

4 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the *Malāmatīs* of Nīshāpūr¹

Blame (*malāma*)

One of the most illuminating chapters in the history of the early mystical movements in Islam concerns the *Malāmatīyya*, the ‘Path of Blame’, a movement that thrived in Nīshāpūr during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries and had also later upshots. Telling the story of this movement – its teachings and main protagonists, the ‘people of blame’ (*ahl al-malāma*) – is not only vital for describing the early history of Islamic mysticism; it is also, from the perspective of the History of Religion, an outstanding example of a system which advocates a contrary method of self-blame. To incur blame on oneself is, for all intents and purposes, contrary to human nature, which tends to shy away from blame and to deflect accusations from itself onto others. *Contra naturam* is also the attempt to conceal good qualities and expose bad ones. Yet, in their mystical quest, the ‘people of blame’ tried to achieve just that: to make their ‘self’, their ‘I’, the object of blame and, consequently, to conceal their praiseworthy qualities and advertise their blameworthy ones. Al-Sulamī, the tenth–eleventh-century author who is our main source (on him and his affiliation, see Sources section below), describes the ‘people of blame’ as mystics of the highest rank. In his *Epistle on the Malāmatīyya* (*Risālat al-malāmatīyya*), he places them at the highest of what are for him the three ‘layers’ (*ṭabaqāt*) of the religious order in Islam. According to him, in the first rank stand the ‘ulamā’, the religious scholars (*‘ulamā’ al-shar‘ wa-a‘immat al-dīn*); then come the Ṣūfīs, whom God has singled out by bestowing on them special knowledge (*ma‘rifā*) and extraordinary deeds (*karāmāt*); lastly, come the ‘people of blame’, who in their innermost (*sirr al-asrār*) have reached a state of union with God (*jam‘, jam‘ al-jam‘, ittishāl*), but no external signs of this is outwardly visible. He writes – what seems diametrically opposed to our customary view of the nature of Islamic mysticism, “One of the most elevated states is to avoid giving preference to the inner over the outer (*min asnā ‘l-aḥwāl allā yu’aththara ‘l-bāṭin ‘alā-l-ẓāhir*).”²

What was the rationale of such outstanding emphasis on self-blame and concealment? Who were the ‘people of blame’ whose names have come down to us? What were the practices established by them? How did they fare vis-à-vis other contemporaneous religious and mystical groups? Were they mystics or perhaps ascetics as some scholars would have it? Ever since I encountered the

malmātīs in my studies of early Islamic mysticism, my interest in them grew, and the information accumulated. In this chapter, I wish to address these points with the help of available sources and studies and describe this remarkable path against the backdrop of the mystical scene of their time and place.

A dramatic conflict is played out in the *malāmatī* path between the *naḥs*, the ‘lower-self’, and the *qalb* (heart) or *sirr* (the heart’s innermost core) – a conflict, reflecting the duality which, in modern parlance, is sometimes referred to as ‘personality’ or ‘ego’ versus ‘Being’ or ‘Self’. This conflict, from early on, has been fundamental to most mystical schools in Islam. As elaborated in another chapter of this book,³ the *naḥs*, the ‘lower-self’, is the energetic centre from which the ‘I’ – the personality, the ego-consciousness – arises and by which it is nurtured. The *qalb*, in contrast, and its innermost aspect the ‘secret’ (*sirr*), is perceived as that boundless yet hidden core within the human being where God’s lights reside. While the ‘personality’ is limited by its finite self-identification, the ‘heart’ yearns to the infinite ‘beyond’, to the ‘other-than-I’, and aspires to awaken fully within the realm of the divine lights. In the history of Islamic mysticism, the ego–heart conflict and the stratagems to overcome the empowerment of the ego (*naḥs*) took various shapes and forms, some outstripping conventional religious and social norms. Thus, for example, the *Qalandariyya*, a late medieval *ṭarīqa* with unclear origins, perpetuated the principle of incurring blame to extreme antinomian limits.⁴ The *Naqshbandiyya*, on the other hand, refined the principle of concealing any spiritual attainments and thus took on normative appearances.⁵ In ninth–tenth-century Nīshāpūr, the *malāmatī* teachers devised a system in which sincere self-scrutiny and self-criticism were interwoven into a social code based on chivalry and altruism (*īthār*, as exemplified by the *futuwwa* fraternities),⁶ and in which the call for abandoning outward marks of distinction and inward claim to spiritual attainments meant, in practice, a strict adherence to the conventional norms of the Islamic *sharī‘a*. As we shall see, such principles brought up a fundamental problem: how far can one proceed on a path of uncompromising introverted purification, which entails elimination of any external traces of vanity (*‘ujb*), presumptuous pretension (*iddi‘ā’*) and delusion (*ghurūr*), to the point of incurring constant blame upon one’s self, without undermining the ethical and practical precepts of extroverted religion.⁷ Another point to bear in mind is this: the *Malāmatīyya*, among other aspects, represents an introverted reaction to extroverted forms of asceticism (*zuhd*).⁸

Nīshāpūr

The activity of the *Malāmatīyya* took place during the third/ninth–fourth/tenth centuries in Khurāsān, in the town of Nīshāpūr, against the background of dynamic religious activity, especially of circles with distinct ascetic and mystical characteristics. During this period, together with Merv, Herat and Balkh, Nīshāpūr was one of the four main cities of Khurāsān.⁹ It stood at an important crossroads from which several main routes spread out: the westward route to Rayy and hence to Baghdād; south-west to Shiraz and the Persian Gulf; south-east

and then north-east to Herat, Balkh, Tirmidh, Bukhara and India; and north-east to Tūs, Mashhad, Merv, Samarqand, Central Asia and China. During the reign of the Tāhirid Dynasty (820–873), Nīshāpūr was the governmental centre and the capital of Khurāsān.¹⁰ Following the fall of Baghdād to the Buwayhids in 945,¹¹ Nīshāpūr became the de facto centre of Sunni Islam till at least the mid-fifth/eleventh century. In its heyday, it consisted of a large number of quarters (*maḥallāt*), originally villages which became absorbed into the expanding town.¹² Its flourishing agriculture was based on a fine and sophisticated irrigation system, with mostly subterranean canals, which efficiently used the water of the melting snow from the mountains surrounding the city as well as the water of the river which flows through its north-eastern part. It also had a flourishing weaving and pottery industry. The north-western part of the city, the Mānishāk suburb, was inhabited mainly by the poor, especially weavers and water-carriers. This was most probably the only area of the city which was not irrigated by canals.¹³ The north-eastern sections, sometimes referred to as villages (*qurā*) – Mulāqabādh, Khordabādh and Naṣrabādh – and the southern suburb of Ḥīra, were inhabited mainly by merchants, well-to-do craftsmen and artisans, as well as by scholars and other members of what might be regarded as a well-established middle class.¹⁴ Some of the well-off citizens of Nīshāpūr owned irrigated estates with large orchards. Most of the distinguished families of Nīshāpūr – those who Richard Bul-
liet calls “the Patricians of Nīshāpūr”¹⁵ – lived in the centre of town. These socio-historical observations have a bearing on the identification and characterization of *malāmatīs* which follow.¹⁶ Since the third/ninth century, the well-being of Nīshāpūr and its inhabitants was impaired by violent religious struggles of a sectarian and fanatical nature. These struggles, which occurred also in other parts of Khurāsān, were known as ‘*aṣabiyyāt*’ (fights of rival groups based on strong self-identities).¹⁷ It seems, however, that Nīshāpūr was the worst affected by them, and that it was the ‘*aṣabiyyāt*’ that brought about the eventual decline of the city in the sixth/twelfth century. These “wild sectarian struggles” – *al-‘aṣabiyyāt*, *al-waḥsha* – were carried out, according to the tenth-century geographer al-Maqdisī, against the background of intense hostility between the different schools of religious law (the *madhāhib*), and first and foremost between Ḥanafites and Shāfi‘ites,¹⁸ whereas the Mālikites, Zāhirites and Ḥanbalites constituted only a small minority in Nīshāpūr. There were also struggles between Shī‘ī groups and the *Karrāmīyya* (on which see below), as well as between groups of ‘vigilantes’ (*mutaṭawwi‘a*)¹⁹ and some other extremists, such as remnants of the *Khawārij*. As a general rule, a correlation existed between the *madhhab* and the theological segmentation: most Ḥanafites adhered to the Mu‘tazila while most Shāfi‘ites adhered to *ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Ḥadīth*, namely, to traditional Islam, and subsequently to the Ash‘arites.²⁰ It is against this factional and sectarian backdrop that the activities of the early *malāmatīs* of Nīshāpūr take place.

Sources

- 1 The only source which deals specifically with the *Malāmatīyya* is Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī’s *Risālat al-malāmatīyya*.²¹ Al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021),

himself a native of Nīshāpūr and a member of one of the eminent families there,²² was also – and this is significant – the disciple of Abū ‘Amr Ismā‘īl ibn Nujayd. The latter was al-Sulamī’s maternal grandfather and one of the most distinguished disciples of Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥirī, one of the central Shaykhs of the *malāmātī* circle at the end of the third/ninth century.²³ Al-Sulamī’s *Risāla* (*Epistle*) is in fact the only source upon which various scholars have based their historical and typological reconstruction of the *Malāmātiyya*. Some of the notable studies are the following: Richard Hartmann’s “Al-Sulamī’s *Risālat al-Malāmātiyya*”²⁴ as well as his “*Futuwwa und Malāma*”;²⁵ Abū ‘l-‘Alā’ al-‘Afīfī’s *Al-Malāmātiyya wa ‘l-ṣūfiyya wa ahl al-futuwwa*;²⁶ Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī’s *al-Ṣila bayna ‘l-taṣawwuf wa ‘l-tashayyu*²⁷; J. Spencer Trimingham’s *The Sufi Orders in Islam*.²⁸

Despite the fertile discourse concerning the relationship between *malāma* and *taṣawwuf*, *malāma* and *futuwwa*, *malāma* and *zuhd*, the scant historical information is drawn from one another, and, ultimately, from al-Sulamī himself. What seems relevant to highlight is that this document is a testament of al-Sulamī’s own affiliation to the ‘people of blame’: being a disciple and grandson of one of the distinguished members of the Nīshāpūrī school, he must have had a triple purpose in mind in writing it: first, to place the *Malāmātiyya* in the arena of the mystical tradition of Islam, outside its local Nīshāpūrī limits; second, to perpetuate the *malāmātī* teachers, whose teachings he elevated above that of the Ṣūfīs; finally, to exonerate the *malāmātīs* of accusation of nonconformity and antinomianism which might have been levelled against them (see Sources, 4). In the attempt to trace the history of the *Malāmātiyya*, later sources, such as al-Hujwīrī’s *Kashf al-mahjūb*, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī’s *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif* or Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, are erroneously adduced – erroneously, since these authors do not engage with historicity, but rather, and solely, with the typological and mystical aspects of the ‘Path of Blame’.²⁹

- 2 In 1965, Richard Frye published three facsimiles of manuscripts of a biographical work, *Ta’rīkh Naysābūr* by Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī al-Bayyī’ (d. 404/1014), written probably at the end of the tenth century.³⁰ The original work by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī was lost, but large portions of it were absorbed by several authors: by Sam‘ānī (d. 562/1166) in *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, by ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 529/1134) in *Kitāb al-Farq bayna ‘l-fīraq*, and by al-Subkī (d. 727/1327) in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*. The first manuscript in Frye’s collection is an abridged version of the *Ta’rīkh Naysābūr* in Persian, titled *Aḥwāl-i Nīshāpūr*. This abridged version covers the period which concerns us, the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, and ends with the contemporaries of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī.³¹ The *Aḥwāl-i Nīshāpūr* contains, as expected, biographical lists of the eminent scholars (‘ulamā’) and Shaykhs of Nīshāpūr in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. It mentions approximately fifty of the renowned mystics of the town. They are referred to neither as Ṣūfīs nor as *malāmātīs* but rather as *zuhhād* (ascetics), ‘*ubbād* (worshippers), *wu‘āz* or *mudhakkirūn*

(preachers). The epithet *Ṣūfī* comes up for the first time in this source as the attribute of Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 320/932). The latter indeed lived in Nīshāpūr for a number of years but was not a native of it. He arrived there from Baghdād, where in his youth he had belonged to the circle of Junayd.³² From the fourth/tenth century on, however, the epithet *Ṣūfī* appears with increasing frequency in front of the names of the local Shaykhs as well. The attribute *malāmatī* does not appear even once.³³ These manuscripts have been the basis for R.W. Bulliet's enlightening socio-historical study on the distinguished families of Nīshāpūr during the period between the third/ninth–sixth/twelfth centuries. Its title, *The Patricians of Nishapur, a Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, speaks for itself.³⁴

- 3 An important source for the history of Khurāsān in the fourth/tenth century are the first-hand descriptions of the famous traveller and geographer from Jerusalem, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (or al-Muqaddasī, d. 380/990) in his book *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*.³⁵ This source is particularly important for the history and characterization of the *Karrāmiyya*, whose eponym is Muḥammad ibn Karrām (d. 255/869). Ibn Karrām was an ascetic and preacher in Khurāsān who exerted an enormous influence, especially among the poor of Nīshāpūr (see "*Malāmatīyya and Karrāmiyya*" section below). In his book, similarly to al-Ḥakīm al-Naysābūrī, al-Maqdisī does not mention either of the appellations *ṣūfīs* or *malāmatīs* at all. To the pietists, ascetics and mystics of Khurāsān he refers as '*ubbād*, *zuhhād*, *wu'āz* and *karrāmiyya*.
- 4 The earliest source known to me in which the *Malāmatīyya* are mentioned is *Kitāb al-Bad' wa 'l-ta'rīkh*, the chronicles of the historian Abū Naṣr al-Muṭaḥhar ibn Tāhir al-Muqaddasī (or al-Maqdisī), written circa 355/966. In the fifth volume of his book, Abū Naṣr al-Muqaddasī writes:

The *Ṣūfī* groups: among them are the *Ḥasaniyya* [after Ḥasan al-Baṣrī? or perhaps one should read al-Ḥusayniyya after al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj?], al-Malāmatīyya, al Sūqīyya and al-Ma'dhūriyya. These are characterized by the lack of any consistent system or clear principles of faith. They make judgements according to their speculations and imagination, and they constantly change their opinions. Some of them believe in incarnation (*ḥulūl*), as I have heard one of them claim that his habitation is in the cheeks of the beardless youth (*murd*).³⁶ Some of them uphold promiscuity (*ibāḥa*) and neglect the religious law, and they do not heed those who blame them ...³⁷

The significance of this mid-tenth-century source is obvious as it relates to groups which had chosen to follow the peculiar 'Path of Blame' (*malāma*), thus alluding to the characteristics of that mystical trend practised by the masters of Nīshāpūr to whom al-Sulamī, barely a generation later, dedicated his *Malāmatīyya Epistle*. The historian al-Muṭaḥhar al-Muqaddasī hence suggests that in the fourth/tenth century a group of "[people] who do not

heed those who blame them”, known as the *Malāmatiyya*, could have been referred to as Ṣūfīs. His description is unfavourable and critical. It suggests that the *Malāmatiyya*, and the other groups mentioned in association with them, had a strong antinomian, nonconformist streak. This information, which to the best of my knowledge is unique in the non-Ṣūfī literature of the time, sheds light on the apologetics underlying al-Sulamī’s works: the *Malāmatiyya Epistle* as well as his hagiographical *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. By ‘apologetics’ I refer to al-Sulamī’s wish to vindicate his hometown’s spiritual teachers, in fact, his own teachers, of antinomian and nonconformist accusations levelled against them.³⁸

- 5 Additional material at our disposal are letters written by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. c.295/908) to two contemporary mystics associated with the early *Malāmatiyya*: one letter to Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥirī and two to Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Balkhī (see the discussion on this correspondence, in “Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Nīshāpūrī masters” section below; see also Chapter 6 in this monograph). Each of the three letters of al-Tirmidhī is written in response to the correspondent’s arguments or questions concerning ‘psychological’ difficulties on the mystical path. In all of them al-Tirmidhī criticizes the system which, in its excessive concern with observing the negative, blameworthy aspects of the ‘lower-self’ (*nafs*), leads its adherents away from the constant remembrance of God. These letters shed light on the main dilemma arising from the *malāmatī* wish to observe and control the ‘lower-self’: the obsession with the introverted work obstructs the constant remembrance of God, which to some, like for al-Tirmidhī, is the central concern of the inward life.

Mystics, not necessarily Ṣūfīs

One of the insights stemming from the study of sources concerning early Islamic mysticism is this: from the third/ninth to fourth/tenth centuries not all Muslim mystics were known as Ṣūfīs. Addressing Muslim mystics with the epithet ‘ṣūfī’ and identifying Islamic mysticism with *taṣawwuf* seems to be the direct result of the compilatory literature of the late fourth/tenth century and later.³⁹ With al-Kalābādhī’s *Kitāb al-Ta’arruf li-madhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, al-Sarrāj’s *Kitāb al-Luma’ fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*, al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, al-Khargūshī’s *Tahdhīb al-asrār* and, later on, al-Qushayrī’s *al-Risāla fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf* and al-Hujwīrī’s *Kashf al-mahjūb*, there is a clear attempt to present an amalgamated picture of the different schools and centres, without losing sight – albeit subtly and tacitly – of the compilers’ own affiliation and allegiance. One may thus argue that al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, in which he includes mystics of different schools under one heading, complements his more locally oriented the *Malāmatiyya Epistle*: both works are the response of a Khurāsānī-Nīshāpūrī compiler to the emphatically Baghdādī slant of the earlier compilations of al-Kalābādhī and al-Sarrāj.⁴⁰ The last two authors, in spite of their Khurāsānī origin, represent in their compilations mainly the Baghdādī

school of the third/ninth century. One of al-Sarrāj's main authorities and informants is Ja'far al-Khuldī (d. 348/959), an important transmitter of sayings and traditions emanating from the schools of al-Junayd, the main Baghdādī teacher during most of the ninth century.⁴¹ In the same vein it is worth noting that in al-Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-Luma'*, the Khurāsānī masters are scarcely mentioned; some of them are totally glossed over (e.g. Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī). This reticence is not accidental. It reflects a conscious divergence between Baghdād and Khurāsān, a divergence which, notwithstanding the later fusion, left its traces in the Ṣūfī tradition. It is highlighted, for example, by a comment made by the same Ja'far al-Khuldī, recorded by al-Sulamī in his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, concerning al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. Al-Sulamī writes:

I heard Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Khuldī say: "I own a hundred and thirty odd works by Ṣūfīs." I asked him: "Do you own any of the works of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī?" He said: "No, I do not count him among the Ṣūfīs."⁴²

At first sight it may appear that this is a disparaging comment by al-Khuldī. It may be understood, however, as reflecting a period, probably the pre-compilatory, in which the terms *ṣūfī*, *ṣūfiyya* and *taṣawwuf* designated exclusively the Baghdādī circle. Indeed, in the vast corpus of al-Tirmidhī, the term *ṣūfī* occurs only in reference to an ascetic, and not in a favourable tone.⁴³ This assumption is corroborated also by the fact, mentioned above, that in al-Ḥakīm al-Naysabūrī's lists the first to be invested with the title *al-ṣūfī* is Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī, who had left the Baghdādī school before moving to Khurāsān. The statistics provided by Bulliet in his study of *Aḥwāl-i Nishāpūr* are also relevant: they show that the circulation of the attribute *ṣūfī* attached to names of Nishāpūrī Shaykhs became more frequent only from the fourth/tenth century onwards.⁴⁴ Al-Sulamī himself seems to acknowledge this fact in his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* when, in writing about Abū 'Uthmān al-Ḥīrī, the central Nishāpūrī Shaykh at the end of the third/ninth century, he remarks: "...the Ṣūfī system in Nishāpūr spread from him..."⁴⁵ Does this mean that before Abū 'Uthmān there were no mystics in Nishāpūr? Or may it rather suggest that Abū 'Uthmān, a moderate *malāmatī* as well as the spiritual teacher of al-Sulamī's grandfather, could have adequately represented an early attempt at merging the Baghdādī and the Khurāsānī schools under the inclusive title *ṣūfī*?

In sum, it is my contention that al-Sulamī, who is virtually our only direct source for the early Malāmatīs of Nishāpūr, is also responsible – especially via his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* in which he includes both Baghdādī and Khurāsānī teachers – for creating and bequeathing the perception that *taṣawwuf* had been a homogeneous movement since early in the history of Islamic mysticism. One cannot overestimate the suggestive impact that al-Sulamī's works have had on modern as well as medieval students. The *Ṭabaqāt*, in fact, is the main source that has shaped our knowledge and conception of early Ṣūfī history. Al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, as well as al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and the compilatory literature at large, do reflect the all-inclusive mystical tradition which became established within Islam through these authors efforts. Indeed, the various Shaykhs

mentioned and referred to in these compilations are all mystics: seekers for whom a direct numinous experience and the psychological transformation which this experience entails is the end and meaning of their lives and teachings. These seekers and teachers were known in the first few centuries of Islamic history by various names: *ahl al-ma'rifa*, *ahl al-ḥaqīqa*, *al-ʿārifūn*, *al-sālīkūn*, *al-zuhhād*, *al-fuqarāʾ* etc. At times, they were named after their particular teachers: al-Hakīmiyya, al-Hallājiyya, al-Qaṣṣāriyya ...⁴⁶

It seems most probable that the mainstream of Islamic mysticism in the third/ninth century, that is, the Baghdādī school, adopted the title *al-ṣūfiyya*.⁴⁷ As has been shown in another chapter, this term had initially denoted ascetics and had related to certain ascetical groups.⁴⁸ It was not until the second half of the fourth/tenth century – mainly as a result of the compilatory activity – that the terms *Ṣūfiyya* and *taṣawwuf* denoted Muslim mystics and Islamic mysticism at large, merging within it the various paths and schools within its scope.

Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār al-Malāmatī, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād and Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī: two streams within the Nīshāpūrī school

In the Ṣūfī compilations from the fourth/tenth century onwards, including al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār (d. 271/884) is the only Nīshāpūrī Shaykh who is consistently referred to as *al-malāmatī*. According to al-Sulamī, he was the founder of the *malāmatī* school in Nīshāpūr.⁴⁹ Scrutinizing the hagiographical material concerning the Nīshāpūrī teachers of the third/ninth century vis-à-vis al-Sulamī's *Malāmatiyya Epistle*, we learn that there were two separate circles within the Nīshāpūrī 'Path of Blame': the circle of Ḥamdūn, extreme and non-compromising in its practice of 'incurring blame on oneself' (*malāmat al-naḥs*)⁵⁰ and the more moderate circle of Abū Ḥafṣ and Abū ʿUthmān. It was the latter circle to which al-Sulamī's grandfather adhered, being one of the closest disciples of Abū ʿUthmān.⁵¹ Many anecdotes reveal Ḥamdūn's insistence on the principle of hiding away all external signs of spirituality. In the following one Ḥamdūn is described by a compatriot, Nūḥ al-ʿAyyār, who belonged to one of the 'extroverted' spiritual circles in Nīshāpūr:⁵²

Whereas I [Nūḥ] ... wear a patched garment (*muraqqaʿa*) ... so that I may become a *ṣūfī* and abstain from sin, for the shame that I feel before God, you (i.e. Ḥamdūn) put off the patched frock lest you be deluded by men and men be deluded by you ...⁵³

In the following passage from the *Malāmatiyya Epistle*, Ḥamdūn denounces overt spiritual practices and criticizes the audible *dhikr* (the practice of remembering God vocally):⁵⁴

When some of the masters were in a gathering with Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār, a certain master was mentioned, and it was said that he practiced *dhikr* profusely.

Ḥamdūn remarked, “Yet he is constantly heedless.” Someone who was present inquired, “Should he not be grateful that God bestows upon him the ability to commit himself to the audible *dhikr*?” Ḥamdūn replied, “Should he not see his failing when the heart becomes heedless due to the [audible] *dhikr*?”⁵⁵

As for Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥūrī who, as mentioned above, had corresponded with al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (see also “Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Nīshāpūrī Masters” section below), he was the central Shaykh of the Nīshāpūrī school from circa 270/883 to 298/910. He was born in Rayy, where he became the disciple of Shāh Shujā‘ al-Kirmānī. Al-Hujwūrī tells how, on a visit with his teacher to Nīshāpūr, he became deeply impressed with their host, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, who had been the leading spiritual master of his day. Abū Ḥafṣ intuitively noticed the struggle in Abū ‘Uthmān’s heart – torn between loyalty to his master and the strong wish to stay with Abū Ḥafṣ. He therefore asked Shāh Shujā‘ to leave his disciple behind, a request to which obviously Shāh obliged. Thus, Abū ‘Uthmān became Abū Ḥafṣ’ closest disciple, and eventually his successor.⁵⁶

The *Malāmātiyya Epistle* tells us that Abū ‘Uthmān trained his disciples in the middle path between his teacher’s method and that of Ḥamdūn. According to Abū Ḥafṣ’ teaching the disciples were encouraged to carry out many spiritual practices, the merits of which were emphasized. Ḥamdūn, on the other hand, in order to eliminate conceit and inflation, criticized and denounced overt spiritual practices. Abū ‘Uthmān taught the middle path. He said:

Both ways are correct; each, however, in its right time. At the beginning of his novitiate we train the disciple in the path of practices and we encourage him to follow it and establish himself in it. However, when he is established and consistent in this path he becomes attached to it and dependent on it. Then we show him the shortcomings of this path of effortful actions and our disregard for it, until he becomes aware of his helplessness, and sees how remote his efforts are from completion. Thus, we make sure that first he becomes grounded in practices yet does not fall into self-delusion. How can we show him the shortcomings of his practices if he has no practices? ... Between the two, this is the most balanced path.⁵⁷

In response to a letter from Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Balkhī, a close companion of Abū ‘Uthmān and another of the correspondents of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī mentioned above (see also Chapter 6 in this monograph), who asked him how one can perfect one’s actions and states, Abū ‘Uthmān wrote:

No action or state can become perfect unless God brings it about without any wish on the doer’s part and without any awareness of the doing of the action, and without awareness of another’s observation of the action.⁵⁸

It is noteworthy that after Abū ‘Uthmān’s death, the Nīshāpūrī centre seemed to have lost its attraction and many of the disciples left to other centres, especially to the one in Baghdād.⁵⁹

Malāmatīyya and Karrāmīyya

The *Malāmatī* school of Nīshāpūr advocated the realization of a spiritual experience of rare psychological purity. The key terms in *malāmatī* psychology were *riyā'*, *iddi'ā'*, *'ujb* and *ikhhlāṣ*. Psychologically, *riyā'* – hypocrisy, acting ostentatiously – arises when spiritual attainments become conspicuous; *iddi'ā'* – pretence, presumption – is the state of self-delusion; *'ujb* – conceit, vanity – amounts to the pride and inflation which arise when one is cognizant of one's own spiritual attainments; *ikhhlāṣ* – earnestness, purity – is a state in which one's actions and self-perception become free of the contamination of the lower-self (the *nafs*). The main aim of the *malāmatīs* was to reach an introverted state with regards to all one's psychological and spiritual attainments. This aspiration is succinctly expressed in the following saying attributed to the teaching of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, as well as in similar sayings scattered throughout the relevant literature:

They [the *Malāmatīs*] show off what is blameworthy and conceal what is praiseworthy. People therefore blame them for their outward [conduct], while they blame themselves for their inward [state] ...⁶⁰

Clearly, the *malāmatī* path represented a sharp, albeit subtle and well-codified, reaction against movements, such as the *Karrāmīyya*, which, in third/ninth-century Khurāsān, exerted a tremendous following, and which were known for their extreme ascetical practices. The *Malāmatī* reaction is itself a reflection of the anti-*zuhdī* tendency of certain circles within Islam right from its very beginning.⁶¹ Islamic mysticism – contrary to what one may expect – is steeped in such anti-*zuhdī* tendency.⁶²

From the *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* of al-Maqdisī, as well as from the biographical lists of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, the *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya* and other heresiographical and hagiographical sources, we learn of the popularity and the tremendous influence exerted by the *Karrāmīyya* – the followers of Muḥammad ibn Karrām – on the lower classes of Khurāsān especially in Nīshāpūr.⁶³ Edmund Bosworth in his studies describes an extremely militant and ascetic movement, which, on account of its popularity among the weavers and water-carriers who inhabited the north-western sections of Nīshāpūr (according to Bulliet's description, the poor district known as Mānishāk), became a threat to the Ṭāhirid rulers. The disciples of Ibn Karrām were apparently the first Muslims who established a quasi-monastic institution in Khurāsān, which they named *khānqāh*. Indeed, al-Maqdisī refers to them also as *Khānqāhiyyūn*.⁶⁴ Although the *Karrāmīyya* are attacked in pro-Shāfi'ite heresiographies for their theological opinions, their extreme asceticism is nowhere disputed. In his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya*, al-Subkī, who cannot be accused of favouring them, gives the following description of their leader Ibn Karrām:

... He used to exhibit a great deal of piety (*tanassuk*), Godfearing (*ta'alluh*), devotional worship (*ta'abbud*) and asceticism (*taqashshuf*) ... Special assemblies were conducted for him, and when he was asked about his ideas he would say that they come from divine inspiration (*ilhām*) ...

Quoting al-Ḥakīm al-Naysābūrī, al-Subkī continues:

I was told that he was followed by a group of the poor (*fuqarāʾ*), that he used to wear dyed but unsewn sheep skin; on his head he used to wear a white *qalansuwwa*, and that he used to preach in a stall [at the market] ... The governor of Sijistān had expelled him ... but was afraid to execute him because of his visible piety and asceticism (*al-ʿibāda wal-taqashshuf*) which attracted to him many followers (*iftatana bihi khalq kathīr*, lit.: by which many people were deluded).⁶⁵

Samʿānī's *Kitāb al-Ansāb* offers an indirect piece of evidence concerning the critical attitude with which the *Malāmatiyya* regarded the *Karrāmiyya*'s extroverted asceticism. He tells us about a confrontation that took place between Sālīm ibn Ḥasan al-Bārusī, one of Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār *al-malāmatī*'s teachers, and Muḥammad ibn Karrām:

Sālīm ibn al-Ḥasan al-Bārusī came to Muḥammad ibn Karrām. [Muḥammad] asked [al-Bārusī]: "What do you think of my followers?" He said: "If the longing of their interior were manifest in their exterior, and the asceticism of their exterior were concealed in their interior, then they would have been 'men' (*rijāl*)."⁶⁶ And he added: "I see much prayer, fasting and humiliation; yet I cannot see the light of Islam upon them."⁶⁷

Interestingly, early Ṣūfī literature does not mention the *Karrāmiyya*. Al-Hujwīrī in the fifth/eleventh century is the first Ṣūfī author who mentions one of their teachers – Aḥmad ibn Ḥarb.⁶⁸ This reticence is significant. In Ṣūfī ethics polemics is counter-advocated. This, therefore, must have been the way in which the early Ṣūfī tradition chose to alienate itself from these extreme ascetic circles: to simply ignore them. Bearing in mind the tendency of the later compilatory literature to standardize and merge the different mystical schools, this silence has loud reverberations. It reflects the ongoing dialectical attitude of Islamic mysticism towards extroverted ascetical behaviour and practice.

The chivalric tradition (*futuwwa*)

The tradition of *futuwwa* (=chivalry, generosity; literally 'youthfulness')⁶⁹ concerns us here because it was an important part of the socio-religious scene in Khurāsān, and because many of the Khurāsānī and Nīshāpūrī teachers refer to themselves as *fityān* (sg. *fatā* = youth; the Persian equivalent is *jawānmardī*) and dedicate many sayings and even whole treatises to the topic of *futuwwa*. Al-Sulamī composed an entire book on spiritual chivalry, the *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*; one finds a special chapter devoted to this theme (*bāb fī 'l-futuwwa*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*. In the study of the historical implications of the Ṣūfī lexicon, the terminology concerned with *futuwwa*, similar to that of *zuhd*, has caused great confusion. Hartmann, Taeschner, Trimmingham and

others are all concerned with the differentiation between *futuwwa* and *malāma*.⁷⁰

From a socio-ethical perspective, *futuwwa* is the name given to the system of closed societies of crafts and professions in medieval Persian towns. These societies, not unlike the guilds of medieval Europe, were exclusive and esoteric. Members were not only required to belong to the relevant professions but were required to abide by the strictest ethical and professional standards. It seems that the most important of these ethical norms was *īthār* – extreme altruism to the extent of self-sacrifice, of always giving precedence to one's fellow-men, especially to the fellows of the fraternity. The etiquette of the *fiṭyān* demanded specific garments and items of clothes by which they were distinguished from other citizens. It is evident from the *Malāmātiyya Epistle*, as well as from other Šūfī compilations, that the social-professional *futuwwa* and the spiritual *futuwwa* were interrelated. Al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* abounds with anecdotes about Šūfī *fiṭyān*, most of whom were affiliated to Khurāsānī teachers. Study of the relevant source material has led me to the conclusion that the interrelatedness (rather than identity) between *Futuwwa* and the *Malāmātiyya* was based on the following principles:

- a The *Malāmātiyya* identified with the *fiṭyān* regarding their attitude to altruistic acts of self-sacrifice, namely, *īthār*.
- b The *Malāmātiyya* masked their mystical identity under the guise of the social *futuwwa*. Many of the *malāmātī* teachers and disciples bore epithets indicating crafts and professions: al-Ḥaddād (=the ironsmith), al-Qaṣṣār (=the bleacher), al-Ḥajjām (=the cupper), al-Khayyāt (=the tailor). Thus, in the *Malāmātiyya Epistle*, Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār says to 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥajjām:

It is better for you to be known as 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥajjām (the bath-attendant, cupper) than as 'Abd Allāh the Mystic (*al-ʿārif*) or as 'Abd Allāh the Ascetic (*al-zāhid*).⁷¹

- c The *Malāmātiyya* adopted the term *futuwwa* (youthful chivalry) as a code name for one of the stages in the mystical hierarchy, perhaps the one preceding manhood *rujūliyya*. Such terms as 'man' (*raju*l), 'manliness' (*rujūliyya*), 'men' (*rijāl*) as well as 'perfect manliness', 'complete maturity' (*kamāl al-rujūliyya*) appear quite often in al-Sulamī's writings. In the *Malāmātiyya Epistle*, for instance, we read:

Abū Yazīd was asked: "When does a man reach the stage of manhood in this business (*matā yabluḡhu 'l-raju*l *maqām al-rijāl fī hādḥā al-amr*)?" He said: "When he becomes aware of the blemishes of his lower-self (*nafs*) and when his charge against it increases (*idhā 'arafa 'uyūb nafsīhi wa qawiyat tuḡmatuhu 'alayhā*)."⁷²

Most illuminating in this regard is a saying ascribed to Abū Ḥafṣ, in which he assesses the spiritual attainments of Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d. c.310/922):

It was told that Abū Ḥafṣ had said [concerning the above]: “A ‘youth’ (*fatā*) grew up in Rayy; if he keeps [faithfully] to his path and to the [behaviour appropriate to] this attribute, he will become one of the ‘men’ (*rijāl*).”⁷³

Malāmatiyya and Ṣūfiyya

As shown above, *ṣūfiyya* and *malāmatiyya* are two terms pertaining to two different mystical schools in the third/ninth century: the Baghdādī and the Khurāsānī schools respectively. Between these two schools, there were relationships and communications. From the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, we know of disciples who moved from one centre to another: there were Baghdādīs such as Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī who moved to Khurāsān, and Khurāsānīs who moved to Baghdād or stayed there for a while on their journey in search of knowledge (*fī ṭalab al-‘ilm*). Scrutinizing the somewhat dry biographical material supplied by the *Ṭabaqāt*, it seems that the Nīshāpūrī centre reached its zenith in the second half of the third/ninth century during the period of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār and Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥirī, when it attracted disciples from far and wide. After Abū ‘Uthmān’s death, however, it appears that the Nīshāpūrī disciples started to wander off. Many found their way to the Baghdādī centre of Junayd, who died six to ten years after Abū ‘Uthmān, and at least twenty years after Abū Ḥafṣ.

There exists at least one interesting record of a meeting between the teachers of the two schools – Abū Ḥafṣ and Junayd – with their disciples in Baghdād. From this anecdote, which is related by al-Sulamī in the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (108), the interaction between the two Shaykhs shows the subtle dialectics between these two schools. This interaction illustrates the notion of proper manners and dignity according to the strict code of conduct and proper etiquette (*adab*), especially *īthār*, while at the same time a hidden rebuke is also implied:

When Abū Ḥafṣ came to Baghdad, the Shaykhs of Baghdad gathered round him and asked him what *futuwwa* was. He said: “You speak first, for it is you who possess eloquence.” Junayd said: “*Futuwwa* is that one obliterates the vision [of one’s acts and merits] and stops taking notice of them (*isqāt al-ru‘ya*).” Then Abū Ḥafṣ said: “How eloquently have you spoken! Yet for me *futuwwa* is that one should conduct oneself according to what is right and just (*inṣāf*) without expecting to be likewise treated according to what is right and just.” Junayd responded: “Arise, my friends, for Abū Ḥafṣ has transcended Adam and his descendants!”

In the last words of Junayd one can detect a subtle irony, perhaps even a covert criticism of the over-submissiveness to the *īthār* code of Abū Ḥafṣ, while Abū Ḥafṣ’ praise of the Baghdādī famous eloquence is also double-edged. Indeed, just before departing, when he was again pressed by the Baghdādīs to give his definition of *futuwwa*, Abū Ḥafṣ said: “*Futuwwa* is

practiced by actions not by speech (*al-futuwwa tu'khadhu isti'māl^{an} wa mu'āmalat^{an} lā nuṭq^{an}*).⁷⁴

It is also related that while Abū Ḥafṣ could not speak Arabic at all, miraculously (by a *karāma*) he could understand the Baghdādī brethren and even answer them in their language.

***Malāmatī* principles**

The main principle on which the *malāmatī* path is based requires that one always behold one's self as blameworthy. Rather than being an ethical dictate, this principle stems primarily from a psychological understanding of the nature of the self. The 'self', or more accurately the 'lower-self' (*nafs*), is understood by the *malāmatī* mystics as being the tempting element in the psyche, *al-nafs al-ammāra bi-l-sū'*: 'the soul which entices one to evil', and in this capacity it functions as the *agent provocateur* in the service of Satan, lusts, and all evil inclinations. Yet, it is also understood as the centre of ego consciousness. Most mystical systems agree that the more one's energy is absorbed in satisfying and gratifying the requirements of the ego, the less energy can be put into the process of spiritual transformation. Paradoxically, by ascetic practices alone the humiliation and surrender of the *nafs* cannot be achieved. On the contrary, the ascetic path often brings about an inflated hardening of the *nafs*. Inflation and conceit derive from both one's self-appraisal (*riyā'*, *ujb*) as well as from external social feedback (*shuhra*, *ri'āsa*). The Nīshāpūrī school known as the *Malāmatīyya* taught therefore that the only way to neutralize the *nafs* is to expose it to blame and humiliation in all circumstances and conditions. Blame and humiliation should be incurred from both external agents and from the *malāmatī* himself. Blame should be drawn upon one's self not only in accordance with what is considered *blameworthy* by social, religious and ethical standards, but also – and first and foremost – with disregard to what is accepted as *praiseworthy* by these standards. Evidently, this lends the *malāmatīyya* a clear non-conformist character.

Perhaps the most paradoxical and bewildering aspect of *malāmatī* teaching concerns blame in the arena of spiritual practices and mystical experiences. Thus, we read in al-Sulamī:

Most of the [*malāmatī*] Shaykhs warn their disciples against savoring the taste of devotional worship. This is considered by them a grave offense (*min al-kabā'ir*). This is so because when the human being finds anything to be sweet and desirable it becomes important in his eyes; and he who regards any of his actions as good and desirable, or regards any of his actions with satisfaction, falls from the stage of the eminent ones.⁷⁵

In psychological terms, the *malāmatī* teachers warned their disciples against the inflation of the ego which may accompany spiritual realization. The ultimate purpose of this 'contrary' path is to reach a psychological stage of equanimity where no importance is attached to either praise or blame.⁷⁶

The best way to illustrate the complexity of the *malāmātī* masters' teaching and to expose the principles they taught is to examine their own words. The following excerpts from al-Sulamī's *Malāmātiyya Epistle* reveal some of the depth of their psychological intuitions in this regard:

- 1 Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār was asked "What is the Path of Blame?" He said: "It is to abandon in every situation the desire to smarten up in front of people; to renounce in all one's states and actions the need to please people; and to be at all times beyond blame in fulfilling one's duties to God."
- 2 Outwardly, the *Malāmātīs* have no special marks distinguishing them from other people, and inwardly they make no claims with God, so that their innermost consciousness (*sirr*), which lies between them and God, can be perceived by neither their inner hearts (*af'ida*) nor by their external hearts (*qulūb*).
- 3 No man can attain the rank of these people [the *malāmātīs*] unless he regards all his actions as hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and all his spiritual states are presumptuous pretence (*da'āwā*).
- 4 One of the [*Malāmātī*] teachers was asked, "What are the first steps in this affair?" He answered:

To humiliate and abase the lower-self (*nafs*) and deprive it of what it relies upon; of that which it finds comfort with and of what it inclines towards; to respect others; to regard others with favour; to justify the wrongdoings of others and to rebuke one's own self.⁷⁷

- 5 The *Malāmātīs* are those over whose innermost consciousness (*asrār*) God keeps watch, pulling over their innermost consciousness the curtain of formal appearances, so that outwardly they participate in all activities performed by their fellow-men, keeping company with them in the market-places and in earning a livelihood, while in their true essence and [spiritual] conduct they associate with God alone.⁷⁸
- 6 Spiritual states are valuable assets deposited in the hearts of their trustees; whoever externalizes them, forfeits the rank of a trustee.⁷⁹
- 7 He who wishes to understand the waywardness of the lower-self (*nafs*) and the corruption of the instinctual nature, let him observe himself when praised. If he notices that his self is favourably affected, even minutely, by what he hears, he should realize that it has deviated from the truth, for the self relies on praise which has no truth in it and is disturbed by blame which has no truth in it.⁸⁰
- 8 One of them was asked concerning the Path of Blame. He replied:

It is to abandon conspicuousness (*shuhra*) in all matters which may distinguish one in the eyes of people, be it in one's manner of dressing, walking or sitting ... He should rather adopt the external behaviour of the people in whose company he is, while at the same time be isolated from them by way of contemplation, so that his exterior person conforms with society so as not to be distinguished in any way, while his interior reality is in utter distinction.

- 9 One of them was asked, “Why do you not participate in *samāʿ* gatherings (musical gatherings conducive to ecstasy)?” He replied, “It is not out of objection to *samāʿ* that we abstain from attending its gatherings, but rather out of fear that we may not be able to conceal our inner spiritual states, and this is grave for us.”⁸¹
- 10 One of their principles is that there are four degrees in [the practice of] the remembrance of God (*dhikr*): the *dhikr* of the tongue, the *dhikr* of the heart, the *dhikr* of the innermost consciousness (*sirr*) and the *dhikr* of the spirit (*rūh*). When the *dhikr* of the spirit is sound, the heart and the innermost consciousness are silenced – this is the *dhikr* of contemplation (*mushāhada*). When the *dhikr* of the innermost consciousness is sound, the heart and the spirit are silenced – this is the *dhikr* of awe (*hayba*). When the *dhikr* of the heart is sound, the tongue is silenced – this is the *dhikr* of divine graces. When the heart is heedless of the *dhikr*, then the tongue takes over, and this is the *dhikr* of habit. Each one of these degrees has a blemish. The blemish of the *dhikr* of the spirit is to be perceived by the innermost consciousness. The blemish of the *dhikr* of the heart is that the lower-self (*nafs*) should take note of it and admire it, or that it should seek to gain by it the reward of attaining one of the spiritual ranks.⁸²

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Nīshāpūrī masters

Among the many treatises and epistles written by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. c.295/908) there are a number of letters in which he responded to questions addressed to him by eminent correspondents. Among these, one letter is addressed to Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, the Nīshāpūrī *malāmatī* Shaykh. Two other letters are addressed to Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl (d. 319/931) from Samarqand, a close companion of Abū ʿUthmān (more on whom below; see also Chapter 6, “Facing Hostility”). Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī himself did not belong to the Nīshāpūrī school or any other mystical school.⁸³ He led his mystical and literary life away from the contemporary centres. He did not have a teacher in flesh, and thus belonged, as the Ṣūfī tradition permits, to the *uwaysiyyūn*, those whose teacher is al-Khaḍir (also Khidr). Traditions in this vein are reported by al-Hujwīrī⁸⁴ and al-ʿAṭṭār.⁸⁵ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī himself voices explicit reservations about the depending upon “a created being (*makhḷūq*)” in the mystical quest rather than upon “the Creator (*al-khāliq*)”.⁸⁶ Yet, as we can see from his letters, he maintained direct links with some of his contemporaries among the mystics of Khurāsān.⁸⁷ His letter to Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, as well as the other two letters mentioned above revolve around the issue of how best to deal with the ego (*nafs*) which undermines all spiritual attainments. Touching on this question, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī writes to Abū ʿUthmān:

I have received your letter, my brother, one letter after another. You confirm repeatedly [how] the blemishes of the lower-self (*nafs*) [are an obstacle] in the [attainment] of [spiritual] knowledge. My brother, if you can refrain from being

occupied by this obstacle, since this is other than God, do so. For God has servants who indeed have knowledge of Him, and they ignore all things but Him. They are wary of being occupied with the lower-self; instead, they fear Him. Whenever anyone of them is afflicted by its memory, his stomach turns⁸⁸ as if he were about to vomit. How can one who strolls in the gardens of roses, jasmine and wild lilies graze in the valleys of thorns? How can one who is nourished by the remembrance of the Majestic be aware of anything but Him?⁸⁹

Al-Tirmidhī's objections to an exaggerated preoccupation with the *nafs* in the mystical quest are expressed here – as well as in other letters and in many passages throughout his writings. In his letter to Abū 'Uthmān, he presents the nucleus of his own understanding that the *nafs* is indeed the centre of negative qualities: lust, desire, fear, anger, doubt, idolatry and forgetfulness. A transformation (*tabdīl*) of these negative qualities into positive ones is possible. This transformation is possible, however, only by means of the heart, that is, by the capacity of the heart to "see things in their essence" (*ḥaqā'iq al-umūr*). The heart's vision is obscured by the negative qualities of the lower-self, which cause a veil (*ghīṭā'*) to be drawn between it and Truth. This vicious circle can be broken by consolidating faith (*īmān*) which resides in the heart. Faith is reinforced by the grace of God, and its light intensifies gradually. As the light of faith intensifies in the heart, the impact of the 'veil' becomes weaker. As it weakens, 'the essence of things' becomes clearer and more visible to the heart. When the heart 'sees' the 'essence of things', its faith is transformed and becomes 'certitude' (*yaqīn*). At this stage, when the heart has attained 'certitude', full transformation occurs: the desire of the *nafs* becomes a desire for God; fear becomes fear of God; anger becomes anger for the sake of God; lust becomes longing for God; doubt becomes certitude, idolatry becomes pure unity and forgetfulness becomes determination. Evidently, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's teaching, although revolving around the same psychological issues and obstacles which occupied the *malāmatiyya*, advocates an utterly different approach. Excessive concern with the *nafs*, regardless of its prominence in counteracting the sincere spiritual and devotional quest, will lead nowhere as long as the seeker's attention remains focused on it alone. Al-Tirmidhī's method, as he reiterates in his letter, is based on "the science of God" (*al-'ilm bi 'l-lāh*), whereas the method of Abū 'Uthmān and the Nishāpūrī teachers – who are not mentioned by name but are undoubtedly implied – is based on "the science of the self" (*al-'ilm bi-'l-nafs*). If one focuses one's attention on the science of the self, says al-Tirmidhī, one will never be released from the self. "If one occupies oneself with the knowledge of the self's blemishes, one will spend all one's life in the attempt to be released from it (*fa-in ishtaghala 'l-'abd bi ma'rīfat 'l-'uyūb baqiya 'umrahu fihā wa fī 'l-takhalluṣ minhā*)." On the other hand, if one places one's attention on the science of God, the heart becomes stronger and its vision of Divine revelations becomes clearer. These revelations revive the heart, and its antithesis, the self, withers away. "When the self gives up because of the impact of the Divine revelations, the heart is revived by the Lord; what blemish remains then?"⁹⁰

In the two letters addressed to Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Balkhī, al-Tirmidhī expounds the same teaching. Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl lived for many years in Samarqand, after having been expelled from his hometown of Balkh.⁹¹ Although he cannot be said to have belonged to the Nīshāpūrī school, he was closely associated with Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥīrī. In his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, al-Sulamī quotes Abū ‘Uthmān as saying, “If I were strong enough, I would have travelled to my brother Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl to find in his company solace for my innermost heart (*sirrī*).”⁹² Al-Qushayrī too, in his *Risāla*, mentions the great esteem in which Abū ‘Uthmān held Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl.⁹³

Based on MS. Leipzig 212, I edited the two letters of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī to Ibn al-Faḍl and included them in my PhD dissertation.⁹⁴ In one of these letters,⁹⁵ al-Tirmidhī seems to be answering Muḥammad’s question as to how one attains the knowledge of the self. Al-Tirmidhī discloses here an uncompromising criticism of those who spend their entire life incurring blame on their selves; interestingly, al-Tirmidhī uses the terms *dhamm* and *lawm* rather than *malāma*. He writes with no small amount of sarcasm that to think that in this way they will control the self’s machinations is sheer delusion. The self is cunning and wily. It will turn the means whereby one attempts to destroy it to its own advantage. Its essence is pleasure and enjoyment. When one makes efforts to fight it, the self finds pleasure in these very efforts. If this is done publicly, the self will gain strength from the admiration and respect that this will draw from the public. Thus, all these efforts are to no avail. He who has eyes to see without deluding himself knows that the obstacle of the self will not be removed by the knowledge of the self or by blaming the self. Only the Creator of the self can eliminate it. He who knows this finds refuge with Him without Whom there is no refuge.

This correspondence, involving three Khurāsānī mystics of the third/ninth century, is a first-hand source that corroborates the contention expressed throughout this chapter; namely, that towards the end of this period there existed in Khurāsān (as well as in Baghdād) a number of mystical circles, centred around diverse teachings and teachers. These circles were mutually related by a complex and dynamic exchange, revolving mainly around questions concerning mystical psychology. Observing the many-faceted personal and communal relationships of these circles, as well as the versatility of their opinions and practices, had been blurred in the later Ṣūfī compilations, whose main motivation was to solidify and standardize the Ṣūfī tradition at large. The existence of such diverse trends, however, can be identified in these very Ṣūfī compilations: when scrutinized alongside additional sources, both Ṣūfī and non-Ṣūfī, a fuller, richer and finer picture of the early development of Islamic mysticism may be sketched.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this chapter was published in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999 [also in 1993]), 583–613. Also in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, Vol. 2 (London: KNP, 1992), 583–613.

- 2 Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Risālat al-Malāmatiyya*, ed. Abu 'l-'Alā' 'Afīfī, in *al-Malāmatiyya wa 'l-ṣūfiyya wa-ahl al-futuwwa* (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-'arabiyya, 1945), 91–3; see also “Sources” section in this chapter.
- 3 See Chapter 8 in this monograph.
- 4 See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1994), Ch. 3, 33ff.; 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī, *'awārif al-Ma'ārif* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1973), Ch. 9.
- 5 See, for example, Itzhak Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2007), 24–5ff.
- 6 See “The Chivalric Tradition (*Futuwwa*)” section.
- 7 On al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's letters, see “al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Nīshāpūrī Masters” section.
- 8 On these two aspects, see Chapters 2 and 3 in this monograph.
- 9 For a detailed description of medieval Nīshāpūr, its geographical position and social structure, see Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nīshāpūr: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), I: 4–27; see also G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia from the Moslem Conquest to the Time of Timur* (London: F. Cass, 1966), 383ff.; C.E. Bosworth, “Nīshapur: Historical Geography and History to the Beginning of the 20th Century”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edn (updated 17 September 2010); see also the extensive bibliography there.
- 10 The Ṭāhirids, who ruled from their capital Nīshāpūr, were generally known as loyal to the 'Abbasids and as sincere upholders of the Sunna, especially vis-à-vis dissident religious activity (e.g. Shī'ī propaganda, mystical communities, extreme asceticism, etc.): see C.E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Handbook* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1967), 99–100, 103–6; C.E. Bosworth, “The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids”, in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 4: *From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 98ff.; A.H. Siddiqi, *Caliphate and Kingship in Medieval Persia* (Philadelphia, PA: Porcupine Press, 1977). For more references, see Chapter 6 in this monograph.
- 11 On the Buwayhid or Būyid dynasty, see Claude Cahen, “Buwayhids or Būyids”, *Encyclopedia of Encyclopedia of Islam*²; and John J. Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334H./945 to 403H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
- 12 On the expansion of Nīshāpūr after the Muslim conquest and on the possible identification of some quarters (*maḥallāt*) with earlier villages (*qurā*), see Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 8–9.
- 13 See *ibid.*, 11–13 and the sources cited there; on the irrigation system, see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M.J. De Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), 299 and 329.
- 14 See Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 13 and the sources cited; on Mulāqabādh, Naṣrabādh and al-Ḥīra, see also 92, 193 *et passim*; also 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Al-Ḥalqa al-ūlā min ta'rīkh naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, ed. Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Maḥmūdī (Qumm: 1362/1982–1983), no. 1, 7; no. 182, 97; no. 336, 196; on the number and size of the *maḥallāt*, see al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 315.
- 15 See Sources section 2, and Bulliet, *The Patricians*, Part II: Patrician Families, Introduction, 85–8.
- 16 On the affiliation of Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Ḥaddād, one of the main *malāmatī* teachers, to Kurādabādh, a village on the north-eastern outskirts of Nīshāpūr, see Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Johannes Pedersen (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 105; the *nisba* of Abū 'Uthmān al-Ḥīrī, the teacher of the second generation of the *malāmatīs*, speaks for itself; for greater detail on these *malāmatī* teachers, see

Hamdūn al-Qaṣṣār al-Malāmātī, Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Ḥaddād and Abū 'Uthmān al-Ḥīrī: Two Streams within the Nīshāpūrī School section.

- 17 See, for example, Jacqueline Chabbi, "Remarques sur le développement historique des mouvements ascétiques et mystiques au Khurasan: IIIe/IXe siècle–IVe/Xe siècle", *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 42, n. 4 and 50, n. 1.
- 18 See al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 326; for the complex problem of determining the origin and typology of the 'aṣabiyyāt struggles, see Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 30ff.; see also Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), in particular "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks", II: 109–68, and "The Early Murjī'a in Khurasan and Transoxiana", II: 32–9.
- 19 On such 'volunteer fighters', see C.E. Bosworth, "Mutaṭawwi'a", *Encyclopedia of Islam*², Deborah Tor, "Privatized Jihad and Public Order in the Pre-Seljuq Period: The Role of the Mutaṭawwi'a", *Iranian Studies* 38 (2005): 555–73.
- 20 Madelung, *Religious Schools*, 109, 114. On the persecution in the eleventh century of the Shāfi'ite-Ash'arites of Nīshāpūr by the Ḥanafite-Mu'tazilites, see Heinz Halm "Der Wesir al-Kunduri und die Fitna von Nishapur", *Die Welt des Orients* 6 (1971): 205–33; also, Heinz Halm, *Die Ausbreitung der safi'itischen Rechtsschule von den Anfängen bis zum 8/14 Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1974), 32–42. On Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl and the madhāhib rifts, see Chapter 6 in this monograph.
- 21 Al-Sulamī, "The Malāmātiyya Epistle", henceforth "ME"; see also *Risālat al-Malāmātiyya* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-jamal, 2015); French translation: Roger Deladrière, *al-Sulamī: La Luicidité Implacable (Épître des hommes du blâme)* (Paris: Arléa, 1991).
- 22 Although Bulliet does not include the Sulamīs among the 'Patricians of Nīshāpūr', he lists several Sulamīs among the Qāḍīs of Nīshāpūr (see Appendix II, 256–9), starting with one Abū 'Amr Ḥaṣṣ al-Sulamī, died 209/824. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, the author of the ME, is mentioned as the Ṣūfī teacher of several sons of so-called 'Patrician' families, including Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, the author of the famous *Risāla*, *The Epistle on Sufism* (see Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 152); see also Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi' ādāb al-ṣūfiyya* and *Uyūb al-naḥs wa mudāwātuhā*, ed. Etan Kohlberg (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1976), 7–8 and Gerhard Böwering, "The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Sulamī", in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds W.B. Hallaq and D. Little (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 43–5; see also Chapter 5 in this monograph.
- 23 On Abū 'Amr Ismā'īl ibn Nujayd al-Sulamī (d. 366/977), see al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 476–80 and the source there.
- 24 Richard Hartmann, "As-Sulamī's *Risālat al-Malāmātīja*", *Der Islam* 8 (1918): 157–203.
- 25 Richard Hartmann, "Futuwwa Und Malāma", *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 72 (1918): 193–8.
- 26 See also note 21.
- 27 Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, *al-Ṣila bayna 'l-taṣawwuf wa 'l-tashayyū'* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1972).
- 28 J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); see also Bernd Radtke, "Theologen und Mystiker in Ḥurāsān und Transoxanien", *ZDMG* 136 (1986): 536–69; Christopher Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements in Nishapur", *Iran* 39 (2001): 237–47; see also note 63.
- 29 For further acquaintance with the 'People of Blame' and their associates, see Chapters 5 and 6 in this monograph.
- 30 R.N. Frye, *The Histories of Nīshāpūr* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī himself was a disciple of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān

- al-Sulamī: see *Jawāmi' ādāb al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Kohlberg, 8; *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R.N. Frye, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 471–2.
- 31 The second text, composed by 'Abd al-Ghāfir ibn Ismā'il al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134), is a sequel to the *Ta'rikh*. It is titled *Kitāb al-Siyāq li-ta'rikh Naysābūr* and it covers the fifth/eleventh century. The third text is by Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Sārifinī (d. 641/1243) and is titled *Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Siyāq* ("Selected excerpts from the *Siyāq*"). For our purposes, therefore, only the first text is relevant. The *Muntakhab* has been edited and published by Muḥammad Kāzim al-Maḥmūdī under the title of *Al-Ḥalqa al-ūlā min ta'rikh Naysābūr al-muntakhab min al-Siyāq*.
- 32 On Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Wāsiṭī, see al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 302–7; al-Sulamī, *ME*, 98 and 105; Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Leiden: E.J. Brill; London, Luzac, 1914) see index; *Kitāb Aḥwāl-i Nishāpūr* f. 27a, line 18: "Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Wāsiṭī Abū Bakr al-Ṣūfī [known for] his mystical experiences (*ṣāhib al-aḥwāl*), lived for a time in Naysābūr then settled in Merv ... and died there." On him, see Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr Al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010); also my review: *Journal of Sufi Studies* 1 (2012): 115–22.
- 33 Note Bulliet's tables on 41–2, especially the significant increase in the number of persons entitles Ṣūfis between 314/926 and 335/946 (41, n. 22). Bulliet's interpretation of the statistical data, however, namely, that "from the ninth/third century to the twelfth/sixth, there was a late starting but extremely rapid growth in the specifically mystic Ṣūfī current, which absorbed to some degree the earlier ascetic and pietistic currents" (42–3) is based on the understanding that Ṣūfī was the only epithet designating a Muslim 'mystic'. On the evidence from the Nishāpūrī groups, which calls for a modification of such interpretation, see Mystics, not Necessarily Ṣūfis – *Malāmatīyya* and *Karrāmiyya* sections.
- 34 A growing interest in the study of the religious groups in medieval Khurāsān has produced several important studies: Jacqueline Chabbi has used the above as well as other sources in her wide-ranging and profound analysis, written primarily from the point of view of social history: see Jacqueline Chabbi, "Remarques Sur Le Développement Historique", 5–72; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte Des Religiösen Denkens Im Frühen Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990–1992) = *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra: A History of Religious Thought in Early Islam*, trans. John O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2017); also Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (New York: SUNY Press, 1988); Radtke, "Theologen und Mystiker", 536–69. On works concerning the Karrāmiyya, see note 63.
- 35 See, note 13.
- 36 ... *kamā sami 'tu wāḥid^{um} minhum yaz 'amu anna maskanahu bayna 'awāriḍ al-murd* – should one understand this as referring to God's habitation in the cheeks of the youth, hence 'incarnation' (*ḥulūl*)?
- 37 Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhīr al-Muqaddasī, Abū Zayd Aḥmad ibn Sahl al-Balkhī, *Kitāb Al-Bad' wa-al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Clément Huart, Vol. 5 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1916), 148. According to F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), Vol. I, 337, the book was written in 355/966.
- 38 According to the Introduction of the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, al-Sulamī sets out to record the biographies of the *arbāb al-aḥwāl*, namely, those who have mystical experiences, a general term for Muslim mystics. He starts off with the successors of the *tābi'ū al-tābi'īn* and finishes with his contemporaries. In his Introduction to the *ME*, on the other hand, he explicitly distinguishes between the Ṣūfis, to whom he refers as God's elect (*khāṣṣa*), and the *malāmatīs*, to whom he refers as the "elect of the elect" (*khāṣṣat al-khāṣṣa*) – see Blame section, note 1.
- 39 See Chapter 1 in this monograph.

- 40 See also Chapter 5 in this monograph.
- 41 On Abū Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 910), see Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality, and Writings of al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic with an Edition and Translation of his Writings* (London: Luzac & Co., E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1976); see also, al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, Index; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 141–50. On Abū Muḥammad Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Khuldī, see al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 454–61; al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, index. On his affiliation with al-Junayd, see J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), Appendix A, 261. On the Baghdādī/Junaydī archetype of 'sobriety' (*ṣaḥw*) versus the Khurāsānī/Bistāmī 'intoxication' (*sukr*), see Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 51ff.; see also Jawid A. Mojaddedi, "Getting Drunk with Abu Yazid or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 66 (2003): 1–13.
- 42 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 454.
- 43 See Chapter 1 in this monograph.
- 44 See also note 32.
- 45 "...minhu intashara [sic] *ṭarīqat al-taṣawwuf bi-naysābūr*" – al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 159.
- 46 See 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. R.A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1936), Ch. 14, 176–266; cf. the passage quoted above from Abū Ṭāhir al-Muqaddasī's *Kitāb al-Bad' wa'l-ta'rīkh*.
- 47 Note the telling attempt of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, in one of the introductory chapters of his *Kitāb al-Lumā'*, to defend the use of the name *ṣūfiyya* against the accusation of innovation: "The argument that [the name *ṣūfī*] is an innovation invented by the Baghdādīs is absurd, since the name was known at the time of Ḥasan al-Basrī..." in the edition of 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah; Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1960), 42. Al-Sarrāj's testimony, even if taken at face value, strongly suggests that the adjective *ṣūfī* originally, possibly since pre-Islamic times, had designated a [solitary] ascetic wearing wool; and that subsequently it was adopted by the Baghdādīs (probably of al-Junayd's circle) as the collective denomination for Muslim mystics. See also Chapter 1 in this monograph.
- 48 On the curious *ṣūfiyyat al-mu'tazila*, see Josef van Ess, *Frihe Mu'tazilitische Häresio-graphie: Zwei Werke des Nāshī' al-Akbar* (g. 293 H.) (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1971), 50 (text) and 43–4 of the Introduction; see also van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 4, 4.2.3: "Später Vertreter der *Sūfiyyat al-Mu'tazila*", in Section 4.2 titled "Bagdader Mu'taziliten"; see also Chapter 1 in this monograph.
- 49 Of all the Nishāpūrī teachers, it is Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār alone who is accorded the attribute *al-malāmātī*; thus al-Sulamī in *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 114 and 119; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, 12 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), Vol. 10, 245–7; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, 19 and al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*. The latter dedicates a whole chapter to the topic of 'blame' (Ch. 6, 62–9), in which he writes: "The doctrine of blame was spread abroad in this sect by the Shaykh of his age Ḥamdūn Qaṣṣār (66)"; al-Hujwīrī dedicates a separate section to the 'Qaṣṣāris', the followers of Ḥamdūn Qaṣṣār (183ff.), in which he writes: "Ḥamdūn's doctrine was the manifestation and divulgence of 'blame' (*malāmat*)."² Ḥamdūn is also mentioned in the *Aḥwāl-i Nishāpūr*, f. 21b–22a and f. 70a, but with no reference to the *malāmātī* epithet.
- 50 A list of Ḥamdūn Qaṣṣār's close circle of disciples may be drawn based on the information culled from the *Ṭabaqāt*: (1) 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Munāzil (d. 331/943) – *Ṭabaqāt*, 114 and 376ff.; also, al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 26; (2) Abū 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Thaqafī (d. 328/940) – probably a direct disciple of Ibn Munāzil – *Ṭabaqāt*, 376 and 378; also *ME*, 118; al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 26; and (3) Abū

- Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Farrā' (d. 370/980) – probably the main disciple of al-Thaqaḥī and Ibn Munāzil – *Ṭabaqāt*, – 539–40; al-Qushayrī names him as Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad *al-malāmatī* – see *al-Risāla*, 20; al-Farrā' was one of al-Sulamī's direct informants (see, e.g. *ME*, 116) – more on these networks and affiliations, see Chapter 5 in this monograph.
- 51 The list of the immediate circle of Abū 'Uthmān, as culled from the *Ṭabaqāt*, is naturally more extensive; here are the names of a few disciples only: Maḥfūz ibn Maḥmūd (d. 304/916), who probably became the successor of Abū 'Uthmān – *Ṭabaqāt*, 269–70; also *ME*, 102; Abū Muḥammad al-Murta'ish (d. 328/940) – *Ṭabaqāt*, 356–61; Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Rāzī (d. 353/964) – *Ṭabaqāt*, 472–5, *Kitāb Aḥwāl-i Nishāpūr*, f. 70a; *ME*, 119; Abū 'Amr Ismā'il ibn Nujayd al-Sulamī, one of the closest disciples of Abū 'Uthmān – *Ṭabaqāt*, 476–80. In *Kitāb al-Luma'* the latter seems to feature as al-Sarrāj's direct transmitter of sayings ascribed to Abū 'Uthmān – *Kitāb al-Luma'*, 103, 208 and 277.
 - 52 On the 'ayyārūn, see Deborah Gerber Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the 'ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007).
 - 53 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 183.
 - 54 On the distinction between vocal and non-vocal *dhikr*, see Muḥammad Isa Waley, "Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism", in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 497–548, especially 526–34.
 - 55 *ME*, 91–2.
 - 56 See al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 132–4; on Abū 'Uthmān Sa'id ibn Ismā'il al-Ḥīrī see also al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 159ff. On Abū Ḥafṣ 'Amr ibn Salāma al-Ḥaddād al-Naysābūrī (d. 260/874), see al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 105ff.; both Abū Ḥafṣ and Abū 'Uthmān are mentioned in the *Aḥwāl-i Nishāpūr* (f. 70a) among the Nishāpūrī masters (*mashāyikh*) without any reference to either *ṣūfī* or *malāmatī*. On the special relationship between Abū Ḥafṣ and Abū 'Uthmān, see also al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, 177.
 - 57 *ME*, 103.
 - 58 *ME*, 106.
 - 59 Thus, for example, according to al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, Abū Muḥammad al-Murta'ish, Abū 'Amr al-Zajjājī, 'Alī ibn Bundār.
 - 60 *ME*, 89.
 - 61 On this anti-*zuhdī* attitude in Early Islam, see Chapter 2 in this monograph.
 - 62 On the dialectic between 'mysticism' and 'asceticism' in the Sūfī tradition, see Part I in this monograph and also the Introduction. Note also the following statements voiced by al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 30ff.; al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, *bāb fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, 126. A warning that the ascetic custom of wearing rough wool or a patched garment might become 'ostentation' (*shuhra*) is voiced by al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) in *al-Masā'il fī a'māl al-qulūb wa'l-jawāriḥ*, ed. 'Abdel Kader A. Aṭā (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1969), 103ff. – for example, 108: "I would beware of ostentation (*shuhra*) [in wearing ascetic-like clothes] lest it should corrupt the hearts so that they become contrived or conceited or arrogant or domineering..." In this vein it is related by al-Muḥāsibī that Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, one of the *tābi'ūn*, when asked about the type of clothing that should be worn by pious Muslims, said: "Purify your heart and wear whatever you like!" Cf. the dictum ascribed to Bayāzīd Bisṭāmī: "Three [types] of men are the most obscured from God: the scholar (*al-'ālim*) by his erudition, the pious worshipper (*al-'ābid*) by his piety, and the ascetic (*al-zāhid*) by his asceticism" (*ME*, 96–7).
 - 63 On the Karrāmiyya in Khurāsān, see C.E. Bosworth, "Karrāmiyya", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn; C.E. Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karrāmiyya [sic] in Khurāsān", *Muslim World* 50 (1960), 6–14; Bullett, *The Patricians*, 62–4; Josef van Ess, *Unge-nutzte Texte zur Karramiya: Eine Materialsammlung* (Heidelberg, 1980); Wilferd

- Madelung, "Sufism and the Karrāmiyya", in *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 39–53; Margaret Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nishapur", *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994): 37–51; also see "Malāmatiyya and Karrāmiyya" section above, and note 28.
- 64 See also 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1912), s.v. *Khānqāhī*.
- 65 Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, Vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-'arabiyya, 1964), 304–5. Cf. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 2, 609ff.
- 66 *Rijāl*, that is, those who have attained the rank of 'spiritual manhood' (*rujūliyya*); see nn 72–3.
- 67 Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, 159 (quoted by 'Affīfī, *Malāmatiyya*, 38); see also van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 2, 610.
- 68 On Aḥmad ibn Ḥarb, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 609.
- 69 On chivalry and Sufism during this period, see Muhammad Ja'far Mahjub, "Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism", in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 549–81.
- 70 See, for example, Hartmann, "Futuwwa und Malāma", 193–8; Franz Taeschner, "Der Anteil des Sufismus an der Formung des Futuwwideals", *Der Islam* 24 (1937), 43–74; Franz Taeschner, "Futuwwa", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, Vol. 2, 961–9 and the sources cited there. See also Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 24; Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974–1977), Vol. II, 126ff.
- 71 *ME*, 94. Likewise, al-Sulamī (*ME*, 109) recounts how Bishr al-Hāfi (=the Barefoot) one day knocked at the door of one of the Shaykhs. "Who is it?" a voice asked. "It is I ... Bishr al-Hāfi," he replied. The Shaykh's daughter replied: "If you bought a pair of sandals for two *dāniqs*, you would have gotten rid of this name (*law ishtarayta na'layni bi-dāniqayn la-saqāta 'anka hādhā 'l-ism*)."
- 72 *ME*, 95. Cf. Abū Ḥafṣ's saying: "He who abides by the right rules of conduct during the mystical moments has reached the stage of 'men'. (*man lazima ādāb al-awqāt balagha mablagh al-rijāl*)" – al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 110.
- 73 *nasha'a bil-rayy fatā; in baqiya 'alā ʿarīqatīhi wa-simatīhi šāra aḥada al-rijāl* – al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 288.
- 74 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 108.
- 75 *ME*, 96.
- 76 In the chapter "On Blame" in *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 68–9, al-Hujwīrī relates a personal anecdote as an illustration of the state of equanimity towards both praise and blame which he had experiences after being subjected to abuse by fellow Ṣūfis.
- 77 *ME*, 90.
- 78 *ME*, 91.
- 79 *ME*, 92.
- 80 *ME*, 96.
- 81 *ME*, 103.
- 82 *ME*, 104.
- 83 Cf. Bernd Radtke, "The Concept of *Wilāya* in Early Sufism", in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 483–96.
- 84 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 229.
- 85 See Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' (Memorial of the Saints)*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 244ff.
- 86 See his "Answer to a letter from Rayy", in which he seems to respond to an anguished correspondent who feels he has regressed in his spiritual path after having met with a so-called teacher. Al-Tirmidhī's response is: "This is what happens when

one searches for the Creator by means of a created being. (*hākadhā yakūnu sha'n' man yaṭlubu al-khāliq bi-l-makhlūq*).” – Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften des Theosophen von Tirmid*, ed. Brend Radtke (Beirut: Steiner, 1992), 171–2 (Arabic section).

- 87 For more on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl, see Chapter 6 in this monograph.
- 88 I prefer to read here M'DTH (*ma'idatuhu*=his stomach) rather than M'RQH as in Radtke's edition.
- 89 See Radtke, *Drei Schriften*, 191 (Arabic section).
- 90 *Ibid.*, 191–2 (Arabic).
- 91 See al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 206–11, and the sources mentioned there; see also Chapter 6 in this monograph.
- 92 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 206.
- 93 For letters of Abū 'Uthmān to Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl, see al-Sulamī, *ME*, 106; al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 25.
- 94 See Sara Sviri (Burg), “The Mystical Psychology of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī”, PhD thesis (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1979) in Hebrew and Arabic; Vol. 2, 77–86 (Arabic section).
- 95 MS. Leipzig, f. 66a–68b; *ibid.*, 82ff. (Arabic).

Perspectives on Early Islamic Mysticism

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and his Contemporaries

Sara Sviri

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-415-30283-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-02272-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear