the fourth group achieve true proximity to God. This latter is a problematic state, since God's direct self-manifestation is destructive, as it is explicitly expressed in the Qur'ān 7 [al-A'rāf]: 143, where God, in response to Moses' plea to show Himself to him, manifests Himself to the mountain, which is pulverised and annihilated. This is why God does not gaze at his friends (*awliyā'*) directly but cloaks his gaze with a veil (*ḥijāb*) in order to protect them from total destruction. Now, some who are granted proximity are yet not bestowed knowledge of this privilege and enjoy the fruits of this blessing behind the veil of 'stations', while others, the strongest ones, proceed beyond stations, beyond the path, so to speak, and are plunged into 'ecstasy', or, better yet, 'pure being' (*wajd*, but *wajada* in Arabic means 'to be, to exist'). This ecstatic state is simultaneously a state of 'finding' (*wajada* also means 'to find') where those who are rendered close to God (*muqarrabūn* – Qur'ān 56 [al-Wāqī'a]: 11 and 88) are granted a firm understanding and pure knowledge of God's intimacy. The door between these ecstatic ones and God is forever open, and the 'close ones' remain in perpetual perplexitude and stupefaction (*dahsha*), which is caused by the onslaught of God's majesty. Blinded to themselves by the overwhelming power of God's nearness, they lose all self-consciousness:

If you ask one who is in this state 'What do you want?' he responds 'God'; and if you ask him 'What do you say?' he replies 'God'; if you ask him 'What do you know?' he replies 'God'; and if his limbs could speak, they would say 'God', since his limbs and his joints are full of God's light. He knows nothing but God, and all his knowledge is of God; he is of God, by God, for God and with God; he has lost his identity and has no bearings. If you ask him 'Who are you?' he cannot even reply 'I, myself' because of the domination of divine secrets on him. Such is the reality of ecstasy/finding (*wajd*). When he attains the zenith of proximity, he can no longer say even 'God.'³⁹

This is the point of the coincidence of opposites when the terms of opposition (God-servant and God) become blurred, and the one who is rendered close is left speechless. The friends of God who are blessed with such proximity never 'recover' from this experience of intimacy. Kharrāz concludes the epistle with the assertion that the 'friends' are chosen for this honour directly by God.

In the *Book of Surrender* (*Kitāb al-farāgh*), Kharrāz examines the issue of human subjectivity through the prism of the doctrine of God's unity, *tawḥīd*, and

reaches the conclusion that God is the only true subject of human history. Indeed, 'saying "I" is the sole prerogative of God', and 'whoever else says "I" remains veiled from [true] knowledge.'⁴⁰ The consequence of God's oneness is the erasure of any lingering feeling of subjectivity on the part of human individuals. This same principle also applies to all other would-be subjects, most notably the angels and the Devil, who remain cloaked in false subjectivity (see Qur'ān 7 [al-A'rāf]: 12, where the Devil says of Adam 'I am better than he'; and Qur'ān 2 [al-Baqara]: 30, where the angels speak of themselves in the first-person plural), and, as a chastisement for their inappropriate claims to being subjects, are asked by God to prostrate themselves in front of Adam (for instance, Qur'ān 2 [al-Baqara]: 34). In short, the words 'I', *anā*, and the Truth, *al-Ḥaqq*, in so far as this latter refers to God, are ontologically linked and inseparable from one another. As a consequence, if a Sufi says 'I' – as did Ḥallāj, as we will see – he can only mean God.

But how is it that the 'friends of God' can have the experience of erasing their own identity in the face of God's majesty because they are pulled near God by God Himself, while all others remain wrapped in the darkness of false subjectivity? In this context, Kharrāz refers back to the Day of Covenant, when all human beings, in spirit, stood witness to God's Lordship (Qur'ān, 7 [al-A'rāf]: 172). There is, therefore, an essential link between human spirits and knowledge of God's unity. However, once human spirits, *rūḥ*, are coupled with lower souls (*nafs*) and instincts (*ṭab'*) after the creation, unbelievers, whose spirits are created from the place of darkness, forget this link, while the believers, whose spirits are created from the place of light, continue to hanker after the experience of witnessing God's unity. Nonetheless, most believers too remain veiled from God's majesty on account of false subjectivity, and only the spiritual elect, the friends of God, driven by the desire (*shawq*) and love (*maḥabba*) of God, overcome the veils imposed by their lower souls and instincts and achieve proximity to the Divine.

In both the *Book of Surrender* and another treatise titled the *Book of Unveiling and Exposition* (*Kitāb al-kashf wa'l-bayān*), Kharrāz comments further on the status of God's friends (*awliyā'*), this time raising the thorny issue of the relationship between them and the prophets (*nabī*, pl. *anbiyā'*). He rejects the view that the friends rank higher than the prophets on the grounds that while all prophets are also friends, not all friends are prophets. The distinction between them is that the prophets are charged with the task of conveying God's commands while the friends serve to remind believers of God. Kharrāz also deals with the questions of whether the friend of God can receive inspiration from God (*ilhām*), and the difference between the miracles of the prophets (*āyāt*) and those of the friends (*karāmāt*).⁴¹

Abu'l-Ḥusayn (or al-Ḥasan) al-Nūrī (d. 295/907–8)

Know that God created a house inside the believer called the heart. He then sent a wind of His magnanimity and cleansed this house of idolatry, doubt, hypocrisy and discord. Afterwards, he directed clouds of His favor to rain over the house, and there grew in it all kinds of plants such as certainty, trust, sincerity, fear, hope and love. Then he placed in the center of the house a couch of unity and covered it with the rug of contentment. And He planted the tree of knowledge opposite the couch, with its roots in the heart and its branches in the sky (Qur'ān 14 [Ibrāhīm]: 24), below the throne. He also placed on the right and left sides of the couch armrests of his laws. Then He opened a door to the garden of His mercy and sowed there many kinds of fragrant herbs of praise, glorification, exaltation and commemoration. He made waters of the ocean of guidance flow to these plants through the river of kindness. He hung a lamp of grace high on the door and lighted it with the oil of purity and the light of the lamp gleamed with the light of piety. Then He locked its door in order to keep out the wicked. He held on to its key and did not entrust it to any of his creatures, neither Gabriel, nor Michael, nor Seraphiel, nor others. He then said: 'This is My treasure on My earth, the mine of My sight, the home of My unity and I am the resident of this dwelling.' What an excellent resident and what a wonderful residence!⁴²

This is how Abu'l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Nūrī describes the heart in his treatise *Stations of the Heart (Maqāmāt al-qulūb)*. Born and raised in Baghdad, Nūrī spent his whole life – except for a number of years of exile in Raqqa – in the 'Abbāsid capital, where he became one of the most prominent Sufis of his time.⁴³ It is likely that his name Nūrī, 'of light', was given to him by fellow Sufis on account of the luminosity of his person and his piety. Later sources also record other titles he held as 'the commander of hearts' (*amīr al-qulūb*) and 'the moon of the Sufis' (*qamar al-ṣūfiyya*). It is not possible to reconstruct the different stages of his life with certainty, but according to one tradition, he was a petty merchant or artisan in the early part of his life:

Every day he would set out from home and take bread with him. On his way, he gave the bread away as alms, went into a mosque and prayed there till shortly before midday. Then he left the mosque, opened his shop and fasted. His family thought he ate at the market, and people of the market thought he ate at home. He maintained this practice for twenty years in his early life.⁴⁴

The proclivity for 'ascetic hunger' described in this report appears to have stayed with him throughout his life. Before his departure for Raqqa, he was associated with the circle of Junayd (see below), but generally he kept himself aloof. In 264/877, he was interrogated on charges of heresy (*ẓandaqa*) brought against him and other Sufis, seventy-odd in number, by the traditionalist preacher Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888).⁴⁵ The Sufis were reportedly taken to the caliph, whose summary judgment against them was death by decapitation. Hearing the judgment, Nūrī rushed towards the executioner, who asked him why he was

in such a hurry. Nūrī's reply, that the lives of his companions were dearer to him than his own even for such a short period of time, caused the headsman to cancel the execution, and the matter was taken to court. There, the judge Ismā'īl ibn Ishāq al-Ḥammādī (d. 282/896) questioned the Sufis, especially Nūrī, about matters of ritual purity and prayer and was impressed by their answers. Nūrī closed the proceedings by saying 'God has servants who hear by God, see by God, go by God, and come by God, eat by God and are clothed by God.' Moved to tears by these words, the judge acquitted the Sufis and reported to the caliph: 'If these people are heretics, then there is not a single monotheist on earth!'

There are anomalies in this story, like the summary judgment of death issued for a high number of well-known figures without a trial and the cancellation of the execution by the executioner himself, that suggest some gradual embellishment of the event in the Sufi tradition to throw Nūrī's portrait into greater relief. A similar process might have been at work in the development of some other 'interrogation' narratives around Nūrī, such as this one that is clearly linked with the trial of 264/877, since it is known that Ghulām Khalīl objected to talk of passionate love for God:

When Nūrī was called on to explain his saying 'I love (*a'shuqu*) God and He loves me (*ya'shuqunī*)', he replied 'I have heard God – His remembrance is exalted – say, "He loves them and they love Him (*yuhibbuhum wa yuhibbūnahu*)" (Qur'ān 5 [al-Mā'idā]: 59)", and passionate love (*'ishq*) is not greater than serene love (*maḥabba*), except that the passionate lover (*'āshiq*) is kept away, while the serene lover (*muḥibb*) enjoys his love.'⁴⁶

Nūrī was also asked to explain some puzzling utterances he made: once, when he heard the muezzin utter the call to prayer, he said 'Stab and poison him!' On another occasion, he heard a dog bark and exclaimed, using an expression normally directed only towards God, 'Here I am! At your service!' Yet another time, he said 'Last night I was in my house with God.' Finally, there is the amusing intervention he made when he once saw a man stroking his beard during prayer: 'Take your hand off of God's beard!' In the reports we have about these questionings, Nūrī is able to explain every one of these provocative statements, mostly by citing relevant verses from the Qur'ān. Yet, since our sources do not provide any social context, it is impossible to know if these were associated with real interrogations by political authorities in Baghdad or if they are to be viewed simply as narrative devices that grew around the one major trial of Baghdad Sufis in 264/877, though the latter scenario seems more plausible.⁴⁷ In any case, it is certain that Nūrī had a proclivity for verbal trespass that shocked some like Ghulām Khalīl. He also had a habit of trampling social convention or at least engaging in shocking behaviour, as when he threw 300 dinars that he had earned from the sale of a piece of land into the river from the Ṣarāt bridge, one coin at a time, saying 'My Lord, do you want to deceive me into turning away from you with these?'⁴⁸

Following his acquittal at the trial of 264/877, Nūrī left Baghdad for Raqqa (today in Syria), where he stayed for a good number of years, perhaps as many as fourteen. It is probable that in this period of his life he grew into more of a recluse: he shunned people, frequented the ruins around town, avoided settlements, and appeared in town only to attend Friday prayers. Eventually, after the death of caliph al-Mu'tamid (d. 279/892), he returned to Baghdad. Melancholic and dreamy, he stayed aloof, and on the one occasion he visited the circle of Junayd, he refused to join the conversation on the grounds that he was not familiar with the expressions they used.⁴⁹ However, he continued to be prominent among the Sufis of Baghdad and was well-known at the court of caliph al-Mu'taḍid (r. 279–289/892–902). In a famous incident, Nūrī broke jars of wine belonging to the caliph, and when questioned about this by al-Mu'taḍid himself, he claimed to be the *muḥtasib*, the officer charged with the supervision of public morality, especially in the market place. When the caliph asked him 'Who appointed you?' Nūrī replied 'He Who appointed you caliph!'⁵⁰ The caliph's vizier too knew Nūrī well, to judge by a report that he gave Nūrī some money for him to distribute among the Sufis of Baghdad, which Nūrī did.⁵¹ Although he habitually lived right at the edge of social propriety and had no qualms about stepping on the toes of political powers, Nūrī's death was reportedly caused by another kind of 'trespassing' that had characterised his approach to God throughout his life: hearing a verse on love, he went into a trance and wandered into a freshly-cut reedbed. The sharp reed-ends slashed his bare feet and he died from the wounds soon after the incident.⁵²

According to Nūrī, humankind was created in order to know God, and intimate knowledge of God was the first obligation of humans toward God:

He was asked about the first obligation that God laid upon his servants, and he said, 'Experiential knowledge (*ma'rifa*), as God said "I created the jinn and humankind so that they might worship Me" (Qur'ān 51 [al-Dhāriyāt]: 56) – and Ibn 'Abbās [companion of Muḥammad and commentator, d. 68/687] said, "So that they might know me experientially" (*ya'rifūnī*).'⁵³

Such intimate knowledge of God is the goal of the Sufis, but ultimately only God can take one to this goal, not human effort:

His Greatness is higher than that there should be a way to Him other than by Him or that He could be changed by what He created. No, there is no guide to God except Him and nothing has any effect on Him since it was He Who created all effects.⁵⁴

The intellect by itself cannot lead to God:

They said to Nūrī: 'By what means did you know God?' He replied 'By God.' They said: 'How about reason?' He replied 'Reason is weak and can only lead to something that is weak like itself. When God created reason He said to it "Who am I?" and it

remained silent. Then He rubbed it [its eyes] with the light of [His] singleness and it said "Your are God". So reason cannot know God except by God.⁵⁵

'Someone asked Abu'l-Ḥusayn an-Nūrī, God be compassionate with him, 'How is it that intellects cannot reach God while God can be known only through the intellect?' He replied 'How can a being with temporal limits comprehend one who has no such limits? How can a being beset with frailties comprehend one who has no weakness or infirmity? Or how can one whose being is conditional know the one who has fashioned conditionality itself? Or how can one whose being presumes a "where" know the one who has given "where" a place and named it "where"?⁵⁶

The only way is to turn the reins over to God:

To the question 'by what [means] did you come to know God' he replied 'By omission/lack of all determination. Whatever I thought and contemplated about happened otherwise. And whatever I did He ruined.'⁵⁷

Since God is humankind's best friend, there is little need for believers to be concerned with questions about their ultimate destiny or about matters of predestination; for their part, all they need to do is to choose God over everything else: 'Temptation is being occupied with something other than God.'⁵⁸ Clearly, the body is one source of temptation: 'The body necessarily leads [one] to oppose God under all circumstances, [since] it covets what is harmful in desiring this world.'⁵⁹ Wealth too leads away from God, and the believer should choose poverty. But poverty extends to and merges with altruism: 'The description of the poor man is that he should be quiet when he possesses nothing and generous and unselfish when he possesses something.'⁶⁰ The mark of true poverty, however, is joy: 'You recognise them [the poor] by their characteristic of having joy in their poverty and their composure on occasions when misfortune visits them.'⁶¹ Such joy is the result of being oriented towards God at all times instead of being bogged down by one's attachments to everything other than God: 'The highest station of the people of realities is the severance of all attachment.'⁶²

Continuous orientation towards God takes the form of an intense 'watchfulness' (*murāqaba*) of God's action on earth; in an amusing anecdote, Nūrī tells fellow Sufi Shiblī that he learned such vigilance from a cat lying in ambush in front of a mousehole.⁶³ Nūrī's favourite medium of vigilance was, however, 'hearing' (*samā'*). By 'hearing', Nūrī meant not so much an 'audition', an active act of listening to a recitation of poetry or a song, but keeping his ears open for detecting mystical meanings that lay behind the level of sound. One who learned to listen in this manner ultimately 'heard' and was moved to answer: 'He whose ear is opened to hearing, his tongue is moved to answer.'⁶⁴ This ability to lend an ear to God and the urge to answer Him was no doubt what took Nūrī to the edges of acceptable speech on many occasions ('verbal trespass') and also turned him into a poet, with many verses preserved in his name.⁶⁵ Such moments of response to God were moments of 'finding' and 'ecstasy' (*wajd*,

with both meanings), though for Nūrī ecstasy could never become a pretext for improper behaviour: 'He who does not observe propriety in his moments [of finding/ecstasy], his is [a moment of] detestation.'⁶⁶ In the attempt to be oriented towards God, the Sufi turned away from everything other than God, turned himself over to God and remained attentive to His call. The path that led to God actually was to be found in the heart.

Intimate knowledge of God is located in the heart. The heart, created by God as the locus of the human encounter with Himself, is composed of four layers: breast (*ṣadr*), heart proper (*qalb*), inner heart (*fu'ād*) and heart's core (*lubb*). These four layers harbour, respectively, Islam, faith (*imān*), intimate knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and unification (*tawhīd*). Islam activates the outer layer, and correct practice leads to the activation of the level of faith, and this process of a deepening spiritual awakening continues until only God's love remains in the heart:

The first thing created by God in the heart of one for whom He wishes happiness is light. Then this light becomes brightness, then rays, then a moon, then a sun. And when the light appears in the heart, this world and what is in it grows cold to his heart. And when it [the heart] becomes a moon he renounces the next world and what is in it. And when it becomes a sun he sees neither the world and what is in it nor the next world and what is in it: he knows nothing but God. And his body is light and his heart is light and his speech is light, 'Light upon light, God guides whom He will to his light' [Qur'ān 24 (al-Nūr): 35].⁶⁷

Once the heart is taken over with God's light, the stage of 'unification' (*jam'*) sets in and the Sufi arrives at God Himself. This is more a continuous game of finding and losing than a losing of the self in God: 'For twenty years I have been between finding and losing. When I find my Lord, I lose my heart, and when I find my heart, I lose my Lord.'⁶⁸ But the seeker does not cease to hope that he might just merge with God: 'Common people don the shirt of obedience; the elite the shirt of [acknowledging God's] lordship and do not pay heed to obedience; but the chosen ones God pulls to Himself and effaces them from themselves.'⁶⁹

Junayd (d. 298/910)

Abu'l-Qāsim al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad al-Khazzāz, a silk merchant of Baghdad who excelled in the study of law early in life, was by common consensus of both pre-modern and modern authorities one of Sufism's major architects. He was born and raised in the 'Abbāsīd capital, which he seems to have left only once in his life on pilgrimage to Mecca. In his youth, he was a prodigious student of jurisprudence under the eminent jurist Abū Thawr (d. 240/855), and he continued to cultivate legal science into his adult years, since he could escape the round-up of Sufis during the inquisition of Ghulām Khalīl by declaring himself to be a

jurist.⁷⁰ Several of his treatises of various lengths as well as a number of letters that he wrote to some of his companions are extant in a single manuscript, and other fragments of his writings are preserved in later Sufi works.⁷¹ A perusal of Junayd's works reveals that his thought revolved around the following pillars.

Deep meditation on the meaning of God's unity

No fewer than eight of Junayd's short treatises are on the question of *tawhīd*, literally 'unification'. In focusing on this central concept, Junayd was operating firmly within mainstream Islamic thought of his time. Already by the beginning of the third/ninth century, the exact meaning of God's unity and uniqueness had become a major bone of contention among a growing number of specialists in the intellectual and confessional foundations of Islam.⁷² Junayd's definition of *tawhīd* as *ifrād al-qidam 'an al-ḥadath*, 'the isolation of the Eternal from the created', was exemplary and garnered much praise for him from posterity.⁷³ What set him apart from others, however, was his assertion that the attempt to attain true unification could succeed only if the individual abandoned any pretence to having powers of intellection and intuition in understanding the issue of God's uniqueness and turned himself over completely to God's hands: 'Know that you are veiled from Him through yourself, and that you do not reach him through yourself but that you reach Him through Him.'⁷⁴ In other words, the realisation of divine unity required the annihilation of human agency and denied the possibility of individuality to all but God Himself. Junayd's insistence on divine agency to the exclusion of all human agency led him to elaborate the peculiar notion of *fanā'*.

Fanā', 'the passing away of self-consciousness'

Junayd thought that when the human individual approached God with his customary sense of being a self-contained, separate entity, it proved impossible for him to affirm God's unity since his own self-consciousness imprisoned him in himself. The only solution was for him to 'pass away from his sense of self', *fanā'*, and thus to arrive at God's presence denuded of his own individuality. Only when all awareness of self disappeared through a total annihilation of self-consciousness was it possible to talk of 'affirmation of God's unity' or *tawhīd*. In order to exemplify this state, Junayd referred to a well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*, an 'extra-Qur'ānic divine saying':

My servant draws near to Me by means of nothing dearer to Me than that which I have established as a duty for him. And My servant continues drawing nearer to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him; and when I love him, I become his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks.⁷⁵

Moreover, Junayd conceptualised such dissolution of self-consciousness not as a new existential state but as a 'return' to a primordial state that human beings had before the creation on the Day of the Covenant.

Mithāq, 'the Primordial Covenant'

'When your Lord brought forth offspring from the children of Adam, from their loins, and had them testify regarding themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Oh yes, we so testify." Lest you say on Judgment Day "We were unaware of this!"' (Qur'ān, 7 [al-A'rāf: 172]). According to Junayd, this primordial covenant recorded in the Qur'ān marked the true and perfect type of human existence as selfless existence in God, presumably as non-individualised spiritual entities in God's mind:

In this verse God tells you that He spoke to them at a time when they did not exist, except so far as they existed in Him. This existence is not the same type of existence as is usually attributed to God's creatures; it is a type of existence which only God knows and only He is aware of. God knows their existence; embracing them he sees them in the beginning when they are non-existent and unaware of their future existence in this world.⁷⁶

Thus initiated by God as divine ideas, humans are then created as individual spirits wrapped in a body and placed on earth. But the memory of their divine, completely spiritual existence on the Day of the Covenant haunts them and lures them into the experience of *fanā'*, which is literally a re-enactment of the primordial covenant. Passing away from consciousness of earthly existence, however, is not total annihilation of the individual since even after *fanā'*, the self survives in a transformed fashion.

Ṣaḥw, 'sobriety'

Those who experience *fanā'* do not subsist in that state of selfless absorption in God but find themselves returned to their senses by God. Such returnees from the experience of selflessness are thus reconstituted as renewed selves:

He is himself, after he has not been truly himself. He is present in himself and in God after having been present in God and absent in himself. This is because he has left the intoxication of God's overwhelming *ghalaba* (victory), and comes to the clarity of sobriety, and contemplation is once more restored to him so that he can put everything in its right place and assess it correctly. Once more he assumes his individual attributes, after *fanā'*. His personal qualities persist in him and his actions in this world; when he has reached the zenith of spiritual achievement vouchsafed by God, he becomes a pattern for his fellow men.⁷⁷

It turns out, therefore, that those who transform their earthly selves through the experience of passing away from self-consciousness and reclaim their primordial states as witnesses of God's lordship by re-enacting the Day of the Covenant are

not only returned to their earthly existence but are given the special mission of guiding others to God.

The spiritual elect

While the struggle to affirm God's uniqueness by erasing the sense of self might be seen as a serious blow to any conception of human agency, for the select few who are picked by God specially for this purpose, *fanā'* and the return from it lead in fact to the formation of new or 'reclaimed' selves reconstituted in God's image. Such reconstituted individuals, now operating as God's instruments on earth, serve to shepherd the community towards God. It is clear that Junayd's doctrines of the covenant, passing away, and sobriety apply only to the spiritual elect, and not to the generality of humankind.⁷⁸ The elect are a tightly-knit group of 'brethren' that Junayd designates by such phrases as 'the choice of believers' (*ṣafwa min 'ibād*) or 'the pure ones' (*khulaṣā' min khalq*). They play significant roles in the community of believers:

God has made them unfurled flags of truth, lighthouses erected for guidance, beaten paths for humanity. These are indeed the scholars among the Muslims, the truly trusting among the faithful, the noblest of those who are pious. They are those who guide in the crises of religion, and theirs is the light which leads in the darkness of ignorance; the brilliance of their knowledge shines through darkness. God has made them the symbol of His mercy for His creatures, and a blessing for whom He chooses. They are the instruments whereby He instructs the ignorant, reminds the negligent, guides the seeker aright ... The brilliance of their light shines clearly for their fellow creatures ... He who follows in their footsteps is guided on the right path, he who follows their mode of life will be happy and never depressed.⁷⁹

Junayd, then, viewed Sufis as a select company of companions who were privileged with the God-given ability of truly affirming God's oneness by blotting out their earthly identities but who also bore the responsibility of acting as guides to humankind in all aspects of life. Indeed, all of Junayd's writings belong to the category of correspondence with fellow Sufis, and he clearly intended these letters solely for the internal consumption of the spiritual elect, and not for the general public. It is reported that when fellow Sufi Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946) wrote him a letter that he considered too explicit, Junayd sent the letter back to Shiblī with the following note: 'Oh, Abū Bakr, be careful with the people. Always we devise some means of camouflaging our words, splitting them and discussing them between ourselves, yet here you come along and tear away the veil!'⁸⁰ Daring in his spiritual vision and learned in the science of law, Junayd was a cautious figure in public life, who sat on the fence between private, inner devotion and public piety.⁸¹

Major characteristics of the Sufis of Baghdad

On the basis of the preceding review of some undisputed Sufi masters of Baghdad, it is now possible to draw a portrait of early Sufism as a distinct mode of Islamic piety. Clearly, these early Sufis were most concerned with obtaining experiential knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of God's unity, with distilling the reality of the Islamic profession of faith 'There is no god but God' into their daily lives. Human life presented itself to them as a journey towards the ever-elusive goal of achieving true 'God-consciousness', as an on-going attempt to draw near God. In Sufi perspective, human beings, viewed as God-servants, had experienced such proximity to their Lord before the beginning of time when God granted them an audience on the Day of the Covenant, and they were promised an even more intimate closeness to Him at the end of time in paradise. While on earth, however, they had to strive to preserve and renew the memory of their primordial proximity to their creator by turning their backs on everything other than God and by living their lives in constant recognition of His presence.

In practice, this meant training and domestication of the lower self through appropriate measures that included continuous cultivation of the heart and, for many but not all Sufis, asceticism as well as seclusion and poverty. The heart was understood as the spiritual organ of God's presence in the human person, and its chief sustenance was 'recollection and invocation' of God (*dhikr*) and perceiving God's activity on earth through 'hearing and vigilant observation' (*samā'* and *murāqaba*). Paradoxically, the journey (*sulūk*) towards the Lord started and continued only when the Sufi realised his own weakness as an agent and acknowledged God as the only true actor in the universe. Only when the reins were turned over to God did the human individual become a wayfarer (*sālik*) and begin the journey towards the goal of achieving proximity to the Creator.

This journey was normally envisaged as a path (*ṭarīq* or *ṭarīqa*) marked by various stopping places (*manzil*, pl. *manāzil*), stations (*maqām*, pl. *maqāmāt*) and states (*ḥāl*, pl. *aḥwāl*) that the wayfarer passed through, even though at this earliest stage of Sufism there was no systematic thinking, let alone any agreement, on the number, nature and order of these stages among the early Sufis. Nor was there a consensus on the destination of the journey. Everyone agreed that closeness to God normally entailed a sharp turn from lower concerns of this world (*dunyā*) towards the realm of ultimate matters (*ākhirā*), a movement away from the lower self (*nafs*) towards the inner locus of God's presence (*qalb*), but it proved difficult to characterise the final encounter with God located at the end of the journey. While some, like Kharrāz and Nūrī, described the highest stage of intimacy with God as the dissolution of all self-consciousness, others like Junayd viewed the ultimate goal as a 'reconstituted' self, a human identity recomposed in the image of God after being thoroughly deconstructed during

the Sufi journey. All agreed, however, that the ultimate Sufi experience was to be viewed as the passing away or re-absorption of the created human being into the only true/real (*ḥaqq*) being of God, and, most emphatically, not as a divinisation of the human. More generally, the encounter between the Sufi and God was a 'unidirectional merger' whereby the former was thought to flow into the latter but movement in the other direction was off limits or, at the very least, extremely limited, since such a flow from the divine into the human could pave the way to divinisation of the human and thus lead to the suspect, even heretical, doctrines of incarnation and inherence (*ḥulūl*).

No matter what their approach to the thorny issue of encounter with the Divine, those who shared the common aim of drawing close to God through experiential knowing enjoyed a special camaraderie with one another in the form of circles of fellowship, mutual mentoring and relationships of master and disciple. Not all human beings ever became wayfarers, let alone grew close to God: that privilege was, it seems, reserved for the few 'friends of God' (*awliyā'*) who were highly conscious of their special status and viewed themselves as the spiritual elect. Many friends, much like the prophets, saw themselves as God's special agents among humans, rendered distinct by their special status as intermediaries between the divine and human planes of being. In their view, they channelled God's mercy to humankind and served to increase God-consciousness among the otherwise heedless, self-absorbed human race through their personal example and their tireless advocacy of God's cause in human affairs.

The special status of the friends manifested itself in a number of practices that simultaneously underscored their distinctness from the common believers (*'awāmm*) and served to forge bonds of fellowship, loyalty and mutual allegiance among the spiritual elect (*khawāṣṣ*). They began to assemble in certain places of congregation (the Shūnīziyya mosque for the circle around Junayd) and to travel in groups, they developed distinctive prayer rituals in the form of the invocation (*dhikr*) and the audition to poetry and music (*samā'*) that frequently led to rapture or ecstasy (*wajd*), and they adopted special initiation practices, notably the investiture with the white woollen robe (*khirqā*) and the clipping of the moustache.⁸² It seems likely, though difficult to verify, that other initiatic acts that came to be characteristic of Sufism, such as the handclasp (*muṣāfaha*, *bay'a*), the bestowal with the rosary (*subḥa*), and the entrusting of the initiate with the *dhikr* formula, were also practised by the first Sufis of Baghdad.⁸³

This inward-looking portrait of the initial phase of full-fledged Sufism needs to be viewed in its proper historical and social context. The Ṣūfiyya developed as a convergence of many disparate ideas and practices into a distinct movement in Baghdad in the second half of the third/ ninth century. Most prominent among its members were the following figures: Abū Ḥamza al-Baghdādī (d. 269/882–3 or 289/902), Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or a few years earlier), 'Amr ibn

‘Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903–4), Abū’l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910), Ruwaym ibn Aḥmad (d. 303/915–16), Ibn ‘Aṭā’ (d. 309/921–2 or 311/923–4), Khayr al-Nassāj (d. 322/934) and, a generation later, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), al-Jurayrī (d. 311/923–4), Abū ‘Alī al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/933–4), and Ja‘far al-Khuldī (d. 348/959).⁸⁴ Even allowing for some embellishment of their learning by the later Sufi tradition, these first Sufis clearly formed an intellectual elite who were highly literate and learned in the Qur’ān, the *ḥadīth* and much else besides. However, since they looked askance at the use of human reason in the attempt to attain knowledge of God, the Sufis were at best sceptical, and at worst dismissive, of scholarly pursuits other than study of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*), rational speculation on the foundations of Islam (*kalām*), and even *belles lettres* (*adab*). It is true, for instance, that Junayd had studied jurisprudence under Abū Thawr (d. 240/855) and later in his life made use of his scholarly credentials to avoid the inquisition started by Ghulām Khalīl (he claimed to be a jurist, not a Sufi), but his own extant writings do not evince any fondness for scholarship, legal or otherwise, let alone any reliance on human reason as a tool to attain proximity to God.

On the other hand, the decidedly distanced attitude of the Sufis towards the nascent legal and theological scholars of their time was not the result of a denial or condemnation of God’s law (*sharī‘a*). Enthusiastic and total acceptance and implementation of God’s commands formed the foundation of the whole Sufi enterprise, and the idea that the divine stipulations could somehow prove to be irrelevant to the endeavour to become true God-servants would have been alien to the Sufis. In maintaining their distance from the representatives of discursive scholarship, the Ṣūfiyya were, rather, motivated by the conviction that scholarly knowledge of God’s laws could only be the beginning, and not the end-goal, of servanthood to God (*‘ubūda’/‘ubūdiyya*) and that the *sharī‘a* was not and could not be the sole or even the primary aspect of the broader relationship between God and His human servants. The bond between the Creator and the creation was, instead, one of intimacy, for some even love, and while the *sharī‘a* laid the foundation for the house of God’s presence in the heart of the believer, it could not build it by itself.⁸⁵ The Sufis thus directed their energies to the cultivation of the heart, and to the extent that preoccupation with legal and theological scholarship tended to distract one from this central exercise, it was inevitable that they would view the increasingly ‘professional’ scholarly enterprises with a mixture of caution, suspicion, alarm and, at times, even disdain. Indeed, no Sufi participated in the burgeoning, interconnected fields of *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (‘principles of jurisprudence’); quite the contrary, the advocates of experiential knowledge assumed an antagonistic posture towards representatives of the theoretical disciplines, and to judge by evidence from the early

fourth/tenth century they were especially critical of the theological disputations of the rationalist Mu'tazila.⁸⁶ On the professional side too, the Sufis apparently held the practical dimensions of the juristic enterprise in low esteem. Junayd was incensed at fellow Sufi 'Amr al-Makkī's decision to accept the title of the *qāḍī* of Jidda and later refused to preside over his funeral for this reason. He was equally displeased with Ruwaym when the latter became a deputy to the chief *qāḍī* of Baghdad, Ismā'īl ibn Ishāq (the same judge who had acquitted Nūrī and the other Sufis, including Ruwaym himself, from the charge of heresy).⁸⁷

For their part, the scholars and lawyers maintained a variety of attitudes towards the Sufis that ranged from curious, and at times sympathetic, observation to scepticism and even contempt. The Mālikī chief judge Ismā'īl ibn Ishāq was clearly accommodating towards them, while Ibn Surayj (d. 306/918), perhaps the leading Shāfi'ī jurist of the day, who visited a session of Junayd out of curiosity and refrained from issuing a *fatwa* about Ḥallāj 'declaring himself ignorant of his [Ḥallāj's] source of inspiration', may have been favourably disposed towards the mystics.⁸⁸ However, the Mu'tazila, and possibly most Ḥanafīs, were dismissive of the Sufis, whom they criticised as antirational obscurantists at best and ignorant imposters as worst. They were especially irritated by miracles attributed to the Sufis by the populace and tended to view these as plain sorcery (*sihr*).⁸⁹ Neither the Sufi approach to knowledge nor the Sufi doctrine of selection, not to mention esoteric Qur'ān interpretation, could have pleased full-fledged rationalists in *kalām* or *fiqh*.

On the other hand, in their scepticism toward the use of human reason in the matters of God, the first Sufis were aligned with the 'traditionalists' who had formed especially around the example of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855). These latter, like the Sufis, were opposed to the utilisation of common sense and reason (*ra'y*) in legal and theological issues and honoured only scriptuary evidence (inclusive of *ḥadīth* reports) on this front. However, Sufi scepticism towards reason did not extend as far as to denounce 'semi-rationalism' in law, as evidenced by the fact that many Sufis were affiliated with the nascent semi-rationalist schools of law (*madhhab*, pl. *madhāhib*): Junayd was a follower of Abū Thawr (d. 240/854); 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān and Abū 'Alī al-Rūdhbārī were Shāfi'īs; Shiblī was a Mālikī; and Ruwaym was a Ṣāhirī. On the other hand, only one Sufi, Ibn 'Aṭā', adhered to the more traditionalist Ḥanbalī school, and there was even one Sufi, Jurayrī, who belonged to the more rationalist Ḥanafī school.⁹⁰ For their part, the traditionalists did not approve of the nascent schools of law, most of which had allowed the use of reason at various levels in law and theology (Ḥanafīs were mostly rationalists, and Abū Thawrīs, Shāfi'īs, Mālikīs, and, to a lesser extent, Ṣāhirīs were semi-rationalists), and the affiliations of the Sufis with the schools might have been sufficient to make them into targets of traditionalists' ire. In the event, the shared ground between the traditionalists and

the Sufis, especially the cultivation of the *ḥadīth* as a form of strong opposition to rationalism, proved to be substantial, and there were few clashes between them, with the inquisition of Ghulām Khalīl as the major example. This incident, we have seen, was most likely prompted by Nūrī's use of the non-Qur'ānic verb '*ashīqa*' instead of the Qur'ānic *ḥabba* (both mean 'to love') with respect to God, a usage that in the eyes of Ghulām Khalīl must have amounted to a 'departure from sanctioned belief and practice' (*bid'a*), which was worthy of suppression. But, there are vague signs that Ghulām Khalīl's ire was raised by talk of sexual promiscuity at Sufi meetings, possibly caused by intermixing between genders and association of adult males with male adolescents at these gatherings. Sumnūn ibn Ḥamza (or 'Abd Allāh) al-Muḥibb (d. 298/910–11), one of the Sufis charged in Ghulām Khalīl's inquisition, and Kharrāz had female disciples, and even though teacher-pupil relationships between males and females did not by any means constitute a clear departure from the Sunna, allegations of sexual misconduct between the sexes among the Sufis would certainly have caught Ghulām Khalīl's attention.⁹¹ Whatever the real cause of this latter's persecution of the Sufis, the suspicion of *bid'a* remained, equally during the second half of the third/ninth century and the following centuries, the fault-line between the traditionalists and the later Ḥanbalīs on the one hand and the Sufis on the other hand, but it is important to note that the relationship between them was not necessarily confrontational and was, instead, frequently quite cordial.

The Ṣūfiyya was a distinctly urban phenomenon, and although our information on the social backgrounds of its members is admittedly rather thin, they seem to have been middle-class urbanites of artisanal and merchant origins. Upper classes were also represented: Shiblī was a high-ranking official of the caliph before his conversion to the Sufi path, and there certainly were wealthy Sufis, of whom Ruwaym and Ibn 'Aṭā were prominent, if rare, examples.⁹² Of respectable social origins, the Sufis by and large also appear to have remained within the boundaries of mainstream social life. Nevertheless, they were clearly too close to the borderline on many an issue, and there were always some Sufis who crossed the line into unconventional, if not downright shocking, social comportment. Nūrī and in particular Shiblī, for instance, were well-known for their transgressions in social behaviour. Others were not that idiosyncratic in public conduct, yet many of them – including Junayd, Nūrī, and Abū Ḥamza Baghdādī – appear to have opted out of the mainstream social practices of marriage and earning a living, though some, like Ibn 'Aṭā and Ruwaym, were gainfully employed and married with children.⁹³ It may indeed be appropriate to characterise their attitude towards family and economic activity as a principled refusal to condemn marriage as well as work, combined with a distinct preference for celibacy and avoidance of active search for sustenance.⁹⁴ Their stance on earning a living is exemplified in the following report about Junayd:

A group of people approached Junayd and asked, 'Where should we seek our sustenance?' He said, 'If you know where it is, go seek it there!' They said, 'Should we ask God for it?' He answered, 'If you know that He has forgotten you, then request it from Him!' They said, 'Should we stay home and place our trust in Him?' He replied, 'To test [God] would mean doubt!' They said, 'What is the solution, then?' He answered, 'To abandon [the idea of] a solution!'⁹⁵

Significantly, this 'fence-sitting' on the key social issues of having a family and holding a job did not translate into a total rejection of human social life and its basic principles by the Sufis. Hermetic seclusion and isolation from social life, though partially practised by Nūrī and possibly by some others, were generally shunned. By and large they did not practise itinerant mendicancy and group withdrawal from society, traits that were, or could be, characteristic of renunciants who were so prevalent in the first three centuries of Islamic history. In contrast to these and other approaches located beyond the boundaries of mainstream urban life, the Sufis planted themselves firmly into the social fabric of Baghdad, although they occupied the 'grey areas' on many social fronts. In this, their rootedness within urban society, they resembled the majority of the scholars, the *'ulamā'*, who occupied the social centre of major towns in Islamic polities of the time. In brief, the *Ṣūfiyya*, like scholars of discursive knowledge, took shape at the very heart of 'Abbāsid urban culture in Baghdad, and put forward their claim to be central players on the main stage in the unfolding drama of authority in urban Muslim communities.

In comparison to the more extremist renunciants, all traditionalists, of the first century of 'Abbasid rule (mid-third/ninth to mid-fourth/tenth century), who tended to be severely critical of the social mainstream and the political status quo, the Baghdad Sufis were firmly 'centrist' in their social and political orientation. Apart from an activist streak characterised by willingness to 'command right and forbid wrong' (exemplified in Nūrī's provocative act of smashing wine jars that belonged to the caliph), which they may have interited from the early ascetic Mu'tazilīs, the Baghdad Sufis were as a rule politically inactive and quietist.⁹⁶ Shiblī, for instance, quit politics upon his conversion to Sufism at around the age of forty, even though he was a high-level government official earlier in life and continued to have connections in the upper echelons of government until his death. As a Sufi, he incurred the criticism of his mentor Junayd, who, probably because of his preference for quietism, disapproved of Shiblī's preaching in public.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, a few Sufis, like 'Amr and Ruwaym, did not hesitate to step into politically sensitive legal positions, though they did not participate in the making of politics as such. In accepting posts as judges, they may have been motivated by their desire to uphold God's law, the *sharī'a*. For their part, politicians were certainly aware of the Sufis, and some of them even paid special attention to the mystics in the form of charity,

but they clearly saw no need to monitor this pious group unless charges of heresy were brought against them by politically influential figures. The Sufis did not constitute a political threat; indeed, they were neither an asset nor a liability for political powers at this stage. There was, however, one figure associated with the Sufis who became entangled in political power struggles at the highest levels and whose grisly execution at the orders of an 'Abbāsīd vizier, Ḥāmid ibn al-'Abbās (d. 311/924), cast a long shadow over the whole course of subsequent Sufi history. That figure was al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).

Ḥallāj was a controversial figure throughout his life. His Sufi affiliation is clear: originally tutored in Tustar by Sahl al-Tustarī (discussed below) for two years in his early youth, he was later initiated into Baghdad Sufism by 'Amr al-Makkī in Basra and is said to have met this latter's teacher Junayd in the early period of his life. Yet, neither is there any doubt about his clean break with 'Amr and Junayd within a decade of his induction into Sufism, a rupture evidently brought about by Ḥallāj's emergence in the mature, adult phase of his life as a relentless social and political activist, a transformation that proved to be unacceptable to his Sufi masters. During the 270s/880s and 280s/890s, Ḥallāj travelled widely as a popular preacher and a thaumaturge and acquired a considerable following in the lands he visited, including Khurāsān, Transoxania, and India. The exact nature of the ideas that fuelled his activism remains the subject of scholarly controversy, especially about whether or not extremist Shī'ī themes coloured his preaching. Ḥallāj spent the last two decades of his life mostly in Baghdad, where he became an intensely controversial figure with a high number of supporters and detractors. Significantly, his friends in the capital included two prominent Sufis, Shiblī and Ibn 'Aṭā', who continued to befriend him until the bitter end. After nine years of house arrest at the court and an extended power struggle between his political enemies and allies, Ḥallāj was brutally put to death in 309/922 on the charge that he had advocated the substitution of the ritual obligation of pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) with a private pilgrimage performed around a replica of the Ka'ba that he had built in his yard. His miracle-mongering may have also been among the charges. Shortly before having Ḥallāj executed, the vizier Ḥāmid ibn al-'Abbās interrogated the Sufi Ibn 'Aṭā' on his views about Ḥallāj, and when this latter publicly denounced the vizier's policies instead, he had Ibn 'Aṭā' beaten to death. No other Sufi, including Shiblī, rose to defend Ḥallāj, while Jurayrī, who had assumed the mantle of Junayd, is said to have agreed with the death sentence against him.⁹⁸

Was Ḥallāj a Sufi? Clearly, he absorbed and internalised Sufi ideas and practices early in life, but it is equally obvious that he forged his own unique mode of piety that went well beyond the domain of the thinking and behaviour of the Baghdad Sufis.⁹⁹ The fact that he stood with one foot inside and the other outside Baghdad Sufism, coupled with his firm friendship with two highly

prominent Sufis until the end of his life, meant that he remained a controversial figure for later generations of Sufis. Was Ḥallāj's trial and execution an unmistakable example of persecution of Sufis by political authorities *because* of their Sufi views and practices? This question is complicated by the existence of a legend, extremely popular among later Sufis, that Ḥallāj was executed because of his explosive utterance 'I am the Truth' (*anā' l-ḥaqq*). According to this account, Ḥallāj suffered the consequences of exposing the secret of the 'union' or 'merger' between God and the Sufi at the highest level of experiential knowledge. Unable to comprehend the subtleties of the complete meltdown of human self-consciousness that takes place when the human comes too close to the Divine, the political authorities mistook Ḥallāj's statement 'I am the Truth' as a claim of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*) and condemned him to death. As this legend would have it, therefore, Ḥallāj was executed as a Sufi by the political establishment because he had attempted to reveal the shocking truth at the heart of Sufi thought and practice to those who could not have possibly understood it.¹⁰⁰

This legendary account is clearly inaccurate and anachronistic. Ḥallāj's involvement in high Baghdad politics was uniquely personal and did not revolve around his identity as a Sufi. More significantly, there is no evidence that Ḥallāj ever uttered the statement 'I am the Truth' which is attributed to him in later sources. Even if he had, there is the fact that most Baghdad Sufis do not seem to have viewed the loss of self-consciousness at the threshold of the divine realm as complete identification of the human with the Godhead, so that if Ḥallāj actually said 'I am the Truth' and meant it in the sense of divinisation of the human, then he had departed from the 'mainstream' Sufi perspectives on proximity to God and, to that extent, was not representative of this mainstream.¹⁰¹ Finally, no Sufi other than Ibn 'Aṭā' was embroiled in the Ḥallāj affair, and Ibn 'Aṭā', as we have seen, was killed not because of his Sufi views but because of his willingness to rebuke the vizier for his usurious policies. Indeed, the Sufis of Baghdad continued to thrive even after the execution of Ḥallāj, under the leadership of Jurayrī. It is, therefore, an error to view Ḥallāj's grueling ordeal as an instance of the persecution of Sufis by political and religious authorities hostile to Sufi ideas.¹⁰²

In summary, the case of Ḥallāj does not invalidate our earlier observation about the centrist orientation of Baghdad Sufis in social and political matters. The plight of Ḥallāj deeply wounded Shiblī and moved Ibn 'Aṭā' to take a stance against the cruel and unscrupulous vizier Ḥāmid, which proved to be a fatal step, but Ḥallāj's trial and execution was not a trial and condemnation of the Sufis, who were neither radicalised nor driven underground as a result of that event. Having successfully inserted themselves into the midst of mainstream intellectual elites of Baghdad, in between the rationalist and semi-rationalist legalists and theologians on the one hand and the conservative traditionalists on the other, with one foot in each camp, the Sufis had arrived to stay.¹⁰³

Notes

- 1 The most comprehensive survey of *zuhd* in this period is Richard Gramlich, *Weltverzicht: Grundlagen und Weisen Islamischer Askese* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997). Individual portraits of many prominent early renunciants appear in Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*.
- 2 Michael D. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996), 125–30; the quotes are from pages 126 and 128; and Deborah Tor, 'Privatized jihad and public order in the pre-Seljuq period: the role of the *mutatawwi'a*', *Iranian Studies* 38 (2005): 555–73. Major primary sources on Ibn Adham are listed in Gerhard Böwering, 'Early Sufism between persecution and heresy', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 46, n. 1, and these are used fully in Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 135–282.
- 3 Böwering, *Mystical Vision*, 47; Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 106–7, esp. note 103. Sources on 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd are listed in Bernd Radtke, 'How can man reach the mystical union: Ibn Ṭufayl and the divine spark', in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 190, n. 221, and Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991–7), 2: 96ff; see *ibid.*, 102ff on 'Abbādān; also Knysh, *Short History*, 16–18.
- 4 Christopher Melchert, 'The Ḥanābila and the early Sufis', *Arabica* 58 (2001): 354–55; cf. Fritz Meier, *Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Ḥayr (357–440/967–1049): Wirklichkeit und Legende* (Tehran: Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 1976), 300–1. For the 'Sufis of the Mu'tazila', see Ess, *Theologie*, 3: 130–33; and Florian Sobieroj, 'The Mu'tazila and Sufism', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. Jong and Radtke, 68–70.
- 5 Jacqueline Chabbi, 'Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ, un précurseur du ḥanbalisme', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas* 30 (1978): 331–45, and Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 154–87. Cf. Böwering, 'Early Sufism', p. 48, notes 5 and 6.
- 6 For a pithy discussion of the theme of *tawba* among early renunciants, see Böwering, 'Early Sufism', 45–50; on *tawakkul*, see the detailed survey Reinert, *Lehre*.
- 7 The clustering of the themes of 'inner life', 'inner meaning of the Qur'ān', and 'doctrine of selection' is suggested by Bernd Radtke in 'Bāṭen', *Elr* 3: 859–61 (quote on 860). For the earliest phase of the search for inner meaning of the Qur'ān, see Gerhard Böwering, 'The Qur'ān commentary of al-Sulamī', in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 41–56, and Gerhard Böwering, 'The major sources of Sulamī's minor Qur'ān commentary', *Oriens* 35 (1996): 35–56. A comprehensive new treatment is Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*. For concise but comprehensive surveys on the idea of divine selection as expressed by the terms *walāya/wilāya*, see 'Walāyah', *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn, ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 14: 9656–62 (Hermann Landolt); 'Walī, 1. General Survey', *El* 11: 109a–111b (B.

- Radtke); Michel Chodkiewicz, 'La Sainteté et les saints en Islam', in *Le Culte des saints dans le monde musulman*, ed. Henri Chambert-Loir and C. Guillot (Paris: École française d'Extrême Orient, 1995), 13–22; and Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 17–46. Two more recent treatments are Gerald Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-'Arabi's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 109–30; and Richard J. A. McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafā' Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn 'Arabi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 8–26. 'Abdāl', Elr 1: 173–4 (J. Chabbi) is somewhat sketchy.
- 8 This is not meant to be a complete list. For a recent discussion of the first four of these figures, see Knysh, *Short History*, chs 1–2; his references should be supplemented by the following: Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 2: 13–62 (on Shaqīq); Sarah Sviri, 'The self and its transformation in Šūfism, with special reference to early literature', in *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195–215 (partly on Shaqīq); Richard Gramlich, 'Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī', *Oriens* 33 (1992): 22–85; 'Du'l-Nūn Meṣrī', Elr 7: 572–3 (G. Böwering); and Josef van Ess, 'Der Kreis des Dhu'l-Nūn', *Die Welt des Orients* 12 (1981): 99–105. On Yahyā ibn Mu'adh, see Meier, *Abū Sa'id*, 148–84. Bāyazīd is discussed below.
 - 9 Female renunciants of this early period were recorded by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) in his biographical notices on women devotees and Sufis, and later, by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), in his *Ṣiḡat al-ṣafwa*; see complete text of the former work and selections from the latter in Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta'abbidāt aṣ-ṣūfiyyāt*, ed. and trans. Rkia Elaroui Cornell (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999); for a concise but comprehensive treatment, see Laury Silvers-Alario, 'Women, gender, and early Sufi women', forthcoming in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, 6 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2003–7).
 - 10 The most comprehensive treatment of Rābi'a is Margaret Smith, *Rabi'a: The Life and Work of Rabi'a and Other Women Mystics in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994) [1928]), though this does not include the valuable discussion of Sulamī recovered much more recently: Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 276–83. See also 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shahīda al-'ishq al-ilāhī Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1962), and for a concise treatment, 'Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya al-Ḳaysiyya', El 8: 354b–356a (M. Smith [Ch. Pellat]).
 - 11 Julian Baldick, 'The Legend of Rābi'a of Baṣra: Christian antecedents, Muslim counterparts', *Religion* 19 (1990): 234, translating from *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 3rd edn (Cairo, 1388/1968), 3: 127. Cf. Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 276–7.
 - 12 Also from *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*, (Cairo, 1332), 3: 85, translating from the Arabic as reproduced in Badawī, *Shahīda al-'ishq*, 137; cf. Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 278–9. Smith's reading of this statement as being about miracles is forced: Smith, *Rabi'a*, 107–8.
 - 13 On Rābi'a bint Ismā'il of Syria, see Smith, *Rabi'a*, 170–3; and Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 138–41, also 63–5 of Cornell's introduction. Sources on Aḥmad ibn Abi'l-

- Hawārī are listed in Gramlich, *Weltverzicht*, 261, note 338. For other Rābī'as, see Baldick, 'Legend of Rābī'a', who thinks that Rābī'a of Syria did not exist (p. 237).
- 14 'Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya al-Ḳaysiyya', EI 8: 355b (M. Smith [Ch. Pellat]); in addition to the sources mentioned there, now see also Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 112 (I owe thanks to Hermann Landolt for bringing this publication to my attention).
 - 15 'Bestāmī (Baṣṭāmī), Bāyazīd', EI 4: 183–6 (Gerhard Böwering), and more recently Muḥammad Riḏā Shafī'ī-Kadkanī, *Daftar-i rawshanāyi: az mīrās-i 'irfānī-i Bayazīd-i Baṣṭāmī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1384/2005), esp. 67–73; I owe thanks to Muḥammad Riḏā Shafī'ī-Kadkanī for generously sending me a copy of this book as well as copies of his two recent works on Kharāqānī and Abū Sa'īd. *Daftar-i rawshanāyi* is a complete Persian translation of Abu'l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Sahlagī's (d. 477/1084) Arabic work, *Kitāb al-nūr min kalimāt Abi Ṭayfūr*, which is the most detailed biography of Bāyazīd available. *Kitāb al-nūr* was edited by A. R. Badawī (Cairo, 1949), but Shafī'ī-Kadkanī has based his Persian translation on his own new edition of the Arabic original soon to be published in Beirut, see *Daftar-i rawshanāyi*, 14. A useful compilation of information on Bāyazīd in primary sources is 'Abd al-Raḥīm Ḥaḳīqat, *Sulṭān al-'arīfīn Bāyazīd-i Baṣṭāmī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Āftāb, 1361/1982). There is also a doctoral dissertation on him that I have not seen: Diana Tehrani, 'Bayazid Bistami: an analysis of early Persian mysticism' (Columbia University, 1999).
 - 16 'Shaḥḥ', EI 9: 361b (Carl Ernst); in-depth treatment: Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).
 - 17 Abū Naṣr 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma' fi'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1914), 382 / *Schlagrichter über das Sufitum*, trans. Richard Gramlich (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1990), 522 (124.1); this passage trans. by Nicholson in the English section, 102 (with minor changes).
 - 18 Reynold A. Nicholson, 'An early Arabic version of the mi'raj of Abu Yazid al-Bistami', *Islamica* 2 (1926): 403–8, translated in Michael A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 244–50; the quote is from 249.
 - 19 For the earliest of such commentaries, most notably by Junayd (d. 298/910), see Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 380–95 / *Schlagrichter*, 520–34 (chs 123–7); translated in Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 214–31. Sells also translates (234–42) sayings of Bāyazīd found in Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1406/1986 [1372/1953]), 67–74; and in 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1375/1956), 88–91 / *Das Sendschreiben al-Quṣayrīs über das Sufitum*, trans. Richard Gramlich (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1989), 50–2 (1.10).
 - 20 Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1932–8), 10: 40; translation reproduced, with minor omissions, from Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 54; this report is repeated in later sources such as 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*,

- ed. Valentin Zhukovsky (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Ṭahūrī, 1378/1999), 233 / *Revelation of the Mystery (Kashf al-Mahjub)*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Accord, NY: Pir Press, 1999), 187; and Abū'l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Sahlaḡī, *Kitāb al-nūr min kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, ed. A. R. Badawī (Cairo, 1949), 136.
- 21 'Bestāmī (Baṣṭāmī), Bāyazīd', *Elr* 4: 184 (Gerhard Böwering). Cf. his statements reported by Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 74, translated in Mojaddedi, *Biographical Tradition*, 21, in which he distinguishes experiential knowledge of God from renunciation; also see p. 26 for Mojaddedi's own comments on Sulamī's portrayal of Bāyazīd as an 'arīf.
- 22 The evolution of Bāyazīd's image in the Sufi biographical tradition is traced in detail in Mojaddedi, *Biographical Tradition*.
- 23 Ess, *Theologie*, 4: 195–209. Major monographic treatments include Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārīt al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1961); Margaret Smith, *Al-Muḥāsibī: An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935); and Yolande de Crussol, *Le rôle de la raison dans la réflexion éthique d'al-Muḥāsibī: 'aql et conversion chez al-Muḥāsibī, 165/243–782/857* (Paris: Concep, 2002). Massignon, *Essay*, 161–71 is still useful for his connection to Sufism.
- 24 Selections from *The Book on Observance of God's Rights* are translated into English in Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 171–95; for the forms of egoism, see p. 172.
- 25 Smith, *Muḥāsibī*, 87–93.
- 26 Crussol, *Le rôle de la raison*, 365–70. De Crussol gives a comparison of Muḥāsibī and Junayd, 345ff.
- 27 Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1970), 156–208; Arabic text of commentary attributed to Ja'far is in Paul Nwyia, 'Le tafsīr mystique attribué à Ḡa'far Ṣādiq: éditions critique', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 43 (1968): 181–230; selections in English: Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 75–89.
- 28 For a synopsis, see Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 30–2; for focused discussion, Göran Ogén, 'Did the term 'ṣūfī' exist before the Sufis?', *Acta Orientalia* 43 (1982): 33–48; still indispensable is Massignon, *Essay*, 104–6. For other derivations and a total of seventy-eight definitions of Sufism, see Reynold A. Nicholson, 'An historical enquiry concerning the origin and development of Sufism', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 38 (1906): 303–48.
- 29 The earliest use of the term is said to be with respect to a certain Abū Ḥāshim of Kūfa (d. 150/767–68), and it was definitely in circulation during the first half of the third/ninth century, see Massignon, *Essay*, 105. On Abū Ḥāshim, see 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Anṣārī al-Harawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Furūghī, 1942/1963), 7; cf. Mojaddedi, *Biographical Tradition*, 71; an English translation of this notice on Abū Ḥāshim is in A. G. Ravān Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī of Herāt (1006–1089 C.E.): An Early Ṣūfī Master (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996), 47–9; further references in Ess, *Theologie*, 1: 228, note 5.
- 30 The quote is from Michael Bonner, 'Poverty and charity in the rise of Islam', in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, and Amy Singer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 25. For the meaning of wearing wool during the second/eighth century, see Ess, *Theologie*, 2: 88. On *zuḥd*, see Leah Kinberg, 'What is meant by *zuḥd*?' *Studia Islamica*, 61 (1985): 27–44 and 'Zuhd',

- El 11: 559b (Geneviève Gobillot); on questions of poverty and wealth, see Leah Kinberg, 'Compromise of commerce: a study of early traditions concerning poverty and wealth', *Der Islam* 66 (1989): 193–212, and on *tawakkul*, see Reinert, *Lehre*.
- 31 Bernd Radtke, *Neue kritische Gänge: Zu Stand und Aufgaben der Sufikforschung* (Utrecht: Houtsma, 2005), 259–80, presents systematically the evidence for these earliest *ṣūfis*; in this study, Radtke announces a forthcoming publication titled *Materialien zur alten islamischen Frömmigkeit und Mystik*, which will presumably include even more new evidence on the prehistory of Sufism. Precisely what differentiated 'wool-wearer' renunciants from their renunciant counterparts is difficult to identify; for an excellent discussion, see Christopher Melchert, 'Baṣran origins of classical Sufism', *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 221–40.
 - 32 The first appearance of the collective noun *ṣūfiyya* in the sources appears to be in al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt*, ed. Rhuvon Guest (London, 1912), 162, as noted by Massignon, *Essay*, 107, note 103 and Melchert, 'Ḥanābila', 354, note 10; now freshly translated in Bernd Radtke, *Kritische Gänge*, 278–9. For a catalogue of the ascetics of the second/eighth century, see Massignon, *Essay*, 113–19; for longer treatments, see *ibid.*, 147–60; Ignác Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras Hamori and Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 116–34; Tor Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 33–54; and Ess, *Theologie*, 2:87–121.
 - 33 The most comprehensive recent treatments of the issue of the 'pre-history' of Sufism are Melchert, 'Baṣran origins', which supercedes Melchert's earlier article on the same topic ('The transition from asceticism to mysticism at the middle of the ninth century C.E.', *Studia Islamica* 83 [1996]: 51–70), and Bernd Radtke, *Kritische Gänge*, 251–91, esp. 280–5, which is also a criticism of Melchert's 1996 article.
 - 34 Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967–2000), 1:646; a short but comprehensive bibliographic essay is Maryam Sha'bānzāda, 'Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz', *Ma'ārif* 19, no 1 (2002): 131–44. On his life, see 'Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz', *El* 4: 1083–4 (W. Madelung). There is also a PhD dissertation on him by Nada Saab, 'Mystical language and theory in Sufi writings of al-Kharrāz' (Yale University, 2004); I have not seen this work.
 - 35 Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 40.
 - 36 Abū Sa'īd Kharrāz, *The Book of Truthfulness (Kitāb al-ṣidq)*, Arthur J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 66.
 - 37 The following coverage of al-Kharrāz's epistles is based on Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique*, 234–70.
 - 38 Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique*, 234ff, which includes a complete translation of this work (256–67), reads *ṣifāt*, as does Sezgin, *GAS*, 1: 646, relying on A. Ateş in *Oriens* 5 (1952): 29, but Sāmarrā'i's edition has it as *ṣafā'*, which makes better sense. Gören Ogén, 'Religious ecstasy in classical Sufism', in *Religious Ecstasy Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Religious Ecstasy Held at Åbo, Finland, on the 26th–28th of August 1981* (Stockholm: distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), 230, also opts for the reading *ṣafā'*.
 - 39 Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique*, 262–3. As Nwyia notes, a version of this passage was apparently contained in a lost epistle of Kharrāz (*Kitāb as-sirr*) and reproduced by some

- later Sufi writers (Sarrāj, Sulamī and 'Attār). Cf. the translation in Ogén, 'Religious ecstasy', 234.
- 40 Paul Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques inédits d'Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (m. 295/907)', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 44 (1968): 248.
- 41 Bernd Radtke, 'The concept of *wilāya* in early Sufism', in *Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 485–6. The view that the *awliyā'* were superior to the prophets was apparently held by Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), the premier disciple of 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd, as well as Dārānī's own disciple Aḥmad ibn Abī'l-Ḥawārī (d. 230/844–5); see Massignon, *Essay*, 152–4, now to be read in conjunction with Gramlich, 'Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī', who, however, is silent on this issue; for ibn Abī'l-Ḥawārī, see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 382. But Kharrāz's criticism might have been also directed at Tustarī, discussed in Chapter 2 below.
- 42 Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 131–2. Cf. *A Treatise on the Heart* attributed to Tirmidhī (who is discussed in Chapter 2 below) that appears in Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sulamī and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Three Early Sufi Texts*, trans. Nicholas Heer and Kenneth Honnerkamp (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003), 11–56, which may instead be a work of Nūrī, as noted by Nicholas Heer on p. 57.
- 43 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 381–446 is the most detailed and up-to-date account on Nūrī. Also see Annemarie Schimmel, 'Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī: "Qibla of the Lights"', in *Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 59–64. An account of his trials in English is found in Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 97–101.
- 44 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 123 / *Sendschreiben*, 70 (1.25). Other sources that contain this report are listed in Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 382, n. 19. However, earning a living in order to spend it on the poor while one is secretly fasting seems to have been either a common practice or, more likely, a 'floating literary motif'; see, for instance, Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis Iblis*, eds. 'Iṣām Ḥarastānī and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Zaghālī (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1994), 202, where this same report is attached to Dāwud ibn Abī Hind, an earlier figure. Ibn al-Jawzī gives another variation of this theme about Abū Ḥafṣ Ḥaddād on p. 471.
- 45 This event occurred under the caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–79/870–92), though the real ruler was his brother the regent al-Muwaffaq (d. 278/891). For the dating, see Melchert, 'Ḥanābila', 360. On Ghulām Khalīl, see, most comprehensively, Maher Jarrar and Sebastian Günther, 'Ḡulām Ḥalīl und das *Kitāb Ṣarḥ as-sunna*: Erste Ergebnisse einer Studie zum Konservatismus hanbalitischer Färbung im Islam des 3./9. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 153 (2003): 6–36, esp. 23–6 on his 'inquisition'; also Melchert, 'Ḥanābila', 360–2; Josef van Ess, 'Sufism and its opponents: reflections on topoi, tribulations, and transformations', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. F. de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 26–8; and Ess, *Theologie*, 4: 281f.
- 46 Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 98, citing from A. J. Arberry, *Pages from the Kitāb al-lumā'* (London, 1947), 5 / *Schlagrichter*, 549 (132.1). This saying of Nūrī was actually a *ḥadīth qudsī*, 'divine saying' ('*ashiqanī wa 'ashiqūhu*') narrated from 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd with an attribution to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; see Massignon, *Essay*, 88 and Ess, *Theologie*, 2: 98.

- 47 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 384 thinks these may have been separate incidents; Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 99, suggests that several of these incidents may be unauthentic; and Böwering, 'Early Sufism', 55, does not comment on whether the accusations were related to the inquisition of Ghulām Khalīl. The first four of the five reports are from A. J. Arberry, *Pages from the Kitāb al-luma'* (London, 1947), 5 / *Schlaglichter*, 549–50 (131.1–2), while the last is by Ibn al-Jawzī and 'Aṭṭār; see note 28 in Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 384.
- 48 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 193–4 / *Schlaglichter*, 400–1 (77.3). For more information on and criticism of Nūrī's shocking behaviour, see especially Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis*, 468–72.
- 49 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 385–6, based on a long report by Ibn al-A'rābī (d. 341/952), who had seen Nūrī in Raqqa in 270, about this latter's return to Baghdad (as reported by Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 14: 74–5).
- 50 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 387 [relying on Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 14:76]; and Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 99 [from Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*]. The rest of the conversation between Nūrī and the caliph, which is about how Nūrī refrained from breaking one last jar when he detected a growing sense of complacency in his lower soul, might actually contain a later Sufi critique of unbridled moral activism.
- 51 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 195 / *Schlaglichter*, 299 (77.5). Nūrī allowed the Sufis to take as much money as they wanted and once it was all gone, he remarked, 'Your distance from God is to be measured by the amount of money you have taken and your closeness to Him by your avoidance of it!'
- 52 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 210, 290 / *Schlaglichter*, 323–4 (88.4) and 418 (102.5). Other reports about Nūrī's death, with conflicting information, are listed in Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 388–9; cf. Meier, *Abū Sa'id*, 17.
- 53 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 63 / *Schlaglichter*, 81 (18, 1).
- 54 Commentary on Qur'ān 72 [al-Jinn]: 3, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 147; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, ed. Sayyid 'Imrān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1421/2001), 2: 353.
- 55 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 63 / *Schlaglichter*, 81 (18, 1). See Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), 71 / *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfis*, trans. A. J. Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 49–50, where this report about the intellect is narrated from a certain Abū Bakr al-Sabbāk.
- 56 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 58 / *Schlaglichter*, 76 (16.6), translation reproduced from John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology*, trans. John Renard (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 86.
- 57 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 544.
- 58 Commentary on Qur'ān 24 [al-Nūr]: 63, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 146; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 2: 57.
- 59 Commentary on Qur'ān 4 [al-Nisā']: 128, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 145; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 1: 163.
- 60 Kalābādhi, *Ta'arruf*, 112 / *Doctrine*, 86, Arberry's translation preserved.
- 61 Commentary on Qur'ān 2 [al-Baqara]: 273, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 144; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 1: 83.
- 62 Commentary on Qur'ān 2 [al-Baqara]: 29, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 144; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 1: 54.
- 63 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 409.

- 64 Commentary on Qur'ān 6 [al-An'ām]: 36, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 145; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 1: 197.
- 65 See, for instance, Kalābādhī, *Ta'arruf*, index, where Nūrī is one of the most cited poets among Sufis.
- 66 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 563/ *Sendschreiben*, 396 (42.11).
- 67 Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 138, ch. 12.
- 68 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 217–18/ *Sendschreiben*, 116 (2.6).
- 69 Commentary on Qur'ān 3 [Āl 'Imrān]: 152, reproduced in Arabic in Nwyia, 'Textes mystiques', 144; Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq*, 1: 123.
- 70 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 503/ *Sendschreiben*, 345 (36.3); also cited in Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac, 1962), 38.
- 71 Sezgin, *Geschichte*, 1: 647–50.
- 72 For instance, *tawḥīd* was one of the five principles of the Mu'tazila, the rationalist theological movement that was especially prominent in the third and fourth/ninth and tenth centuries; see 'Mu'tazila', *El* 7: 783a–793a (D. Gimaret).
- 73 The citation of this saying at the very beginning of possibly the most popular handbook of Sufism must have contributed to its popularity; see Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 28–9/ *Sendschreiben*, 25 (0.8).
- 74 Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, Arabic 54, English 175; Süleyman Ateş, *Cüneyd-i Bağdādî: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mektupları* (Istanbul: Sönmez Neşriyat, 1969), Arabic 57, Turkish 154.
- 75 Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, Arabic 33, English 154; Ateş, *Cüneyd*, Arabic 36, Turkish 136. The English translation is from William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Ḥadīth Qudṣī* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 173–4 (saying 49), with full text and ample references to other occurrences, including the *ḥadīth* collections of Bukhārī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, to which one can add Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīṣ-i Maṣnavī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1361/1982), 18–19 (no. 42).
- 76 Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, Arabic 41, English 76; Ateş, *Cüneyd*, Arabic 44, Turkish 141–2.
- 77 Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, Arabic 52, English 172 (retained here); Ateş, *Cüneyd*, Arabic 55, Turkish 150.
- 78 The case for Junayd's doctrine of selection is made in Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Walāyah according to al-Junayd', in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought, in Honor of Hermann Landolt*, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), 64–70. Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 1: 76 sees evidence of predestinarianism in Junayd's thinking about sanctity.
- 79 Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, Arabic 23, English 143–4 (reproduced here with one revision); Ateş, *Cüneyd*, Arabic 25, Turkish 124.
- 80 Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 233–4, as translated by Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, 51 / *Schlagrichter*, 356 (90.3). On Junayd's esoterism, see *ibid.*, 35–6. For references on Shiblī, a very prominent figure in his own right, see note 92 below.
- 81 For in-depth treatment of Junayd's image in the Sufi biographical tradition, see Mojaddedi, *Biographical Tradition*.

- 82 On the Shūnīziyya mosque as a gathering place, see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 2: 576, s.v. 'Šūnīziyamoschee', with multiple references to episodes in the lives of Nūrī and Ruwaym; on travelling in bands, see Meier, *Abū Sa'id*, 296–9; on the robe and initiation, see Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 72 and 103; on the earliest phase of Sufi prayer practice, see 'Dekr', *Elr* 7: 230, col. ii (Gerhard Böwering), and on *samā'*, see esp. Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 267–300 / *Schlagrichter*, 389–428 (chapters 95–106), which is discussed in detail in Kenneth S. Avery, *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samā': Listening and Altered States* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004). Massignon, *Passion*, 3: 226–8 contains a very useful, albeit brief, catalogue of rituals peculiar to the Sufis, many of which must have been practised by the Baghdad Sufis.
- 83 By contrast, the use of the prayer rug, *sajjāda*, and its use as investiture, does not seem to date back to the third/ninth century; the earliest attestation of the use of the *sajjāda* by Sufis, as noted by Hermann Landolt, 'Gedanken zum islamischen Gebetsteppich', in *Festschrift Alfred Bühler*, ed. Carl August Schmitz (Basel: Pharos Verlag, 1965), 247, is a passing reference in the *Kitāb al-luma'* of al-Sarrāj who died in 378/988; see Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 201 / *Schlagrichter*, 308 (81.1). For a depiction of Junayd with a rosary, see Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 119 / *Sendschreiben*, 68 (1, 24).
- 84 This list is reproduced, with minor changes, from Knysch, *Short History*, 67.
- 85 On the relationship between the Sufis and the *sharī'a*, see Bernd Radtke, 'Warum ist der Sufi orthodox?', *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 302–7.
- 86 Sobieroj, 'Mu'tazila and Sufism', 87–9.
- 87 On 'Amr and Junayd, see Florian Sobieroj, *Ibn Ḥafīf aš-Šīrāzī und seine Schrift zur Novizenerziehung (Kitāb al-Iqtisād)* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft im Kommission bei F. Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1998), 257, citing al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Cairo, 1349/1931) 12: 224. 'Amr was a *muḥaddith* and author of treatises that did not survive; he apparently denied the value of inner states, see Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 72–5, and Sobieroj, *ibid.*, 51–3. On Ruwaym and Junayd, see Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, 10: 268, cited in Sobieroj, *ibid.* (see 257–9 for more information on this topic).
- 88 'Ibn Suraydj, Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Umar', *El* 3: 949a (J. Schacht); Sobieroj, *Ibn Ḥafīf*, 103–4. On his opinion of Ḥallāj, see also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs*, 224, where he is quoted as saying 'I do not understand what he [Ḥallāj] says'; and Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 102–3. Cf. Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, 5; the later sources used by Abdel-Kader (Subkī and Ibn al-Kaṭhīr) seem to have portrayed the relationship between Junayd and Ibn Surayj as a much closer one than it probably was.
- 89 Mu'tazilī attitudes towards the Sufis are documented in Sobieroj, 'Mu'tazila and Sufism'. In this article, Sobieroj reproduces the details of the Mu'tazilī writer Abū 'Alī Muḥassin ibn 'Alī al-Tanūkhī's (329–84/941–94) criticism of Sufis, in particular of Ibn Khafīf, Shiblī, Ruwaym and Ḥallāj. His charge against Ibn Khafīf, which was that the latter encouraged sexual promiscuity among his followers, is one of the earliest attestations for this accusation that becomes a standard component of criticism of Sufis.
- 90 Christopher Melchert, 'The adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal', *Arabica* 44 (1997): 250–1; Melchert overlooks the cases of Ibn 'Aṭā' and Jurayrī when he states that no Sufis adhered to the Ḥanbalī and the Ḥanafī schools; for the *madhhab* of Jurayrī, see Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 78. The term 'semi-rationalist' is Melchert's. For the term

- 'traditionalist', as well as 'rationalist' in this context, see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), ix–xi.
- 91 Since the exact reason for Ghulām Khalīl's anger against the Sufis is not known, admittedly all speculation about this incident is conjectural, but see Ess, 'Sufism', 27–8. On Sumnūn, see 'Sumnūn', EI, new edition, 9: 873a–b (B. Reinert); his role in the inquisition is described in A. J. Arberry, *Pages from the Kitāb al-luma'* (London, 1947), 8 / *Schlaglichter*, 554 (134.3); summarised in Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, 39. Two female disciples of Kharrāz are included in Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 154–5, 172–3.
- 92 On Shiblī, see 'Shiblī, Abū Bakr Dulaf b. Djaḥdar', EI 9: 432a–b (Florian Sobieroj) and Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 513–665; Sobieroj has written an unpublished 'Habilitationsschrift' titled 'Abu Bakr al-Shibli: Dichtung, tafsir und Aspekte der Überlieferung' (I have not seen this work). On Ibn 'Aṭā', see Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 93 and Richard Gramlich, *Abu l-'Abbās b. 'Aṭā': Sufi und Koranausleger* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft Kommissionsverlag, F. Steiner, 1995), and on Ruwaym, see Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 447–82.
- 93 Junayd, Nūrī, and Abū Ḥamza Baghdādī possibly lived as celibates and reportedly all shared the same female servant, Fāṭima nicknamed 'Zaytūna'; see Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 158–61; also Abdel-Kader, *Junayd*, 50, with further references. The status of celibacy was a debated, and therefore open, issue at this time, with attention focused on the Qur'ānic term *raḥbāniyya* (Qur'ān 57 [al-Ḥadīd]: 27) and, later, on the non-canonically *ḥadīth* 'lā raḥbāniyyata fi'l-islām', 'there is no monkery in Islam', see Massignon, *Essay*, 98–104; 'Raḥbāniyya', EI 8: 396b (A. J. Wensinck); and Sarah Sviri, 'Wa-raḥbāniyyatan ibtada'ūhā: An analysis of traditions concerning the origin and evaluation of Christian monasticism', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 195–208.
- 94 For a discussion of the issue of refraining from earning a living among renunciants, which provided the background for the distinct approach of the Baghdad Sufis, see Reinert, *Lehre*, 170–90, 252–62, and 272–84. For further confirmation of the Sufi attitude to earning a living and having a family, see especially the relevant chapters in Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 195–7 (earning a living) and 199–200 (family) / *Schlaglichter*, 300–2 (78) and 305–7 (80).
- 95 Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 427 / *Sendschreiben*, 244 (19.18).
- 96 On early wool-wearers who 'commanded right and forbade wrong', see Melchert, 'Ḥanābila', 354. These activist wool-wearers might have been 'the Sufis of the Mu'tazila', who were otherwise known for forbidding gainful employment (*taḥrīm al-makāsib*) and denied the need for a single political ruler; see Ess, *Theologie*, 3: 130–3; cf. Sobieroj, 'Mu'tazila and Sufism', 69–70.
- 97 Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder*, 1: 519–22 (on his conversion), 555–60 (on his relations with Junayd); see also 'Shiblī, Abū Bakr Dulaf b. Djaḥdar', EI 9: 432a–b (F. Sobieroj).
- 98 See Massignon, *Passion*, in four volumes, but also available in an abridged edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). For condensed treatments, see Herbert Mason, *Al-Hallaj* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1995) and 'Hallāj', EI 11: 589–92 (Jawid Mojaddedi). On the question of his miracles, see Ess, 'Sufism', 30–3. On Ibn 'Aṭā's death and Jurayrī's stance, see Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 527–32. Ibn 'Aṭā's support of Ḥallāj may have been in part occasioned by his Ḥanbalī allegiance, since

- a group of Ḥanbalīs defended Ḥallāj; favourable attitudes to him among Ḥanbalīs are seen later, as evidenced, for instance, by the fact that Ibn 'Aqīl (431–513/1040–1119) wrote a treatise in defence of Ḥallāj's miracles in his youth, see George Makdisi, 'The Hanbali school and Sufism', *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 67.
- 99 See the penetrative remarks of Meier about Ḥallāj in Fritz Meier, 'An important manuscript find for Sufism', in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, trans. John O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 184–5.
- 100 This perspective reaches its culmination in the works of the Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār (d. after 618/1221–2), see 'Ḥallāj', *Elr* 11: 591 (Jawid Mojaddedi), and Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 130–2.
- 101 See Bernd Radtke, 'Mystical union', 185–94, which surveys Sufi approaches to the question of 'mystical union' with God.
- 102 For a concise yet comprehensive discussion of his trial, largely on the basis of Massignon's *oeuvre* on Ḥallāj, that comes to this conclusion, see Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 102–10.
- 103 There seems to be precious little information on the relationship, if any, between the Sufis and other groups of intellectuals such as the nascent philosophers (*falāsifa*), the government secretaries (*kuttāb*) and the litterateurs (*udabā'*), but for some leads, see Sobieroj, *Ibn Ḥafīf*.

Sufism
The formative period

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