

# SUFISM

and the

# Way of Blame

HIDDEN SOURCES *of a*  
SACRED PSYCHOLOGY

**YANNIS TOUSSULIS, Ph.D.**

Foreword by Robert Abdul Hayy Darr

# SUFISM

and the

# Way of Blame

archegos



# SUFISM and the Way of Blame

---

HIDDEN SOURCES *of a*  
SACRED PSYCHOLOGY

Yannis Toussulis, Ph.D.



Theosophical Publishing House  
Wheaton, Illinois \* Chennai, India

Learn more about Yannis Toussulis and his work at <http://www.Toussulis.net>

Find more books like this at [www.questbooks.net](http://www.questbooks.net)

Copyright © 2010 Ithaq Foundation

First Quest Edition 2010

Quest Books  
Theosophical Publishing House  
P.O. Box 270  
Wheaton, IL 60187-0270

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher of this book.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials.

While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers and Internet addresses at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

Cover design by Drew Stevens

Maps by Jay Kinney

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Toussulis, Yannis.

Sufism and the way of blame: hidden sources of a sacred psychology / Yannis Toussulis.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8356-0864-0

1. Malamatiyah. I. Title.

BP189.7.M3T68 2011

297.4'8 — dc22

2010044152

ISBN for electronic edition, pdf format: 978-0-8356-4046-6

5 4 3 2 1 \* 10 11 12 13 14

This book is dedicated to Mehmet Selim Öziç, whose contribution to my life and research has been invaluable and without whom this book would never have been written.

# Contents

Foreword	ix
Preface	xv
1. The Sufi Mystique	1
2. The Traditionalist Critique	19
3. Quests for the Hidden Hierarchy	39
4. Further Quests for the Hidden Source	53
5. The Earlier Way of Blame	71
6. The Middle Period of Malamati Activity	91
7. The Later Malamatiyya	117
8. Twentieth-Century Representatives	139
9. The Seven Stations of Wisdom	165
10. Human Completeness	183
Epilogue: Looking Toward the Future	201
Appendix: <i>Risala i Salihyya</i> by Pir Nur al-Arabi	209
Notes	217
Glossary	237
Bibliography	249
Index	265



# Foreword

**S***ufism and the Way of Blame* is the most comprehensive study to date of the twelve-hundred-year-old school of spiritual psychology known as the *malamatiyya*. Practitioners of the school, known as the *malamatis* (or *malamis*), emerged in the ninth century CE at Nishapur, the Eastern capital of the Islamic world. The “way of blame” refers to the sustained application of self-observation and healthy self-criticism in order to understand one’s true motivations. The *malamatis* held that ostentatious acts of worship and spiritual discipline were sure to inflate the worshipper’s sense of self-importance. They held that only the application of conscience could help people to diminish their self-centered desires for power, recognition, and self-aggrandizement.

For decades, Dr. Yannis Toussulis has studied the spiritual teachings and practices of the Sufi way as an insider. I became aware of his expertise in these matters some years ago when we met on a weekly basis to compare notes on our studies in Sufi spirituality. It was in those rich conversations and readings that we together discovered a direct linkage between the teachings of the *malamatis* and the Sufi school that I have been associated with, the *Naqshbandis*. It was at that time that I also had the privilege of meeting Yannis’s Turkish teacher, Mehmet Selim Öziç. Mehmet’s kind and unassuming manner with people and his almost unnoticeable sharing of wisdom are the very model of *malami* teaching. Yannis has been initiated into several Sufi orders and, through Mehmet Selim, he has been authorized to teach the lineage of the nineteenth-century *malamati*-*Naqshbandi* master, Pir Nur al-Arabi.

*Sufism and the Way of Blame* is the bountiful harvest of Yannis’s studies in the fields of spirituality, psychology, and the history of religion, brought together in this richly contextualized presentation. The book is

## FOREWORD

aimed primarily at Americans and Europeans, but I think that Muslims everywhere will benefit from Yannis's elucidation of important *malamati* contributions to Islamic spirituality.

The book opens by introducing us to myths about Sufism proliferating in the West. One of them is that Sufism operates above and beyond religion, a notion that is prevalent in dozens of recently published books of mystical verse that offer interpretations of Rumi and Hafiz. The thirteenth-century Rumi has become one of the most popular poets ever because he is seen as a universalist who mystically transcends religious dogma and ritual. Though this view of him might be partly true, Rumi was also a sincere Muslim devoted to elucidating the spiritual meanings at the core of Islam.

European and American interest in Islam and Sufism goes back to the early nineteenth century when a universalist trend led to a genuine inquiry into other faiths. American interest in Islam dates back even further to a time when the founding fathers John Adams and Thomas Jefferson exchanged letters on the subject. Around the same time, Transcendentalism evolved out of Unitarianism and reached beyond religious dogmatism with a fresh and open-minded inquiry into the universal, spiritual message of all religions. Within a generation, literate Americans were becoming familiar with the Sufi poetry of Hafiz and Saadi, thanks to the works of transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

It was perhaps because of these trends that Hazrat Inayat Khan, an Indian Sufi, found Americans so receptive to his universalist Sufi message at the end of the nineteenth century. During the following decades there was an explosion of interest in Sufism. A variety of traditional Sufi orders set up shop in Europe and the United States. Dozens of new scholars translated Sufi literature and published studies on Islamic mysticism. As Sufism became more popular, it was often watered down. Popular reductions of Sufism offered simplified spiritual teachings and practices dissociated from their Islamic context. At the other end of the spectrum, the Sufi traditionalists and other more orthodox

## FOREWORD

schools of Islamic Sufism distanced themselves from universalist Sufi teachings.

In the nineteenth century there was also a fascination with spiritualism, and séances were commonplace. Spiritualism and occultism influenced the writings of some twentieth-century spiritual teachers as well, including Madame Blavatsky, G. I. Gurdjieff, and their heirs. Perhaps they found it easier to establish their own authority by invoking the influence of remote superhuman “Himalayan masters” and “hidden teachers.” Such thinking crept into Western renditions of Sufism, and, in the 1960s, the Sufi teacher Idries Shah claimed (and had claimed for him) that he was the representative of a Sufi “hidden hierarchy” that influenced the world’s inner workings. Such narratives left followers of these various fabrications vulnerable to all kinds of manipulation. These “teachings” obscured the straightforward metaphysics and genuine spirituality with an overlay of spiritual bureaucracy.

After critiquing contemporary representations of Sufism in the first few chapters, *Sufism and the Way of Blame* moves on to present us with the authentic teachings of the malamati path. The book examines malamati-Sufi history, doctrine, and practice in such detail that readers will need to pace themselves in order to properly absorb and digest the material. The careful consideration and review of those sections on malamati metaphysics and spiritual practice will generously repay those who really want to understand what Sufism has to offer.

Dr. Toussulis traces the evolution of the malamati way through centuries of social, political, and religious upheaval throughout the Islamic world. The metaphysics of Sufism had reached their apogee of sophistication in the thirteenth century with the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi. This “Greatest of Shaykhs” formulated the doctrine that came to be known as the Oneness of Being, a teaching that led to a transformation of Sufi doctrine and praxis. The Shaykh advocated an experiential approach to witnessing that all of existence was essentially divine, regardless of its infinite variety of self-expression in cosmic and intelligible forms. It is interesting to note that Ibn al-Arabi held that the malamatis possessed

## FOREWORD

the most complete approach to spiritual illumination. Thanks in part to the Greatest Shaykh's teachings, the way of blame rose to greater prominence among Sufis all over the Islamic world. From that time until the present, the malamatis have continued to adapt their teachings to changing circumstances while never abandoning their fundamental principles. Dr. Toussulis makes a compelling case for the continuity of this teaching, and he offers evidence of its influence in the development of Turkey's secular democracy in the twentieth century.

To further summarize this book would not do justice to its complex treatment of the malamati way. However, a few comments might be helpful on a recurring theme that I think should be of great interest to the reader. This concerns the malamati approach to the cultivation of one's essential humanity. As already mentioned, the original malamatis held that external manifestations of worship and spiritual states were likely to inflate people's egotism. The opposite of egotism for the malamatis and other Muslim mystics was the essential human reality as described in the Qur'an and in *hadith* literature.

In the Qur'an, God tells the angels to bow to Adam, the human archetype, because of his capacity to perceive and comprehend the full range of existence, from the sublime to the mundane. The human being is presented in Islamic cosmology as the "synthesizer of all realities." So great is the perceptive and sapient scope of the human essence that it has frequently been compared to a polished mirror. This is because of the mirror's capacity to reflect any particular thing without becoming it. The malamatis and other Sufis regard the ego-self as an artifact of this world, born of instinct and faulty sensory perceptions that obscure and constrict the essential range of human understanding and expression. The self-centered person tries to preserve his mortal identity by painting it on the mirror's surface, right over his reflected image. He continues to reify his constructed identity with the images he paints over the mirror of his true nature, thereby restricting its range. The malamati way is about restoring the Adamic range of human experience that encompasses the mundane and the spiritual.

## FOREWORD

The malamatis advocate a form of “true poverty” and “emptiness” to preserve the human mirror’s reflectivity. This special poverty, which is actually the ultimate expression of humility, is also called “nonbeing” across the Sufi tradition. It is the pure mirror in which God’s own existence and experience are manifested. The attenuated and constricted experience of the painted mirror is also regarded as God’s experience, but immeasurably constricted through the ego-self.

The malamati way thus evolved from the sincere application of conscience into one of the most comprehensive and sophisticated spiritual teachings in the world as it integrated and developed centuries of Sufi teaching. This synthesis offers to sincere seekers a true path of repatriation to the homeland of nonbeing in order to experience their real purpose and meaning in life. It is here that this book finally lands and may convey its most important message. In short, *Sufism and the Way of Blame* is a complex yet immensely practical book that offers us a real understanding of Sufi principles and their useful adaptation.

—Robert Abdul Hayy Darr  
Author of *The Spy of the Heart*;  
translator of Mahmud Shabistari’s  
*The Garden of Mystery*



# Preface

Over the last several decades, scores of books investigating the historical sources of Sufism have been published, and a few more popular writers have presented modern Sufi practices with varying degrees of psychological insight. So why, then, write another book about Sufism? This interdisciplinary work begins by critically examining popular and scholarly conceptions about Sufism as a whole and critiques some of them in an attempt to bring the study of Sufism up to date. Moreover—as far as I know—this is the first book to detail the relationship between Sufism and the controversial “way of blame” in all its historical phases up to the present day.

The way of blame (Ar., Pers. *malamatiyya*) originally designated a group within larger Sufism that focused on the psychology of egoism and engaged in self-critique (Ar. *malama*, “to blame”). Later, the term *malamati* most often referred to those Sufis who incurred blame by shunning Islamic literalism and formalism. This book compares earlier findings on the *malamatiyya* with research conducted with one of its living representatives, Mehmet Selim Öziç (pronounced “Ozich”). In the closing chapters, I also present an up-to-date paradigm of psychospiritual development that is still being used by *malamati* Sufis currently. Before addressing this, however, I found it necessary to revisit the study of Sufism as a whole.

In chapter 1, I critique “New Age” renderings of Sufism that have spread through the mass media. Many secularists, as well as fundamentalists, believe that the “universalistic” aspects of Sufism cannot coexist with Islam; thus, a popular mystic like Rumi could not have been a genuine Muslim. If anything, his “creed of Love” was a formless, universalizing mysticism veiled under Qur’anic references. As I will attempt to

## PREFACE

show, this is an utter falsehood, yet this impression still persists in the popular imagination. Sufism may be a way of *gnosis* (or direct perception), but it is neither opposed to nor incidental to its host religion.

In chapter 2, I critique a number of academics who insist that authentic Sufism can only be studied within narrower Islamic parameters. I do not mean to disparage their work as a whole; nevertheless some of these scholars suffer from a traditionalist bias that can result in a sanitized version of history. I propose, instead, that Sufism is a multiplex phenomenon that grew out of a syncretic cultural matrix, one that often embraced certain forms of Muslim heterodoxy. Notwithstanding these facts, one should not ignore that Sufism lacks unifying characteristics distinguishing it from other sacred traditions.

In chapters 3 and 4, I critique certain writers like Gurdjieff, Idries Shah, and J. G. Bennett who engaged in a considerable amount of myth-making. As I detail in those chapters, these writers overemphasized the universalistic aspects of Sufism at the expense of its specifically Muslim character. More importantly, they contributed to certain myths about the origins and manifestation of the way of blame that contradict its essence. The way of blame is more accurately described in Abdulbaki Golpinarli's *Melamilik ve Melamiler*, originally published in 1931, which suggests that the way of blame developed through three historical waves or phases. I adopt his framework in chapters 5 through 7.

In chapter 5, I detail the first wave of malamati activity by tracing its history back to its beginnings in northeastern Persia, then northward through Central Asia, and westward into Seljuk Anatolia (present-day Turkey). In chapter 6 I take up the second wave of malamatism that emerged in the early Ottoman period, and in chapter 7 I detail the third wave that emerged through the efforts of Pir Nur al-Arabi, a pivotal figure who lived in the nineteenth century. Though formally a Naqshbandi shaykh, the Pir identified himself almost exclusively with the malamatiyya and with the school of Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi in particular: the so-called *Akbariyya*, or "Greatest Way." Though these two schools of thought must be distinguished, the Akbariyya and the way of blame

## PREFACE

became strongly interrelated. The reasons for this will be explored in greater depth throughout this book.

I hope the reader will bear with me. Though somewhat arduous to read, these chapters attempt to weave together the sociopolitical developments that helped to shape the future of Sufism throughout the greater Middle East, but especially in the Balkans and Turkey.

In chapter 8, I detail more recent manifestations of the way of blame after the formation of the Republic of Turkey, and I also interview Mr. Öziç, who currently lives in Istanbul. This interview exemplifies the universalistic current in Islam that renders its separation from Sufism illusory.

In chapter 9, I detail the paradigm of consciousness that describes the malamati approach to spiritual development: one that is simultaneously universalist and specifically Islamic. As I hope to show, this “map” is a cumulative synthesis gleaned from earlier classical sources of Sufi psychology. Finally, in chapter 10, I discuss the implications of the malamati-Sufi concept of human completeness as a model of spiritual enlightenment, and I do so while cognizant of its current relevance.

A note of caution is necessary. Because Sufism is a multiplex phenomenon, I am forced to adopt a multidisciplinary approach throughout this book. As a result, I will press for a more sociological (as well as psychological) understanding of Sufism. Religious teachings are not formed in a political vacuum, and it is important to investigate their sociohistorical contexts. Then—and only then—can one assess their spiritual completeness and relevance for societies today. All of this, however, does not obviate the faith-based character of the tradition for the individual seeker, and for this a more transpersonal approach is needed. This will become more evident in the last two chapters.

As an academic psychologist, I have accumulated thirty-five years of professional experience teaching consciousness studies, the psychology of religion and culture, and political psychology in a number of graduate programs. For over a decade, as an adjunct professor in political psychology at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, I focused

## PREFACE

on intercultural conflicts in the Muslim world, and this experience has influenced my general approach to this book, but not exclusively so. Instead of being an academic specialist in Middle East or Islamic studies, I remain, primarily, a contemplative practitioner.

Aside from my professional interests, I have actively traveled the Sufi path for over thirty years, half of which I spent studying the practices of the Turkish *melamiye* (Turk. form of *malamiyya*). In 1978, shortly before entering the study and practice of Sufism, I had the extreme good fortune of meeting a rather enigmatic teacher of Sufism named Hasan Lütfi Şuşud, who had served as the last principal teacher of the Gurdjieffian J. G. Bennett.

Shortly before meeting Mr. Şuşud (pronounced “Shushud”), I had read Bennett’s book *The Masters of Wisdom*, which focused on the “Kh-wajagan,” earlier Sufi masters who had preceded the mostly widely spread order in Central Asia—the Naqshbandiyya. Although this book engaged in some questionable speculation, portions of it contained accurate research derived from Hasan Lütfi Şuşud’s earlier book published in Turkish as *Hacegan Hanedani* (1958).

Toward the end of his life, Hasan Şuşud attempted to practice the bare essentials of what he believed to be the early Naqshbandi method of *dhikr* (the practice of remembrance). He did so, however, by discarding his affiliation with any particular Sufi order while teaching an approach he simply termed *Itlaq Yolou* (the Path of Liberation). It was reported anecdotally that Şuşud belonged to a tradition of the *malamatiyya*, but the details remained obscure to most.

Almost twenty years after initially meeting him, I discovered that Hasan Şuşud was also the spiritual preceptor of a murshid named Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer, a fact apparently hidden from J. G. Bennett as well as from many other students of Şuşud. Bilginer left a living successor, Mehmet Selim Öziç, and the latter became my personal spiritual guide in 1995. It was then that I began to see the difference between Gurdjieff’s and Bennett’s work and more classical sources that still exist today.

## PREFACE

Much of what I present in chapters 8 through 10 results from my longtime association with Mr. Öziç, an inheritor of the malamati school founded by the nineteenth-century Sufi reformer Pir Nur al-Arabi. Very little has been written about the latter, who was a seminal figure, and little is known of him in the West, yet his importance to the study of malamatism should not be underestimated. Remnants of the Pir's school still exist among Albanian communities in Kosovo and Macedonia, and there is occasional contact between them and those who continue this legacy in the Republic of Turkey. The Pir's tomb is located in Strumica (in the Republic of Macedonia), and an active branch of his Sufi order meets in a dervish lodge adjacent to that tomb. As of this writing, there are five remaining murshids in Istanbul who continue to teach the method of Pir Nur al-Arabi, but only Mehmet Selim has come to the attention of a handful of Europeans and Americans.

Of the successors of Pir Nur al-Arabi's lineage still active in Turkey, to my knowledge Mehmet Selim is the only one fully conversant in English and the only one who has taught anyone in the West. He served as a uniquely qualified informant to this book by virtue of being the only active successor of Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer, the son and successor of Hacı Maksud Hulusi (also known as "Pristenevi"), who was one of two principal representatives of Pir Nur al-Arabi in Istanbul. Mehmet Selim's line of succession is unquestionably direct and verifiable from his *khalifa nama* (letter of succession), which was issued by Bilginer in his own handwriting. This document verifies that the lineage of Pir Nur al-Arabi is extant, even though the French scholar Thierry Zarcone strongly suggests that the school died out with Bilginer.

Nur al-Arabi's form of malamati teaching was greatly influenced by earlier Khwajagan-Naqshbandi teachings, and Hacı Maksud Hulusi was a Khwajagan-Naqshbandi shaykh. Thus, a strong Khwajagan—as well as Akbari—influence can be found in both of these men's teachings. This emphasis was passed on to Hasan Şuşud, Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer, and Mehmet Selim Öziç, although none of them belonged to the (outer) Naqshbandi Order.

## PREFACE

Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer has authored a few authoritative books on this tradition in Turkish. Golpinarli's *Melamilik ve Melamiler* includes a substantial section on Pir Nur al-Arabi, but no matter how important, this work was written by someone who never knew the tradition of Nur al-Arabi from the inside. The present work, as far as I know, is the only one that does so; and it compares the Nuriyya with its sources in the earlier tradition of the Khwajagan, a group claimed as the source of Idries Shah's approach—and also (according to some) of Gurdjieff's teaching. In many ways, this book attempts to reconcile the unfinished project of both Mahmut Bilginer and Hasan Şuşud by realigning Pir Nur al-Arabi with his earlier antecedents in proto-Naqshbandi circles.

Apart from Mehmet Selim, to whom I am supremely grateful, I have many others to thank for their contributions to this work. It has been my great fortune to have collaborated on portions of this book with Robert “Abdul Hayy” Darr. Along with his excellent command of classical Persian, Bob has had extensive experience traveling the Sufi path in Afghanistan. Bob's knowledge—and translations—of Bahauddin Naqshband, Lahiji, and Shabistari have been critical to my attempt to place Pir Nur al-Arabi in a broader context.

I am additionally grateful to my close friend and colleague Dr. Marc Applebaum, a cultural psychologist whose experience in phenomenological research enabled me to enlist his support in reviewing the experiential structures of the six stations of wisdom (chapter 9). Marc is a seasoned practitioner and an authorized representative of the Nuriyya in the West. His doctoral studies in Muslim prophetology and in cross-cultural understandings of intuitive functioning have contributed much to my own thinking.

Given my lack of expertise in Near Eastern languages, this book would have been impossible without the assistance of Robert Darr in classical Farsi and Mehmet Selim Öziç in Modern and Ottoman Turkish, as well as in Qur'anic Arabic. Additional help in translating scholarly works in French was provided by Dr. Annick Safken, an academic

## PREFACE

psychologist and professor of religious studies who is a valued member of our circle. I am also particularly grateful for a number of critiques that were offered by Professor Carl W. Ernst, an Islamic Studies specialist on the faculty of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A thorough reading of this manuscript and great moral support was also offered by Dr. Lewis Shaw, a Cambridge-educated linguist, theologian, and philosopher who is fluent in several Near Eastern languages. His reading and corrections of this manuscript were aided by his deep understanding of the fundamental affinities underlying the Abrahamic traditions: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic. Dr. Shaw remains a valued member of our circle, as well as a kindred spirit.

Quite importantly, none of this work could have been completed without the core circle of our nonprofit, the Ithaq Foundation. Several members of our group have contributed financially to the writing of this book, principally Annick and Steve Safken. A former member of our circle, Jolie Andritsakis, contributed her knowledge of the Gurdjieff method to my findings in chapter 3.

I also want to thank Richard Smoley and Will Marsh at Quest for their patience and fortitude in editing this book. My old friend Jay Kinney created the maps for the book and also provided valuable editing input, especially through his knowledge of some of the primary sources. Given that Richard and Jay had published some of my former writings in *Gnosis* magazine, they were well acquainted with my problems in striking a balance between scholarly and popular writing.

A number of colleagues have attempted to bring other genuine Sufi approaches to an American audience while enriching my work. These friends and colleagues include John Mercer and Nick Yiangou of Beshara Institute and the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society; Shaykh Ahmed Abdur-Rashid, founder of Legacy International and a shaykh of both the Shadhili and Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi Sufi orders; Dr. Robert (Ragip) Frager, a founder of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and a

## PREFACE

shaykh of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order; Shaykh Kabir Helminski of the Mevlevi Order, who together with his wife, Camille, directs the Threshold Society; Dr. Refik Algan, a translator of several important Sufi works; Dr. Samuel Goldberger, a modern expositor of Ibn al-Arabi and an inheritor of the Akbari tradition; Professor Emeritus Dr. Abdul Aziz Said, holder of the first chair in Islamic Peace Studies and the director of the Peace Studies Program at American University, Washington. To all of these people, I am genuinely grateful.

Finally, I wish to thank the numerous Sufis I have met—both living and recently deceased—who have inspired my continuing reflections on the wider spectrum of Sufism. These include Mohammed Hanie al-Shafi, a shaykh of the Qadiriyya and Shadhiliyya (Egypt); Dr. Muhammad Shaalan (Egypt); the late Ali Baba, a *madhoub* (divine madman) of the Naqshbandiyya (Turkey); the late Hasan Sari Dede, shaykh of the Qadiri-Rifa'iyya (Turkey); the late Şefik Can, a grand shaykh (Turkish: *Ser-Tariq*) of the Mevlevi Order (Turkey); and Metin Bobaroglou, an Ekberi-Sultani murshid currently living in Istanbul.

May this book reflect well on all of them; and please accept that any mistakes in it are solely my own.

Yannis Toussulis, Ph.D.  
San Francisco Bay Area, 2010



# One

## The Sufi Mystique

**T**he first part of this book is devoted to addressing certain biases that affect Sufi studies, contributing to what I will call a “Sufi mystique,” which is based upon a series of questionable assumptions found both inside and outside academia. Foremost among them is the assumption that Sufis have to be either Islamic (in a parochial sense) or universalists who exist outside of any particular religio-cultural context. If Sufis are universalists, goes the assumption, then they can’t be mired in any one particular tradition. The distinction lost in this formulation, of course, is that one can be grounded in a particular tradition without becoming rigid or doctrinaire.

A contradictory position holds that all Sufis are, more or less, orthodox Muslims, bound to a particular region or culture, and that “authentic” Sufism must therefore conform to the doctrines of a particular school or interpretation of Islam. As this book will show, historically this has not been the case even though, on the whole, most Sufis were (and still are) followers of Sunni Islam. Exceptions nevertheless abound, and in almost every case many classical Sufis ran afoul of religious authorities (whether Sunni or Shi’i).

What is certain is that most, if not all, Sufis tend to embrace a certain form of universalism. How and why they did so will consume the bulk of this book. Suffice to say for now that the universalism most Sufis embrace is not the same one presupposed in the popular imagination. The mass media (which “bodies forth” the popular imagination) has been influenced by a number of renderings of Sufism, and some

## CHAPTER ONE

of these form a part of what is envisioned as a “New Age” form of spirituality.

Since a number of spokesmen for this eclectic (and mostly secular) form of spirituality have adopted Rumi, what better place to start than with him? Critiques of “occultist” and academic “traditionalist” sources will be postponed for later chapters.

Throughout the 1990s, it was widely rumored that the most-read poet in the United States was Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, a revered Sufi mystic; yet most American readers negated the fact that Rumi was also a devout, practicing Muslim. In fact, as noted by Ibrahim Gamard, a translator of Rumi, most popular American renderings of the latter were not what they appeared to be.<sup>1</sup> Instead, they were mostly New Age reinterpretations of Rumi’s Islamic metaphysics.

These contemporary renderings avoided Rumi’s specifically religious moorings, and this seemed to appease the desires of a largely secular readership. At the same time as serving a popular need, however, the original Rumi was becoming distorted in the interests of promoting an overarching universalism that fit contemporary expectations. Even the venerable *New York Times* was not immune to characterizing Rumi in such a simplistically reductive manner.

A 1998 article in the *New York Times* travel section reported that “although [Rumi] used a religious vocabulary, he scorned the rituals and dogma of established faiths. He believed that truth is to be found in each human heart and proclaimed himself ‘not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi or Zen.’”<sup>2</sup> Contradicting this article, a closer reading of Rumi would show us instead that he never mentioned Hinduism or Buddhism per se, although he did refer to the practices of the “Hindustan.”<sup>3</sup> Thirteenth-century Seljuk Turks also knew nothing of Zen, and the assertion that Rumi “scorned the rituals and dogma of established faiths” reveals an ignorance of the real Rumi, who carefully kept to the five pillars of Sunni Islam. It is true that Rumi extended complete respect to the rites of neighboring Christians and Jews throughout his lifetime, but this was dictated by traditional Islam.

## THE SUFI MYSTIQUE

Noticeably absent from this article—and most modern renderings of Rumi—is the idea that the latter could be *at the same time* a Muslim and a universalizing mystic. Sadly, the *Times* article mirrors some common myths and assumptions held in the popular press in the West: a mystic such as Rumi couldn't be compatible with Islam—or so it seems. In the meantime, Islamic scholars scratch their heads and wonder which Rumi was being read.

A survey of the contemporary scene would show that several well-selling interpretations are available in English: There is the Rumi of Reynold A. Nicholson, scholarly but dry; there are those of Kabir and Camille Helminski that are accurate, but more accessible; there are those of Coleman Barks and Robert Bly, both of whom are creatively innovative and make it clear they are offering “interpretations” of Rumi. There is also the Rumi of Andrew Harvey, who appears to be both spiritually ecstatic and (homosexually) erotic; and finally there is Deepak Chopra's Rumi—according to publicists, “even more languid, poignant and personal” than the rest.

It didn't seem to matter to mass promoters that the real Rumi disliked poetry and had written instead, “You have seen nothing but yourself. . . . Become selfless and be delivered.”<sup>4</sup> Instead, media pundits like Chopra opined that the Sufi poet expressed “the transcendent intimacy that's the source of the divine.” Reading Chopra attentively it would seem that the “source of the divine” can be found in “transcendent intimacy,” and not the other way around. The implication, here, is that the “source” of God can be found in any form of intimacy that takes you beyond yourself. And this is a contradiction of what the actual Rumi had often opined. Of course a transcendent form of intimacy can happen in romantic love, but unfortunately such love can also still remain largely narcissistic and egocentric—a condition well known to classical Sufis. (And here, increasingly, I will make a distinction between “traditional” and “classical,” though the two may coincide. The “classical” tradition conforms to the greatest Sufi writers such as Rumi and others like him, most of whose works were composed between the thirteenth

## CHAPTER ONE

and fifteenth centuries. Some “traditional” Sufis, on the other hand, have varied in their adherence to the classics, often adhering instead to more ethnocentric folkways.)

During the Rumi craze, the premises of Sufism were almost completely reversed in the interests of spiritual consumerism. In the process, the actual discipline of the Sufi path was utterly neglected, replaced by a more marketable sentimentality that fit New Age expectations.

This turn of events seemed to shock the sensibilities of a number of Persian- and Turkic-speaking Sufis in the greater Middle East. At the same time the merchants of the bazaar didn't seem to mind. They were elated that the Rumi craze had provided the city of Konya (in Turkey) with a new source of revenue. For centuries, Konya had been a place of pilgrimage for traditionalist admirers of Rumi. As Westerners and Middle Easterners comingled, Mevlana (lit., “our Master”) was being rapidly transformed into an object of religious kitsch and New Age tourism. The article in the *Times* had this to say:

Every year around this time, the streets of Konya are decorated with images of whirling dervishes, the Islamic mystics who seek to commune with the infinite through ecstatic dance. From lampposts and bus shelters, they look beatifically down on the throngs bustling along cold streets.

These images mark the annual festival commemorating Jalaluddin Rumi, who conceived the dervish dance as part of his lifelong quest for religious rapture. . . .

This annual event is Konya's main tourist attraction. Dozens of shops sell porcelain dervishes, dervish necklaces, dervish tie clips and cigarette lighters bearing what is supposed to be Rumi's portrait.<sup>5</sup>

What lessons can one derive from this? According to the *New York Times*, Rumi had “conceived the dervish dance as part of his lifelong quest for religious rapture,” but this, too, was somewhat fallacious. The dervish dance (Turk. *sema*) of Rumi was never ritualized during his lifetime.

## THE SUFI MYSTIQUE

For Mevlana, movement was a spontaneous occurrence. The *Mevleviyya* (alt. *Mawlawiyya*), “those who follow the Master,” were established as a Sufi order by Rumi’s son Sultan Valad. Only then did a form of rhythmic turning become part of the Mevlevi Order’s repertoire. Such “dancing” had been a spontaneous expression of many Sufis before Rumi, yet none of those Sufis had “conceived” or invented such movements. Instead, they found themselves *overtaken* by a mystical ecstasy that caused them to move in particular ways that occasionally included whirling. Rumi did not “quest for religious rapture.” Instead, he sought spiritual knowledge of a direct and sapiential quality that moved him to such rapture. Ecstasy, for Rumi, was secondary to intuitive knowledge, or better yet, *gnosis*. And this knowledge was called by other Sufis a “knowledge by presence” (*ilm al-hudhur*) or a knowledge given directly by God (*ilm laduni*). Though not limited to it, the God envisioned in this case was nevertheless shaped by the Qur’an. In a similar vein, the love envisioned by Rumi was not a species of romantic love.

It is true that Rumi said, “Love’s folk live beyond religious boundaries,” but the term *ishq* (sometimes translated as “love,” but more exactly “ardent desire”) can be problematic for those first encountering Sufism. To be sure, great gnostics like Ibn al-Arabi have often exclaimed, “My creed is Love,” and numerous other Sufis were renowned for pursuing a devotional path to gnosis. At the same time, the love that these Sufis speak of can only be seen as a by-product of something else—and that “something else” is a continuing closeness to, and longing for, an Ineffable God. It is not desire of the human form, nor of any concepts and imaginal constructs, no matter how dearly held; in fact, Rumi says, “Renounce the love of form. Love of faces and forms is not love.”

The latter saying needs to be repeated. According to Rumi (and others like him), if you love the face or form of anything this is not the love of which he spoke. Such love cannot, therefore, be sated in egocentric, romantic love; nor can it be discovered in New Age faddism or by conformity to legalistic or literalistic forms of religion. Instead, according to the great eleventh-century metaphysician of love Ahmad al-Ghazali,

## CHAPTER ONE

love “blames” such things, and such blame has three faces: “One towards the world of creation, one towards the lover, and one towards the beloved.”<sup>6</sup>

Al-Ghazali illuminates these three faces of blame by saying that in the first case, blame “consists in keeping the lover from paying attention to things other than the beloved”; in the second case, “it consists in keeping him from paying attention to himself”; and in the third case, “it consists in making [the lover] take nourishment from nothing but love.”<sup>7</sup> This is an arduous form of love, indeed, and it far exceeds the romantic or New Age conception of it.

These faces of blame disallow the lover from finding satisfaction in any form, image, or concept, including *himself*. To take nourishment from nothing but love means to release oneself from attachment to anything love blames or from anything love finds insufficient to resolve itself in union (*ittihad*). Here we come closer to classical Sufism and not to the Sufism of popular imagination.

At the same time, however, al-Ghazali presents an affront to some forms of absolutist traditionalism. Such union can never be established as a permanent “station” (*maqam*), for to do so would be to claim it as the permanent achievement; as al-Ghazali puts it, “He who thinks of union [*wisal*] as ‘coming together’ and feeds himself on this state does not realize the true Reality of love.”<sup>8</sup> Such love, in other words, can never be captured in any formulation whatsoever, whether orthodox or not.

Al-Ghazali offered this prayer to what we may call the “really Real”: “Since I seek nothing in this world from you except love, Union with you and separation are the same to me. Without your love my being is in disorder. Choose as you may: union or separation!”<sup>9</sup>

This radical indigence is a hallmark of classical Sufism, and anything that fails to emphasize the contingency of human beings is not a part of the same tradition. Again according to Rumi, “Lovers pitch their tents in the desert of Non-Existence.” The core of Sufism, then, is to discover one’s nonexistence in the face of something more convincingly real. And this conviction can only be found through “tasting” (*dhawq*)

## THE SUFI MYSTIQUE

and not through derivative knowledge of any kind. But to taste requires a discipline and dedication not normally found in those who merely dabble in spirituality in order to enhance their own narcissism. Nor can such love be found by the nominally religious who adhere to rigid forms of whatever kind.

To love is not to have an excessive desire for some thing or for someone; it is a by-product of a deeper “remembrance of the heart” (*dhikr al-qalb*). This remembrance is something that re-members fragmented human beings by reconnecting them to their source; and the source of one’s being, according to Rumi, can only be found in “the desert of Non-Existence.”

To “non-exist” is to love. Sufis invite this death or annihilation (*fana*), but only when their consciousness has been sufficiently purified through dedicated practice: meditation, contemplation, and spiritual companionship. If consciousness is still overly attached to or overly identified with anything outside of itself—or, to put it another way, if consciousness is overtaken by anything other than a bare attention to awareness itself—it cannot find the source of love as “Love.”

We are advised by the author of the *Times* article that “kernels of spirituality are still to be found [in Konya], but they float on a sea of kitsch and political controversy.” No doubt this is true not only in Konya, and it is certainly not limited to Turkey alone. Unfortunately, it is a characteristic of most of the greater Middle East as well as of the West. The real, rather than the fabricated, Rumi had this to say in his own day: “I have studied the learning of the day and took great pains to be able to offer precious, precise, and wondrous things to the erudite, the clever and the seekers of truth who come before me.”<sup>10</sup> He then added, “Discernment is faith, and lack thereof is infidelity.”<sup>11</sup>

Today, it seems that most of the world, both East and West, has forgotten an intuitive form of discernment, and this is much to the detriment of Muslims and Sufis, who themselves have been partly complicitous. Simply put, Sufism cannot be reduced to Islamic formalism, nor can it be reduced to the effusive romanticism that accompanies a

## CHAPTER ONE

sentimentalist form of mysticism, nor encapsulated within New Age wishful thinking.

The “creed of love” is not a free-floating, universalistic form of mysticism. Sufism is a complex phenomenon that includes a number of irreducible cultural, political, and psychological elements as well as spiritual ones. My contention throughout this book will be that Sufism is a multiplex phenomenon and that the essence of Sufi spirituality can not be fully examined outside of its varying interpretations and socio-historical contexts. Since this is often overlooked, I find it necessary to reexamine and critique the various ways Sufism has been presented to the public. Unfortunately, in doing so, I find I have problems with the general approaches to Sufism currently available, particularly after having been an insider to that tradition for several decades.

One of the most important problems facing Westerners—and, increasingly, more volatile younger Muslims—is that Sufism has become encased in its own ongoing mystique, accentuated at times by mystagogy. It is time for a more thoroughgoing reappraisal, some of which I hope to provide in this book.

### THE ELEPHANT IN THE DARK

Several men are invited to examine an elephant in the dark. One man feels its trunk, another its hoof, another its tusk, and yet another its tail. The next day, each of them is asked to describe an elephant. Naturally, each faithfully describes the piece he had felt. None of their accounts are similar, and none of their renderings fully describe an elephant. In the mid-1960s, Idries Shah used this old tale from Rumi to illustrate how no one in the West had an adequate grasp of Sufism.<sup>12</sup>

Despite years of additional research, the elephant still remains partly obscured, and of all the spiritual traditions brought to the West, Sufism remains the most puzzling. Is Sufism a universal tradition transcending all religious forms, or can it be understood and practiced only within Islam? Over the last thirty years an array of contradictory answers has

been given. Even more perplexing is that many of these answers seem to be issued by authoritative Sufis themselves. Here is a small, but representative, sample: Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927) once remarked that “Sufism has never had a first exponent or a historical origin.” More recently, Idries Shah (1924–96) claimed that Sufism is “the inner, ‘secret,’ teaching that is concealed within every religion.” Javad Nurbakhsh, the head of a more traditional Sufi order, disagreed by exclaiming, “Outside Islam, Sufism does not exist.” Expanding on this theme, Seyyed Hossein Nasr asserted, “Sufism cannot be practiced outside of Islam even if self-styled ‘masters’ in the West using the name of Sufism say otherwise.”<sup>13</sup>

Noticeably, half of the declarations above seem to cancel the others, and a number of scholars have concluded that the other half have been issued by “psuedo-Sufis.”<sup>14</sup> Given this controversy, a number of questions arise. To begin with, who among those quoted above is a “real” Sufi, and who gets to define the parameters of authentic Sufism?

In the non-Muslim West, the subject of Sufism has been largely addressed by a number of popularizers who are often confronted—and contradicted—by an equal number of academic skeptics. Despite their differences, however, the two opposing groups often share a number of common assumptions. Interestingly, the ground assumptions they share arose from a form of metaphysics called *perennialism*—loosely, a school of thought that resembles Rumi’s creed of love and al-Ghazali’s way of blame.

Before we investigate Sufism or its specialty, the way of blame, we must investigate the nature of perennialism and its subtypes. Each of these subtypes, I propose, has filtered out the complexity of Sufism as a whole and presented partial views of the subject that reduce it. Notwithstanding this problem, however, the perennialist perspective cannot be easily discarded because it is inherent in much of Sufism, as well as being present in much of Islam. How and why this is so will be examined throughout this book, but for now it may be necessary to examine the form that perennialism has taken in a largely modern, Western context.

## CHAPTER ONE

Sufis like Khan, Shah, Nurbakhsh, and Nasr interpret Sufism differently, yet, less apparently, all of them are “essentialists.” They suggest that Sufism has an ideal (essential) form that exists outside history. The study of Sufism for these spokesmen cannot, therefore, be exhausted by historical, social, or political studies. The essence of Sufism (if disclosable at all) must be sought elsewhere and by using other means. The means adopted by such essentialists usually require the adoption of a particular metaphysical system or metaphilosophy that transcends any particular religious framework.

As already established by historian Mark Sedgwick, the essentialist perspective adopted by a number of Sufis who address Western audiences is an outgrowth of a school of thought that approaches the study of various religions as manifold expressions of an underlying primordial tradition, the *philosophia perennis*.<sup>15</sup> Perennialists hold that the world’s great religions are singularly important and equally valid because they all derive from the same locus of truth—one discovered only by a direct form of perception, which early Greek philosophers had called gnosis. While gnosis is extradimensional, traces of its continuing influence can be discerned in the underlying similarities found in otherwise varying religious doctrines. At the same time they affirm the “mystical core” of all religions, however, some perennialists hold that differences among religious traditions are important to maintain because they are necessary for people of differing cultures and temperaments. Although gnosis itself may be timeless, it must be approached from a particular sociohistorical context that frames such an approach.

In typically perennialist fashion, William James once noted that “the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition” is “hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, . . . we find the same recurring note.”<sup>16</sup> Implicitly, for James, the similar note found in mystical traditions is the eternal quest for an immediate form of knowing.

As we shall see, perennialism offers a meta-approach to discussing and assessing the mystical core of Sufism, and it may also offer a more

accessible way of discussing the contemporary relevance of Sufism to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Nevertheless, the overarching approach of perennialism still poses some notable problems. For one thing, it is not a systematic form of philosophy, but rather a tendency of thought. As such, it doesn't present a unified method of assessment, and as a partial consequence, various perennialist Sufis differ significantly among themselves.

I submit that the Sufi commentators quoted above differ so greatly among themselves not because they represent (or necessarily misrepresent) different schools of Sufism, but because they embody varying forms of perennialist thought: a *universalist* approach largely promoted in the West by Hazrat Inayat Khan and his son Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan; a *traditionalist* form promoted by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Martin Lings; and, finally, an occultist approach taken by Gurdjieff, Idries Shah, and J. G. Bennett.

Each of these spokesmen for Sufi perennialism addresses different segments of a similar audience in the West, and, as would usually be the case, some segments of that audience are more sophisticated than others. In addition to tailoring their expressions to fit different audiences, these spokesmen have more substantial disagreements about how to frame Sufism as a whole. Most importantly, some of these spokesmen attempt to identify criteria that establish "authentic" Sufism.

Authentication involves "legitimation," the process whereby a concept or practice is made acceptable to a given audience, and, of course, to authenticate something is to exercise a particular form of power. Because of this, authentication is a political act and therefore almost always contentious.

Although essentialists posit otherwise, Sufism has never escaped the politics of legitimation since it, like any other tradition, has a decidedly sociohistorical dimension. Because of that, Sufism is subject to political forces that shape discourses about its nature, function, and possible essence. To borrow a phrase from Michel Foucault, "Knowledge is power," and the validation of knowledge entails an assignment of authority.

## CHAPTER ONE

The entitlement called “expertise” attends knowledge-granting authority; and it is acknowledged experts who get to establish standards of legitimation. At the same time, what is legitimate or authentic for one audience may not be so for another, so it follows that the parameters of authentic Sufism will be determined differently by experts who appeal to different audiences. This raises the question of who is a “real” Sufi.

Here, and in other chapters of this book, I will examine briefly how a number of groups have attempted to advance their claims concerning the nature, scope, and current manifestations of Sufism. Of necessity, I will continue to critique each of these spokespersons and their approaches, and only secondarily will I advance a different approach.

As we have already seen, the question of authenticity implicates how each spokesperson interprets Sufism and Islam, and—in terms of marketability—how each of them seeks to address a predominantly Western audience that is largely non-Muslim. Since the form of perennialism that most appealed to Americans was a simpler form of universalism, we shall examine it first by focusing on one of its key exponents from the Orient, Hazrat Inayat Khan. Later, we will also examine traditionalist critiques of reductive universalism.

### THE UNIVERSALISM OF HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

Coming to the United States in the early twentieth century, Hazrat Inayat Khan perfectly mirrored American expectations by claiming that Sufism, as essential mysticism, superseded formal Islam. According to Khan, the essence of Sufism could be found in a timeless gnosis that has expressed itself in differing religious forms. While appealing greatly to American Transcendentalist sentiments, Inayat was not as heretical—or innovative—as he seemed. Instead, he was a product of India’s religious syncretism, and his concepts evolved out of a particular historical context.<sup>17</sup> To understand that, we need to review the history of Sufism on the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, and by doing so it might become more apparent why Inayat Khan’s message took the form it did. Countering

certain biases, we shall see that a universalist perspective is not alien to certain forms of Islam, and it is part and parcel of the Indo-Pakistani tradition to which Inayat Khan belonged. To put it in simple terms, Hazrat Inayat Khan was not a modernist innovator as some would later claim.

Not long after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), Islam spread peacefully along the Western coast of India along with spice traders. In the eighth century Arab armies subdued the Sind (now in Pakistan), as well as the Punjab (now split between India and Pakistan). The greatest influx of conquering Muslims occurred, however, when Turkic and Pashtu Afghan warriors poured through the Khyber Pass in the late tenth century.

These highlanders made Lahore their first capital, followed by Delhi in the twelfth century. They saw themselves primarily as *ghazis* (raiders or sacred warriors) waging a holy war against Hindu and Buddhist infidels.<sup>18</sup> The Sufis who accompanied them were of all tendencies, warlike and peaceful, and some who were more pacific sought to reconcile Hinduism with Islam.

One of these Sufis was Baba Farid (d. 1175/76), a sage known to have held conversations with Hindu Yogis. Hardly a conservative, Baba Farid reflected general tendencies within the Chishtiyya, a Sufi order that became well known for its ecumenical spirit. The history of the Chishtiyya would become strongly linked with the destiny of the largest, longest-lasting Muslim dynasty in India, the Mughals, who reigned between 1526 and 1857.

*Mughal* is an Indo-Persian rendering of *Mongol*, although the term *Timurid* is far more accurate. The former term is misapplied to the later descendants of Tamerlane, the Turko-Mongol conqueror of Central Asia who sacked Delhi in the fourteenth century. Though Tamerlane was famous for his rapacity and cruelty, one of his great-grandsons, Akbar (1542–1605), became equally renowned for creating one of the most refined civilizations ever known. Like their Turkic cousins the Seljuks and Il-Khanids, the Mughals under Emperor Akbar fostered

a climate of interreligious tolerance that in some ways anticipated the later European Enlightenment. Akbar, it was said, was a Sufi initiate of the Chisti Order.

Like Akbar and his grandson, the Mughal Emperor Dara Shukoh (1615–59), Inayat Khan was as comfortable with Brahmins and Zoroastrians as he was with his fellow Muslims. As was the case with Dara Shukoh, however, his spirit of universalism would be similarly criticized by conservatives in India and farther abroad. Mirroring his predecessors, Inayat de-emphasized the parochial elements of Islam and concentrated instead on the underlying unity of all religions. Like the Emperor Akbar (also a Sufi), Khan established a form of universal religious worship, which would become the hallmark of his approach. Once, when asked the difference between Sufism and other approaches to mysticism, Inayat answered definitively, “The difference is that it casts away all differences.”

In order to show that Khan’s universalism was not merely the result of corrupting Western influences or modern eclecticism, it is necessary to examine, in brief, his biography. Inayat Khan’s paternal lineage descended from a family of Turkic tribal chieftains who were originally from Afghanistan but later settled in Kashmir after the Mughul invasions. Inayat’s father, Rahmat Khan, married the daughter of a renowned music teacher, Moula Bakhsh, who had founded the Royal Academy of Music in Baroda, where Inayat Khan studied vina and vocal raga under the tutelage of his grandfather.

Inayat Khan eventually became renowned as a master of classical Indian music, and he was greatly honored and patronized by the ruler of Hyderabad. During his time at this noble’s court Inayat met his first murshid, or spiritual director, Khwaja Hashim Madani, an aristocratic Arab from Medina and a shaykh of the Chishtiyya. After studying for many years with Hashim Madani, Inayat Khan was instructed by his teacher, then on his deathbed, to carry the Sufi message to the West. Reportedly, the Murshid’s dying words to Inayat Khan were, “Harmonize the East and the West with the harmony of [your] music.”<sup>19</sup>

## THE SUFI MYSTIQUE

Though Inayat Khan eventually abandoned his musical career, he followed his teacher's instruction to harmonize the differences between the Islamic East and the Christian, but largely secularized, West. He traveled to New York in 1910 with his brother and cousin in tow. There this little troupe supported themselves through concerts as "musicians of Hindustan." There also he met and married Ora Ray Baker, a cousin of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science Church.

Within two years Inayat's troupe was invited to give a recital at the Vedanta Society in San Francisco. In the Bay Area, he was inspired to lecture directly on the topic of Sufism; and it was there also that he met Mrs. Ada Martin, his first and foremost disciple (later to be named Murshida Rabia Martin).<sup>20</sup>

It was not in the United States, however, where Inayat Khan established his headquarters. After several years touring Europe, he settled with his family in a village named Wissous, near Paris, and the first actual headquarters for the "Sufi Movement" was established in Geneva. This choice was because of a vision Inayat Khan had when first visiting there in 1914 before the onset of World War I. His vision presaged the establishment of the League of Nations, an institution that mirrored the saint's aspirations for the unity of humankind.

On a trip to America in 1923, Inayat Khan would remark:

I saw in the people of America the sum total of modern progress. I called it "the Land of the Day." . . . If there is anywhere that the international ideal finds response it is in the United States. For spiritual things their love is growing every day more and more. [However] there are so many things to attract their attention, right and wrong both, that they cannot always make out which to accept and which to reject. Many, therefore, go from one thing to another, and get so accustomed to moving on that they do not feel contented with one thing.<sup>21</sup>

No matter how much he readily admired America, Inayat's feelings were somewhat ambivalent about its people's faddishness. Because of this, he

## CHAPTER ONE

returned to Europe, where he felt a greater affinity with its more refined and well-established culture.

In both America and Europe, however, Inayat found an acceptance of universalist ideas that mirrored his own education and religious background. His universalism, in other words, was the result of his embracing Islamic Sufism and not, as some would later claim, of his abandoning it. His expression of Sufism was the result of a partial synthesis between social liberalism and the tolerant form of Islam native to multicultural India. That Inayat's synthesis was no doubt limited and perhaps equally partial would follow, and this we will continue to examine throughout the remainder of the book.

After a while, Inayat returned to India, took ill, and died in 1927 at the age of forty-four. He summarized his essential message as follows: "May the message of God reach far and wide, illuminating and making the whole humanity as one single Brotherhood in the Fatherhood of God. . . . *The Message is the awakening of humanity to the divinity of man.*"<sup>22</sup> Here, we find the expression of a spiritual humanism that was congenial to religious liberals in the West, but this vision was not uncommon among similar Sufis in the greater Middle East. As I hope to show, this spiritual form of humanism was largely implicit, but also partly explicit, in much of classical Sufism.

In finality, Hazrat Inayat Khan's appeal can be better understood as a meeting of similar ways: Mughal Indian and liberal European. This adaptability shouldn't be surprising since Inayat inherited a portion of the Turko-Mongol heritage that embraced a pluralism also admired in the United States, albeit in a different, more democratic fashion.

On the one hand, the Timurids could be quite zealous and cruel, and on the other hand (and at times that suited their purposes) they could be quite tolerant and open, an attitude that no doubt gave them a tactical advantage in the culturally diverse areas they occupied. Thus, as we shall see, Sufism in Turkic Anatolia and Central Asia—and to some extent in South Asia and Indonesia—would take on a different coloration than it would in predominantly Arab lands.

To this day, more conservative Muslims, some of them Sufis, criticize Inayat Khan, his son Pir Vilayat Khan (d. 2004), and other universalists for minimizing the role Islam has played in the development of Sufism. In this respect, perhaps the most cogent critique comes from another perennialist school, that of the “traditionalists.” I will offer a critique of that school in the following chapter.

For now, it is important to summarize that popular New Age representations may have missed the boat by oversimplifying the universalist elements that can be found in the classical traditions of Sufism. In the process, a narcissistic form of romanticism pervades many popular renderings of poets like Rumi. A nebulous “oceanic feeling” does not reside at the heart of Sufism, nor does indiscriminate religious devotion. Sufi gnosis is far more sophisticated than that, and it provides a detailed approach to sacred psychology that requires more rigor. Much of the sacred psychology of classical Sufism will be examined in the last two chapters of this book.

In the next chapter I will propose that, apart from New Age obscurantism, one must also be wary of more traditionalist approaches to Sufism. Some of them limit the broader scope of Sufism to its more orthodox interpretations—and this has led some Sufis to assume that they must appear more particularly “Muslim” than most.

I propose, instead, that a more authentically Islamic form of universalism is waiting to be found by digging deeper into history. The sources of Islamic universalism reach far back into antiquity, yet (as I hope to show) a form of Sufism that is both universalist and traditional still exists today. One must labor hard, however, to find that stream of thought, and this book will offer no easy solutions to that quest. I imagine that the original Rumi would urge us on.



## Two

# The Traditionalist Critique

**A**s I noted in the last chapter, conservatives have critiqued the simplistic forms of universalism that appeal to New Age movements. One of the most eloquent of those spokesmen is Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933).<sup>1</sup> A protégé of the Alsatian-born metaphysician Frithjof Schuon (1907–84), Nasr has been the foremost representative of the traditionalist form of perennialism in America. As a close associate of the European circle of René Guénon (1886–1951), Schuon had built upon his mentor’s theories, which included the idea that a given religion remained valid only as long as it preserved an active and intact “initiatic” structure.

Guénon and Schuon agreed that while various traditions unfold in particular spatiotemporal settings, they originate in an ahistorical source. This source, the divine principle, itself continues to direct the development of each tradition through its present-day intermediaries: adepts who remain linked to the founders of each religion through an active, initiatic bond.

Schuon’s premises also include that there is a transcendent unity operating behind the world’s great religions; that each religion remains valid by retaining an esoteric core; that different expressions of exoteric religion are also necessary; that exotericism serves an obvious need for a multiplicity of approaches that serve different spiritual capacities; and that the specific forms exoteric religions preserve cannot, therefore, be reduced, rearranged, and absorbed into a simplistic form of universal worship.<sup>2</sup> At the same time as upholding the necessity of varying

## CHAPTER TWO

traditions, Schuon also insisted on the continuing tension between esotericism and exotericism.

The works of Guénon and Schuon suggest that simpler universalists and popularizers of Sufism have either willfully ignored the obvious, bending Sufism to their own purposes, or have simply postponed a confrontation with Islamic formalism. By doing so, Nasr and Martin Lings actively propose these popularizers have further obscured the elephant in the dark.

Although not mentioned specifically by Nasr and Lings, Hazrat Inayat Khan and his son Pir Vilayat Khan, as well as a number of lesser-known Western Sufis, all seem to embrace a simpler form of universalism, and all of these teachers, admittedly, have lived in non-Muslim nations. Whether these “hybrid” teachers represent genuine or authentic Sufism is another matter, and that is beyond the purview of this book. Generally, however, such “Westernized” Sufis have not been favored by traditionalists because they seem to have adulterated a purer Islamic Sufism with extrinsic ideas and practices. There is some merit to this critique, but traditionalism is also beset by a number of contradictions.

Ironically perhaps, Frithjof Schuon, the most influential forerunner of the traditionalist school, is known to have assimilated the practices of other religions into his own improvised *tariqa*, or “order,” the *Maryamiyya* (named after Maryam, the Arabic name of the Virgin Mary). As Mark Sedgwick observes, “By the time of Schuon’s death in 1984, Sufism had become almost incidental to a wider enterprise that involved Christians, Red Indian [i.e., Native American] dances, and—according to some reports—sacred nudity. At this stage, some of Schuon’s followers had come to see him as, in some form, a divine incarnation.”<sup>3</sup>

All of these eclectic practices, it seems, were quickly abandoned by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, although he never repudiated his master; nor did he ever publicly address the apparent contradictions in Schuon’s heterodox approach to Sufism. According to Patrick Laude, Nasr and Schuon differed in an important way. As opposed to Nasr’s, “Schuon’s work has to do with situating, explaining and criticizing or rejecting a variety of

formal characteristics and phenomena that encumbers the traditional scene.”<sup>4</sup>

For Schuon, it seems, exoteric religion functioned like a protective shell around its kernel (mysticism or esotericism), and sometimes, he held, one had to break the shell to get at the kernel. This breaking through, according to Nasr, exemplifies “the freedom which the *Tariqah* provides through the acceptance and subsequent transcending of the forms of the Divine Law.” But, adds Nasr, “The *Tariqah* cannot be reached save through the *Shari’ah* and the apparent negation of the Path is not of the *Shari’ah* itself but the limiting of the Truth to external forms alone.”

For Nasr—who seems to have kept Schuon in mind—the “subsequent transcending of the forms of the Divine Law” can only properly occur among the saints (*awliya*). “Only the saint realizes the totality of the nature of universal man and thereby becomes the perfect mirror in which God contemplates Himself.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Nasr, like his predecessors Guénon and Schuon, presupposes an esoteric hierarchy that can properly distinguish between “external forms” and the sacred law itself. It is to these saints or sages that one can turn to acquire a proper understanding of the Way. Because of this, it is logical to conclude that one has to begin the search for these “perfect mirror[s] in which God contemplates Himself” in order to enter the Way authentically. Most forms of perennialism land in this place, although, as we shall later see, one particular group of esotericists placed a greater precedence on finding such “masters” outside of a formal Islamic framework.

Traditionalists like Nasr and Martin Lings (d. 2005) claim that Sufism is thoroughly grounded in Islamic formalism, and they do so with considerable supporting evidence. The works of classical Sufis have been translated by credible Arabists and reputable scholars of Persian such as Nicholson, Arberry, Massignon, and (more recently) Chittick, Murata, Morris, Sells, Reynard, Algar, Wilson, and Lewisohn. Most of these classical texts elucidate mystical doctrines generated by the most prominent

## CHAPTER TWO

and influential Sufis of the “middle period” of Sufism (roughly, the twelfth through fifteenth centuries). These Sufi theosophists included Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Suhrawardi the Martyr (d. 1168), Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240), and Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273).

Today, a study of these classical authors reveals that the worldview of Sufism, throughout, is frequently interlaced with references to the Qur’an and to the collected traditions (*ahadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad. No doubt, these classics facilitated the development of a relatively high degree of doctrinal and spiritual integrity that situated Sufism firmly within an Islamic context, and to this day this development remains a binding force in much of the greater Middle East.

The traditionalist Martin Lings has written, “Sufism is nothing other than Islamic mysticism. . . . As to the thousands of men and women in the modern Western world who, while claiming to be ‘Sufis,’ maintain that Sufism is independent of any particular religion and that it has always existed, they unwittingly reduce it.” Obviously, Lings was concerned with the particularity of Sufism being overshadowed by a simplistic form of mystical universalism. There is little doubt that Sufism largely evolved as a unique and particular path within the larger framework of Islam, and this is the case even though it shared common characteristics with other forms of mysticism. Nevertheless, Lings may have overstated the case by writing, “The foundations of Sufism were laid and its subsequent course irrevocably fixed long before it would have been possible for extraneous and parallel mystical influences to have introduced non-Islamic elements.”<sup>6</sup>

In contradistinction to Lings, however, other scholars have devoted themselves to uncovering such “parallel mystical influences.” This can be seen in the works of Margaret Smith, Louis Massignon, and Tor Andrae. In a similar vein, A. J. Arberry, R. A. Nicholson, and Annemarie Schimmel also detect the presence of extrinsic influences, but they do not conclude that Sufism was originally extraneous to Islam. Their research simply doesn’t support the view that Sufism is “nothing but” Islamic mysticism.

## THE TRADITIONALIST CRITIQUE

Nor, as Lings would have it, were the foundations of Sufism irrevocably fixed at its beginnings (presumably with the Prophet Muhammad). The substructure of medieval Sufism was heavily dependent on Late Hellenistic thought (Neoplatonism and Neopythagoreanism). Throughout its history, Sufism was nurtured by the contributions of mystical Judaism and Christianity. Complicating the issue further, there are indications that later Sufi thought was also influenced by other religious traditions from central and south Asia, particularly Hinduism and (as some would assert) Buddhism.

Lings's thesis that Sufism was fixed at its foundations is not supported by historical research. Certainly, traces of mystical/philosophical worldviews from other traditions can be found within Sufism, and it is a purist myth that Sufism developed solely within the confines of Islamic orthodoxy.

Given other well-established evidence, it is easier to maintain that Sufism arose in the "Islamicate" world and, as such, that it was largely shaped by the prevailing attitudes, values, practices, and prejudices of the people who inhabited that world, whether Muslim or not. The term *Islamicate*, coined by Marshall Hodgson, does not refer directly to the religion of Islam, but rather to "the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims."<sup>7</sup> In all probability, Sufism was shaped not just by religious doctrine and mysticism, but by the whole sociocultural milieu surrounding it—and not all of it Muslim.

The original mission of Muhammad had combined both religious and political functions, and as a result the subsequent history of Islam has been fraught with religio-political struggles that continue to this day. In Islamic discourse, religious legitimacy has always borne a strongly political connotation, and such definitions have been burdened with lengthy, often contentious, debates—and sometimes with open conflict. Because of this, we need to investigate the historical origins of Islam before further investigating the nature of Sufism as a distinct practice or "way."

Since the Prophet Muhammad is viewed as the progenitor of Sufism, it is necessary to briefly investigate his biography. The Prophet was born

## CHAPTER TWO

into a clan called the Banu Hashim, which was part of a larger tribe that dominated Mecca called the Quraysh. After the Prophet's death (ca. 632 CE), immediate questions arose concerning his succession by an appropriate leader, or *Imam*, of the community. While expressly forbidden by the Qur'an, factions arose favoring one or another contender, and tribal politics and intrigues reasserted themselves quite quickly and forcibly after the demise of Muhammad.<sup>8</sup> These contests would lead to a division between Sunnis and Shia that continues to the present. How did this split occur, and what impact, if any, did it have on the development of Sufism?

The Prophet's clan, the Banu Hashim, included Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the cousin to whom Muhammad had married his daughter Fatima. Ali and Fatima had two sons, Hasan and Husayn, both also greatly beloved by the Prophet, and their descendants were referred to as the "People of the House" (*Ahl-al-Bayt*). The immediate family of the Prophet was accorded great spiritual prestige by a number of Muslims, predominantly the Banu Hashim and the *Ansariyya*, the "Helpers" who had first allied themselves to the cause of Muhammad in Medina. No matter how this loyalty was originally valued, it led quite quickly to a political split within the community.

Those who favored Ali's succession came to be known as the "Party of Ali" (*Shiat al-Ali*, or later simply the *Shia*). They were opposed by the *Ahl al-Sunna* or "People of the Community," who favored the broader consensus established by the other tribal leaders of the Quraysh. The need for a political consensus brought with it the need for a greater religious consensus as well. However, such developments would take several centuries, and the Shia would take a different path from the majority of Muslims who remained Sunni.

Ali was thought of by some in both communities as inheriting the esoteric (as well as the exoteric) understanding of Islam from the Prophet, and this is substantiated by a number of traditional sayings attributed to Muhammad. Few Muslims disagreed about Ali's spiritual

status, yet he was not favored as a political successor by the majority of tribal leaders in Mecca.

While Ali was still attending the Prophet's deathbed, Abu Bakr as-Sadiq (d. 634) was elected to represent the community by tribal consensus. Abu Bakr was a leading member of the Quraysh, as were the two Imams who succeeded him, Umar (d. 644) and Uthman (d. 656), and as a by-product of these appointments the marginalization of Ali was viewed by some as an attempt to reassert the supremacy of the Meccan aristocracy. The Ansariyya of Medina and the more recently converted Muslims in the provinces came to resent this.

At the head of this controversy was the Banu Ummayya, the most powerful clan of the Quraysh in Mecca, who had initially fought Muhammad. Among the leaders of the Banu Ummayya were Abu Sufyan and his son Muawiya (d. 680), who, although they later converted to Islam, were two of the strongest opponents of Muhammad's original mission. Abu Sufyan owned considerable land around Damascus, and Muawiya soon established his base there after he became the governor of Syria.

With the election of Abu Bakr, the first order of business was uniting all Arabs under Muslim rule. This led to a series of wars against other tribes who resisted, and the conflict brought the Arabs right up to the borders of the Byzantine Empire, which extended into Syria, and up to the borders of the Persian Sassanian Empire extending into Iraq. After the unification of much of Arabia, Muslim armies continued to spread northward and outward into the larger Fertile Crescent (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq), and under the second Imam, Umar, the Muslims consolidated their hold in these areas. The Byzantines were defeated in Syria and withdrew into Anatolia. In the meantime, the Sassanids lost their capital, Ctesiphon, which was located in Mesopotamia. After a decisive battle in 636, the Persians quickly withdrew and were hurriedly pursued into central Iran, where they were overthrown nearly two decades later. The final conquest of Byzantium

## CHAPTER TWO

would have to wait until much later, when it was accomplished by the Ottomans.

Approximately thirty years after the death of the Prophet, the Arabs had conquered the entire Fertile Crescent as well as the central plains of Iran, and by doing so they inherited a large number of Greek-, Aramaic-, Coptic-, and Persian-speaking subjects. Those among the captured populations who converted to Islam were referred to as *mawalis* (clients). These *mawalis* brought with them many of their earlier beliefs, which had an effect on the further development of Islamic thought, including Sufism.

For a considerable amount of time, *mawalis* were treated as second-class citizens, and they began to revolt against their treatment under the third Imam, Uthman. Some of these provincials assassinated Uthman. The murder led some to wonder whether Ali ibn Abi Talib was its instigator, inasmuch as he had never given up claiming to be the rightful successor of Muhammad.

Around 658 CE, Ali went to war with Ai'sha, the favorite wife of the Prophet, who had aligned herself with the Banu Umayyayya, the relatives of the murdered Uthman. While the Umayyayya established themselves in Damascus, Ali and his allies left Mecca to settle in Kufa (Iraq), where Ali had attracted a number of supporters.

After a decisive battle at Siffin, the party of Uthman under their leader Muawiya sued for arbitration, and Ali accepted. Ali assumed the title of Commander of the Faithful, but three years later he was assassinated by a faction that opposed his accommodation to Uthmani partisans.

Immediately after Ali's death, Muawiya declared himself the leader of the Muslims, thereby establishing the Sunni Umayyad dynasty. After a year of peace, another civil war broke out, this time between Ali's son Husayn and Yazid I, the son of Muawiya. Husayn and his troops were massacred at Karbala in 680, and the Shia went into a period of political decline from which they would not fully emerge until the fifteenth century. In the meantime, differences in interpretation between Sunnis and

the Shia prevailed, so the foundations of Islam were not as irrevocably fixed as Martin Lings has claimed.<sup>9</sup>

As we have seen, the transfer of power to Damascus and Kufa—and away from Mecca—further exposed seminomadic Arabs to more settled (and more thoroughly developed) cultures of the Fertile Crescent. Syria was mainly composed of Aramaic-speaking Christians with a largely Hellenized culture, and Iraq included even more diverse populations. One scholar observes: “Iraq was a center of world religions and cultural dialogue at the end of the Arab conquest. . . . Prior to the Arab conquest, this region was the home of Christians (Monophysites and Nestorians), Jews, and Magians, along with Hellenistic antecedents that had preserved some roots there.”<sup>10</sup> It is quite probable that all of these influences contributed to the further development of Sufi ideas and practices.

Up to this day, Ali is considered to be one of the primary sources of every Sufi order and school, and there is evidence that the most central concepts and procedures of Sufism first arose from the People of the House and that this nascent form of Sufism later attracted a number of people of other religious traditions who gradually became Muslims.

When Ali moved his headquarters from Medina to Kufa in 656, he had the support of Salman Farsi and Abu Dharr. Mawalis (non-Arab Muslims) of mainly Persian (and, formerly, Christian, Mandaean, and Zoroastrian) background were the primary supporters of Ali against the oppressive Arab aristocracy of the Umayyads. The formerly Sassanid city of Jundishapur, near Baghdad, remained a center of Neoplatonism, and the city of Harran hosted scholars well versed in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It is quite probable that some of these scholars were attracted to Islam, especially the more esoteric formulations promoted by the Shia.

The first recorded esoteric exegesis of the Qur’an occurred under Jafar as-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, who descended from both Ali and Abu Bakr, and was revered by both Sunnis and Shi’i alike. After Jafar as-Sadiq, however, the gulf between the two communities continued to

## CHAPTER TWO

widen, and proto-Sufis seemed to have been suspended between the two factions.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes that Shi'ism and Sufism "possess a common parentage in that they are both linked with the esoteric dimension of the Islamic revelation and in their earliest history drew inspiration from the same sources."<sup>11</sup> Schimmel adds that many Shia and Sufi ideas were "interdependent," although "the relationship between Shia thought as it crystallized in the ninth and tenth centuries and the theories of Sufism that emerged at about the same time has not yet been completely elucidated."<sup>12</sup>

Victor Danner notes that after the eighth Imam (Ali al-Rida, d. 818) "it is rare to find much interaction between the remaining Imams of the Twelver school of Shi'ism and the Sufi sages. The reason is simple enough: the remaining Imams do not have the authoritative roles that the early Imams—at least up to the sixth Imam—exercised over all of Islam. . . . The sixth Imam, Jafar as-Sadiq (d. 148/765), had a kind of cosmic function in the community as a whole which the remaining Imams could not possibly have. It is not by accident that Sufism comes into the picture with increasing frequency after his days."<sup>13</sup>

A famous early Sufi, Bayazid Bistami, was spiritually associated with the circle of Jafar as-Sadiq, and Hasan al Basri (perhaps one of the earliest Sufis known as such) was a disciple of Ali ibn Abi Talib. A close companion of Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (the eighth Imam), Maruf al Karkhi, was the Shaykh of as-Saqati, who founded the school of Baghdad, of which Junayd became the most renowned expositor. Junayd, as I will later relate, was the founder of the earliest organized school of Sufism. Clearly, Shia influences played a significant role in the development of Sufi ideas, although the latter came to be identified, in the main, with the Sunni community.

The famous Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun noted this when he wrote: "[Shia] theories entered so deeply into [the Sufis'] religious ideas that they based their own practice of using a cloak (*khirqah*) on the fact that Ali clothed al-Hasan al-Basri in such a cloak and caused him to agree

solemnly that he would adhere to the mystic path. The tradition thus inaugurated by Ali was continued according to the Sufis, through al-Junayd.”<sup>14</sup>

Undoubtedly, Sufi doctrines and practices were polished and refined by nomocentric Muslims. Yet it is also well documented that Sufi practices were shared with non-Muslims throughout its history, and thus it is inevitable that a certain degree of cross-fertilization occurred between Sufism and other religions in the Near East and (somewhat later) in the rest of Asia. Morewedge notes that “Islamic tradition in its normative dimension participated substantially in Platonic and Neoplatonic structures, both in its concept of the ultimate being and in its instrumental and pragmatic theory of knowledge via the path of self-realization.”<sup>15</sup>

This point is vital and requires further elaboration. Preceding the advent of Islam, Alexander the Great had created a vast empire covering most of the greater Middle East. The Sassanid dynasty of Persia had welcomed Greek metaphysicians into its own academy, and their ideas were later propagated as a form of “oriental philosophy.”<sup>16</sup> In Alexandria, a great synthesis of Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian thinking also occurred through the medium of a commonly shared Greek language (*koine*). All of this had also seeped down into the general cultural fabric of the greater Middle East by the advent of Muhammad’s revelation.

This Hellenistic substructure informed the development of mystical Judaism and Christianity, including the so-called gnostics. As Muslim armies conquered most of Alexander’s former empire, they inherited these centers of learning. Thus, Sufis shared a common cosmological language with others who lived alongside them, and these people included the pagan Sabeans who were later identified with the Hermetists. The latter, along with Syriac Christians, helped translate Greek texts into Arabic under the Abbasid dynasty in the ninth century CE. These, in turn, formed the substructure of Arab philosophy, cosmology, and theological argumentation (*kalam*), as well as providing the logic that still determines the fundamentals of Islamic law (*usul al-fiqh*).<sup>17</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

All of this being the case, one could easily conclude that Sufism, if not the whole of Islam as we know it, developed as a syncretic religious movement. This syncretism reconciled disparate or contradictory beliefs while fusing them together. Evidence of such syncretism continues to accumulate, yet Sufism, in its classical form, was not an unreflective collection of random beliefs and practices. It was not, in other words, simply an eclectic form of mysticism.

On the contrary, and from the outset, Sufis of all types attempted to achieve a high degree of doctrinal integrity. Nasr writes, "Islam has considered all the wisdom of traditions before it as in a sense its own and has never been shy of borrowing from them and transforming them into elements of its own world view. Such a characteristic of Islam does not, however, mean in any way that Islam is unoriginal or does not possess its own spiritual genius."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as we have noted, throughout most of its history Sufism has never lost its scriptural grounding in the Qur'an; Muhammad remained the acknowledged forefather of Sufism while he was situated among all the other Abrahamic prophets in the Qur'an.

What exactly constitutes the traditionalist approach that I have already critiqued in Lings? In order to answer this question, more needs to be said about the life and works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In the United States, Nasr is the primary philosophical spokesman for traditionalism. As a well-established academic, he has directed his appeal to a more sophisticated audience, and some consider him to be the doyen of Sufi studies in the West. One might question how this came to be.

Before the Khomeinist revolution in the 1970s, Nasr had founded and directed the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Tehran, which hosted eminent visiting scholars such as Henri Corbin (1903–78) and Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–93). Importantly for the future of Sufi studies, younger luminaries such as William C. Chittick, Sachiko Murata, and Peter Lamborn Wilson came to study with Nasr, and less-known but equally important scholars who resided in Tehran, such as Alan

Godlas and Leonard Lewisohn, were influenced by him. Most of these scholars returned to teach in the United States.

After the revolution in Iran, Nasr soon followed them, and his affect on Sufi studies in America has been substantial, a status only barely approximated in recent times by a number of other, excellent scholars of Sufism such as Carl W. Ernst, William C. Chittick, Hamid Algar, and Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2007). Today, the traditionalist position is favored by a minority of academic specialists and by a select group who adhere to orthodox or “orthopractic”<sup>19</sup> forms of Islamic Sufism.

For formalists such as these, a Sufi who is a non-Muslim is a contradiction in terms; universal truths can be discovered in Islam, but only because Islam offers a more complete revelation that supersedes formerly valid religions. Sufism, according to such traditionalists, is a purely Islamic phenomenon, and it must remain so in order to retain its authenticity.

Arguably, such ideas may fit the traditionalists’ preference for hyper-coherence, the need to have everything perfectly ordered. The actual history of Sufism is not so smooth and seamless, yet situating Sufism within traditional mainstream Islam has practical advantages. It protects Sufis from being attacked from two sources: modern relativism, which denies the validity of revelation, and fanatical fundamentalism, which negates esotericism. It also protects Sufism in the West from being co-opted by dubious occult groups and New Age faddists. Because of this, the traditionalist perspective is not without appeal to those who feel limited by both of these trends, and rightly so.

At the same time, it is doubtful that there can be any one truth about Sufism, at least not one that can be fully articulated. Sufism is a multiplex phenomenon that takes on different shapes and forms historically, both socially and individually. Throughout this book I maintain that it should continue to be treated as such.

Historical research and anthropological research provide us with no definitive answers concerning “essential” Sufism; yet disciplines such as these can rule out common fallacies. Such fallacies include the notion

## CHAPTER TWO

that Sufism entirely transcends Islam or, conversely, that Sufism is simply and purely “Islamic.”

Let me submit that there are several versions (or visions) of Sufism and Islam, and that each one is suitable for different audiences with varying spiritual capacities. As I hope to show, this was the position taken by a number of classical Sufis, many of whom implied it, while others more openly stated it as being the case. Mystics such as Jalaluddin Rumi, though firmly rooted in Islam, could say, “There are some of God’s servants who approach God via the Koran. There are others, the more elite, who come from God only to find the Koran here and realize that it is God who sent it.”<sup>20</sup>

### THE LAW AND THE WAY

As opposed to universalists, traditionalists like Seyyed Hossein Nasr hold that no one can follow a Sufi way (*tariqa*) without also adhering to the *Shari’ah* (Islamic law). To quote Nasr, “Every man must accept the *Shari’ah* in order to be a Muslim. . . . Man cannot aspire to the spiritual life, to walking upon the path to God (*Tariqah*) without participating in the *Shari’ah*.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, it is a truism that Islam is primarily a nomocentric religion. According to Fazlur Rahman, “The Qu’ran is a teaching primarily interested in producing the right moral attitude for human action.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the holy book is unequivocal in stating, “The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the best of you in conduct” (49:13).

No doubt, Islamic religious traditions (in the main) concern themselves with an elucidation and an elaboration of sanctified norms. Al-Qushayri, in the eleventh century, had already transmitted a long-standing tradition that “whosoever surpasses you in moral character has surpassed you in Sufism.”<sup>23</sup>

Yet, the term *shari’ah* (lit. “the broad way”) has come to be confused by many with the “fundamental foundations of the law” (*usul al-fiqh*), and over the centuries this has led to a severely restricted—and some

would say doctrinaire—approach by an increasingly professional class of ulama (lit. “knowledgeable ones,” but roughly “clerics”).

One can easily establish that Sufism has existed in a tense—and sometimes ambivalent—relationship to doctrinaire Islam. Those tried for heresy, such as Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri (d. 907 CE), and those executed such as Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) and Ayn al-Qadhat al-Hamadani (d. 1131) testify to the lack of concordance between Sufis and “the law”—as do a host of other Muslim mystics who often ran afoul of legalistic religious authorities.

To be accurate and balanced, it would be equally true to say that some Sufis themselves became a part of the professional ulama, and many of them reconciled Sufism with Islamic orthodoxy. Chief among them were Junayd, Jilani, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ansari, and, much later, Sufi reformers such as Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali Allah. Classical Sufis like Jalaluddin Rumi, on the other hand, often chided reductive legalists and theologians, although Rumi himself had been trained as a legalist and had worked as a religious judge. To convey his general opinion of legalists, Rumi related this story:

When Bayazid [a famous Sufi mystic] was a child, his father took him to a school to learn jurisprudence. When brought before the teacher, he asked “Is this the jurisprudence of God?”

“This is the jurisprudence of Abu-Hanifa,” they said. “I want the jurisprudence of God!” he said. . . . Following his quest, he came later to Baghdad. As soon as he saw Junayd [another famous mystic], he cried out, “This is God’s jurisprudence!” . . . Bayazid [interposed Rumi] was born of intellect and discernment. So let the external forms go.<sup>24</sup>

Ibn al-Arabi was also well known as a qualified interpreter of Islamic law, yet he wrote the following: “The *fuqaha* [legalists] of our times have restricted and forbidden, for those who follow them, what the Sacred Law had widened for them. . . . That is one of the gravest calamities and one of the heaviest constraints in the matter of religion.”<sup>25</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

Given this view, Nasr may be being overly simplistic when he writes, “The larger orthodoxy of the Muslim community has always been able to prevail and prevent either the Law from stifling the Way or the Way from breaking the mould of the Law and thereby destroying the equilibrium of Islamic society.”<sup>26</sup> Always? Despite the popularity of such claims among traditionalists, the actual (and not imagined) history of Sufism seems to contradict this view.

During its formative period, from the ninth through the twelfth centuries CE, Sufism was subject to close scrutiny by Islamic legalists who doubted its orthodoxy. By the middle phase of its development (thirteenth through sixteenth centuries), many Sufi orders had reconciled themselves with mainstream Sunni Islam. There were notable exceptions, but these were often suppressed by religious and secular authorities. Later, between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, and as the Islamicate world was assailed by colonial powers, Sufism again divided into reactionary and progressive camps to meet the new challenges posed by the onset of modernity. Indeed, a number of supposedly heterodox Sufis challenged the divine status of the law, as did quite a few modernists, some of them influenced by Sufism.

At the other end of the spectrum, a number of Sufis who were also legalists began to reexamine whether Sufism itself was essential or intrinsic to Islam. Foremost among them was Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), also known as Imam Rabbani (the Divine Imam). Sirhindi’s importance to Sufism cannot be underestimated, since he was also referred to as the “reviver of the second millennium.” Sirhindi found that many, if not most, Sufis had deviated from the doctrines of orthodox Sunni Islam. He concluded that some of these Sufis, like Hindus, Sikhs, and the Shia, were inimical to Islam, and he claimed that the Sufi way (*tariq al-walaya*) and the Prophetic Way (*tariq al-nubuwwa*) were not one and the same. The former might, however, support the achievement of the latter depending on the Sufi’s conformity to the law.<sup>27</sup>

About a hundred years after the death of Sirhindi, another influential Sufi emerged in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, Shah Wali Allah

of Delhi (d. 1762). Like Sirhindi, the Shah considered himself to be a “reviver” (*mujaddid*), not only of Sufism, but of the entirety of Islam. Shah Wali Allah divided the development of Sufism into four preceding epochs.

The first began at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and extended up to the formation of the first observable Sufi orders in Baghdad in the early tenth century. Sufis of the second epoch, like those of the first, were ascetic pietists who engaged in extensive fasting and prayer. These earlier Sufis were also greatly concerned with meticulously observing the laws of Islam. Unlike those of the first epoch, however, these Sufis also began to search for a language that could properly express their inner illuminative experiences.

In the third epoch, the elite among Sufis began to concern themselves with a perceptual absorption *in* God. Finally, in the fourth epoch, Sufis began to elaborate metaphysical theories about their unitive experiences.

Although Shah Wali Allah believed that Sirhindi was overly critical of the Sufis of the third and fourth epochs, he also believed that a number of Sufis had been misled by *bid'a*, a form of innovation that was extrinsic and antithetical to Islam. As a consequence, the Shah (in agreement with Sirhindi) decided that Sufism was badly in need of reform since, in some cases, it had strayed from the law for centuries.<sup>28</sup>

Nasr writes, “There have been those who have tried occasionally to break the balance in favour of the *Tariqah* [Sufism] as if it were possible for the Way to exist in the world without the Law which serves as its outward shield and protects it from the withering influence of the world. In fact so many of the movements which have ended in the creation of a sect or even deviation from and break with the total orthodoxy of Islam have come about as the attempt to exteriorize esotericism without the support of the *Shari'ah*.”<sup>29</sup>

Although conservatives insist that a Sufi must follow the *Shari'a*, many accept the fact that Sufism has taken on many forms: Sunni,

## CHAPTER TWO

Twelver Shia, and Ismaili, as well as other heterodox forms. The Shari'a has been interpreted in many ways by those accepted by their respective communities as Sufi authorities.

Orthodox Sunni Sufis generally follow one of the four canonical schools of law. Twelver Shiites follow their own school, and so-called extremists or "exaggerators" (*ghulat*) of Shi'ism follow yet other methods of interpretation. In some Sufi schools, the shaykh is considered the final arbiter of what actually constitutes the Shari'a—at least for his immediate disciples. So, the issue of following Islamic law is similarly complicated, and it has become even more so today. Purists insist that a person must grapple with these issues and in the process must submit to a traditional form of Islamic legalism.

Yet, once again, it is important to assert that Sufism—in its historical reality and not in its essence—has taken on numerous forms, and not all of them have been approved by orthodox legalists, either in part or in whole.

If tensions between the law and the way had not persisted, orthodox Sunni Sufis like Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1327/28) would not have spent so much time and effort attempting to expunge foreign elements from Islamic mysticism.<sup>30</sup> Although Taymiyya was largely refuted by authorities in fourteenth-century Egypt, his efforts were revived by later Sufi reformers in India like Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali Allah.

Ironically perhaps, Ibn Taymiyya is often cited today by Islamist literalists such as the Wahabis who are inimical to Sufis, including those who are devout, "orthopractic" Muslims. As we have seen, the assertion of Martin Lings that Sufism was "fixed at its foundations" has been debated by notable, traditional Sufis such as Sirhindi and Shah Wali Allah. Nasr's assertion that authentic Sufis all follow the same, presumably homogenous, Shari'a is also contestable.

As opposed to the assertions of traditionalists, there is no one truth about Sufism, at least not one that can be fully articulated. Sufism is a multiplex phenomenon that takes on different shapes and forms, historically, socially, and individually. Historical and anthropological research

cannot provide us with definitive answers concerning “essential” Sufism, yet outsider disciplines such as these can rule out common fallacies, including those held by certain insiders. Such fallacies include the notion that Sufism entirely transcends Islam, or, conversely, that Sufism is simply and purely Islamic.

From a religious standpoint, sociopolitical and historical studies of Sufism may be viewed as peripheral to its spiritual substance; yet, as we have seen, doctrinal aspects of Sufism have also attracted considerable attention and been researched by English-speaking scholars. These studies require a historical perspective.

On the side of traditionalists, Sufism continued to rely on the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad for their primary inspiration and edification. To scriptural sources such as the Qur’an and the Sunna were added the works of classical Sufis who further refined the tradition. Many of these works, like the *Mathnawi* (alt. *Mesnevi*) of Rumi, were commentaries on the Qur’an, or, like the *Fusus al-Hikam* of Ibn al-Arabi, they expanded upon essentially Qur’anic themes.

It is important to underscore that there are expressions of Sufism contradicting the traditionalist position that were (and still are) more universal in scope, and others that are more parochial, politicized, and culture bound. The greatest masters of Sufism, who were once numerous, have touched the souls of devout Jews, Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus, as well as, more recently, secular humanists; these masters did so while remaining devoutly Muslim in their own way.

Given all of this, we can conclude that Sufism offered an approach to Islam that sometimes melded with—and sometimes clashed with—Islamic legalism and literalism. This sometimes compatible and sometimes ambivalent relationship continues to this day, as does the search for “authentic” Sufism.

Throughout its history, Sufism has remained a complex, multiform entity, and its expressions continue to vary up to this day. At the same time, a relatively high degree of structural as well as doctrinal uniformity persists. As varied as Sufi theory and praxis may be, there is still

## CHAPTER TWO

a core of Sufism that remains relatively intact—and meaningfully so, though not in the static sense.

To be a Sufi, according to traditionalists, one must follow an accepted school of Islamic law (*madhab*), and one must also follow an organized *tariqa* (path). Only these specific forms, according to traditionalists, preserve an intact, initiatic chain or hierarchy that leads back to the Prophet Muhammad, and thence to the transcendent unity that underlies both Islam and Sufism. If, however, conformity to Islamic law among Sufis is debatable, and if the form of the *tariqa* has never been entirely fixed, then what remains of the traditionalist argument?

What remains of the traditionalist argument is that all Sufis belong to an initiatic chain. This chain (*silsila*) is continued through assiduously maintained master-disciple relationships throughout history and the transmission of certain forms of esoteric knowledge.

Traditionalists maintain that there is a “core doctrine” in Sufism, but as we shall see the doctrine to which they refer is not maintained by *all* Sufis. Instead, the doctrine in question is maintained in its original purity only by a few Sufis who have often been identified in the tradition as being “blameworthy.” The quest for those who taught this mostly hidden doctrine consumed the attention of a group of perennialists I will refer to as (populist) “occultists.”<sup>31</sup> What they found, or rather *imagined* they found, is the subject of the next chapter.

## Three

# Quests for the Hidden Hierarchy

Some believe that the question of whether or not Sufism is intrinsically tied to normative Islam has been definitively answered. The pioneering scholarship of Reynold A. Nicholson, Arthur J. Arberry, Louis Massignon, and Annemarie Schimmel has firmly established Sufism as the “mystical dimension of Islam.”<sup>1</sup> The question that remains, however, is what *form* of Islam?

At the heart of ongoing controversies fueled by Ibn Taymiyya, Ahmad Sirhindi, and others were the doctrines of the so-called Akbari tradition initiated by Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi. Those who followed this tradition included renowned commentators such as Qunawi (d. 1274), Farghani (d. 1296), Jandi (d. 1300), Kashani (d. 1335), Qaysari (d. 1350), and Jili (d. 1408). Poets who were expositors of this school included luminaries such as Iraqi (d. 1289), Shabistari (d. 1339), and Jami (d. 1490). Most of the largest Sufi orders were penetrated by this thinking, including the most orthodox and widespread of all the Sufi orders: the Shadilliyya, Qadiriyya, and Naqshbandiyya.

No other doctrine can claim with equal validity to comprise the core of classical Sufi thought, yet no other doctrine has spurred as much controversy. Traditionalists such as Nasr and Lings believe there is a single doctrine central to all of Sufism, one entirely compatible with traditionalist interpretations of the Shari’a—but this is debatable.

Instead, there have been two divergent approaches to Sufism that have had a direct bearing on how one interprets the whole of Islam. The first approach is thoroughly unitive and might be called a form

of qualified nondualism approaching monism; the second approach is decidedly dualistic.

Ibn Taymiyya and Ahmad Sirhindi were quite explicit in identifying two forms of Sufi doctrine that interpreted Islam quite differently. Moreover, they found that these two visions of Islam were not entirely compatible. Sirhindi referred to these two Sufi approaches as the doctrine of unicity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) and the doctrine of unicity of perception (*wahdat al-shuhud*). Following Sirhindi these two camps would be referred to simply as *wujudi* (existentialist) versus *shuhudi* (perceptionist or subjectivist) forms of Sufism. Shah Wali Allah of Delhi attempted to reconcile them, yet despite his attempts very important differences still remain.

Briefly, shuhudis believe that God is separate from his creation and that he is both one and singular in his essence. Because of this, no multiplicity can exist in his being. To view God and his creation as similar is a matter of perception or of subjective “witnessing” (*mushahada*). Wujudis, on the other hand, believe that God in his essence, though not in his manifestation, is *identical* with his creation. In reality, there is only one Existent; therefore, individual, empirical entities are all but an illusion, relatively speaking. God and humankind are different in function but not in essential identity.

Both Ibn Taymiyya and Ahmad Sirhindi found the views of wujudis reprehensible, contrary to the Qur’an, and contrary to the Prophet’s example. Such views, in their opinion, often led some Sufis to virtual (if not actual) apostasy: to an unlawful existence, outside of the Shari’a. For Sirhindi, differences between humans and God were not to be violated, in thought or in expression.

Indeed, the presuppositions of shuhudi Sufism were fully in accord with mainstream Islamic belief, and, in this sense, they were likely to be considered more orthodox. Wujudis, thus, could be found more “blameworthy,” which is, indeed, one of the meanings Ibn al-Arabi used in his expositions to define the *malamiyya* (alt. *malamatiyya*), “people of blame.”

## QUESTS FOR THE HIDDEN HIERARCHY

Ibn al-Arabi posited a spiritual hierarchy among Muslims, which he expressed as follows: There are the worshippers, who devote themselves to acts of purification. Then there are the Sufis, who know about the stages and science of mysticism; they aspire to gain those things and develop charismatic gifts. Finally, there are the people of blame. These, according to the Great Shaykh, are “the foremost of the people of Allah.” He didn’t fully reveal how or why, but he strongly suggested that he was one of them.<sup>2</sup>

According to Ibn al-Arabi, *malamatis* (the *malamiyya*) were called blameworthy because their rank, or spiritual station, did not reveal itself. They did not appear different from ordinary people because they did not make a show of religious devotion, nor did they crave any miraculous powers. Instead, they remained focused on removing the slightest taint of egoism from themselves. In fact, they “blamed,” ceaselessly critiqued, their own egocentricity for obscuring their access to God. They were the solitaries or singulars (*afrad*) and the people of no station (*la maqam*).<sup>3</sup>

As we shall see later, the term *blameworthy* held many connotations throughout the history of Sufism. For Ibn al-Arabi (1165–1240) in particular, however, the *malamatis* were those who followed—and had fully realized—the *wujudi* perspective. Later Sufis, like Shah Wali Allah, attempted to balance and reconcile *wujudi* and *shuhudi* perspectives, but, nevertheless, the *shuhudi* doctrine prevailed among most Sufis who adhered to a stricter form of legalism and traditionalism.

## THE OCCULTISTS

Guénon, Schuon, Nasr, and other traditionalists all insist there is a necessary tension between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of any religious tradition. Unlike Nasr, Schuon had insisted that sometimes “one must break the husk to get at the kernel.” As already reported, “the Greatest Shaykh,” Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi had identified a specialized group within Islamic mysticism, the *malamiyya*, who might

### CHAPTER THREE

appear to be outside the law, or at least to be less observant of Islamic formalism. From a modern esotericist position, authentic masters of Sufism are certainly few, and this contributed to the enduring myth of a hidden hierarchy in Sufism. The latter, it is held, exists both within—and sometimes partly beyond—the boundaries of nomocentric Islam.<sup>4</sup>

According to this conception, the Sufi adepts who form this hierarchy have a more nuanced understanding of Islam, and without their presence the outer shell of Sufism at times degenerates into various forms of parochial or cultic expression. Such adepts, moreover, are noticeably open, flexible, and lenient to people of other religious traditions. Ibn al-Arabi is reported to have said, “If a gnostic is really a gnostic he cannot stay tied to one form of belief.”<sup>5</sup>

If this is so, then one could make a case for pluralism being both necessary and spiritually enhancing. As a result, interpretations of Islam found congenial among certain Sufis might often transcend what many other literalist Muslims understand as the basics of their faith. At the same time, gnostics like Ibn al-Arabi might argue that such Sufis were not discarding these beliefs but rather reinterpreting them to fit an evolving religious consciousness.

While classical Sufis considered this reinterpretation necessary to retain Islamic purity, a decidedly different approach was taken around the turn of the twentieth century by certain Europeans who sought to avoid the complexities of conversion to an alien religion. These seekers, who were mostly (nominally) Christian, hoped to find a timeless gnosis that could be *extracted* from Islamic Sufism and brought to the West as a more subjectively situated self-transformative practice.

For some of these occultists, the adepts of authentic Sufism couldn't possibly be mired in any form of organized religion. In their imagination, such Sufi adepts had to exist instead in secret societies that promoted a practical and adaptable form of the perennial philosophy. The way of blame, in particular, was thought to be blameworthy, in part, because it existed outside of the external forms of Islamic law.

That these perennialist beliefs were colored by a limited and oppositional view of Islam should be obvious. That they also conformed to the biases of certain Europeans and Americans should also be apparent. At the same time, the pioneering efforts of certain innovators of Sufi practice were not lacking in their own sincerity or their relevance to emerging modernist needs.<sup>6</sup>

Despite their limitations, it was these Europeans who first sought to explore the psychospiritual principles that underlie and inform Sufism—and in a way accessible to the non-Muslim. As a result, these early Western seekers had a considerable affect on nonacademic Europeans and Americans, some of whom still follow their teachings today. Since this is so, it might be helpful to examine at least three of these popular writers: George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877–1949), who was thought by some to exemplify the “path of blame,”<sup>7</sup> Idries Shah (1924–96), and John G. Bennett (1897–1974). All three gathered a substantial following of Western students, and all three point to a common source of inspiration.

How much did they reveal or obscure the elephant in the dark? What can we actually discover about the mythologized source of their teaching? Assuming that it still exists, can this source contribute anything important to our understanding of the gnostic approach that is specifically Sufi? What did any of their teachings have to do with the way of blame?

As we shall soon investigate, a great deal of confusion about the *malamati* approach abounds. Both academics and popularizers of Sufism remain somewhat perplexed by its later manifestations. These, as we shall see, exhibit a native form of perennialism that does not negate Islam or the fundamentals of the Law. Instead both the earlier and the later *malamatiyya* seem to *enhance* a universalist understanding of Islam, and this is particularly relevant to those who seek to find a common ground between the European Enlightenment and its religious counterparts in the Near East.

## GURDJIEFFIANS AND THE HIDDEN HIERARCHY

In 1979, the British director Peter Brook showcased his film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, based (mostly) on the book of the same title by G. I. Gurdjieff. The place chosen for the opening was San Francisco: a place renowned for its experimental forms of spirituality and populist esotericism.

Anticipating the New Age, the Vedanta Society and the first Theosophical lodge had opened their doors there at the beginning of the last century, and the first American Zen center had been established in San Francisco by the 1920s. Around the same time, the larger Bay Area also hosted Inayat Khan's foremost American representative, Rabbia Martin. Followers of Gurdjieff had also soon established a considerable presence there, and quite a number of them attended the opening of the movie.

As the curtain rose, Brook's film showed the young Gurdjieff traveling throughout the Near East with a group called the "Seekers of Truth."<sup>8</sup> Surely, many members of the audience felt an affinity with that name, and even more so with the spiritual ideals that had inspired the Seekers. Certain details of their mythic quest are worth examining, and I will explore them as the movie unfolds in our imagination.<sup>9</sup>

In the film, after surviving numerous perilous encounters Gurdjieff found a mysterious dervish named Bogga-Eddin in central Asia. This dervish pointed to a higher source of wisdom, secluded in Afghanistan, "beyond" or "behind" Sufism. Undaunted by additional risks to himself, the film's hero ventured into the vastness of the Hindu Kush. There, he finally came to a place where he had to dismount from his horse; and here, like all classical heroes, he had to leave his guides behind. This, we were informed theatrically by the film, was a journey to be taken alone.

Gurdjieff soon found that he had to cross a rickety wood-and-rope bridge stretched out between two sides of a yawning gorge. Alone, he had to make his way across this frightening gap, unaided by anything

but faith and an indomitable will for truth. Like the quest for the Holy Grail, this filmic adventure dramatized universal themes like those Joseph Campbell explored in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As he might suggest, the chasm “G” had to cross suggested the cleft between normal perception and “the other shore” of enlightenment. The journey was fraught with danger, and much of its territory lay uncharted. Few would venture here—or so we were informed by symbolic import—and few would survive. Here, however, comparisons with other Western myths might conclude.

Unlike the solitary genius of the heroic ideal then current in turn-of-the-century Europe, Gurdjieff sought (in his words) a “circle of conscious humanity.” The film introduced audiences to another important theme, which can be summarized as follows: Though we come alone to the quest, we cannot hope to change ourselves in isolation. We require the aid of those who know much more than we do. We might come to meet such people if we struggle long and hard, and especially if we are willing to face our helplessness while relentlessly pressing on. Certainly, none of these themes would contradict the teachings of other forms of esotericism, but a divergence was soon introduced.

Earlier in the film, in Egypt and Armenia, Gurdjieff had found maps that pointed to the survival of the “Sarmoung Brotherhood,” a group comprised of elite members of the world’s religions.<sup>10</sup> As a long-standing tradition, the school was founded at the beginnings of recorded history in Babylonia.<sup>11</sup> According to Gurdjieff, the Sarmoung had preserved a “scientific method” of spiritual transformation that transcends all religious differences. Here, too, we discover another crucial constituent of the myth.

We are informed that the “method” of the Sarmoung was not haphazard. Like other sciences, this sacred technology was rigorous and precise, and it could be tested and verified through direct experience. Moreover, the method was time-tested, extending back to the Babylonian period (ca. 2500 BCE). The Sarmoung Brotherhood trained its adherents to achieve “objective consciousness.” Here, it was suggested,

### CHAPTER THREE

mere emotionalism could be replaced with a spirituality shorn of mystification and sentimentality.

Vague and indefinite faith, it was suggested, could be replaced by a thoroughly pragmatic form of self-transformation. In their monastery the Sarmoung had employed movements that transformed the subtle “centers” of each individual. These centers were coordinated, then integrated, then aligned with a “Higher Reality.” As anyone sufficiently familiar with Sufi practice could verify, some (not all) of these movements were drawn from a variety of exercises performed by various dervish orders. In the Gurdjieffian myth, however, they were combined and synthesized in a unique new form to achieve a far greater efficacy.<sup>12</sup>

Elements of these exercises, moreover, were lifted out of a (narrower) Islamic context and given a new directive: the development of a “harmonious human being”: a being who transcended organized religion, a being freed from both religious and materialistic tyrannies. Unlike the world’s religions, which have been divisive, the Brotherhood offered a method that unified humanity in a common cause: the transformation of human beings into self-responsible agents who could actually *perceive* reality or truth more directly. Sufism, which has been embedded in Islam, was surpassed by finding the “source” of Sufism. Formalistic Islam, which in any case is derivative, was left behind.

Here, in short, was a system that would greatly appeal to more sophisticated students of esoterica. Here, instead of circuitous and useless religious pursuits, such students might find a practical method of self-transformation. Of course, the “self” being transformed could also be a cultural construct, but this was not the subject of inquiry for most Gurdjieffians; nor was the purported reality of the Sarmoung. Along with its romantic orientalism, this myth of a hidden hierarchy coincided with many other elements of what is now called “New Age” thought, much of which was foreshadowed by the “Occult Revival” that appealed to a number of leading artists and intellectuals in the nineteenth century. In order to understand the foundations of Gurdjieffian thought (which

lie outside the fabled Sarmoung), we must place it in its proper cultural and historical context. This may help us to better understand the continuing impact of Gurdjieff on the transmission (and the transformation) of Sufi—or quasi-Sufi—ideas in the West.

The form of the quest for a “circle of conscious humanity” in *Meetings* was shaped by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism. In the nineteenth century a number of people became fascinated with esotericism due to the “Occult Revival,” of which W. B. Yeats was an outstanding spokesman. Yeats, in fact, became an active member of the Golden Dawn, an influential society that sought to revive the mystery traditions of Europe.<sup>13</sup> Other occult movements, affected by romantic orientalism, became more attracted to the “Wisdom of the East.” Much of this had little impact on general society, but this was soon to change.

The amalgamation of experimental occultism with romanticism—and the further merging of these two ways with libertarian (and sometimes authoritarian) political ideas—led to a number of new spiritual movements in Europe and America. Some of these movements sought to expand beyond drawing-room occultism and to move further and deeper into mainstream society. Foremost among these movements was Theosophy, founded by Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–91) along with her cohort, Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907).

Theosophy celebrated ideals of universal brotherhood and sought to recover a single primordial tradition, or perennial philosophy, that underlay all of the world’s religions. According to Blavatsky and Olcott, ancient Europe had inherited pieces of a unified tradition that had originated in the far reaches of Asia. The source was still intact, and core teachings concerning the spiritual evolution of humankind were still kept secret by this “Great White Lodge” in the vastness of the Himalayas. Blavatsky claimed that she in particular had been contacted by the hidden adepts, or “Mahatmas,” of this lodge in mediumistic trance and that they had tasked her with now revealing their teachings.

Apparently Blavatsky’s form of communication with the Mahatmas was insufficient, for she, Olcott, and many other Theosophists would

### CHAPTER THREE

journey for years throughout the Middle East and most of South Asia to meet them. As they did so, they encountered various mystics of all the great religions, coming to be known by some as Searchers of the Truth. In the process of traveling and then relocating to India, they contributed much to anticolonialist movements in the Orient. In fact, as noted by historian K. Paul Johnson, Theosophists and Masons allied themselves with movements as diverse as Pan-Buddhism, Hindu Nationalism, and Pan-Islamism.<sup>14</sup>

Broadly speaking, Theosophical influences can be seen at play in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, and in many ways Gurdjieff would seem to be promoting a quasi-Theosophical version of Sufism. In two historical works, *The Masters Revealed* and *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*, K. Paul Johnson produces evidence strongly indicating that this was the case. At the same time, Gurdjieff's mission seemed to be quite different from that of his predecessors.

For Gurdjieff—unlike the more optimistic Theosophists—the normal human condition was one of complete “hypnosis.” According to Gurdjieff, one had to awaken to the “terrible condition of things.” In order to do so, people had to “remember” themselves because their normal condition was one of being “asleep.” Awakening necessitated a heroic effort, and it required the absorption of a person's sensate, emotional, and intellectual “centers” into a new-born “unified self.” Despite Gurdjieff's vitalist, existential approach, remnants of idealistic Theosophy can still be found in the Gurdjieff method. These elements were largely grafted onto Gurdjieff's system by P. D. Ouspensky (1878–1947).

Ouspensky was the single most important person in organizing Gurdjieff's teaching into a coherent system. He had once been a leading Theosophist, as had A. R. Orage, the chief spokesman in America for Gurdjieff. Johnson provides evidence that Gurdjieff's most important mentor, hidden under the pseudonym Lubovedsky in *Meetings*, was Prince Esper Ukhtomskii (d. 1921), a Russian diplomat and life-long Buddhist. Apparently Ukhtomskii had met and conferred with Blavatsky and Olcott a number of times in India, so elements of the

Theosophical myth most probably informed Gurdjieff's thought as well as that of Ouspensky, who had been a leading spokesman for Theosophy in Russia.

Whatever its connection with Theosophy, the Sarmoung myth mirrored the aspirations of many Russians, Europeans, and Americans at the time, whether they were Theosophically minded or not. What were their social and psychological motivations, and how do they remain active today?

In the first place, the author of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* assumed that all of humanity was gradually evolving into a new form of consciousness. In this respect, all men and women were joined in a universal fellowship, even though many of them would be unconscious of it.

If none of these developments or concepts was novel, what did Gurdjieff contribute to our knowledge of Sufi sacred psychology—if anything? Though Gurdjieff may have spent time among dervishes, it is highly unlikely that he functioned as their emissary, and his teaching is enshrouded in barely comprehensible works like *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1950).

Given numerous works already written about this enigmatic figure, such as James Moore's excellent biography, I will not investigate the thought of Gurdjieff himself. Instead, I will concentrate on the (later) Gurdjieffian notion that there are hidden origins to Sufism that lie outside of its formal history. As we shall shortly see, this myth was later propagated by Idries Shah and J. G. Bennett for their own particular reasons.<sup>15</sup> Suffice to say, all Sufi schools are structured in a similar way, yet Gurdjieff's work was organized in a strikingly different manner. There are classical texts that refer to a hidden hierarchy, but as we shall see later, this hierarchy takes on a different form from that suggested by Gurdjieff and his self-proclaimed successors.

Rather than being a solitary genius, as proposed by some of his followers, Gurdjieff offered instead a syncretic approach to self-transformation that was partly flavored by Sufism. This was probably because he was

### CHAPTER THREE

raised in the Near East, and much of its culture influenced his personal development.

Gurdjieff's mother was Armenian, and his father's name was originally Giorgades, a Greek patronym. He was born and buried as an Orthodox Christian, yet his teaching blended many elements of a number of traditions that still existed in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) as well as in other parts of Eurasia. These components were later translated into a language (and a paradigm) somewhat accessible to Europeans as "G" met with circles in Russia, France, England, and America.

It is particularly noteworthy that Gurdjieff's Asian influences emphasized the power of bare attention. Self-remembering is a hallmark of Buddhist practice, and Johnson notes that Gurdjieff's probable mentor, Prince Esper Ukhtomskii, was an active practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism. In addition, Gurdjieff also recounted how he had spent time in Tibet, and there he would have certainly encountered this practice as central to spiritual development.

Awareness of one's "states" is also an idea we find among the Sufis, and particularly the Naqshbandi Order, a group Gurdjieff implied he had contacted in Central Asia. Like Gurdjieff, the "root school" (*Ar. risha*) of the Naqshbandis also teaches that we all have a "defective feature" (Pers. *khassiyat i-naqis*). They emphasize that an acute encounter with this defect is necessary and ongoing in any authentic spiritual practice. Much like Gurdjieff, they teach that our consciousness-distorting personality can only be overcome by continuous awareness as well as by divine grace, subjects to which I return later.

In contradistinction to European rationalists, Gurdjieff proposed that most of us are automated sleepwalkers, and that we are composed of many conflicting selves. He also emphasized that before we can attain to objective reason we must form a "unified I." Yet, the paramount importance of attention had been emphasized earlier by the American psychologist William James.<sup>16</sup> The concept of a unified I was also similar to Freud's concept of "ego strength." Freud's predecessors, Janet and

Charcot, had already explored the phenomenon of split-off subpersonalities, which they claimed acted as “many selves.” Gurdjieff was not as radical in his thinking as some have surmised.

The one seemingly novel idea Gurdjieff proposed was that there are *seven* forms of self: (1) the person motivated mainly by the instinctual or “moving” center; (2) the person motivated mainly by the emotional center; (3) the person motivated mainly by the intellectual center; and (4) the person balanced in all of these functions. He also proposed, but didn’t dwell on, three further types: number five is “unified”; number six is “conscious”; and number seven is “perfected.” Anyone familiar with Sufi psychology will recognize that this sevenfold system is directly derived from the Sufi *maqamat*, system of stations, and, again, more will be said about this later.

In finality, it is safe to assume that whatever his merits or demerits, Gurdjieff was an influential spiritual innovator who synthesized various elements of Western, Near Eastern, and Far Eastern traditions. To give him credit, he also popularized the importance of bare attention and detached self-observation.<sup>17</sup> The Gurdjieff method may have benefited a number of serious seekers, yet, at the same time, we can deduce that Gurdjieff falsified his past and fictionalized his actual sources.<sup>18</sup> A skeptic might conclude that he did this in order to fit the expectations of those who were attracted to his work. As if to justify falsifications such as these, Gurdjieff claimed: “Truth can only come to people in the form of a lie—only in this form are they able to accept it; only in this form are they able to digest and assimilate it. Truth undefiled would be, for them, indigestible food.”<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Gurdjieff’s system itself may have been largely indigestible food for many. Best known among the followers of Gurdjieff was Ouspensky, who had broken away from his teacher in the 1920s. Ouspensky had devised a clever but emotionally colder rendering of the “System.” Although Ouspensky was brilliant in his own right, his attempt to set up an independent version of the Work produced desultory results.

### CHAPTER THREE

Twenty-five years later, this former heir apparent of Gurdjieff, who had taken to drinking heavily, died stating to his pupils: "There is no System. . . . Start again for yourselves."<sup>20</sup>

J. G. Bennett, one of Ouspensky's chief disciples, would later write, "In ten long years [of working with Ouspensky] I had gained nothing but profound disillusionment. Many of those who had studied with Ouspensky since 1922 [the year of his break with Gurdjieff] were in the same condition."<sup>21</sup>

In one letter to Bennett, Ouspensky confessed that "man's only hope [was] to work with the higher emotional centres," and he added, "we do not know how this is to be done."<sup>22</sup> When several of Ouspensky's followers, including Bennett, returned to Gurdjieff in 1948, the latter would goad them relentlessly, saying, "You must feel, you must feel, your mind is a luxury."<sup>23</sup>

At the end (which came a year later in 1949), Gurdjieff, like Ouspensky, died with no clearly appointed successor. Instead, according to a number of sources, he confessed, "I've left you all in a fine mess!" His calmer, more official dying statement would be the following: "The essential thing, the first thing, is to prepare a nucleus of people capable of responding to the demand which will arise. . . . So long as there is no responsible nucleus, the action of the ideas will not go beyond a certain threshold. That will take time."<sup>24</sup>

The evening after Gurdjieff's funeral, one of his most loyal followers, Jeanne de Salzmann, announced: "When a Teacher like Mr. Gurdjieff goes, he cannot be replaced. Those who remain cannot create the same conditions. We have only one hope: to make something together. What no one of us could do, perhaps a group can."<sup>25</sup>

## Four

# Further Quests for the Hidden Source

**A**fter I go, another will come,” Gurdjieff had promised Bennett and others.<sup>1</sup> Seventeen years later, Idries Shah arrived on the scene as another promoter of the hidden hierarchy. Addressing Bennett’s group, Shah expanded upon the Sarmoung myth, and by doing so he further mystified the original sources of Sufism.

In 1964, a book by Idries Shah appeared entitled simply *The Sufis*. The scholar, poet, and novelist Robert Graves wrote an introduction that mirrored perennialist expectations. He submitted that the Sufis’ “origins have never been traced or dated. . . . Nor are the Sufis a sect, being bound by no religious dogma however tenuous and using no regular place of worship.”<sup>2</sup> For Graves, Sufism preceded (and possibly superseded) Islam and all other religious traditions as well. Not only that, but for Shah, the tradition had been (and would always be) the basis of gnosis as such.

According to *The Sufis*, nearly all the esoteric traditions in the West were the result of hidden Sufi activity: the Knights Templar, the Hermeticists, alchemists, Rosicrucians, and the Freemasons. Sufi influence could be deciphered in the Grail Legend, Chaucer, Dante, and Shakespeare. Though unsupportable, these claims would appeal to those who had earlier been drawn to Theosophy and Gurdjieff. Here, indeed, was the hidden tradition revealed at last—or so it seemed to some.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Within two years after the publication of *The Sufis, The Teachers of Gurdjieff* was issued by an author named Raphael Lefort. In this book, certain Sufis informed Lefort that Gurdjieff had died without appointing any successors. Though G's "message died with him," Gurdjieff had acted under "specific orders" issued by a mysterious entity called the "Center."<sup>3</sup>

In this, there was a specific location and source of the Work, something Gurdjieff himself had described in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Lefort, as he traveled throughout the Middle East, met with various Sufi shaykhs who claimed to be under the direction of this root school. One of them would state: "Gurdjieff was to teach certain things for a certain circumstance." After that time, his teaching was "adulterated and carried out long after its effectiveness had gone."<sup>4</sup>

Gurdjieff served a role that was "preparative." Someone was supposed to come and complete his teaching. If, as suspected, "Lefort" was none other than Shah writing under a pseudonym, then the preparative work done by Gurdjieff suggested the later insertion of Idries Shah into English Gurdjieffian circles.

Not surprisingly, Shah issued his first appeal to the Gurdjieffian group active in Britain centered around John G. Bennett. Shah contacted Bennett in 1962, presenting himself as having just arrived in England to seek out Gurdjieff's followers. His mission, he claimed, was to transmit "knowledge and methods that were needed to complete their teaching."<sup>5</sup> This, at least, was Bennett's understanding as reported in his autobiography, *Witness*.

In fact, Shah had been raised in Great Britain, was himself half-Scottish, and had studied at Oxford.<sup>6</sup> His father, Iqbal Ali Shah (1894–1969), was an Indian of Afghan descent and a hereditary member of the Naqshbandi Order. The younger Shah at one time, in the 1950s, had worked as a secretary for Gerald B. Gardner, who had himself almost single-handedly reconstructed the Wiccan tradition while directing the Museum of Magic on the Isle of Man.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps, like Gardner and Gurd-

jeff, Idries Shah was about to launch another reconstruction—but this time of Sufism.

Having obscured his authentic past, Shah chose to project the image of a missionary from the East. According to Bennett, Shah “did not claim to be a teacher, but he did claim that he had been sent by his own teacher and that he had the support of the ‘Guardians of the Tradition.’” At first, Bennett would exult, “It was astonishing to learn that here in England was a man who was entitled to speak on behalf of the ‘Invisible Hierarchy.’ I had seen enough of Shah to know that he was no charlatan or idle boaster and that he was intensely serious about the task he had been given.”<sup>8</sup>

It appears that Ikbal Ali Shah—and later Idries—had, indeed, been instructed by teachers in Afghanistan, but their relationship would remain entirely sketchy or vague. Much later it was more fully revealed by an ex-student of Shah’s named Robert “Abdul Hayy” Darr. As a co-founder of the Afghan Cultural Assistance Foundation, Darr worked actively delivering humanitarian aid to Afghans through his own organization in the 1980s. He also worked with the United Nations’ food relief program in northern Afghanistan in the spring of 1990. While doing so, he traveled frequently among the mujahedeen and came to know quite a number of influential Sufis.

During this period, Darr was befriended by Homayon Etemadi and Ustad Khalilullah Khalili, two acquaintances of Idries Shah’s father, Ikbal Ali Shah, and this is what Darr claimed to me that he was told: Through his father, Idries Shah came to know a number of Sufis who were part of the Western-educated aristocracy that surrounded the king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah. One of them was Sufi Abdul Hamid Khan, the Master of the Royal Afghan Mint; another was Ustad Khalilullah Khalili, the nation’s poet laureate and an ambassador to various countries in the Arab world. Though devoutly Muslim, both of these men shared a similarly broad—one might say “universalist”—interpretation of Sufism. In tracing his own family’s lineage, Ikbal Ali Shah traveled

## CHAPTER FOUR

to Kabul and renewed his Naqshbandi studies with Sufi Abdul Hamid. He tried to convey some of his insights in a book called *Islamic Sufism*, published in 1933. Some of these teachings were also passed on to his children, Idries and Omar.

While first meeting Bennett in 1962, Idries Shah handed him a “Declaration of the People of the Tradition.” According to that declaration, Sufi knowledge “is concentrated, administered and presided over by three kinds of individual, existing at any given time. They have been called an ‘Invisible Hierarchy,’ because normally they are not in communication or contact with ordinary human beings.”<sup>9</sup>

As if specifically tasked by the “Guardians,” Idries Shah would soon begin to administer Sufi circles in Europe and North America, while his brother, Omar Ali Shah (d. 2005), served a similar, though less noticeable, role in South America. This would account for two of the “three kinds of individual” mentioned in the Declaration. The third individual, who acted as the emissary of the “Center,” was probably the elder Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah.

Despite these obfuscations, Idries was hardly an imposter. The extraordinary body of work on Sufism he would later produce was highly thoughtful and creative. Claims issued by Shah’s followers that he was the sole authority on Sufism in the West, however, were greatly exaggerated and misleading. One follower of Shah claimed: “All authentic Sufis are in direct contact, and there is in the world at any one moment only one Sufi entity which manipulates the totality of the Sufi activity.”<sup>10</sup> This did much to continue the myth of a “Hidden Directorate” (Bennett’s term), which allowed Shah’s followers to propagandize that his school was the only legitimate Western branch of Sufism.

Claiming that Shah was the sole representative of the “Source” fit perfectly, of course, with the expectations of those nurtured on the myth of the Sarmoung Brotherhood. Playing on that myth, an unnamed correspondent of the *Times* of London filed a report of his visit to “Abshar Monastery” (1964), a place that sounded suspiciously similar to the monastery described by Gurdjieff in *Meetings*. In this particular report,

however, the head of the monastery oversaw “the mass ‘remembering,’ the Dervish zikhr of the name of the absent head of the community, the *Sarkar* (Work Chief). This took the form of the phrase Idd-rees Shaah!”<sup>11</sup>

In another article filed in 1965, another correspondent reported visiting a similar (if not identical) place explicitly specified as the home of the Sarmoung Brotherhood. In this report the *Surkaur* (spelled slightly differently) was referred to as the “Lord of Time,” the (absent) head of the community. The reporter asked if there were any “emissaries” of the Brotherhood in Europe. The answer was that there “was one, but he must not speak of him,” because this emissary had to work “in private.”<sup>12</sup>

Any skeptic reading these two articles carefully would have pieced together various implications: the innuendo that Idries Shah himself was the absent head of the Sarmoung Brotherhood working as an “emissary” of the Source in Europe; the suggestion that he was “disguising” that fact; the allusion that Shah himself was the “Lord of the Time,” another rendering of the traditional Sufi phrase “the Axis of the Age” (*Qutb al-Zaman*). All of this can be rightly viewed as mythmaking on the part of Shah, whether cynically self-serving, as critics later proposed, or otherwise.

In 1987 Robert Darr reported what was being taught and generally accepted in Idries Shah’s school to Ustad Khalilullah. After stressing that he had been a close friend of Iqbal Ali Shah, the Ustad responded, “His children [Omar and Idries] have lived in Europe for a long time and their understanding of our view is not precise because their Persian isn’t perfect.”

Darr, who reported this to me anecdotally, interpreted this as the Ustad’s courteous way of indicating that something was amiss. The teachings of Idries Shah were not fully in alignment with those arising in Afghanistan, yet publicly disclaiming those teachings would have been a breach of Sufi etiquette. Darr reported there is an old Naqshbandi saying that illustrates such behavior: “We don’t do that, but we don’t deny it, either.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

There may have been another reason that the Ustad and his circle may not have wanted to publicly break with Idries Shah, but this is conjectural. By 1964, King Zahir Shah had overseen the implementation of a new constitution that guaranteed parliamentary representation, free elections, and civil rights for all citizens. As a result, throughout the next decade Afghanistan was beset by increasing internal divisions between the religious ulama, tribal factions, and increasing Marxist dissent. We might easily assume that the king and his government needed goodwill in the West, and they hardly needed a literary or a religious scandal to further complicate such matters.

Over a period of more than thirty years, Shah would attract a number of renowned literary figures into his circle of admirers, including the recipient of the United Kingdom's Companion of Honor award, novelist Doris Lessing; Sir John Glubb, a historian of the Middle East and the former commanding general of the Arab Legion; and Professor I. F. Rushbrook Williams, a Quondam Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. During roughly the same period, the list of Shah's detractors would grow to include an even larger number of scholars, including (but not limited to) Seyyed Hossein Nasr; L. P. Elwell Sutton, a distinguished professor of Persian studies at the University of Edinburgh; and the distinguished German Islamicist Annemarie Schimmel.

Whatever the opinions of these supporters or detractors, according to Robert Darr, Homayon Etemadi, an Afghan well-acquainted with Iqbal Ali Shah's approach to Sufism, was perplexed that Idries had introduced a foreign element into classical Sufi teaching. Such ideas included transforming the hidden hierarchy into a materialized group of superhumans who could take power over other human beings. As we shall see later, this concept completely contradicts the core ethics of classical Sufi teachers.

While Madame de Salzmann, Madame Ouspensky, and others continued to spread remnants of the method, Bennett took heart from Gurdjieff's indication that he (alone) "would follow in [Gurdjieff's] footsteps and take up the work he had started." According to Bennett, the master

had confided to him privately: "You. Only you can repay for all my labours."<sup>13</sup> Bennett took this to mean that he must seek out the Source, place himself under the tutelage of "the teacher to come," and assist in creating, if not directly initiating, a renewed version of the school.

After being contacted by Idries Shah, Bennett initially placed himself at the service of this "Teacher from the East." Bennett was then living at Coombe Springs, an estate established in 1941 to promote the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky Work. In October 1965, Bennett decided to gift Shah with the estate, but as he and the board of directors were discussing the matter, Shah insisted that the estate be turned over to him personally with no strings attached. Having met this request, Bennett found himself and his group banned from the premises. Shah then sold Coombe Springs and reestablished himself in London with a new house, where he formed an entirely new group.

It seems evident that Shah had established a beachhead in Britain by building on the Sarmoung myth and by playing on the expectation that another teacher from the "Center" would arrive to finish the work started by Gurdjieff. But the mythmaking (and seeming chicanery) did not end with this.

As early as 1968, Shah would intimate that a group called the Khwajagan was the source of his work. According to him, this was the "earliest of all the mystical 'chains of transmission'" in Sufism.<sup>14</sup> As any scholar of Sufism could tell, this was, at best, an exaggeration, and it was followed by more embellishments.

One thing that could be verified was that the Khwajagan were an important group originating in eastern Iran (Khurasan). And from there this organization spread throughout Central Asia, giving birth to the Naqshbandiyya, the largest and most widespread of all of the Sufi orders in the greater Middle East, along with the the Qadiriyya.

Shah would claim, "Naqshbandi sheikhs alone have the authority to initiate disciples into all the other orders of dervishes." This, too, would prove to be inaccurate except for those Naqshbandis who were also (simultaneously) members of other Sufi orders. Shah also opined:

## CHAPTER FOUR

“Because they never publicly adopted any distinctive dress, and because their members never carried on attention-attracting activities, scholars have not been able to reconstruct the history of the order, and it has often been difficult to identify its members.”<sup>15</sup> This would only be true of a certain type of Naqshbandi Sufi, a subject to which I will return later. Clearly—if it existed at all—the branch of the Naqshbandiyya to which Shah referred was not the order known to most scholars or to most participants in normal Sufi circles.

Something that scholarly investigators of Sufism find particularly vexing is that Shah explicitly and deliberately played down the specifically Islamic roots of Sufism. This contradicts all existing studies of the Naqshbandiyya, as well, since they are widely known to be the most conservative of all the Sufi orders. In fact the Naqshbandiyya, in particular, are renowned for maintaining an allegiance to the Shari’a, and especially to Sunni Islam.

Confounding such conservative expectations, Shah would report the following discussion with a contemporary Sufi master (presumably a Naqshbandi): “Question: Is Sufism the interior meaning of Islam, or does it have wider application?” “Answer: . . . Sufis can teach in any vehicle, whatever its names. Religious vehicles have throughout history taken various names.”<sup>16</sup>

Shah would reiterate time and again: “The Sufis often start from a nonreligious viewpoint. . . . Sufi mysticism differs tremendously from other cults claiming to be mystical. Formal religion is for the Sufi merely a shell, though a genuine one, which fulfills a function. When the human consciousness has penetrated beyond this social framework, the Sufi understands the real meaning of religion.”<sup>17</sup>

As if to regain some balance and to dissuade some from imagining that Sufism is inimical to its host religion, Shah took great care to remind us that there can be “no interior conflict between Islam and Sufism.” Instead, Shah professed, “Mohammed . . . did not claim to bring any new religion. He was continuing the monotheistic tradition which he stated was working long before his time.” At the same time, over the

centuries, “Islam as a community [became] regulated by the interpretations of the doctors of law,” thereby being reduced to “a matter of legal definition.”<sup>18</sup>

Somewhat confusingly—and in contradistinction to Idries Shah—his father, Iqbal Ali Shah, was critical of Sufis who were not practicing Muslims. “The Koran is the first and the last Text Book of Sufism,” he would write, “and the Prophet Mohamed the greatest Sufi of all times. Whosoever, therefore, does not subscribe to this idea, despite the fact that he may be following an Occult Way, is not Sufi.”<sup>19</sup>

Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah had objected to the separation of Sufism from its Islamic roots, yet that critique would later be leveled against his son. Unlike his father, Idries never referred to the Qur’an as the “first and last Text Book of Sufism,” nor did he seem to agree that “a Sufi must of necessity be a Moslem.”<sup>20</sup> If anything, Idries Shah would take great care to distance himself from formal religions of any kind.

Omar Ali Shah (the brother of Idries) would adopt a more conciliatory, yet reserved, approach to Islam. For example, he would teach his students Islamic prayers and openly style himself “the Naqshband.” In a later book, dedicated to Iqbal Ali Shah, he would state: “The problem is that certain bodies . . . [including the] Islamic, have taken up a position of rigidity. They will not permit the possibility of anything different from what they say or think.”<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, Idries Shah was not proposing that Sufism was non-Islamic, yet both he and his brother seemed to be operating outside of a conventional Muslim framework. Even more interesting for this study is that both styled themselves “Naqshbandi.” The largest branches of the Naqshbandiyya currently extant are the Mujaddidi and Khalidi subgroups. Both branches are widely known for their religious and political conservatism, and both are widely spread throughout the Islamic world. Shah seemed to be pointing to another branch of the Naqshbandiyya, a smaller group secreted away in Afghanistan much like the fabled Sarmoung. Did such a group exist that could be independently verified?

## CHAPTER FOUR

In another book published in 1966, Shah disclosed the following: “G. I. Gurdjieff left abundant clues to the Sufi origins of virtually every point in his ‘system’; though it obviously belongs more specifically to the Khaghagan [alt. Khwajagan] form of dervish teaching.”<sup>22</sup> It seems evident that both Iqbal Ali Shah and his two sons had contacted this particular school, and J. G. Bennett would soon search to find them.

In a characteristically British way, Bennett omitted describing the emotional impact of losing Coombe Springs, although it seems evident that he felt used by Shah. Instead, in an extraordinary act of cognitive reframing, Bennett reported traveling to New York and meeting with Madame de Salzmänn, who “was very curious about Idries Shah and asked me what I had gained from my contact with him. I replied: ‘Freedom!’”<sup>23</sup>

Apparently, the freedom Bennett had gained allowed him to pursue other possible sources of the Gurdjieff Work. While deciding whether or not to serve Shah, Bennett had written a Turkish teacher he had met earlier in Istanbul to ask his advice. The response from this correspondent was that Bennett should thereafter “be free from all teachers and all schools.”<sup>24</sup>

Having served as a British intelligence officer immediately following World War I, Bennett was fluent in Ottoman Turkish. Since Turkic dialects were (and still are) one of the principal languages spoken throughout the Near East, Bennett’s linguistic abilities allowed him to travel and visit several indigenous Sufi teachers during much of the early to mid-1950s. His principal attraction was to the Naqshbandiyya, which he believed, like Shah, held important keys to the system.<sup>25</sup>

After his punishing encounter with Shah, Bennett—who by then had entered his seventies—began to study seriously with Hasan Şuşud, his correspondent in Turkey. According to Bennett, Şuşud would insist “that I was a ‘master’ and that I had gone beyond all those whom I regarded as my teachers. . . . Hasan took immense trouble to convince me of my own importance.”<sup>26</sup>

Much of Şuşud's own book, whose title in Turkish is *Hacegan Handedani*, would be incorporated into Bennett's last work, *The Masters of Wisdom*. In that book Bennett would conclude that the source of the Work was, indeed, to be found in the original teachers of the Naqshbandiyya, the *Khwajagan* or "Masters," spelled alternately as *Khajagan*, *Khaghagan*, or *Hacegan*. At the end of his autobiography, Bennett relates that Şuşud taught him the "*zikh-i-daim* or perpetual prayer of the heart," a *Khwajagan* technique from which Bennett derived "immense benefit."<sup>27</sup>

Bennett would also credit Şuşud with helping him to experience for himself "the reality of what [he] had accepted in theory." He added: "Only, now [1974], after forty years, did I see myself recovering from the conditioning to which I had been subjected in the Ouspensky groups, where it was constantly emphasized that the higher levels of being were far away and that objective consciousness was no concern of ours."<sup>28</sup>

In 1978—and after having first read Bennett—I myself traveled to Istanbul, where I met Hasan Şuşud. In our first (and only) meeting, Şuşud not only verified that the teachings of the *Khwajagan* were important—perhaps even central—to Sufism, but that "Gurdjieff was a thief of the Tradition." According to Şuşud, he had personally met Gurdjieff (probably in Istanbul in the 1920s) and was thoroughly convinced that Gurdjieff was *not* an "emissary" of the Work. The implication was that Gurdjieff had probably lifted a part of their system out of its original context. For various reasons, the system had never realized its stated goal, namely producing a stable realization that could be lived in everyday life.

Bennett's search had, indeed, ended with Hasan Şuşud, who seemed to have an intimate working knowledge of the methods of Central Asian Sufism. Şuşud also, however, claimed to have left this path behind him. Instead, he told me that he had extracted a part of the *Khwajagan* method and discarded the rest as pointless. Şuşud would become known for teaching his own method, *Itlaq Yolu* (the Path of Liberation) to a number of Western students, including J. G. Bennett.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Though I instantly liked Hasan Şuşud, his path seemed overly ascetic and simplistic. It largely depended on fasting and an arduous method of breath control and seemed to present only a part of what was necessary for balanced human development. I would later discover that Şuşud had belonged to yet another school of Sufism: one that neither Bennett nor anyone else in the West had discovered. Much of that tradition remained undisclosed by Şuşud, who had vastly oversimplified its methods. More importantly, this school had a connection with both the Khwajagan, the forerunners of the Naqshbandiyya, and with the malamatiyya, the people of blame—a group with which Bennett had also linked Gurdjieff.

Who were these people? And were the “people of blame” connected with the Khwajagan? Did Gurdjieff and Shah derive some of their teachings from one or both of these sources?

While Gurdjieff indicated that part of his teaching derived from Sufi sources, his later followers would acknowledge that he created his own system. It is not my purpose to discredit that system in whole or in part. It is clear, however, that two of Gurdjieff’s principal followers found the system lacking. One of them was Ouspensky, and the other was J. G. Bennett, who would actively seek the precursors of Gurdjieff among the Sufis.

Whatever its merits or demerits, the Gurdjieff work incorporated a method of “self-witnessing,” an approach recognized by certain Sufis as similar to their own. The map of seven stations that Gurdjieff referred to is clearly Sufi in origin, and much of this book will be dedicated to exploring it. For now, let it suffice that the most sophisticated map of the *maqamat* (spiritual stations) seems to have been produced by the Khwajagan.

Bennett was certain that the character Bogga-Eddin in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* referred to the historical figure Bahauddin Naqshband (d. 1389). In the film and the book, Bogga-Eddin indicates to Gurdjieff that the source of his teaching lies before or “beyond” him. Since Bahauddin Naqshband was the eponymous founder of the Naqshbandiyya,

this could indicate an earlier source than him and his order. Bennett was convinced that he had found these precursors in the Khwajagan.

Clearly, Idries Shah began his career through a direct appeal to the followers of Gurdjieff, and although some of his sources may have been similar, Shah obscured as much as he revealed about them. What can be independently confirmed is that Shah's approach included teachings derived from an extant group in Afghanistan. If Darr's reports are correct, this group included liberal, Western-educated Sufis of unquestionable reputation. All of them acknowledged a spiritual connection with the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya, although (according to Darr) some of them worked outside of any recognizable Sufi order. As we shall see, this is also a feature of the *malamatiyya*, the Sufi way of blame.

Dismissed by Idries Shah, Bennett would seek out another unorthodox Sufi teacher, Hasan Lütfi Şuşud. The latter would indicate his spiritual indebtedness to the Khwajagan, though Şuşud would later be found to have a connection to the people of blame. Like Shah's circle in Afghanistan, Şuşud would claim to be working outside of any formal *tariqa* (Sufi order). Şuşud would sum up his own approach as follows: "The way of absolute liberation is for those who are compelled to seek an escape from the torment of relative reality. Some people cannot be content with intellectual and religious attainments. They aspire to the Absolute, to the Essence."<sup>29</sup>

In Şuşud's phrase "the torment of relative reality," we find a resonance with Gurdjieff's "terrible condition of things." We also sense a rather modern appeal to those who "cannot be content with intellectual and religious attainments."

At the same time, Şuşud would maintain, "The Sufism of absolute liberation is normal Sufism," and, "The way of annihilation is the way of the great Prophets, the venerable saints, the Masters of Reality and Essential Truth." For Şuşud, his approach was neither outside of Islam nor alien to normative Sufism, nor did it need to be divorced from any of those sources. Şuşud nevertheless believed there were two branches of Sufism, a "Northern" and a "Southern" approach. The former differed

from the latter in its emphasis on the realization of a Buddhist-like emptiness at the core of the self. “Non-being,” he would write, “is real existence, being awake. It is the secret of being without being.” This emphasis, Şuşud insisted, was at the basis of Khwajagan teaching.<sup>30</sup> Here, we approach the crux of the matter. At the opening of this chapter, I proposed that there seemed to be a controversy about whether or not Sufism could exist apart from Islam. Since the very word *islam* means surrender, it suggests releasing oneself from the preoccupations of the self. All Sufis have emphasized this. But the early Khwajagan were particularly suspicious about a “spiritualized” form of egotism, and they were particularly concerned with religious or spiritual hypocrisy.

Because of this, the Khwajagan—and the earliest Naqshbandis—avoided the use of a number of spiritual devices used by other Sufi organizations. These devices included the wearing of special cloaks, hats, or other forms of insignia that would single them out from nonmembers. In addition they avoided congregating in special “lodges” (*khaniqahs* or *tekkes*) and avoided the performance of supererogatory religious practices in public, preferring the silent form of ritual remembrance to audible *dhikr*; they also generally avoided public recitals of Sufi poetry and music. Even more importantly, they took great care in maintaining their mystical “sobriety” and were careful to hide their ecstatic states. One of their principles was to blend well with ordinary people and to seek “solitude in the crowd.” These principles and procedures were also observed by the most assiduous people of blame, a subject that will be addressed at length in the next chapter.

As anyone familiar with the writings of Gurdjieff and Shah can detect, both of them valued these same principles. In one important area there is a radical departure, however: the cultivation of any form of mystique, especially the intimation—or outright promotion—of a hidden hierarchy. It is true that a certain form of Sufi hierarchy is found in the writings of Ibn al-Arabi, but it lands in a different place: the radical indigence, or spiritual poverty, of the people of blame. This will be explored at greater length in the following chapters.

Among the Khwajagan, as among all classical Sufis, one could become close to God only by accepting one's inner poverty (*faqr*); yet, this did not result from becoming either an adept or an ostentatious "fakir." To adopt such a position (or station) would be to flaunt one's lowliness. In classical Sufism it is often emphasized that authentic realization consists of knowing—without a doubt—that "the servant is as though he had never been, and God is as He has never ceased to be." In other words, what we designate as "God" is beyond all contingencies, while humankind remains utterly contingent, therefore fallible.

Such a realization is completely at odds with creating or fostering myths and mystification, even more so when one encourages others to believe in a materialized "Lord of Time." This practice is actually abhorrent to both the Khwajagan and the people of blame. Here, both Gurdjieff and Shah depart from the fundamentals of classical Sufism.

According to Darr, Ustad Khalilullah was perplexed that Idries Shah in this way would complicate a path that was actually simple though rigorous. As Khwaja Ahrar once said, "In reality the goal is annihilation and non-being."<sup>31</sup> If this is so, then the path consists of *relinquishing* power over others. It certainly does not consist of resorting to the use of mythical ploys to *enhance* such power.

Encounters with the actual, as opposed to the mythical, inheritors of the Khwajagan could best be entitled "Meetings with *Unremarkable Men*." Their "secret" is that you might never notice them unless you are acutely attentive and emptied of spiritual ambitions and pretensions. In this manner, the modern Khwajagan conform to the teachings of classical Sufism, summed up by notable Sufis in the following ways: One of the early Khwajagan, Bistami, was asked how a Sufi could draw nearer to God. His answer was through that which was *not* a property of the Almighty, "humility and indigence." Another great Sufi, Qushayri, once said, "The hero is he who smashes idols and the idol of every man is his ego."

We may surmise that Gurdjieff, Shah, and (to a lesser extent) Bennett found Euro-American culture ill equipped to accept this central

## CHAPTER FOUR

Sufi concept. It may be that these promoters of another way crafted the myth of the hidden source to fit the expectations of the seekers they found—many of whom were universalists, traditionalists, and esotericists. As already indicated, the expectations that contributed to this myth had a long history in Europe and North America, so the approach taken by Gurdjieff and Shah had a practical advantage. In the meantime, though they may have intended to use the myth of the hidden hierarchy as a transitional device, the popularizers of Sufism (or quasi-Sufism) may have themselves fallen prey to a form of power complex or ego inflation.

In finality, and notwithstanding the positive contributions these popularizers have made, it is regrettable that they have contributed to keeping the elephant in the dark. More importantly, by resorting to mystification, they may have further obscured the central mystery that resides in Being itself: a mystery that only reveals itself in the most elegant simplicity.

In the following chapters, I hope I will clear the way to a different way of exploring the transformative psychology embedded in Sufism. I will also investigate the probability that the *malamiyya* (whom I will simply call *malamatis*) and the earliest Khwajagan were practically one and the same. It was they (among a few others) who put the classical theosophy of Sufism into practice, and with the least amount of adulteration.

Undoubtedly, successors of the early Khwajagan and the *malamatis* still exist today, although, as we shall see, many scholars and seekers have found them somewhat inaccessible. The contemporary methods of these practitioners may differ slightly, but their approach rests on the principles and goals best expressed by the theosophy of Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi.

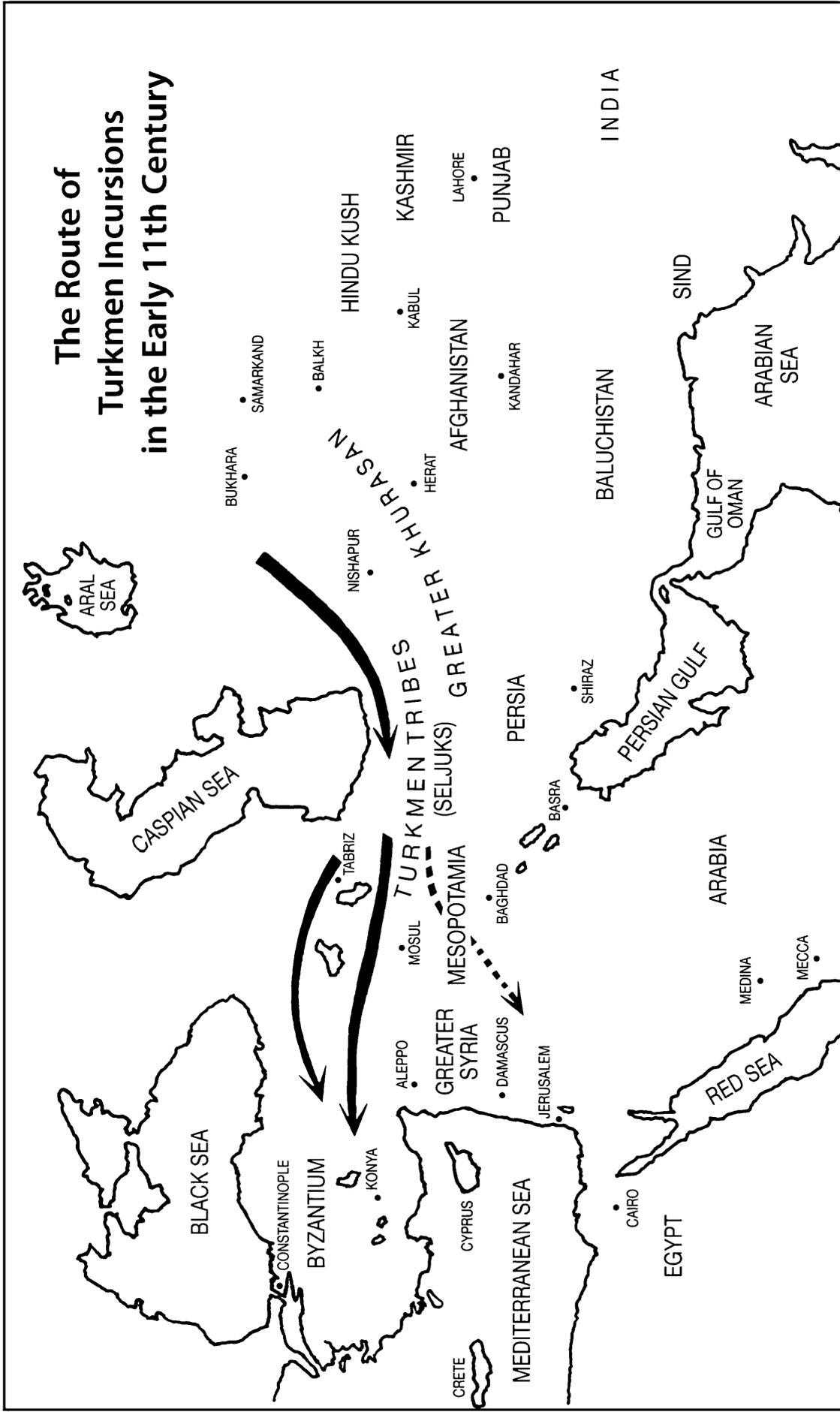
As I hope to show, the spiritual map of contemporary *malamatis* is remarkably detailed, and their attitude toward Islam and the Muhammadan way is quite open, tolerant, and universal in outlook. As

FURTHER QUESTS FOR THE HIDDEN SOURCE

for the two extremes I have mentioned, Islamic legalism and New Age obscurantism, I offer the following poem of Rumi:

Beyond Islam and unbelief  
there is a “desert plain.”  
For us, there is a “passion”  
in the midst of that expanse.  
The knower of God  
who reaches [there]  
will prostrate.  
[For] there is neither Islam,  
nor unbelief,  
nor any “where”  
[in] that place.<sup>32</sup>

# The Route of Turkmen Incursions in the Early 11th Century



## Five

# The Earlier Way of Blame

**B**efore investigating the actual historical sources of the people of blame, it may serve us well to summarize the last chapter. J. G. Bennett was convinced that Gurdjieff's greatest influence came from a group of proto-Naqshbandis in Central Asia, a brotherhood later verified by Hasan Şuşud as the Khwajagan, or Masters. As we have also seen, Idries Shah implied that his own perspective was influenced by the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya. Moreover, the father of Idries, Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah, was also known to have contacts among Afghan Sufis, some of whom (according to Robert Darr) were still active members of the Khwajagan.

Hasan Şuşud, a rather enigmatic Sufi in Istanbul, had disguised his former affiliation with the Naqshbandiyya and with another group that referred to itself as the Nuriyya-Malamiyya (in Turkish, *Nuriyye-Melamiye*). As already noted, he had revealed that he had a rather low opinion of Gurdjieff as a “thief of the tradition.” It is hard to tell which tradition Şuşud was referring to, although he probably meant the Khwajagan or the malamatiyya, or both of them comingled together.

A common element that tied together Gurdjieff, the Shah family, Bennett, and Şuşud was that all of them referred to the masters of Central Asia. All of them also posited that the Khwajagan had functioned as a rather elite group within greater Sufism; yet all of them, with the exception of Şuşud, seem to have deviated from the central teachings of Sufism, which emphasized the nothingness of human beings next to God. Instead, the followers of Gurdjieff, Bennett, and Idries Shah

## CHAPTER FIVE

would all continue to promote a form of occult elitism that emphasized a hidden hierarchy in Sufism composed of superhumans who operated beyond, behind, or outside of normative Sufism and Islam. And this idea, as we have seen, was inimical to the original teachings of the Khwajagan.

Ibn al-Arabi had also referred to a hierarchy among saints, at the pinnacle of which were the blameworthy (*malamiyya*, or *malamatis*). But rather than promoting a form of elitism, he and other classical Sufis claimed that *malamatis* hid themselves among the common people. A question that remains is whether or not the Khwajagan and the people of blame were somehow associated with each other, and if so whether or not they shared common characteristics. To attempt to answer this question requires a less fantastical examination of the early *malamatis* and the Khwajagan, who appear to be separate. So, to begin with, what was the original “path of blame”?

From recent research, it seems that Islamic mysticism originally included two distinct lines of spiritual development: one centered in Mesopotamia, principally in Baghdad, and the other in Khurasan, a province that once included northeastern Iran, Afghanistan, and parts of Central Asia. These two trends have been referred to as the Mesopotamian and the Khurasanian: the *malamati* and Sufi schools respectively.<sup>1</sup> Hasan Şuşud called these two approaches the northern and southern branches of Islamic mysticism, but these descriptors are a bit too vague to be useful.<sup>2</sup> We shall now attempt to distinguish between Sufism and *malamatism* while acknowledging how they became intermingled over time.

The first reference to the way of blame can be found in the Qur’an, which refers to those who “struggle in God’s path, fearing not the blame of any blamer” (5:54). In one tradition, the Prophet Muhammad (sa)<sup>3</sup> is reported as saying, “Poverty is my pride,” to which he added (in another tradition), “Poverty is to be disgraced in this world and the next.”<sup>4</sup> Turning to a current encyclopedia of Islam, we find that the *malamatiyya* (way of blame) is described as “the designation of a tendency, or

of a psychological category, of people who attract blame to themselves despite their being innocent.”<sup>5</sup>

But why were the *malamatis* reproached and by whom; moreover, how were they held to be innocent? From the example of the Prophet Muhammad, we can deduce that the *malamatis* were held to be innocent by God and not by human beings. As we know, Muhammad was initially reproached for being a false prophet, as well as a social deviant who provoked his Meccan kinsman by opposing their well-established social conventions.

Of course, the Arabic word *malamati* was never directly attributed to Muhammad by pious Muslims. By the second century of Islam (ninth century CE), however, this term was applied to Abu Yazid al-Bistami (804–74), who broke with convention by speaking openly about the state of “essential union” (*ayn al-jam*).<sup>6</sup> By doing so, Bistami expressed an aspect of unitarian (*wujudi*) belief that some Muslims found acceptable and others would not. At the same time, Bistami acted in ways that challenged parochial understandings of the Shari’a quite openly.

In one example, it is said that Bistami one day was entering a city when its people, who had heard of his renown, ran out to meet him. He noticed that their ministrations were distracting him from his thoughts of God. Arriving at a bazaar, Bistami took out a loaf of bread and began to eat. All of these people fled, for it was the month of Ramadan. Bistami turned to a disciple traveling with him and said, “You see! As soon as I enact a single article of the law they all reject me!”<sup>7</sup>

Bistami’s point was that it is incumbent upon Muslims to fast during Ramadan, but one of the exceptions is when one is traveling; thus, Bayazid (as he was also known) was actually following the Shari’a, and the people surrounding him were both ignorant of sacred law and more concerned about following their own conventions. Bayazid knew the finer points of the law, but his adherence to the internal meaning of the Shari’a marked him as a *malamati*.

By appearing not to excel in the formal obligations of Islam, *malamatis* like Bistami would incur the criticism of those who judged them

strictly from outward appearances. In addition, those who practiced this way were especially critical of their own egoism and pietism, finding that the existence of these traits, in themselves, were blameworthy.

By extension, malamatis avoided all forms of religious ostentation and displays of self-righteousness, but, conversely, they never engaged in rebellion as a merely egocentric form of assertion. If they *appeared* to be acting in unethical ways, it was in order to instruct others in the deeper meaning of the Shari'a and its essential ethics.

Those who most perfectly incurred blame were those who relinquished outward appearances and focused instead on a path of relentless self-inquiry (*muhasibi*). As noted by Hamid Algar (one of the foremost authorities on the history of the Naqshbandiyya), these attributes would also become associated with the Khwajagan, who became identified as such by the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> This was long after the death of the ninth-century Bistami, who was listed as one of their most illustrious forbearers.

Trimingham summarizes: "The true malamati conceal[ed] his progress in the spiritual life . . . [and he aspired] to free himself from the world and its passions whilst living in the world."<sup>9</sup> While the malamatis were inwardly driven to eradicate all traces of self-conceit, they were compelled, above all, to eliminate the hypocrisy inherent in having a separate sense of selfhood. Both Schimmel and Trimingham claim that the malamatis stressed the ideal of *ikhlas*, "perfect sincerity," as well as "the nothingness of men before God." According to Hamid Algar, almost all these traits could also be attributed to the Khwajagan.<sup>10</sup>

Central to Qur'anic teaching was the notion that Allah would forgive all but two sins: that of associating any partners with himself (*shirk*) and that of hypocrisy (*nifaq*). The malamati focused on eliminating the latter, especially when it was disguised as false piety. The diminishment of *shirk*, self-idolatry, would then lead to a greater proximity to God that, at times, would approach, but not reach, complete unification.

Such states of unification, however, were not to be expressed outwardly as endowing the mystic with a special form of charisma. Abu

'Abd al-Rahman Sulami (d. 1021) wrote that the malamatiyya "consider it idolatrous to make a display of their acts of devotion; to parade ecstasy is apostasy. . . . They believe that signs and wonders should not be divulged; [instead] they are to be looked upon as possible traps."<sup>11</sup>

A precedent was found in the Prophet Muhammad, who indicated that the most pernicious form of idolatry was the worship of oneself. Sufis of all forms were concerned with the eradication of self-conceit, but the malamatiyya, in particular, became renowned for accenting the efficacy of "blame," or relentless self-inquiry, in eradicating all vestiges of egoism. Such inquiry often exposed the subtler form of narcissism that attached itself to formalistic religious observances, including those of the Sufis.

It is important to note that while the way of blame was generally understood to be a form of spiritual disposition or temperament (*mashrab*), it also became known as an organized school of mystics. In Nishapur, the capital of Khurasan, a particular group beginning with Hamdun al-Qassar (d. 883/4) began to define its salient characteristics. "Hamdun al-Qassar was once asked 'What is the Path of Blame?' 'It is to abandon in every situation the desire to smarten up in front of people,' he said, '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.'<sup>12</sup> Here, we find one of the basics of the malamati way: to be continuously mindful of God while forgoing one's attachment to praise or blame. But there are other equally important aspects.

Abu Uthman al-Hiri, another renowned Khurasanian malamati stressed, "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 awareness of the doing of the action."<sup>13</sup> Herein, Abu Uthman emphasized the importance of self-abandonment in a single-minded devotion that leads to a closer proximity to God.

Above all, according to Schimmel, the original malamatis sought to overcome all vestiges of self-division or hypocrisy through an applied

psychology that could be termed a “science of the self” (*al-ilm bi'l-nafs*).<sup>14</sup> This spiritual approach, as we shall see, would later lead to a more thoroughgoing psychology of states (*ahwal*) and stations (*maqamat*).

Trimingham notes that members of the school of Nishapur exhibited the following characteristics: they rejected all outward show of ritual piety; they worked for their living instead of accepting alms; they wore no distinctive robes that would set them apart from others; they did not submit entirely to spiritual masters, although they did seek guidance; they also did not profess speculative theories of mysticism, but strived, instead, to eradicate all aspects of limiting self-consciousness; and, finally, they sought to live in the world while pursuing the mystical path with the least degree of notability.<sup>15</sup>

As part of their practice, and in order to disguise their interior pursuits, most malamatis—as well as the later Khwajagan—belonged to guilds (*akhiyya*). Sviri notes that “many of the malamati teachers and disciples bore epithets indicating crafts and professions.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, rather than secreting themselves away in retreat, the malamatis were usually to be found among the artisans of the bazaar. Along with pursuing normal work, malamatis also espoused a tradition of generosity to strangers, or “spiritual chivalry,” called *futuwwa* and a chivalrous form of *adab* (etiquette), best described by Sulami.<sup>17</sup> This mode of behavior was wedded to daily life, whose conduct was considered by the malamatiyya to be the proving ground of spiritual realization.

The Khwajagan, who also arose in Khurasan, exhibited the same characteristics, although their way spread more extensively throughout Transoxiana in Turkic Central Asia. They became identifiable Sufis while absorbing most of the traits of the Nishapuri malamatis.

Sviri notes that only after the second half of the tenth century did the term *Sufi* come to be used as a comprehensive term identifying all Islamic mystics. Before that, according to Sviri, the term was applied only to mystics schooled in the Baghdadian approach attributed to Junayd al-Baghdadi (830–910).<sup>18</sup> Since the Khwajagan were known as Central

Asians who took after the Persian malamatis, how did they come to be known as Sufis?

Although Junayd's teacher, Sari as-Saqati, is attributed with establishing the school of Baghdad, it was Junayd who became renowned as its greatest expositor. The members of this school, known as Masters of Unification, were most concerned with the inculcation of sobriety (*sahw*). Much like the Nishapuri malamatiyya, with whom they had contact, the Baghdadian Sufis saw sobriety as a necessary balance to mystical "intoxication" (*sukr*)—and also as a way of balancing a mystical gnosis (*ma'rifa*) with strict observance of the Shari'a, the ethical norms of Islam.

Junayd's emphasis on sobriety came from his distaste of Khurasanian mystics such as Bayazid Bistami who openly expressed divine intoxication. A story about the mystic Shibli illustrates Junayd's attitude: Overpowered by ecstasy, Shibli began to preach out loud the "secret." Junayd, as an exponent of lawful restraint, reproached him. "We whisper these words in backrooms," he said. "Now you come out and declare them in public." Shibli replied, "Only I am speaking and only I am listening—in both worlds who exists but I? These words only proceed from God to God. Shibli doesn't exist at all." Upon hearing this answer Junayd relented: "If that is the case, you have my dispensation."<sup>19</sup>

From this story we might deduce the following: the unification of self and God (*ittihad*) in Sufism is considered to be a secret; in official Islam such a position might be considered heretical; the utterance of ecstatic utterances (*shathiyat*) in public might be considered unlawful; only the absence of oneself in speaking such words would insure one's innocence through the evident absence of egoistic drives.

Shathiyat were most often expressed in states of divine intoxication. Perhaps the most famous of these is that of Bayazid himself: "He took me up and set me before Him. He said, 'Bayazid! My creatures desire to see You.' I said, 'Array me in Your oneness and clothe me with Your selfhood, and bring me to Your unity, so that when Your creatures see me, they will see You. There will be You, and I will not be there.' . . .

## CHAPTER FIVE

I shed my self as a snake sheds its skin, then I looked at myself, and behold! I was He.”<sup>20</sup>

The radical submergence of individual identity in Allah and the outpouring of shathiyat was not only a Khurasanian phenomenon but also occurred among Baghdadian Sufis such as Shibli (d. 846) and Nuri (executed in 907). These outpourings caused the ulama to become extremely suspicious of Sufis, a vexing issue for Junayd, who warned that momentary states of divine intoxication must be followed by sobriety. Only in this condition, according to Junayd, could a Sufi return to the worshipful (and lawful) position of a servant of Allah. Here, again, the Baghdadian Sufis mirrored the attitudes of the Nishapuri malamatis, although Junayd also acted out of a sense of political expediency.

As opposed to the Baghdadian orders of Sufism, which were centered closest to the caliphate, Khurasanian Sufis could afford to yield to shathiyat without operating under the immediate threat of official censure by the legalists (*fuqaha*).

Terry Graham notes, “Socio-politically, Baghdad represented a continuation of the authoritarian character [of the earlier Persian Shahs] with an etiquette based on courtly behavior, hierarchy, command and obedience, whereas Khurasan was a region which had constituted the marches of the [Persian] empire.” After Muslim conquest, continues Graham, Khurasan “had served as the seedbed for revolt against both Arabic influence and [Persian-style] despotism, that is, whatever was imposed from the capital in distant Mesopotamia.”<sup>21</sup>

Apart from political expediency, both the Nishapuri malamatis and the Sufis agreed that only in the stage of sobriety could a mystic become fully adept, mentally balanced, and therefore capable of providing a good example to others. It should not be thought, however, that Bistami failed to arrive at the state of sobriety or that Junayd bypassed the experience of intoxication. Instead, Junayd insisted:

I have realized that which is within me  
And my tongue has conversed with Thee in secret

## THE EARLIER WAY OF BLAME

And we are united in one respect,  
But we are separate in another.<sup>22</sup>

The message of psychological stability and societal adjustment, best elaborated by Junayd, informed all of the orthodox Sufi orders thereafter; and, while ecstatic utterances were normally tolerated within the inner confines of Sufism, these expressions were generally discouraged outside such circles. This was not necessarily the case in Khurasan.

Religious legalists continued to condemn ecstatic assertions for both pious and debatable political reasons, and certain ulama began to actively prosecute Sufis for exposing such experiences. In perhaps the most famous case cited in Sufi literature, Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) refused to heed the warning of the Baghdadian Junayd to restrain himself. While Junayd conversed with Allah in secret, Hallaj felt compelled to make the secret known to the public in several instances, the most famous of which was his exclamation, "Ana al-Haqq" (I am the Truth). For this statement, among others, Hallaj was accused of attributing a Godlike attribute to himself and of therefore being a heretic; through his subsequent persecution he came to be identified as blameworthy. For his religious impropriety, Hallaj was censured by the immediate followers of Junayd, who felt that Hallaj had done a disservice to Sufism as well as to the community at large. With Hallaj, "blame" (*malam*) would begin to take on another connotation.

As noted above, the attribution of any associate or partner to Allah was considered to be the worst of sins in Islam. As the doctrine of essential union spread among Sufis, the subject that most occupied the minds of Islamic legalists was the heresy of *hulul* (indwelling, incarnationism).

In legalistic theology, "a considerable amount of time [was] spent demonstrating that God cannot dwell in a creature because this would mean that: God is not a necessary existent; that there would be two eternal beings; and that a division would be created in God by his infusion into a divisible object." Indeed, it was recorded that Hallaj had

prayed, "Between You and me there is an 'I am' that battles me, so take away, by your grace, this 'I am' from in between."<sup>23</sup>

Despite these nuances of interpretation, Hallaj was arrested and accused of "claiming divine lordship and preaching incarnationism."<sup>24</sup> As a cause célèbre, his case would haunt the imagination of all later Sufis, some of whom themselves would suffer a similar persecution. Shibli, the direct successor of Junayd, almost met such a fate.

Clearly, Hallaj was not merely a divine madman, although he espoused what *appeared* to be a path of intoxication. According to a contemporary scholar, "Hallaj broke with Junayd precisely on the subject of sobriety and intoxication. Junayd maintained that they were pre-ordained qualities, and that sobriety denoted soundness while intoxication implied excess. Hallaj said that the two were correlative human attributes on the path, both of which must be transcended to reach the goal."<sup>25</sup>

Hallaj indicated the possibility of a *unio mystica* in which the contraries of sobriety and intoxication were found to be perfectly correlated, or perhaps entirely coexistent. Curiously perhaps, this point of view was consistent with a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (sa): "God has a special wine for His saints; when they imbibe it, they become intoxicated, and when they are intoxicated, they become enraptured, and when they are enraptured, they become euphoric, and when they are euphoric, they become mellow, and when they are mellow, they become purified, and when they are purified, they become conjoined, and when they are conjoined, they come to be in union, and in union, there is no distinction between them and their Beloved."<sup>26</sup>

Though insane or blasphemous from a formalistic point of view, Hallaj's sayings indicate that the Shari'a as interpreted by legalists could become an obstacle to the realization of an experience deemed essential by the Prophet himself. Unlike Hallaj, however, the Prophet would balance his statements with others indicating the necessary separation of the individual and Allah *both before and after* a union with "no distinction."

Junayd would insist, “Unification is the separation of the Eternal (God) from that which originates in time.” This statement was meant to confound mystics like Hallaj who insisted instead that “the first step is the annihilation of separation (*tafrid*), so that in unity (*wahdaniyyat*) one affirms nothing other than God.”<sup>27</sup> After Junayd and Hallaj, all Sufis veered in the direction of a greater degree of intoxication or sobriety, with the *malamatiyya* and the Khwajagan favoring an inner intoxication balanced by an outward sobriety.

After the creation of specific Sufi orders in the eleventh century, the salient features of such schools usually included: (a) the use of a sevenfold map of spiritual development originally developed by Junayd’s teacher, *as-Saqati*; (b) the cultivation of controlled ecstatic states through the practice of repetitive vocal invocation; (c) the use of distinctive clothing and insignia to distinguish Sufis from other people; (d) a structure of teaching that was hierarchical.<sup>28</sup> The more formal orthodox orders—many of which still exist today—were greatly influenced by Junayd and his followers.

The later Khwajagan would blend Baghdadi Sufism with Khurasanian *malamatism*, while keeping an accent on the latter. Unlike many other Sufi orders, however, the Khwajagan did not wear distinctive clothing, preferred subvocal *dhikr*, and placed an emphasis on less formalized student-teacher relationships. A later member of the Khwajagan, Bahauddin Naqshband (1318–89) was known to say, “The door of Shaykhhood is closed, [while] the door to spiritual friendship is open.”

Algar observes, “The other commonality between the *Malamati* and the first *Naqshbandis* is the emphasis on the spiritual efficiency of a virtuous and devotional companionship (*suhbat*), that is, the company of their masters and companions. . . . In another of his definitions of his path Bahauddin describes it as the path of companionship. Some *Naqshbandi* authors even consider companionship as being more efficient than invocation [*dhikr*].”<sup>29</sup> Algar is quite correct; however, the name *Naqshbandi*, which only came into usage a hundred years after Bahauddin’s death, should not be used to designate the earlier

Khwajagan. By that time, many Naqshbandis had adopted the features of the other Sufi orders, which the Khwajagan had largely forgone. In the meantime, another variant of malamatism would soon eclipse its earlier manifestations.

## THE QALANDARIYYA

Throughout Khurasan and Transoxiana, and later in Asia Minor, the Hallajian variant of malamatism would exert a far greater influence on the popular imagination than either the Khwajagan or the Nishapuri. This influence was due to the spread of itinerant dervishes throughout the countryside who came to be known as *qalandars* (uncouth or coarse ones) and who upheld the virtues of Mansur al-Hallaj.

Due to the influence of the qalandari tradition, Western orientalists would make Mansur al-Hallaj a leading exemplar of the ideal malamati martyr. Carl Ernst has observed: "As Kraus and Massignon put it, in the path of the elect, 'deification' is not realized except under the appearance of a denial of the law (*kuf*r, *zandaqah*), an anathema incurred by love, a momentary ravishment of the intellect."<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen, however, the title King of the Self-Blamers given to Hallaj by Massignon would not adequately represent the fuller history of the malamatiyya. Neither ecstatic utterances nor divulgements of radical union played a part in the Nishapuri or Khwajagan way. Nevertheless, malamatism after Hallaj would come to be associated with the following characteristics: a preference for intoxication (whether or not it was hidden under the veil of sobriety); a preference for doctrines that expressed the unicity of being; and an emphasis on the virtues of wandering dervishes who were (at least outwardly) heterodox. It is the last characteristic that colored all subsequent expressions of malamatism.

It should be noted that classical Sufis like Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi and Hujwiri (d. 1072/3) took considerable pains to distinguish between true and false forms of malamati activity. Groups of wandering qalandars would act in open defiance against the Shari'a. In the process they

often earned widespread disapproval, and by doing so they thereby threatened the reputation and the legal standing of other Sufis.

Hujwiri noted, “He who abandons the law and commits an irreligious act, and says that he is following the rule of ‘blame,’ is guilty of manifest wrong and wickedness and self-indulgence. There are many in the present age who seek popularity by this means, forgetting that one must already have gained popularity before deliberately acting in such a way as to make the people reject him; otherwise, his making himself unpopular is a mere pretext for winning popularity.”<sup>31</sup>

Through references to principles such as these, many Sufis judged those like Hallaj to be immature practitioners. The most sober *malamatiyya* were not openly antinomian, nor did they desire martyrdom. Instead, they quietly sought to challenge their own hypocrisy. For the Nishapuris the greatest form of hypocrisy was self-righteousness, whether this was enacted through excessive adherence to orthodoxy or through intentionally flaunting the *Shari’a*.

Instead of adopting the more flamboyant behavior of the *qalandar*, the more mature *malamati* attracted blame through understatement: through being less noticeable in undertaking religious commitments and observances. Notwithstanding these differences, however, the Nishapuri and *qalandari* tendencies interfused over time, particularly among more “intoxicated” Sufis, and this would have an enormous affect on the definition of *malamatism* thereafter.

Above all others, it was Abu Sa’id Abi’l-Khayr (967–1049) who gave a new impetus and meaning to the way of blame in Khurasan. It was he who blended the *malamati* with the Sufi and *qalandari* modes of mysticism. Abu Sa’id was a disciple of the Nishapuri *malamati* Sulami, who granted him a license to teach, and along with Sulami, Abu Sa’id extolled Mansur al-Hallaj, of whom he said, “There was no one [in his time] with equal knowledge, east or west.”<sup>32</sup> We have already shown how the tension between ardent desire (*ishq*) and proper conduct (*adab*) informed all of Sufism, especially in Baghdad. Unlike Junayd and the Nishapuris, however, Abu Sa’id valued the expression of open ecstasy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

“Ascribe nothing to yourself,” he would say. “Let time bring what it will, hell or high water. Live joyfully, delighting in whatever comes your way.”<sup>33</sup>

Mirroring Abu Sa’id, the Baghdadian Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 1126) articulated an entire philosophy based on the stages of *ishq*. Like Abu Sa’id, al-Ghazali wrote most of his works in Persian, and a series of Persian-speaking Sufi poets would succeed him, including such luminaries as Sanai (d. 1131), Attar (d. 1220), and Rumi. All of these mystics brought the theme of ecstatic love together with an exemplification of the lover as a wandering dervish or *qalandar*: one who gambles everything in hopes of winning the Beloved—and with little attachment to exoteric religion.

The literary trope of the *qalandar* included the following: He is a free-spirited vagabond (Pers. *ayyar*) who frequents the *kharabat* (ruins), a term referring to “a tavern, a gambling-house or a brothel.”<sup>34</sup> He is an “inspired libertine” (*rind*) and a “gambler” (*kamzan*) who stakes himself on one bet—finding union with God. Sometimes he involves himself in un-Islamic cults such as Zoroastrianism or sports the belt (*zunnar*) of a Christian. In short, the *qalandar* appears to be one who seeks immediate union with an indefinable God above and beyond all outward norms of religion.

All these ideas were obviously repellent to the orthodox, and they were meant to be. Abu Sa’id had written, “Unless to other’s eyes you become an infidel, / In the creed of lovers, you’ll never be Muslim.”<sup>35</sup> Statements like this were meant to be a form of shock therapy applied to literalists who had become overly identified with religious formalism. After Abu Sa’id, this form of *malamati* Sufism would predominate in Khurasan and Transoxiana, with the earlier forms of Nishapuri sobriety taking a backseat.

Suhrawardi defined the *qalandariyya* as “people who are governed by the intoxication [engendered by] the tranquility of their hearts to the point of destroying customs and throwing off the bonds of social intercourse.”<sup>36</sup> It was this form of *malamatism*, and not the more sober

Nishapuri variety, that would become more prevalent among the less educated people of Khurasan. They had had a long tradition of memorizing and reciting poetry, and for similar reasons this form of malamati Sufism would quickly spread among the Turks who occupied Transoxiana. They, too, were enamored of storytelling, song, and other forms of folk recitation; and their bards (*ashiqs*) spread the lore of the qalandariyya eastward into India and westward into Asia Minor.

Like their cousins the Mongols, the Turks of the steppes worshipped Tangri, “Eternal Heaven,” closeness to whom could be found on mountaintops and the wrath of whom was mythologized as thunder. Itinerant shamans, rather than an organized priesthood, served the religious needs of the pre-Islamic Turks, and charismatic holy men (of whatever kind) were given equal reverence. This spiritual predilection opened the way to the influence of Zoroastrian magi, Nestorian monks, Buddhist bhikkus, and (later) Sufi mendicants, all of whom traveled along the Silk Route, which crossed the steppes. Even more cross-fertilization must of course have occurred in this melting pot, and all of this, no doubt, further aided Sufism's syncretic development. Ibn Taymiyya objected to this syncretism as a “Tatar” innovation; yet, despite his objections it was rapidly conveyed like a virus throughout Arabic-speaking lands.

Bernard Lewis observes: “From the early ninth century the caliphs of Islam began to import Turkish slaves from the eastern border, chiefly for service as warriors. These soldiers were known as ‘*mamluks*’—an Arabic word meaning ‘owned.’ . . . Though nominally of servile states, they came to form a privileged military caste, recruited by capture and purchase, but held together by strong regimental loyalties. As the armies of Islam became more Turkish, and the governments of Islam more military, the Turks established domination in the lands of Islam that lasted for a thousand years.”<sup>37</sup>

The first Islamicized Turks who ruled Afghanistan and northeastern Persia (Khurasan) were the Ghaznavids (ca. 963–1040). These people, originally mercenaries of the Persians, were defeated by the Seljuks (ca. 1040), who went on to conquer the rest of Iran. As they did so they

## CHAPTER FIVE

adopted the Persian language and culture and became heirs to the Sasanid and (later) Abbasid systems of courtly bureaucracy. They also came into contact with the rich heritage of Persian Sufism through Abu Sa'id Abi'l-Khayr.

In order to strengthen their legitimacy, the Seljuks adopted both Sufism and Sunni orthodoxy as their own form of normative Islam; and along with the consolidation of their power, this did much to assure that many more ulama became Sufis and vice versa. Ironically, perhaps, it was the Seljuks who also aided the rapid spread of the more antinomian ideas of the qalandariyya.

By 1055, the Khan of the Seljuks, Tughril Beg, was invited to conquer Baghdad by the Abbasid caliph, who wished to throw off the yoke of his Shi'a overlords. While successfully doing so, Tughril Beg was recognized as the successor of the Abbasids and as the Sultan of East and West.<sup>38</sup>

Tughril Beg's nephew and successor, Alp Arslan, defeated the Byzantines at Manzikert (in Eastern Anatolia) in 1071. He also appointed as his chief minister the Persian Nizam al-Mulk, who promoted a combined Sufi-Sunni version of Islam throughout the sultan's realms.

Nizam al-Mulk, whose name literally translates as "order of the realm," consolidated the religious legitimacy of the Seljuks by, among other things, becoming a patron of the Baghdadian Sufi Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. The latter authored the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, an encyclopedic body of work that further assured Sufism would continue to be accepted as orthodox by traditionalist ulama. In the meantime, Abu Hamid's brother, Ahmad al-Ghazali, was a prime representative of the creed of love, a tradition that closely mirrored the Khurasanian Sufism of Abu Sa'id, another saint patronized by the Seljuks. Because it enjoyed official sanction, the creed of love continued to spread in Persian-speaking areas due to the poetic influence of Sanai, Attar, and Rumi, all of whom wrote in Persian and all of whom lived under the Ghaznavids or Seljuks. Their poetry, as we have seen, lionized the qalandariyya, whether or not they meant to do so as literal antinomians.

Turning back to Anatolia, the Byzantines, unwisely, had invited Seljuk mercenaries to aid them in one of their numerous civil wars. A nephew of Alp Arslan, Suleiman, heeded the call, and the Seljuks were able to sweep through most of Asia Minor with utmost speed. They did so by forming alliances with ambitious Christian notables and by appealing to the landed peasantry, who were overburdened by Byzantine taxation. Within ten years, Arslan established the first Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Iconium, renamed Konya.

Grousset observes, “To prevent them from ravaging their finer Iranian domain, the Seljuk sultans apparently established [Turkmen warriors] by preference in the marches of the sultanate, in Asia Minor.” Grousset further adds that “the Anatolian plateau, by its altitude, climate, and vegetation, forms a continuation of the steppe zone of Central Asia.” Because of this, these grasslands were more inviting to the nomadic pastoralists. Accordingly, “Persia proper escaped Turkification, while Anatolia became a second Turkestan.”<sup>39</sup> While this might be so, it is also well established that Asia Minor remained largely Orthodox Christian, and Turkification actually entailed the assimilation of various forms of Christian (and pre-Christian) belief.

While the Seljuks promoted a lenient, but more nominally orthodox, form of Sunni Islam, their ruder cousins, the Turkmens, had adopted a more syncretic form of Islam that could be characterized as neither purely Sunni nor purely Shia. The Turkmen raiders were usually more loyal to their *Babas*, or “fathers,” who—in contrast to the urbanized ulama—tended toward varying forms of heterodoxy. Because of this, the malamati Sufism of Khurasan in its qalandari form quickly spread among them, and it was this trope that later spread quite rapidly in Asia Minor, the Balkans, and the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent—all areas ruled by Turkic dynasties (the Seljuks, Ottomans, and Timurid Mughals, who were actually Turkic rather than Mongol).

As de Brujn notes, “Prior to the beginning of the thirteenth century, all instances of the use of the word qalandar which are on record belong to the realm of literature.”<sup>40</sup> This would gradually change under

the Seljuks, who had gained the patronage of the Ayyubid elites. “Sunni Islam rose to political dominance, communities bitterly debated about which school of law was to be the basis of shariah. There was increasing pressure for conformity and considerable overt persecution.”<sup>41</sup> From this time onward (and especially after the twelfth and up to the fifteenth century) tensions between orthodox Sufis and heterodox qalandars increased.

According to Karamustafa, “Sufism gradually became a respectable, and even desirable, vocation among the cultural elites as a whole and emerged as an integral, perhaps, the key, component of Islamic high culture. . . . Having secured more than a firm foothold in upper urban society and its culture, it rapidly permeated all social and cultural strata.”<sup>42</sup> According to Ewing, the malamatism of the qalandariyya increased because it “signified a counter to the excesses of formalism, where knowledge has been linked to social status and power.”<sup>43</sup>

Karamustafa would add, “The antinomian rejection of society represented by deviant dervish groups developed alongside with—and primarily in reaction to—the organized Sufism of the socially respectable tariqahs.”<sup>44</sup> The thesis and antithesis of intoxication and sobriety became more apparent as outwardly sober institutions of orthodox Sufism lent themselves to the further consolidation of political norms and practices. This, of course, was vital to upholding centralizing myths and ideologies of empires such as those of the Seljuks, Il-Khanids, Timurids, and, later, the *Osmanli*, or Ottoman, Dynasty.

The trope of the qalandar had earlier served as an exemplification, a metaphorical embodiment, of the perceptual shift that had occurred to Bayazid Bistami in the station of *ayn al-jam* (the unification of essence). Though desire for union with God colored the outer expression of more ecstatic Sufis like Abu Sa’id, Rumi, and Iraqi, it did not disable them from adjusting their behavior and insights to the nomocentric needs of their society. Mystics such as these were largely legitimized by the Seljuks because they balanced their yearnings for radical union—and

individualistic expression—with their adherence to communal norms embodied in the Shari’a.

Later, from the thirteenth century onward, the trope of the qalandars tended to be literalized as the behavior of deviant wandering dervishes took on a more heterodox form of doctrinal expression. In formerly Hindu and Buddhist areas, the qalandars appeared to be similar to wandering bhikkus and sadhus. Farther west, the qalandari mode of religious expression held greater appeal to the Christianized masses of Anatolia and the Balkans.

These qalandars, who often broke with the Shari’a, organized themselves into larger brotherhoods and began to threaten rulers like the Seljuks with populist forms of rebellion. It was this “folklorish” form of malamatism that became more prevalent in rural areas, especially among the less settled Turkoman hordes and the partly or completely Christianized landed peasantry. This, quite naturally, would soon prove to be a vexing issue to both princely and clerical powers, especially after active rebellions threatened both the Seljuks and, even more so, their later inheritors, the Ottomans. From this time onward, the term *malamati* would convey a quasi-political as well as a religious meaning, the implications of which would only gradually become apparent.

To summarize: There are multiple meanings of the term *malamati*, and there are several dimensions to the way of blame. These include, firstly, an earlier emphasis on interiorized self-examination and adherence to the Shari’a (adopted by the Khwajagan); secondly, a later manifestation of qalandari tendencies (adopted by a number of antinomian dervish groupings); and, thirdly, as we shall see, an amalgam of these forms that attempted to bring them together in a broader synthesis.



## Six

# The Middle Period of Malamati Activity

**I**n the last chapter, we encountered the influence played by the Seljuks throughout the Middle East, and we saw how this Turkic tribe also spread westward into areas that comprised the heartland of the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantium. The importance of that region to the later development of malamatism should not be underestimated.

It should be said that in the early part of the fourth century CE the Roman emperor Constantine had adopted Christianity and had moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). By the mid-sixth century, the entire Roman Empire had become officially Christian under Emperor Justinian, and as the church solidified its power base in Byzantium, the Italic peninsula was ravaged by Vandals, Goths, and Huns. As a consequence, the center of Christendom moved east with the establishment of a “Second Rome,” or, as it would later be called by Muslims, *Rum*.

From Justinian onward, the capital of Christendom remained in Asia Minor for approximately five hundred years until the Great Schism of 1054 when a wedge was driven between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. By this time the citizens of Byzantium were arguably more thoroughly Christianized than their brethren in the West, but despite that, various schismatic sects continued to exist in Byzantium; and these divisions were never fully overcome by the monolithic form of Orthodoxy that was officially sanctioned by the emperor.

## CHAPTER SIX

Less than fifty years after the Great Schism, the Seljuk Turks arrived in Anatolia, and, taking advantage of the split between the Latinized West and the Hellenized East, they consumed most of the former eastern provinces of the Roman Empire rather quickly. Although little has been detailed about this phenomenon, it can be safely assumed that these Muslim raiders (*ghazis*) encountered and absorbed the remnants of heterodox forms of Christianity.

During the Middle Ages the remnants of the classical Hellenistic tradition still survived in Byzantium, and the peasantry of Anatolia still clung to many of their more ancient beliefs, among them Manichaeism, Hermeticism, and the Christian Paulician and Marcionite heresies. The Seljuks would have been adequately prepared for this encounter since Hellenistic philosophers had begun to be persecuted in Byzantium by the sixth century CE, and many had fled to Persia, where they had contributed greatly to the foundations of Islamic thought.

As in all other periods of history, Islamic understandings encountered and partly assimilated earlier traditions, and it is highly improbable that this would have ceased with the Turkic invasions of Asia Minor. Instead, as proposed by certain scholars, Islamic malamatism, in particular, may have been influenced by other sources, such as the Cynics and the Syriac Christians.

Few, if any, of these developments seem to have affected the orthodox Sunni Sufi orders directly, yet they may have predisposed the Christian populations of Anatolia to accept the qalandari form of malamatism that spread through the influence of the more heterodox Turkmen Babas (as a political grouping, the *Baba'i*). Some of the Babas banded together and revolted against the Seljuk state in the mid-thirteenth century, but these particular religio-political groupings were roundly defeated, and many of their kinsmen were massacred. No doubt these events left a lasting impression on the ruling Seljuks, who wished to control their sometimes-restive populations, and the threat of similar religio-political revolts would later emerge again during the Ottoman period.

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF MALAMATI ACTIVITY

By the close of the thirteenth century one of the few surviving Baba'i named Shaykh Edeballi migrated to the north of Anatolia and married his daughter to the chieftain of a relatively minor branch of the Oqhuz Turks. This *bey* (Turkish for *emir*) would come to be known as Osman the First, and he established the beginnings of the Osmanli Dynasty in northwestern Anatolia. Interestingly, and quite unlike the Seljuks, Osman and his immediate descendants embraced a form of Islam that was neither Sunni nor Shia, a form that was shaped instead by the qalandari Sufism of the Baba'i.

Harvard historian Cemal Kafadar remarks, "Muslims living in the frontier areas of the period from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries should be conceptualized in terms of a 'metadoxy,' a state of being beyond doxies, a combination of being doxy-naïve and not being doxy-minded, as well as the absence of a state that was interested in rigorously defining and strictly enforcing an orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup> This religious malleability meshed well with the melting-pot culture that characterized Anatolia.

From Osman onward, frequent intermarriage took place between the Greek and the Turkish nobility, so that the Osmanli Dynasty quickly formed a new type of ethnicity that can accurately be described as Greco-Turkish. Kafadar notes that this period witnessed a "liquidity and fluidity of identities . . . hard to imagine in the National Age."<sup>2</sup> This had earlier been the case in Seljuk times, but it became even more pronounced in the first hundred and fifty years or so of Ottoman ascendancy.

Kafadar's comments leave us with the impression that the Islam of this period was multivalent, fed by a number of converts who may not have left behind their former beliefs entirely, whether such beliefs were animistic, Gnostic, or Christian and quasi-Christian. To this already varied mixture were added the syncretic beliefs of Turkmen tribesmen whose kinsmen along the Silk Route had earlier absorbed the influences of Manichaeism, Taoism, Buddhism, and various forms of Shi'ism.

The religious glue that enabled Ottoman rulers to legitimate these beliefs as properly Islamic was the wujudi doctrine of the Akbaris (the

followers of Ibn al-Arabi). Wujudi doctrine was heavily based on a Neoplatonic substructure, which was easily absorbed by those whose religious concepts were shaped similarly by late Hellenistic thought (whether Jewish, Christian, or quasi-pagan).<sup>3</sup>

The Akbari doctrine of unicity (*wujud*) was well elaborated by numerous Muslim scholars, and it was eventually sanctioned by the state as orthodox. At the same time, the less-educated populace was disposed to a qalandari form of mysticism that mirrored (and at times exaggerated) wujudi concepts in a more eclectic—as well as increasingly elastic—fashion, resulting in a new form of malamatism: one that was far more controversial and, at times, more explicitly political.

Osman's son, Orhan, began his reign in 1326, and he rapidly expanded Osmanli territory so that the boundaries of Byzantium shrank back close to the walls of Constantinople. Having established his capital in Iznik (the former Nicaea), Orhan invited a scholar from central Anatolia to establish the first Ottoman university (*madrasa*) there. The rector of this madrasa, Daud al-Qaysari was the disciple of al-Qashani, himself a primary student of al-Jandi, who studied with al-Qunawi, the direct successor of Ibn al-Arabi. Thus, the wujudi doctrine of the unicity of being became a widespread doctrine with official sanction, and it was soon taught in other madrasas throughout the Ottoman Empire. In the meantime, the more popular Hallajian variety of wujudi belief predominated among the less-educated classes in the countryside, which was frequented by the qalandariyya.

During the second half of the fourteenth century, as Murad I conquered Thrace and Macedonia, more Christian feudal lords become vassals to the Turkish state. Many converted to Islam, though some did not, but these developments added further coherence to a newly emerging nation that was multiethnic and multireligious, yet still uniquely Osmanli.

Meanwhile, a fifth of all prisoners taken by the Ottoman armies were assigned to the sultan as “slaves of the gate” (*kapi kullari*). Some of them were trained as new troops, the *yeni cheri* or “Janissaries,” and others

were assigned to be court administrators. This innovation further secured the loyalty of civil servants and the palace guard by minimizing Turkish intertribal rivalries. More importantly for the subject at hand, this provision occasioned the creation of a radically different class in a society that was rapidly swelling. It surrounded the sultan with non-Turkic Muslims who were former Christians and owed their loyalty solely to him.

Further consolidating this special social class, the next sultan, Bayazid I (“the Thunderbolt”), imposed a new form of child taxation as he rapidly expanded into Bulgaria and Serbia. This levy, called the *devshirme*, or “collection,” required that Balkan Christian subjects hand over the best of their newborn sons to him, and they were then taken to the imperial court where they were converted to Islam and raised as *kapi kullari*. It was a cruel but effective tactic. After a period of re-education—and as they proved their competence and loyalty—these slaves were sent out to be governors and commanders in the provinces; and thus, the conquered began to serve as their own conquerors and overseers.

The Janissaries, who functioned as a praetorian guard for the sultan, came to be closely affiliated with the Bektashi Order, which originally had been only one of many *qalandari* groups from central Anatolia. As the contemporary scholar Ahmet Karamustafa points out, the Bektashiyya emerged as an order that carried on the legacy of earlier, more antinomian, *qalandari* groups, but in a form that lent itself to greater state control.<sup>4</sup> In fact, as it became a large standing army, the Janissary corps was largely instrumental in conquering and controlling the Balkans—and with them went Bektashi missionaries.

Much as in the earlier period in Anatolia, the gradual conversion of Christian subjects (besides the *kapi kullari*) was facilitated by the heterodox nature of *qalandari* Sufism with its liberal interpretation of Islam and its preference for mystical intoxication over sobriety. The Bektashiyya was quite compatible with indigenous Christians because it placed far less emphasis on the legalistic observances of Islam.

## CHAPTER SIX

Muhammad Mufaku observes that the Bektashiyya “excused . . . its members from performing the [Islamic] canonic observances—prayer, fasting, and the like—just as it allowed them to drink wine, lawfully, and so too make use of other things that were prohibited.”<sup>5</sup> In addition to relaxing certain ritual observances, the Bektashiyya assimilated the earlier beliefs of the *ghulat*, extremist Shiites, and these ideas mirrored some concepts already present in Christianity.

Like Christians, many of the *ghulat* espoused a Trinitarian concept of the Godhead. In their case, however, the Christian concept of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was replaced with the triune formula of Allah, Muhammad, and Ali. In addition to their unorthodox cosmological doctrines, Bektashis also revered the Christlike martyrdom of Mansur al-Hallaj, who had been killed by the orthodox ulama. These innovations must have struck a resonant, mythological chord with Christianized populations in the Balkans and Anatolia, thus facilitating their conversion to Islam. This, in turn, aided the gradual coalescence of a distinctive Osmanli identity, which was further eased by the permeability of ethnic boundaries.

During this period, it should not be imagined that the peoples who inhabited the Balkans were organized into separate nations—no more so than in Anatolia. Until the late eighteenth century, the only marker of ethnic difference was religion, whether Christian Orthodox, Jewish, Roman Catholic, or Muslim.

For centuries, centralized Byzantine control had been undermined by large-scale Slavic invasions and a succession of lesser kingdoms such as those of the Avars, Serbians, and Bulgarians, and the barriers created by language and ethnicity were relatively porous. Religious beliefs were similarly permeable, and adherence to Christian orthodoxy was marked by correct ritual observance more than by doctrinal conviction.

In the largely coastal cities of the Balkans, Greek predominated as a language of religion, governance, and trade. On the other hand, the interior was largely populated by groups that spoke Slavic, Romanian, Albanian, and various other languages. Of course, Turkish-speaking

settlers were also among these people, but rather than the Turkish language spreading throughout the Balkans, the Sublime Porte (Ottoman government) began adopting Slavic and Greek as court languages alongside Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. Twenty percent of the total population of the Balkans converted to Islam, and these converts usually retained the use of their original Balkan dialects. This process hastened the melting-pot character of Ottoman discourse, and it extended into religion as well.

Although the Bektashiyya represented only one of several Sufi orders in the Balkans, its attitudes toward dogmatic Islam were representative of most of the population. Orthodox Sufi orders predominated in the larger cities, but more heterodox attitudes persisted in the smaller townships and villages of the countryside.

According to Mufaku, the Bektashi “establishment for the members was the tekke, which was devoid of any niche for prayer towards Mecca [*qibla*]. The gatherings for the dhikr and the recitation of it in séances . . . took the place of statutory prayers, and the form of a circle was adopted so that each man faced another.” In this way the Bektashis “protested against the facing of any specific direction in order to pray.” Instead, the Bektashiyya sanctified individual human beings, as evidenced in their saying, “There is nothing better for you than to face, or turn your person towards, another human being.”<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, this form of spiritual humanism became the hallmark of the Bektashiyya and of other qalandari groups that bore the specific name of *melamiye* (the Turkified version of the Arabic *malamiyya*).

These malamati groupings, like the Bektashiyya, had their original homeland in central and eastern Anatolia. However, due to the threat of newly invading Mongol hordes they had quickly moved westward. When Bayazid I laid siege to Constantinople in 1394, the city was saved by a massive assault from the east initiated by Tamerlane, the Turco-Mongol conqueror who sought to rebuild the former empire of Genghis Khan. Much of eastern and central Anatolia came under Tamerlane’s control, and as a result, Ottoman strategic concerns turned eastward.

## CHAPTER SIX

While invading eastern and central Anatolia, Tamerlane allied himself with Turkish beys. These included remnants of the Seljuks, who were opposed to Ottoman supremacy, and the defeat and subsequent capture of Bayazid in 1402 shattered Ottoman dominance in central Anatolia and ushered in the period of the Interregnum (1402–13).

During that period—and while already reeling from the loss of Bayazid—the Ottoman court was further undermined by a series of civil wars initiated by Bayazid’s four surviving sons. One of these sons, Mehmet Chelebi, emerged victorious. Nonetheless, three years later an additional threat appeared, this time from a rebellious group of qalandariyya in the western coastal regions. The principal figure representing this threat was Shaykh Badruddin (alt. Bedrettin) of Simawna (1358–1420); and as we shall see it was his qalandari representatives who actually promoted an open revolt against the newly reemerging—and more centralized—Ottoman state.

Badruddin himself could not be characterized as a qalandar. Instead, he was a highly educated member of the ulama class and a staunch Akbari, and he came from an aristocratic ruling family. His grandfather was a nephew of the Seljuk sultan Alauddin and a former disciple of Jalaluddin Rumi. Badruddin’s father was Gazi Israel, a commander under Suleyman Pasha and the conqueror of Simawna, a fortified town near Edirne in Thrace, which formed a land bridge with the Balkans. Also a trusted Islamic scholar and jurist, Israel became the chief judge (*qadi*) as well as the governor of that region. Badruddin’s mother was the daughter of a Greek Orthodox priest, and her influence, as well as the fact that he also married a Greek wife (and married his son to another one) might explain why he extended respect to observant Christians.<sup>7</sup> Exceeding mere tolerance, Badruddin would later propose that Muslims and Christians should live in conditions of greater social, as well as religious, equality. These ideas (among others) led to Badruddin’s eventual execution as a malamati heretic and an apostate from Islam. Harmonious relations between different “People of the Book” were certainly acceptable to the ulama, but social equality, as yet, was not.

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF MALAMATI ACTIVITY

In order to comprehend how Badruddin moved from being a notable Sufi scholar to being a political martyr, one must investigate his biographical details. In his youth he was trained in Islamic law by a trusted colleague of his father and was then sent to Bursa, the capital of the Ottomans. There, he studied with a disciple (twice-removed) of Sadruddin al-Qunawi in a madrasa where Ibn al-Arabi's influence was strong. After his studies in Bursa, Badruddin went on to study logic and astronomy in Konya, and then, at the age of twenty-five, traveled to Cairo to study logic at the intellectual center of *dar al-Islam* (the domain of Islam).<sup>8</sup>

In Cairo, Badruddin joined other Turks such as Molla Fenari, whose father had been a student of al-Qunawi. Although he attempted to remain a simple student, Badruddin's reputation as the "Light of Rum" preceded him, and he was quickly introduced to the royal court. Shortly after that, in a meteoric fashion, Badruddin was appointed by the Egyptian Mamluk sultan Barkuk to be his son's religious preceptor.<sup>9</sup>

Although rough-hewn dervishes were not to his liking, Badruddin was introduced to one of them favored by Sultan Barkuk. In a sudden reversal, the young scholar decided to become a disciple of this seemingly outlandish qalandari shaykh. Friends of the family became quite alarmed at this development, and they wrote a letter of warning to Badruddin's father. They were much surprised to find that he actually welcomed this change, and when Badruddin refused to come home to Thrace, his father prayed to God to make Badruddin "the Bistami of his time." Badruddin's Sufi mentor, Husseyn Ahlati (from the town of Ahlat in Eastern Anatolia), had initially traveled to Cairo on foot via Aleppo and Damascus. Although appearing to be a simple, wandering Turkic dervish, Ahlati was quite literate and gifted in medicine, and because of this he was invited to the Mamluk court to take care of Barkuk's son, who had taken ill. The resulting treatment was successful and, thoroughly gratified, the Egyptian sultan appointed Ahlati as his spiritual advisor.<sup>10</sup>

Given the ensuing power and wealth that accrued to him, however, Ahlati came under attack by rivals at the court, who accused him of

## CHAPTER SIX

practicing various occult sciences, of conjuring demons, and also of being a crypto-Christian. All of this may be attributed to scandal mongering, but it is also clear from literary sources that Ahlati was probably a malamati of dubious orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup>

After Badruddin completed his studies with his mentor, he was sent by Ahlati to act as his chief representative in Tabriz, the principal city of Azerbaijan. There Badruddin met with Tamerlane, who wished to retain him as his spiritual advisor, but, having learned of the Mongol emperor's desire, Badruddin secretly took to the road and quickly returned to Cairo.<sup>12</sup>

There Badruddin discovered the Mamluk court was in chaos and much of the land lay in famine. Worse yet, Ahlati was terminally ill. Yet despite these difficulties, Badruddin left Egypt only after Ahlati had appointed him as his successor and the other dervishes in Ahlati's circle had contested his appointment.

Leaving Egypt, Badruddin took considerable time returning to Thrace. After living in Konya for a while, the Shaykh migrated to the western coast of Asia Minor to the province of Aydin (the ancient Ionia), where between 1411 and 1413, he served as the chief justice of its capital, Tire. It was in that city that Badruddin also hired a steward who would soon become his principal disciple. This man, Borkluce Mustafa, may have been of Greek descent, since it is clear in most records that he was fluent in that language.<sup>13</sup>

After Badruddin departed for Edirne, and between the years 1413 and 1416, Borkluce and another of Badruddin's disciples, Torlak Kamal, preached certain ideas (with or without the blessing of Badruddin). The ambition of these key disciples was to replace the Ottoman state with a form of spiritual communism that expunged the social and religious differences between Christians and Muslims, and their preaching soon resulted in a peasant revolt that became a full-blown insurrection.<sup>14</sup>

Over a three-year period, Borkluce continually sent missionaries to Chios (then under Genovese rule), and he lived for a while on the Greek island of Samos, where according to some chroniclers a number

of Turks had fled after Tamerlane's conquests. Some say that Borkluce's ideas inspired both Muslim and Christian peasants as far away as Crete (then under Venetian rule) to revolt. There, wandering preachers promoted a similar message: freedom from serfdom, eradication of religious discrimination, and equal distribution of wealth. After these events, other malamatis in Ottoman domains would occasionally be suspected of entertaining similar concepts of spiritual communism and anthropocentrism.<sup>15</sup>

According to the Byzantine chronicler Doukas, "This man preached poverty to the Turks and encouraged them to put all in common, except women: food, clothes, herds and lands. . . . He was insisting that if a Turk says that all the Christians are infidels, it is he [the Turk] who proves his infidelity."<sup>16</sup>

Borkluce frequently sent his apostles to the Greek island of Chios to preach that there was no possible salvation except through a Muslim realignment with Christianity. As evidence of this, Borkluce sent this message to an old hermit in a monastery on that island: "I am your companion in *ascesis*, worshiping the God you worship. I, too, prostrate myself in front of Him, and I am with you at night, when I silently walk across the sea."<sup>17</sup>

The French scholar Michel Balivet concludes that Borkluce upheld a "supraconfessional conviction" that surpassed orthodox Islam or Christianity, and it is important to note that this was far removed from earlier forms of malamatism. According to Balivet, "We can see the Isawi, or Christ-like, character of Borkluce, such as his walking on water and death on a cross, as well as his deliberate will to have practices identical to the Christians, went further by proclaiming the unity of the two religions, the worship of the same God, and their necessary convergence."<sup>18</sup> If Balivet is correct, then the religious ideas of Badruddin's followers would have been as threatening to the Ottoman state as the earlier Baba'i revolts had been to the Seljuks—even more so, since Borkluce adopted a supraconfessional approach in a land still largely populated by Greek-speaking Christians.

## CHAPTER SIX

In 1416 the newly crowned Mehmet the First dispatched his general, Bayazid Pasha, with a sizable army to quash an open rebellion in the vicinity of Mount Styliarion. To emphasize the importance of this event, Mehmet sent along his twelve-year-old son, the future Sultan Murad II. Having gathered reinforcements along the way, the armies of Bayazid penetrated the peninsula of Karaburun, which extends into the Aegean Sea opposite Chios; and, there, they slaughtered most of the civilian population indiscriminately of the beliefs they held.

Arriving at the dervish mountain stronghold, the sultan's armies fought Borkluce's troops while huge losses accumulated on both sides. When the rebels finally surrendered, the qalandars were tied up in chains and brought to Ephesus (the modern town of Seljuk). There Borkluce was executed in a manner recommended by the ulama to the state. For his acts of seditious apostasy and for "spreading corruption throughout the land" (*haraba*), Borkluce was first tortured to recant and then crucified. With the cross still attached to his body he was stretched out on a camel, which was led throughout the town; those of his followers who did not disclaim him were killed before his eyes. Reportedly neither Borkluce nor any of his followers renounced their faith; and thus the insurrection ended in an act of collective martyrdom.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, Badruddin, who had been held captive in Iznik, escaped. A year later, he was caught in Serres (a town near Salonika), where he was tried and hung. His supporters said he had not endorsed Borkluce's rebellion, but Badruddin had nevertheless incurred the wrath of the ulama, who declared him an apostate. Whether or not Badruddin had endorsed an open rebellion, it seems obvious that his ideas threatened an increasingly uniform Ottoman Empire—one that relied upon increasing religious conformity. But we might ask, which of Badruddin's ideas most provoked the ulama in particular, and why was he so adamantly declared an apostate of Islam?

Two hundred years after his trial, Badruddin was still a subject of controversy. Shaykh Aziz Mahmud Huda'i (d. 1623) is known to have written to the sultan of his time that Badruddin was "a heretic and

a libertine who tried to make unlawful into lawful, and in his book, *Inspirations*, [he] decried the signs of the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection.”<sup>20</sup> If Badruddin was a “free thinker” (*zindiq*), then which of his ideas threatened the orthodoxy so readily?

According to Tosun Bayrak, a modern Jerrahi shaykh, Badruddin had disclaimed a literal understanding of the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection, positing instead that “the signs of the imminent end of the world both did not and will not happen, and/or are always happening.”<sup>21</sup> According to Bayrak, Badruddin believed that the return of Jesus and the Mahdi at the end of times was a metaphor for the rebirth of the spirit of humanity itself.

Indeed, Badruddin had openly celebrated that “the appearance of Mahdi, the last imam, is the realization of what Allah says [in the Qur’an, 15:29], ‘I have breathed into man from My own spirit.’” The Shaykh further elaborated: “This is the growth of the seed of Muhammad in the perfect human being. The seed will grow into the causal mind, the all-encompassing mercy, and the Divine essence.”<sup>22</sup> As indicated above, the heresy of Badruddin began with the proposal that events in the Qur’an were metaphorical and not to be taken literally. Of course, these ideas paralleled those of other qalandariyya and the Bektashiyya, but Badruddin went further. Building upon that ground assumption, the Shaykh also declared that these metaphors pointed to the deliverance of human beings from any form of earthly bondage. Moreover, although they focused on an “inner” form of deliverance, these ideas could easily be linked to an “outer” rebellion against the state, especially one that depended upon religious conformity.<sup>23</sup>

After the rebellion of Borkluce, it became increasingly apparent to the Ottomans that heretical ideas threatened the centralization of state power. Intoxicated mystical ideas that eschewed a more sober and legalistic definition of Islam were inimical to the cohesion of society. As a consequence the Ottomans adopted a policy of appeasing—and then gradually absorbing—various other antinomian qalandari groups while gradually promoting a more orthodox form of Sunni Islam.

## CHAPTER SIX

The tension between the qalandariyya and orthodox Sufis, however, was never fully resolved. Even before the revolts inspired by Badruddin and Borkluce had started, another stream of potentially vexing malamatism had also entered the Ottoman fold—again, from the eastern provinces.

At the close of the fourteenth century, an unassuming baker named Somuncu Baba (d. 1408) immigrated to the city of Bursa from Azerbaijan. According to the Ottoman scholar Victoria Holbrook, this Sufi of malamati temperament was sent to Anatolia by a Shaykh “Erdebili,” also known as Safiyyadin al-Ardabali (d. 1334).<sup>24</sup> It seems more probable that Somuncu Baba was sent by and owed allegiance to the son of Ardabali, Sadr-ad-din, who, as would be expected, became the shaykh after his father’s death.<sup>25</sup>

While Ardabali was a member of the strictly Sunni Suhrawardi lineage, his son, Sadr-ad-din, was closely associated with Turkic *akhiyya* (Sufi guilds) and the *futuwwa* (Sufi-inspired chivalric orders).<sup>26</sup> Both of these, as we have noted, were heavily influenced by the Khurasanian malamatiyya, as well as by the Akbariyya; and later, as we shall see, the Safawiyya Order (named after Safiyyadin) would mutate into a far more menacing political form.

At this point, however, the loosely organized Safawiyya were not considered a threat, and Somuncu Baba was greeted with great respect by a leading member of the ulama, Molla Fenari (d. 1430/31). Fenari had once been a fellow student of Badruddin of Simawna in Cairo and would later become the first official Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam. Like many other scholars at the time, he was a staunch Akbari,<sup>27</sup> and he also greatly praised Somuncu Baba’s discourses, indicating that not only the malamatiyya, but also the Akbariyya were probably compatible with Somuncu Baba’s teaching.

As a result of this compatibility, Somuncu Baba was invited to attend the court of Mehmet the First in Bursa. At that point, as befitting a malamati qalandar, he quickly disappeared from Bursa, never to be heard from again. Before his departure, however, the Baba left behind

an important successor, Hadji Bayram Wali (d. 1429/30), a notable scholar who was more outwardly orthodox.

Hadji Bayram of Ankara was a mystic well versed in Ibn al-Arabi's thought through his formal theological training.<sup>28</sup> He combined his training as a Naqshbandi with the malamati teachings of Somuncu Baba and by doing so spawned a new Sufi order called the Bayramiyya. By the time of the Hadji's death, however, this new order would split into two factions, one of which would inaugurate a new phase of malamatism.<sup>29</sup> The split occurred between two leading disciples of Hadji Bayram. The first was Hamza 'Aq Shams al-Din (d. 1459), a religious scholar, and the second was Umar Sikkini (d. 1475/76), a senior dervish of Hadji Bayram. While 'Aq Shams al-Din (alt. Aksemseddin) preserved the more formally orthodox character of the Bayramiyya, Sikkini Baba favored the qalandari malamatism that was more openly expressed in the poetic works of Hadji Bayram, which, in turn, were influenced by Hallaj. These differences in emphasis were soon to be expressed in a hagiographical account of the split between the two disciples. Holbrook translates the Ottoman classicist Golpınarlı's rendering of the event as follows:

After Hadji Bayram died . . . and Aksemseddin was recognized as his successor, the brotherhood gathered mornings and evenings for meditation; but Sikkini would sit alone in a corner of the mosque, not participating. One day Aksemseddin told Sikkini that if he did not join in, he would take the [shaykh's dervish] crown away from him. Sikkini replied that Aksemseddin might come to his house the following Friday after prayers; he would surrender robe and crown to Aksemseddin then. On the promised day Sikkini lit a great fire in the courtyard of his house; Aksemseddin and his followers came after the prayers. Sikkini danced ("waving and clapping his hands") into the fire and emerged unharmed, only his robe and crown having burned.<sup>30</sup>

It is said, thereafter, that the malamati followers of Sikkini no longer wore distinguishing dervish caps and robes, preferring instead to blend

with the common people, but as we have seen this was also a characteristic of the earlier malamatiyya in Khurasan. The renowned Ottoman scholar C. H. Imber speculates otherwise: “The real reason why the Malamatiyya [in Ottoman domains] wore no distinguishing clothing must, in fact, have been because their heretical beliefs led to occasional persecutions, and their survival could depend on concealing their identities from the authorities.”<sup>31</sup>

No doubt, malamatis were persecuted heavily during the following century for posing a continuing threat to the state, but the causes must be investigated later in this chapter. Before that, it is important to address the symbolic elements in Sikkinī’s hagiography, which Imber does seem to consider—and these elements reflect the beliefs of all Sufis who have identified themselves as “malamati.” Among those beliefs we find the following: all outward signs of Sufi affiliation may themselves become hindrances to a deeper realization. This is especially the case for one who has passed through the fire of purgation that constitutes *fana* (annihilation). This purgation reveals individuals in their nakedness (unadorned simplicity). In returning to a normal state while subsisting in proximity to God (*baqa*), the malamatis often choose to eliminate class distinctions with their fellow human beings.

From what we have learned earlier, Sikkinī’s attitude was fully in accord with both the Nishapuri malamatis and the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi, but these are facts that Imber does not choose to investigate.<sup>32</sup> For now, it is important to note that the Bayramiyya diverged into two streams or forms: the first, clearly compatible with orthodox Sufism, was represented by ‘Aq Shams al-Din, a scholar well accepted by the court; the second, which represented a recognizable lineage, if not a tariqa in the normal sense, was the Bayrami-Malamiyya founded by Umar Sikkinī. Both of these forms may have represented the fuller path of Hadji Bayram, each presenting the outer and inner faces of his teaching.

The more orthodox branch of the Bayrami tariqa achieved broader acceptance in 1453 when Constantinople was conquered by Mehmet II, an event that sent shock waves throughout the Christian world. Before,

during, and after the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmet II was often accompanied by his foremost spiritual advisor, none other than 'Aq Shams al-Din himself.

Byzantium had been the last representative of Christian power in the Near East, and with the fall of its key city, a Muslim inherited the title of Sultan of Rum (the Arabized rendering of Emperor of Rome).<sup>33</sup> In the ensuing centuries, the Ottomans would expand their domains further into southeast Europe, aided by the orthodox Sufi orders, including the Bayramiyya.

Under the guidance of 'Aq Shams al-Din, Sultan Mehmet established a remarkably modern palace school for future members of the administrative and military services. Students of the school were drawn solely from the kapi kullari, and after graduating they were promoted to key administrative positions; as a consequence the kapi kullari class was further consolidated and empowered.

From the conquest of Constantinople until 1623, according to one scholar, only five of the forty-seven grand viziers were of Turkish origin.<sup>34</sup> With the further spread of the Ottomans into Europe, the latter were becoming further "Balkanized," and this cultural heritage continued to seep into Turkish Sufism.

This seepage was only partly contained by the more orthodox Sufis who had allied themselves with the uppermost strata of the administration. As generations passed, and as Ottoman bureaucrats became more assimilated to a more purely Turkish identity, they came to favor the more officially sanctioned expressions of Islam; and this, of course, further embellished their social status. Membership in the more clearly Sunni-oriented Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, and Mawlawiyya (Turk. *Mevleviye*) helped in the process, but only partly so. Later these orders were influenced by those who held a dual affiliation with the malamatiyya (a subject to be explored in the next chapter).

In the meantime, the son of Mehmet the Conqueror, Bayazid II, became much attracted to the Khalwati (Turk. *Halveti*) Order of Sufism,

which like the Bektashiyya harbored pro-Alid (or Shi'i) sympathizers. Bayazid II (r. 1481–1512) was noted as a deeply spiritual man, and he strove hard to avoid too many conflicts, preferring instead to strengthen the infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire. He was, nevertheless, hard-pressed to avoid an open conflict with a new threat that arose in the east with the breakdown of Timurid power.

The Safawi Order, which had preceded the Bayramiyya, had become politicized by the descendants of Shaykh Ardabili and had gradually transformed itself into an extremist sect. Although originally Sunni, the later Safawiyya came to worship their spiritual leaders as literal reincarnations of Ali—and later as embodiments of Allah Himself.

The Safavids (as the later Safawiyya came to be known) formed political alliances united behind a Mahdi-like figure named Shaykh Haydar Ibn Junayd (d. 1488). As their distinctive insignia, Junayd's followers adopted a red cap symbolizing the blood of Husayn, the martyred grandson of the Prophet. The caps were also shaped into twelve gores (symbolizing the twelve Imams). After Junayd's grandson Ismail took power, these *kizilbash*, "redheads," became a large and formidable military force allied closely with a number of Turkoman and Kurdish tribes in eastern Anatolia and western Iran.

The contemporary scholar Shahzad Bashir has said, "On a socio-political level, the greater social viability of messianic ideologies stemmed from a weakening of the paradigm of universal rule, the deterioration of social order in the wake of Mongol and Timurid conquests, and the rise of genealogical groups such as the sayyids and Sufi shaykhs and their hereditary heirs as prominent social actors throughout the Islamic East."<sup>35</sup>

By 1501 Ismail had conquered Tabriz (in Azerbaijan) and declared himself shah, and over the next eight years he conquered much of Iran, Iraq, and Transoxiana. Kizilbash missionaries succeeded in converting much of the population of eastern Anatolia, and they even managed to draw to them a few surviving followers of Badruddin of Simawna. Bayazid II needed to counter the threat of the qalandariyya joining

forces with the Safavids, and he attempted to do this by strengthening the power of the Bektashiyya.

In 1501, Bayazid appointed a particular Bektashi shaykh named Balim Sultan (d. 1516) to head the entire order. In exchange, the sultan expected the Bektashis to tame their unruly kinsmen in the east and to wean them away from the Safavids.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, this attempt at conciliation only partly succeeded. As current or former kizilibash became members of the Bektashiyya, the latter itself was changed by absorbing more of these irregular (*ghulat*) ideas. Bayazid also deported some of the more unrelenting kizilbash to Morea (Peloponnese), which had the effect of reinvigorating heterodoxy in the southern Balkans.

Selim I overthrew his father, Bayazid II, in 1512 and declared war against the Safavids. As his army marched to the eastern provinces to do battle, forty thousand Anatolian kizilbash were slaughtered, and open advocates of these or similar ideas throughout the empire faced inquisitorial proceedings. Even after Selim defeated Shah Ismail at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514, kizilbash uprisings continued to erupt periodically in Anatolia, and inquisitions against heretics continued until the 1620s with only short periods of respite.

Complicating this issue, Selim expanded Ottoman territory into the Arabic-speaking Middle East after containing the Safavid threat. Conquering Syria, Egypt, and then the Hijaz, Selim I inherited the position of "Caliph of Islam." As a consequence, the Ottomans became the protectors of Mecca and Medina, which in turn cemented a tighter alliance with the official Sunni ulama. This alliance was to continue throughout the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) and after, and the solidified power of the ulama would inspire further persecutions of free thinkers (*zindiqs*). The latter term began to be applied to the malamatiyya because they were thought of as extremists of *wahdat al-wujud* (the doctrine of the Akbaris). Some reasoned, in addition, that the malamatiyya might harbor similar ideas to the kizilbash and thus pose an additional threat to the state.

## CHAPTER SIX

During the first few years of Suleyman's reign the teachings of Umar Sikkini received a fresh impetus from a third-generation Bayrami-Malamati shaykh named Oghlan Shaykh (d. 1529). Oghlan, who resided in Ankara, seemed to embrace a form of heresy called Hurufism that had originated in the eastern provinces (a site uncomfortably close to the kizilbash heartlands) under Timurid rule in the late fourteenth century.

The Hurufi movement, which derived its name from the Arabic word for letters (*huruf*), promoted an esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an based upon a numerical science of letters called *abjad*. While developing a kabalistic-type form of divination, Hurufis came to believe that the letters composing the names Allah, Muhammad, and Ali could also be discerned in the structure of the human face, therefore in all individual human beings.<sup>37</sup>

Reflecting the earlier views of Hallaj, Hurufis proposed that the human being is the most perfect representation of God in physical form—a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm. This theory was not unlike that proposed earlier by Ibn al-Arabi, but it had been given a more concrete political expression in the peasant revolt of Borkluce.

Making matters worse, the founder of Hurufism, Fazlallah Astarbadi (d. 1394), had claimed to be the Mahdi and had attempted to enlist Tamerlane to his cause. The attempt failed, and Astarbadi was executed as an apostate by the Timurids, but his surviving followers continued to expect his imminent resurrection. As a close follower of Umar Sikkini, Oghlan Shaykh was highly unlikely to have assimilated these Mahdist beliefs, but nevertheless he borrowed heavily from Hurufi concepts in articulating his own view that the human being is the mirror of God. What was once true of Muhammad (sa) and Ali was potentially true for all human beings—providing, of course, that they realized it fully.

Unlike mainstream Shia, Hurufis emphasized that *all* human beings are manifestations of the prototypes of Muhammad (sa) and Ali, a teaching readily absorbed by groups such as the Bektashiyya and the Bayrami-Malamatiyya. This assured that these movements would be

persecuted by both Sunnis and orthodox Shia alike, but it also helped to promote the supraconfessional humanism that had already emerged in the thought of Badruddin of Simawna.

As the Ottomans had learned, doctrines like these—more centered on the sanctity and sovereignty of the individual—could undermine orthodoxy and lead to open rebellions against the state, especially one that had vested its power in an absolute monarchy. As in the case of the kizilbash, beliefs like these could also lead to the ascendance of Mahdi-like figures who could lay claim to the title of Perfected Human Being (*Insan al-Kamil*). Once again, these extremist interpretations of Akbari theories threatened the power of a centralized Sultanate.

As a result, Oghlan Shaykh was arrested and executed after he had established the movement in Istanbul and had successfully converted a number of disciples. Notable among them was Ahmed the Cameleer (d. 1546), who escaped persecution and spread malamati teachings in Thrace. Ahmed was known for saying “The Mirror of Man is the outward form of God,” and soon that idea would spread throughout the European part of the Ottoman Empire, which the Turks called *Rumelia*, the remaining “Land of the Romans.” This area continued to expand beyond Thrace, and by the end of the fourteenth century it came to include Bulgaria, Wallachia (Romania), Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and much of modern-day Greece (Epirus, Thebes, Thessaly, and Euboea). It was a rather large and restive area.

In certain ways Rumelia was similar to Khurasan or the earlier marches of Anatolia. All of these areas were at a greater remove from caliphal authority and equally distant from the religious institutions that had sanctified that power. For this reason, as we have seen, not only the Bektashiyya but later the malamatiyya were able to promote their ideas with greater impunity in those regions.

While orthodox Sufis had strengthened their alliance with the Ottoman bureaucracy, some members of the mercantile class were drawn to the Bayrami-Malamatiyya; and as they crossed the land bridge of Thrace, they met with local *ayans* (notables) who ruled semiautonomous

regions of the Balkans. Many of these notables were former Christians who, after serving as knighted cavalrymen (*sipahis*), had been given land grants called *timars*; others were former Janissaries, a number of whom retained their links with the Bektashiyya. Given a more generally heterodox population in the Balkans, partly supported by the local gentry, the malamatiyya were more able to evade heresiologists—at least temporarily. Inquisitorial trails against potential kizilbash fifth columnists continued until the 1620s, and several malamatis were caught in the dragnet, although it is doubtful that they were supporters of the Safavids.

Malamati teachings had deeply penetrated Bosnia by 1560, but when one of these Bosnians, Hamza Bali, returned to Istanbul to teach openly he became a cause célèbre; he was tried and executed as an apostate in 1562. Again the reasons given were tenuous at best. Thereafter, the Bayrami-Malamatiyya became known as the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya (Turk. *Hamzeviye*), and the order reached Serbia and Bulgaria (part of the widening region of Rumelia), due to the efforts of the Hidden Idris (d. 1615), a successful merchant and the nephew of a tailor to the grand vizier.

By the time that another malamati martyr, Beshir Aga, was executed in Istanbul in 1663, a majority of those who belonged to the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya had begun to resemble a more orthodox tariqa by declaring that they adhered to the Hanafi branch of Sunni Islam. As a result the group attracted to itself a number of intelligentsia, as well as high government officials, including the Shaykh al-Islam (or Grand Mufti) and the grand vizier who served directly under the Sultan.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to their support of the Shari'a, the Hamzawiyya continued to stress the wujudi approach of Ibn al-Arabi. As a result they became well known for putting the teachings of the Greatest Shaykh ahead of all others. Since study of Ibn al-Arabi was usually relegated to more advanced practitioners of Sufism, the shaykhs of other tariqas were attracted to the Hamzawiyya as a form of "supraorder," an advanced curriculum of study and practice. Thus, a number of rather well-placed

Mawlawis, Khalwatis, and Naqshbandis gravitated to the Hamzawiyya, and malamati ideas began to have a greater influence within these other tariqas.

The Bektashis, in the meantime, had thoroughly absorbed Hurufi concepts and the influence of the kizilbash (now acquiring the less polemical name Alevis). As a result, a further differentiation between Alevi-Bektashis and the malamatiyya became clearer. As the Bektashiyya clung to the semidivine status of the Twelve Imams and their own Babas, the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya did not do so; nor did the malamatiyya support the rise of Mahdi-like figures who could challenge the state (as had been the case with the kizilbash). The malamatiyya, by contrast, quietly upheld the idea that every person was potentially a Mahdi (lit. “rightly guided”)—but they held these ideas in a way far less politically controversial than had been the case earlier in the reign of Suleyman.

For malamatis, only mystical realization guaranteed entrance into the spiritual Imamate, and this idea, rather than being extremist, could be found in the earlier teachings of Ibn al-Arabi. Since these ideas were congruent with the wujudi rendering of Sunni Islam, rather than with Shi’ism, the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya remained affiliated with the former, which eased their eventual acceptance by the ulama and the state.

Earlier, some of the malamatiyya had elicited suspicion by using Ottoman imperial titles such as Sultan and Vizier in addressing one another. Imber surmises that this group “regard[ed] itself as self-governing and beyond the authority of the Ottoman state, whose titles and organization it mimicked.”<sup>39</sup> Holbrook finds this conclusion questionable. Instead, she proposes that this order manifested a “para-state consciousness” that prompted the state to persecute a number of malamatis for their “revolutionary bids for an alternative future of Islamic ideology.”<sup>40</sup>

These attempts to reshape Islamic thought had to be carefully framed. Official Islam and the orthodox Sufi orders played a vital part

in maintaining the internal cohesion of the Ottoman Empire. They also helped to legitimize the expansion of the imperium as a civilizing mission. In a reciprocal manner, the success of the Ottoman Empire further consolidated the power of the ulama and the orthodox Sufis who worked in tandem with them.

Wandering qalandars had played an important part in the process of earlier conversions to Islam. Their usefulness, however, was being outlived as the Ottoman state became progressively centralized and bureaucratized. What Holbrook calls “radical bids for an alternative Islamic ideology” could be shared only with a highly sophisticated audience, and this audience—made up increasingly of the military, administrative, and ulama classes—needed to be reassured that the malamatiyya would no longer be associated with either Mahdist ideas or rebellious plots.

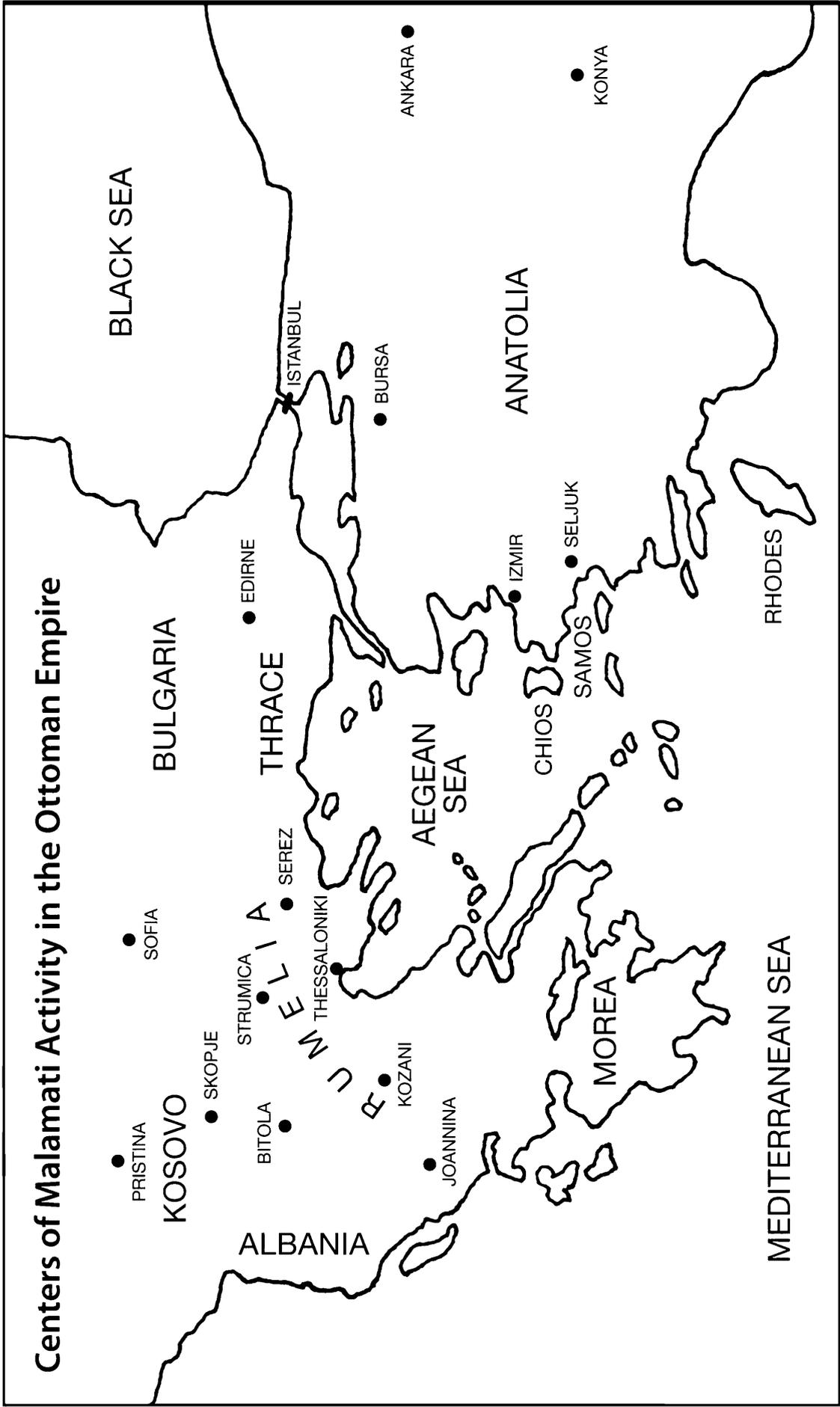
It should not be imagined, however, that these developments depoliticized the malamatiyya entirely, but a new bid for political influence would only take place several centuries years later—and only as the Ottoman Empire suffered a considerable decline in its power. As we shall see in the next chapter, a new and more subtle approach was taken by repoliticized malamatis in the nineteenth century.

In the meantime, Suleyman the Magnificent would extend Ottoman territory even farther into the domains of the Hapsburgs in Austria-Hungary and storm Vienna. The Turks dominated the entire Mediterranean Sea until their defeat by combined Christian powers at the naval battle of Lepanto (1571). For the next hundred years, the Ottoman Empire would struggle with the Hapsburgs and their allies. At the same time, a new foe appeared to the north in the person of Peter the Great of Russia (r. 1682–1725).

Czar Peter planned to expand Imperial Russia, to the detriment of the Tatars and their suzerains, the Ottomans. An alliance of the Russians, the Poles, and the Hapsburgs made great gains by defeating the Ottomans, who had once again attacked Vienna. For the “Third Rome,” the Czars and the Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburgs joined forces

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF MALAMATI ACTIVITY

temporarily, and after the Treaty of Carlowitz (1699), the Ottoman Empire began to lose some of its European holdings. Hungary and Transylvania were ceded to Austria, the Ukraine to Poland, and islands in the Aegean, the Dalmatian coast, and the Morea (Peloponnese) went to the Venetians. These developments marked the zenith of the Ottoman Empire, and its gradual decline prepared the ground for a new wave of malamati activity.



## Seven

# The Later Malamatiyya

**A**s we have seen, prior to the modern age the Ottomans were confident they were destined to war with others in order to encompass them in a universal order—a confidence bolstered by their pragmatic achievements at imperial expansion. At the height of Ottoman preeminence in the seventeenth century, the flag of the empire was emblazoned with three crescents, each representing one of the domains under imperial control: Asia Minor, whose landmass encompassed present-day Turkey; the European provinces, including most of the Balkans as well as much of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Crimea; and almost all of the Arabic-speaking Middle East and North Africa. The internal cohesion of these vast territorial domains necessitated a belief system that enhanced citizen conformity and compliance.

During the reign of Suleyman, and for the next three hundred years, the Ottoman Empire remained in a state of accelerated conflict with the West, further accentuating the need for a cohesive and comprehensive metaphysical rationale that backed the sultanate's expanded bids for power. Because of this, earlier forms of the malamatiyya were forced to undergo changes, including (as we have seen) the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya reaffirming their allegiance to the orthodox (Hanafi) Shari'a.

The political stakes were high, and they extended well beyond the boundaries of the empire. Ottoman domains bridged Europe and the Orient, and all of the major trade routes for spices and silk passed

## CHAPTER SEVEN

through its territories.<sup>1</sup> It was because of this that the Spaniards sought an alternative overseas route to the East Indies, and after the discovery of the New World the treasuries of Charles V were swollen by massive amounts of silver mined in Latin America. These riches allowed Charles to conduct massive military offensives against the Ottomans by land and by sea—and not only as the king of Spain, but also as the Holy Roman Emperor, blessed by the Pope.

Returning to the Ottoman Empire, political exigencies, as always, dictated tighter restrictions on antinomian expressions of Sufism, and most of the ulama and the Sufi orders continued to conform to state requirements. As we have seen, demands for religious conformity could wax and wane, but they would always increase whenever a struggle for centralization of state power dictated such a need. This was the case in the late Ottoman period when the empire continued to be assailed by the Western powers.

After the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, the Ottoman Empire experienced a slow but steady decline. By the close of the eighteenth century, the military prowess of the sultanate, its territorial integrity, and its vision of Islam were increasingly challenged by a gradually unified Christian Europe, resulting by the mid-nineteenth century in the cataclysmic breakup of the European half of the empire and the subsequent rise of separate nation-states in the Balkans.

As this breakup occurred, a “third wave” of malamati activity arose that repoliticized the movement in ways far more subtle than the malamatiyya involvement in politics in the middle period. These changes were initiated—almost single-handedly—by Pir Nur al-Arabi (1813–88/89).<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, the Pir attempted to soften the effects of Ottoman decline by exemplifying the adaptability of Sufism and Islam to contemporary conditions.

Nur al-Arabi was a member of the ulama, a Naqshbandi shaykh, and a dedicated follower of Ibn al-Arabi. All of these attributes would have suited him well for a conservative role in Sufism, were it not for the rapid and destabilizing historical changes. These changes necessitated

a more radical approach to Islam, but one that was diplomatically tempered in order to be rendered acceptable to more conservative and reactionary traditionalists.

Because he came from a long line of *Sayyids*, lineal descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, it was easier for the Pir to gain an initial acceptance among the official ulama. Adding to his status, both sides of his family had been active in orthodox Sufism for several generations. Nur al-Arabi's father, Sayyid Ibrahim Qudsi, was the son of a Sufi shaykh, Badrul Wali, who came from a long line of Sayyids and had directed a lodge outside of Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> and no doubt the family's prestige eased their way into Egypt shortly before the Pir's birth.

Sayyid Ibrahim died when Nur was four years old, and he was subsequently raised by a maternal uncle for three years. At seven years old he became the pupil of Shaykh Hasan al-Quwaysini (d. 1838), a well-known Ashariite scholar and exemplar of Sunni orthodoxy who was later to become rector of al-Azhar in Cairo. The early patronage of a theologian like Quwaysini would later lend the Pir a still greater aura of authority among the Ottoman ulama class.

Although Quwaysini is not known to have had a particular tariqa affiliation, he educated the future Pir in classical Sufism as well as teaching him the Qur'anic sciences and principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). All of these skills served his student well when he emigrated to the Balkans from Egypt, and especially so when he later attempted to influence leading members of the ruling Ottoman ulama and military and state bureaucracies.

In 1829, when Nur al-Arabi was sixteen years old, Quwaysini delivered his protégé to a Naqshbandi shaykh known simply as Yusuf Efendi, who took Nur al-Arabi to Yanya (present-day Ioannina, Greece). As the capital of the westernmost province of the Ottoman Empire, this metropolis of two hundred thousand citizens funneled trade between the western Ottoman Empire and Europe via a canal linking it to Arta, a port on the Adriatic Sea. Nur al-Arabi resided in Yanya for nine months while he pursued further studies in Sufism under the direction

## CHAPTER SEVEN

of Yusuf Effendi's son-in-law, Talat Effendi. We do not know for certain why such a young pupil was sent there by Quwaysini, although it seems plausible that fully qualified Islamic teachers were needed by the Sunni Naqshbandiyya in order to teach the more largely heterodox populations of the Balkans. These people, as we have seen, were greatly influenced by the Bektashiyya, which had (once again) fallen into official disfavor. Perhaps Quwaysini had also sent his student to these frontier regions to test his general spiritual fortitude, but this we will never know for certain.

Less than a decade before Nur's arrival, the Pashalik of Yanya had been left in disarray by wars conducted by a despot named Ali Pasha Tepelen as he attempted to become the independent sultan of Rumelia. During this period, any hope of unity and reform was challenged by Bektashi excesses on the one hand and by the reactionary ulama on the other. The Janissary corps played a part in bridging these factions, thereby creating a triumvirate that became increasingly troublesome to the sultanate.

At the close of the eighteenth century the Janissaries and the ulama, united to depose Selim II, the first of a series of modernizing sultans. Though they succeeded in assassinating Selim, they failed to prevent his successor, Mahmud II from carrying forward reforms with ruthless efficiency.

Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) disbanded the Janissaries and closed down the tekkes of the Bektashiyya, who were the former's religious allies. These moves, however, were merely a prelude to Mahmud instituting laws aimed at preventing corruption and also at fostering a greater centralization of state power by limiting the power of the local notables (*ayans*) in the Balkans, among other measures. All of these developments gave rise to the period called the Tanzimat (reorganization), which took place between 1839 and 1876.

The entire restive Pashalik of Rumelia was subjugated by Sultan Mahmud II in 1820, and the Bektashiyya were officially abolished, along with the Janissaries, in 1826. Since the infamous Ali Pasha was a

patron of the Bektashiyya, and since he had also supported ethnic Albanian claims to independence, Bektashi lodges were turned over to more conservative tariqas such as the Naqshbandiyya, which were viewed as allies of the Sublime Porte.

Two years before Nur al-Arabi took up residence in Yanya, the Egypto-Turkish fleet was destroyed by a European alliance at Navarino (1827). French forces under Napoleon invaded Egypt and marched on Syria. British control spread rapidly in India, and the contest between the czarists and the English for influence in Central Asia initiated “the Great Game.” Farther west, the Austrians and imperial Russia made significant progress in containing, and then diminishing, Ottoman holdings. It was a time of great crisis for Islamic civilization as a whole, and especially so for the Ottomans as the last exemplars of Muslim temporal power.

Spurred on by territorial losses, and given its need to compete with Europe’s obvious military and economic superiority, the sultanate began to move toward limited modernization by the close of the eighteenth century. Because of this, the Great Powers were able to intervene in Ottoman affairs indirectly, but adroitly, by exporting European-style education.

The adoption of new technologies by the Ottomans required that they import European instructors to teach in their academies. These teachers normally taught in French (and, to a lesser extent, in German); and this necessitated that the educated Ottoman classes also learn those languages. Since fluency was accomplished more efficiently through an exposure to general literature, authors like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu came to be read; and thus Enlightenment ideas entered Ottoman discourse.

As an outcome, a few Muslim reformers promoted the alignment of Islamic thought with Western philosophy and science—and, in varying degrees, with the political ideas of postrevolutionary Europe. Nur al-Arabi—although he can hardly be called a rationalist—supported modernization, and one can only speculate that he did so because he

## CHAPTER SEVEN

believed a number of Enlightenment ideals were compatible with Islam. Certainly that would not be out of character for him.

Where the Pir, like others, saw a danger in the liberal Enlightenment was that it supported the rise of nationalist revolutions throughout the Ottoman Empire. Nur al-Arabi did not appear to oppose nationalism, as such, but he did act to dampen the violence that sprang from its ethno-religious divisions.

As already noted, a hundred years earlier the Ottomans had ceded much of their Balkan territories to the Holy League, a coalition of European powers. This development took place around the same time the Russian Empire began a period of ascendancy under Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725). The beginnings of the Tanzimat coincided with a further consolidation of the Russian Empire initiated by Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96), and after Catherine became czarina she made it a personal cause to undermine Ottoman supremacy.

Originally a German Catholic influenced by the Enlightenment, the future empress had spent many hours reading Montesquieu and Voltaire. Before ascending the throne, however, Catherine converted to Orthodox Christianity, and like Peter the Great—whom she admired and tried to surpass—she subsequently sent Russian agents into the Balkans to fuel indigenous uprisings among the Christian population.

At the end of the first Russo-Turkish War (1768–74), the Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji included a stipulation allowing Russia to represent Orthodox Christians in Moldavia, Walachia, and the Aegean Islands. After this treaty, Russia interpreted its oversight as extending to all Orthodox Christian subjects in the Ottoman domain, and as a result Russia came to support the Serbian and Greek uprisings that took place between 1804 and 1829.

Simultaneously, some indigenous Balkan revolutionaries were inspired by French republican and Enlightenment ideals to secede from the Ottoman Empire and establish a number of separate nation-states. Since ethnicity in the Balkans was determined predominantly by religion, the form of nationalism that resulted was dominated (in the main)

by Orthodox Christians. As an unfortunate by-product, this contributed to a breakdown of relatively stable (and more peaceful) intercommunal relations among Christians, Jews, and Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

All of these developments aided the further dissolution of the European third of the Ottoman Empire—aided and abetted by the Great Powers—and dramatized the need to continue the Ottoman Reorganization. A group called the Young Ottomans came to believe that the only way to fully secure the gains of the Tanzimat was to embrace the European Enlightenment, to reinvigorate Islam, and to promote a parliamentary form of monarchy. Some of them also believed that a new and more inclusive model of Ottoman citizenship, irrespective of religion, could stave off divisive nationalist aspirations.

The modern scholar Serif Mardin describes this movement as follows: “Among the Young Ottomans existed at least four categories of reformers.” The first included “those most attuned to the liberal ideal of progress through emancipation from all remnants of a bygone age. They were the most universal, the closest to starting from the basic postulate of the brotherhood of humanity.” The second tendency was one of “nationalism,” and the third category included those who advocated “reason in the solution of political problems.” Finally, the fourth category included those who felt close to common people, who felt “the bewilderment of those who were left stranded, materially and spiritually.”<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, anecdotal evidence indicates that Pir Nur al-Arabi played a small yet significant part in inspiring these constitutional reformers. The part that Nur al-Arabi played, however, was largely motivated by his desire to reform Sufism and Islamic understanding. Because of this, the “third wave” movement that was named after him, the Nuriyya-Malamiyya, must be properly viewed within that context. Like the Young Ottomans, the Pir seemed to be convinced that “the political theory of the Koran and its interpreters provided the strongest guarantees of individual freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

While similar reformers of Sufism the Pir most greatly admired, such as Ahmad Ibn Idris (d. 1837), exerted considerable influence in Arabic-

speaking areas, Nur al-Arabi made further moves toward modernizing Sufism in accord with changes taking place in the Ottoman Empire itself.<sup>7</sup> As we have seen, the Pir's mission seemed to be focused differently from that of other reformers in the larger Islamic world. His influence was focused on the westernmost regions of the sultanate where (among other things) he sought to defuse the religious extremism accompanying the rise of ethnic nationalism.

While doing so, the Pir discarded what he considered to be the essentials of Sufism while attempting to revive more enduring Islamic values. Nur al-Arabi used the phrase "the profession of Muhammad" (in Ottoman Turkish, *Maslaq Muhammedi*) to describe his approach. This phrase was analogous in many ways to "the Muhammadan Way" (in Arabic, *Al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya*, and in Ottoman Turkish, *Tariqat i-Muhammedi*), a term adopted by a number of Sufis after it was originally coined by Ibn al-Arabi. The meaning of that term varied considerably among Sufi reformers, although most of them promoted a return to earlier Islamic norms.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Nur al-Arabi, who adopted a more pacific approach, most Sufi reformers were united by their armed resistance to the encroachments of European colonialists throughout the "abode of Islam" (*dar al-Islam*). In India, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831) organized armed resistance against the British Raj; in Algeria, Amir Abd al-Qadir (d. 1883) fought the French; and Czarist advances into the Caucasus were countered by Ghazi Muhammad (d. 1831) and Shah Ismail (d. 1871).<sup>9</sup>

Notably, all these reformers had multiple Sufi affiliations, yet none of them privileged one religious order above the rest. Instead, they sought to reform Sufism by returning to what some of them envisioned as an original Muhammadan Way. It is doubtful that they actually met with one another, yet in most cases these activists shared a definite spiritual affinity, and many of them used Ibn al-Arabi as their primary point of reference. This remained the case even though quite a number of them remained critical of the Greatest Shaykh.<sup>10</sup>

Pir Nur al-Arabi was a devout Akbari, and like Ibn al-Arabi he equated the Way of Muhammad with the malamatiyya; and he did not believe that the position of the Seal of Muhammadan Sanctity had terminated with the Greatest Shaykh himself. Instead, the Pir believed that Ottoman Sufis like Badruddin of Simawna had later inherited the position of the Seal. The Pir also came to believe that reformers like him could occupy a similar status in the future. As we shall see, this belief was strengthened when Nur al-Arabi became an initiated Akbari and a direct inheritor of the Akbari lineage that descended from Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi.

In 1830, after Nur al-Arabi had spent nine months in Yanya, Quway-sini wrote to him there and instructed him to go to Mecca. Whatever effect the Naqshbandi Shaykhs Yusuf and Talat Effendi had upon the young Pir we will never know since he didn't mention them in his writings.<sup>11</sup> During his stay in Mecca, which lasted one year, Nur al-Arabi met another shaykh, Ibrahim al-Shamariki who initiated him into the Shabani-Khalwati as well as the combined Uwaysi-Akbari lines of ascription.<sup>12</sup> It was the Akbariyya that carried forward the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi—and it was this spiritual lineage that was most important to the Pir.

The Uwaysi-Akbari chain passed through Daud Abd al-Ghani Nablusi (d. 1733), one of the most important revivers of Ibn al-Arabi's legacy in the late Ottoman period. Nablusi was known to be an "Uwaysi," a Sufi who received instruction directly through the spiritual presence of a departed shaykh; in Nablusi's case this form of communication took place through the medium of contact with the ethereal presence (*ruhaniyya*) of Ibn al-Arabi. Nablusi's lineal successors apparently also possessed the Uwaysi aptitude, and thus the Pir experienced a direct spiritual connection with the Prophet Muhammad—as is evident from his journal entries.

During his first visit to Mecca, Nur al-Arabi had a significant dream in which the Prophet draped his cloak (*khirqā*) upon his shoulders.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Muhammad (sa) then wrote three lines on a piece of paper and handed it to the Pir. One of the Prophet's closest companions, Abu Bakr as-Sadiq, who was hovering nearby, commented that this was an initiation into the mystical stations (*maqamat*) of the effacement of the divine actions, qualities, and essence, and the Pir would continue to contemplate these stations until he arrived at their completion. This was later confirmed by Quwaysini through another vision presented to him by the Pir.

An initiation into the divine actions, qualities, and essence indicated that Nur al-Arabi had arrived at the position of “annihilation in God” (*fana fi-Allah*). According to classical Sufism, however, this acquirement required further refinement. Self-annihilation was only one part of what many Sufis described as the ascending arc on the journey *to* God. Once having arrived at the apex of this arc, one would continue to journey *within* God for an indeterminate period of time. Then, in a descending arc, one would return to the world “from and by” God in order to instruct others. All of this, for the Pir, would take some further time and maturation. For the time being, it seemed that Nur al-Arabi's experience of *fana* had taken him to a point where Quwaysini's practical knowledge had effectively ended. Quwaysini's tutelage, it seemed, was no longer sufficient to aid his student's progress along the path.

A more direct form of guidance from the Prophet Muhammad himself was deemed necessary by many traditional Sufis, so Quwaysini suggested that Nur al-Arabi visit the Husayni Mosque in Cairo. When the Pir went there—and as he walked toward the tomb of Imam Husayn—he saw the apparition of a person sitting there. He later related, “I was inspired that he was Habibullah [lit. “the Beloved of God,” one of the names given to Muhammad]. I had a feeling of fear, but I walked over to Him and kissed His knee. He prayed for me, he touched my back, and He then permitted me to leave. I walked to the main entrance where I turned around and looked back to the huge space of the mosque, and it was still empty. I walked back again to the Sublime Station, but I could no longer find [Him there].”<sup>13</sup>

When he related this incident to Quwaysini, the latter responded that Nur al-Arabi had gained the spiritual approval of the Prophet directly, and thus the Pir could now return to Rumelia and teach there. Taking his leave, the Pir left by way of Alexandria and landed in Antalya (in Turkey); after traveling through many towns in Anatolia, he crossed by sea to Salonika, then proceeded to Serrez (present-day Serrai in Greece). Perhaps it was there that the Pir became acquainted with—and was later inspired to write his famous commentary on—Badruddin of Simawna; indeed, it was in the city of Serrez that Badruddin was tried and executed on charges of heresy.

By 1833, upon the request of certain notables, the Pir went to Kocani (Macedonia), where he was appointed a professor at its local madrasa. The year before, the lower half of the Balkans had broken away when the sultan had signed a treaty recognizing the Kingdom of Greece. As a result, Macedonia became even more important as a center of Ottoman control, especially so since it contained the largest trade city in the Balkans, Salonika. The governor of Macedonia, Hifzi Pasha, came to know about this twenty-year-old prodigy and invited him to the capital of the province, Uskup (present-day Skopje).

In 1839, while in Uskup, the Pir (now age twenty-six) received another initiation into the Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi Order, this time by Shaykh Abdulhalik Kazani, a grand shaykh from Istanbul. Evident from this event is that Nur al-Arabi considered it important to continue his formal connection to the Naqshbandiyya even though he believed that the Uwaysi-Akbari approach was far more essential.

These events coincided with the ascension of a new sultan, Abdul Majid (1839–61), and the formal beginnings of the Tanzimat with the declaration of the *Hatti-Sharif* (Noble Edict) of Gulhane. Kinross would later observe, “The earliest constitutional document in any Islamic country, it was in effect a charter of legal, social, and political rights, a Magna Carta for the subjects of the Empire.”<sup>14</sup> Due to the reactions of the conservative ulama, however, Rashid Pasha, who had drafted it,

## CHAPTER SEVEN

was dismissed and exiled to the embassy in Paris (1841)—and thus the reforms of the *Hatti-Sharif* were greatly delayed.

At the time, none of these events affected the Pir directly, although they would do so somewhat later. More pressingly, Grand Shaykh Kazani's initiation did not satisfy Nur al-Arabi's desire for deeper spiritual realization, and in 1843 (at the age of thirty) the Pir journeyed back to Mecca. According to his son, Sharif Effendi, the Pir had said, "Our present knowledge is not enough for us, the sacred Mecca and Medina can never be without the presence of a perfect Murshid, this is a chance for us; so we must look for one." Sharif Effendi added that the Pir found a seeming qalandar named Darwish Muhammad (alt. Dervish Mehmet) in Mecca and later described their meeting:

After circumambulating the Ka'bah I sat to meditate. A person who appeared to be a madman came and sat next to me, his body touching mine. There were lice on him, which I feared would come onto me. But they came toward me, then turned back and stayed on him! He said to me, "I educate my lice. They will never leave me." I asked his name. "Darwish Muhammad," he said. And he told me that he had sat with me nineteen years ago, on my first Pilgrimage, and remembered my fancy blue coat. He had not addressed me then on account of my youth.<sup>15</sup>

According to Sharif Effendi, at the suggestion of Darwish Muhammad, Nur al-Arabi went into a retreat for the traditional period of forty days, during which time he was initiated into the stations of *baqa-jam*, *hadhrat al-jam*, and *jam al-jam*—by the spiritual presence of the Prophet. Returning from Mecca to Uskup, the Pir was authorized, on the recommendation of Darwish Muhammad, to act as a completed Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi shaykh by Mustafa Trabzoni, the representative of Grand Shaykh Abdulhalik Kazani.

It is curious that a qalandar like Darwish Muhammad could exert an influence on a Naqshbandi shaykh, unless of course he belonged to

the same order, but that has not been recorded. Nur al-Arabi reported, instead, that Darwish Muhammad, when asked what order he belonged to, had simply responded he belonged to the *Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya*. This term indicated that Darwish Muhammad might have belonged to a particular branch of the Mujaddidi-Naqshbandiyya, some of whom, though originating in India, had come to live in Mecca. Some of these itinerant dervishes adhered to the ideas of Khwaja Mir Dard (b. 1721), a mystical poet who had begun to propagate a new branch of the Mujaddidi-Naqshbandiyya also called the Way of Muhammad.

Among Khwaja Mir Dard's tenets were the following: the *Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya* should not be considered a new sect; all Muslims should love Ali and the *Ahl-al-Bayt* (descendants of Muhammad), although the Shi'i had taken this love to an extreme; the Imamate continued through the Twelve Imams and then descended through Sayyids, who were divinely appointed; among the Sayyids, God would appoint a renewer every one hundred years. According to Mir Dard, perfect Sufis made no distinction between *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat al-shuhud*; true Muhammadis substituted the word *nur* for *wujud*, because the latter term was not to be found in the Qur'an; moreover, a state of political peace stimulated the practice of Islam, and, as a consequence, members of the *Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya* could visit the powerful in order to encourage them to rule by the principles of justice.

Interestingly, Nur al-Arabi would later adopt almost all of the principles listed by Mir Dard although he never mentioned the latter by name. Instead, after his pilgrimage to Mecca, the Pir began loosening his formal ties with the Mujaddidi-Naqshbandiyya. Despite his appointment as a shaykh of this (almost purely) Sunni order, the Pir—not unlike many other Turkish Sufis—manifested a great love for Ali and the Twelve Imams. Himself a Sayyid, Nur al-Arabi increasingly saw himself as a reviver of both Sufism and Islam. The Pir made little distinction between wujudis and shuhudis, while still giving preference to Ibn al-Arabi. There can be no doubt that the Pir also supported a state

## CHAPTER SEVEN

of continuing political peace, and (as we shall see) he made a concerted effort to promote the principle of justice among those who ruled in positions of authority.

In all these respects, Nur al-Arabi was in full agreement with the concepts articulated by Mir Dard, although the question of whether or not Darwish Muhammad had been a Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi can never be settled due to the lack of written evidence. It is fairly certain, however, that the dervish was not an Indian because (according to the Pir) he spoke a middle-Anatolian dialect. This region, as we have seen, had been influenced by malamatis of all types for centuries, and Ankara had been the home of Hadji Bayram. Suffice to say, Darwish Muhammad chose not to reveal himself as the member of any particular tariqa, although he insisted on the Pir's refinement of the stations of *baqa* (continuance after annihilation), which were hallmarks of *both* the Naqshbandiyya and the malamatiyya. What is more important is that Darwish Muhammad opened the door for Nur al-Arabi's experience of a state considered of primary importance to Akbaris as well as to the Naqshbandiyya and the malamatiyya in general. (The state in question will be detailed in the next chapter).

On his way back to Macedonia from Mecca after leaving Darwish Muhammad, the Pir stopped in Yanbu, the closest port to Medina. There, he sacrificed a ram, and the meat was cooked with rice and served to the poor. The next day, he claimed to have been initiated into *ahadiyyat al-jam*, the station of *khatm* (seal of the saints): "While taking a nap, I entered through the Bab al-Salam [Gate of Peace] and met with Rasululah (sa). This occurred while he presented me with his face of Divine Light, not with his corporeal face. It appeared as a ray of shining light, much stronger than the sun. He opened his palms and told me to walk. As I walked, the ray of light pulled me in. I was held there and squeezed, and he initiated me into the station of Ahadiyya [nondelimited Oneness]."<sup>16</sup>

It was common for Sufis to believe that someone initiated in this way had achieved at least a taste (*dhawq*) of the station of the *Qutb al-*

*Zaman* (Axis of the Time), but the Pir did not immediately assume this position. Instead, Nur al-Arabi grew more certain that he had a special function to perform as a reformer of Sufism, although in a way that was still unclear to him.<sup>17</sup>

Returning to Rumelia via Egypt, the Pir visited Quwaysini for the last time to secure his approval. Once back in Uskup, Nur al-Arabi learned that the governor, Hifzi Pasha, had been replaced by Selim Pasha, who became the Pir's disciple. After Selim Pasha was reassigned to Istanbul as the commander of the interior security forces, he invited Nur al-Arabi (then age thirty-seven) to visit him for six months in 1849–50. While staying in Istanbul, the Pir is reported to have met with many shaykhs and members of the ulama, but this was only the beginning of his mission to expand his influence among more influential members of the Ottoman bureaucracy.

During 1850, the Pir returned to Macedonia and traveled to the city of Prizren, in neighboring Kosovo province. After arriving there, according to his journals, he experienced an inner directive to begin initiating people into the stations of annihilation and continuance (*fana wa-baqa*). The next day, he extended an invitation to two imams and a small number of junior officers in the army battalion protecting the city, and for the next two years, the Pir's reputation continued to expand.

By 1852 Nur al-Arabi was invited by Ismail Pasha, then a field marshal and Chief of Staff of the Army of Macedonia, to deliver a series of lectures at the military academy in Monastir. The Pir's acceptance of this invitation was to prove decisive. War clouds were gathering over the Crimea, and within two years a disastrous three-year conflict would ensue between imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

Nur al-Arabi stayed in Monastir for three months in 1852, during which time he lectured on "Subtle Research with Commentary on the Inspirations of Shaykh Badruddin of Simawna" (*Lataif al Tahkikat fi Sharhi al Waridat*). His audience included military cadets and an influential group of politicians and ulama, and the Pir's choice of his topic may have been prescient, for Badruddin of Simawna was well known

## CHAPTER SEVEN

for promoting a supraconfessional order that united Muslims and Christians.

One of the causes of the ensuing Crimean War was that Czar Nicholas's ambassador had presented a demand to the Ottoman sultanate in 1853 that Russia should acquire the right to act as a protectorate to the Ottoman Empire's twelve million Orthodox Christian subjects. One wonders if the Pir, by introducing the topic of Shaykh Badruddin a year earlier, was attempting to circumvent the possibility of Russia's taking advantage of the religious divisions that increasingly divided the empire.

In any case, it is clear from a reading of his commentaries that the Pir agreed with Badruddin of Simawna that every person had to arrive at an interior realization of Islam and that each Muslim was potentially his or her own Jesus, Muhammad, and Mahdi. These ideas, as they had before, supported an intrinsically democratic view of Islam, one that (at least implicitly) supported the movement among Tanzimat reformers to curb the power of the sultanate and the official ulama. In a possible nod to members of the audience who later joined the Young Ottomans, one portion of the lecture's title, "Subtle Research," may have hinted at the Pir's deeper intention in presenting his topic to them rather than to members of the brotherhoods or the ulama.

A major turning point, the Crimean War lasted from 1853 to 1856, and only after its conclusion was a royal proclamation declared, called the *Hatti-Humayun*, that secured equal rights for all Ottoman subjects irrespective of religion. Meanwhile, the Muslim populations of the Balkans were further enlarged by massive numbers of Tatar refugees from the Crimea, and tensions between local Muslims and Christians became further enflamed.

In 1861 Sultan Abdul Majid's reign was succeeded by Abdulaziz (r. 1861–76), of whom Kinross has declared: "Reactionary in his outlook and unrestrained by any liberal principles, he ruled as an absolute despot."<sup>18</sup>

While the sultan's court tried to restrain the more liberal reforms of the Tanzimat, by 1865 the Young Ottomans attempted to offset these responses by joining together in a secret organization called The Patriotic Alliance. Three years later, reactionaries in the general vicinity of Uskup filed a petition with the Sublime Porte complaining that Pir Nur al-Arabi was spreading heretical as well as subversive teachings. Sultan Abdulaziz ordered the Shaykh al-Islam to investigate.

The Pir's old student and patron, Husayni Husni Pasha, acting as the minister in charge of interior security forces, prevented the case from going forward, and he then invited Nur al-Arabi to Istanbul as his personal guest. As a result, the Pir and his son Sharif Effendi came to Istanbul for a third time and stayed in the residence of Husni Pasha in 1868–69; during that time Nur al-Arabi met again with a number of well-known (but unnamed) Sufi shaykhs and ulama. Most importantly, through the direct intercession of Husni Pasha, the Pir was saved from the fate of Badruddin of Simawna, whose radical teachings had become utterly enmeshed with those of his more militant representative Borkluce.

Once Nur al-Arabi had successfully eluded prosecution, it became increasingly apparent that he was more of a moderate, incrementalist reformer than a violent revolutionary, and as a result his reputation as a loyal and dependable citizen caught the attention of well-placed members of the bureaucracy who could now afford to associate with him more openly.

In 1871, the Pir (now fifty-eight) visited Istanbul for a fourth time at the invitation of the newly appointed Shaykh al-Islam, Mir Ahmad Muhtar Effendi, also known as Molla Bey (d. 1882/83).

During this stay in Istanbul, Nur al-Arabi initiated a number of dignitaries, including the treasurer of the Ottoman army; the chief inspector of religious nonprofits (*wakifs*); a leading mullah of Egypt; and three Rifa'i shaykhs, one of whom, Haririzade Kemalettin Effendi (1851–81), would later become the Pir's primary representative in Istanbul.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

The year before, while traveling to Monastir for a circumcision ceremony, Nur al-Arabi had stopped in a town called Tikwash for a few days. During that period, the Pir openly declared that he had arrived at the position of being a “Pole,” or *Qutb*. No doubt, this spiritual appointment would play a part in his attempt to unify all of the malamatiyya under his own direction. On the way to Istanbul, Nur al-Arabi had stopped in Thrace to visit the tomb of the Hidden Idris, the seventeenth-century representative of the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya. Having met with the spiritual presence of Idris, Nur al-Arabi became further convinced that he should issue an appeal to the present head of the Hamzawis in Istanbul, Sayyid Abdulkaadir Effendi, to join him under his leadership. Much to the Pir’s disappointment, Sayyid Abdulkaadir declined.

Victoria Holbrook writes: “Seyyit Abdulkaadir el-Belhi (d. 1922) . . . was the first Melami Axis to enjoy as public a following as that of Beshir Aga, martyred in 1663. . . . He traveled with his father [from Afghanistan] to Bursa in 1863–4, and by invitation of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz’s father, they moved to Istanbul.”<sup>19</sup> As a Naqshbandi shaykh, Abdulkaadir also headed a tekke dedicated to that order in the Eyyup district of Istanbul, and it was in that city that he became the successor of Seyyit Bekir Reshat Effendi (d. 1875), a leading malamati saint. Despite meeting with Abdulkaadir several times, Nur al-Arabi failed to convince him to join forces, and the Hamzawiyya continued to operate separately under Abdulkaadir’s direction. The last known Axis of the Hamzawiyya was reported by Holbrook as passing away in the early 1950s, and a number of those attached to the Hamzawiyya in Turkey and the Balkans were gradually absorbed by the Nuriyya-Malamiyya, although a number of others preferred to remain a distinctly different group that operated in a more secretive manner.

After his fourth trip to Istanbul, Nur al-Arabi came back to Uskup. Four years later (1875), he returned for the fifth time to stay with his Murid, the Shaykh al-Islam Molla Bey for five months. Shortly after that trip Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) ascended to the throne, and the Pir would never visit Istanbul again. The dictatorial policies of

Abdul Hamid made it impossible. Mardin notes that the new sultan “distrusted the alliances between liberal bureaucrats and ulema [ulama].” As a result, Abdul Hamid persecuted the liberals and “actively encouraged obscurantism in the medresses [madrasas].”<sup>20</sup>

In 1877 a new war broke out between Turkey and Russia. This conflict ended in defeat for the Ottomans, but their unexpected resistance allowed other European powers, led by Britain, to intervene and broker a peace, the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878). The treaty stipulated that the Ottomans had to recognize the independence of Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro, much to the satisfaction of Russia. In addition, the Sublime Porte had to cede territory to these new nations and to relinquish control over the newly founded state of Bulgaria. As a further insult, the sultanate also had to pay war reparations to Russia.

As the empire weakened, Abdul Hamid sought to strengthen his hand by dissolving the parliament. In the process, many Tanzimat reformers were exiled, and some, like Midhat Pasha, were eventually put to death. The result of this abrogation of the constitution was that Abdul Hamid launched a veritable reign of terror against liberalizing reformers and their allies among the ulama.

Lord Kinross would later write, “Pale, silent, and melancholy, with a ‘sinister and scrutinizing’ look that belied his polite manners, Abdul Hamid scented danger on every side and suspected all those around him. He surrounded himself with an army of spies, *agents provocateurs*, secret police, and unofficial informers who provided him with daily reports. It thus came to be said that one-half of the population of Istanbul was employed spying on the other half.”<sup>21</sup> This was hardly an atmosphere that supported reformers like Nur al-Arabi, and he retired into relative obscurity in Macedonia.

The year 1878 marked another turning point in the fortunes of the Sublime Porte. Britain invaded Cyprus, and Austria-Hungary conquered Bosnia and Herzegovina, while France seized the province of Tunisia. The Congress of Berlin reduced Ottoman territories in Europe to Macedonia, Albania, and Thrace. More importantly, as a result of

the Decree of Muharram in 1881, the Ottomans were forced to accept new financial restraints by the European powers. According to the decree, the Ottoman public debt was reduced from £191,000,000 to £106,000,000, while certain revenues were assigned to debt service and a European-controlled organization was set up to collect the payments. This organization subsequently played an important role in most Ottoman financial affairs, and it also acted as an intermediary for European companies seeking to improve their Turkish investments. As a result, and already in steady decline, the Ottoman Empire came to be known as “the sick man of Europe.”

In 1879, Nur al-Arabi made another pilgrimage to Mecca with 110 of his disciples. When he came back, he saw that a rebellion for Albanian independence was taking place in Kosovo. Seeking to keep aloof, he encouraged his disciples to stay out of the conflict and remain neutral.

In 1884, four years before his death, the Pir made his last pilgrimage to Mecca with 130 of his murids. His son-in-law and designated successor, Abdurrahim Fedai Effendi, and his grandson Kemal Effendi were with him on this trip. On the way back, while passing through the Suez Canal (now under the control of the British), Abdurrahim Fedai Effendi died on board the ship.

In 1888, Nur al-Arabi died from a bladder disease at the approximate age of seventy-six and was buried in a tomb in Struminca, in Macedonia. The liberalizing reforms of the Tanzimat had failed by then, but fortunately for others, the Pir left behind a number of representatives in the Balkans and (more significantly for this study) in Istanbul. Some of these, it seems, played a part in inspiring progressive reforms in the next phase of Turkish history, which witnessed the demise of the sultanate and reforms that eventuated in the formation of the Republic of Turkey.

The historian and specialist in Naqshbandi tradition Hamid Algar makes three assertions about Pir Nur al-Arabi. Firstly, that the Pir’s teachings “had very little to do with Naqshbandi teachings”; secondly, that “he was initiatically linked to the malamatiyya second period”

(that of the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya); and, thirdly, that he was “a dedicated partisan of the *wahdat al-wujud* for whom order affiliation did not matter much.”<sup>22</sup> Since Algar does not cite any evidence to support his assertions, we must consider some of them somewhat speculative and possibly partly misleading.

To begin with, Algar’s assertion that the Pir’s teaching “had very little to do with Naqshbandi teachings” is contradicted by the beliefs of Hulusi, Şuşud, Bilginer, and Öziç, all of whom were convinced that Pir Nur al-Arabi’s work reflected the earlier Khwajagan (this will be detailed in the next chapter). Hulusi’s successor, Hasan Lütfi Şuşud, may have been inspired by his teacher to further research the parallels between the Khwajagan and the malamatiyya. Those parallel teachings certainly influenced Şuşud’s successors.

Scholars other than Algar, such as Golpinarli, Zarcone, and Xavier, do not cite Nur al-Arabi as being initiatically linked to any malamati group of the “second period,” including the Hamzawi-Malamatiyya. In fact, Golpinarli published the pir’s chains of succession (*isnad*), and they directly contradict Algar’s assertion.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, there can be no doubt that Nur al-Arabi was a “dedicated partisan of the *wahdat al-wujud*,” but, even more so, the Pir was a direct successor of the Akbarian lineage that passed through Daud al-Nablusi. It is true, however, that the Pir departed from the later teachings of the Mujaddidi and Khalidi branches of the Naqshbandiyya, both of which have been studied extensively by Algar.

As for the assertion that one’s affiliation to the Sufi orders didn’t “matter much” to Nur al-Arabi one should note the following caveat. Most of the members of the Pir’s “supra-order” were already members of normative tariqas such as the Rifa’iyya, Khalwatiyya, Mawlawiyya, and Naqshbandiyya. In addition, in his *Risala* the Pir advised the following: “You should strive to learn continuous remembrance [*al-dhikr al-daim*], which is a secret practice of the gnostic order [*tariqa*] because heedlessness is removed through continuous remembrance. The learning of continuous remembrance requires initiation and instruction

## CHAPTER SEVEN

by an individual of the ‘people of remembrance.’”<sup>24</sup> The latter phrase is widely recognized as referring to those who belong to an organized tariqa.

While it is true that the Sufi orders to which others belonged did not “matter much” for Nur al-Arabi, his work must be viewed within the context of Sufi tradition as a whole. Although the Pir reorganized this teaching and attempted to streamline the essentials of the Way, he was not at variance with its classical teachings, which extended back over a thousand years. Instead, he reorganized certain concepts and principles, and reoriented certain Sufi practices to fit with contemporary conditions.

In his particular articulation of the Way, Nur al-Arabi also redefined its pedagogy and curriculum by slightly altering its basic map—whose facets we will examine in chapter 9.

## Eight

# Twentieth-Century Representatives

**A**fter Pir Nur al-Arabi's death, a number of his representatives in the Balkans continued his lineage as a semiautonomous tariqa of its own. Most of those whom the Pir had appointed to be his *khullafah* (representatives) were shaykhs of other Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiyya, Rifa'iyya, Khalwatiyya, Mawlawiyya, Sa'idiyya, and (in at least one case) the Bektashiyya. Often, these representatives continued to teach the outward practices of their mainstream tariqas, while reserving the "inner" malamati teachings for their more advanced murids. While independent Nuriyya-Malamiyya tekkes were established in the Balkans (principally in Kosovo and Macedonia), this was not the case in Istanbul. There, malamatis met in private homes or in the tekkes of other Sufi brotherhoods.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Istanbul still remained a multi-ethnic city. In fact, an 1886 census taken in that city revealed a population of approximately 450,000 Christians, 400,000 Muslims, and 22,000 Jews. Beyond the Galata Bridge in a district called Pera (Beyoğlu), a number of Europeans émigrés mixed with Ottomans who were more educated and cosmopolitan.

Serif Mardin observes that "during the reign of Abduaziz mansions became centers of discussion, as well as educational institutions, and the focus of intense cultural activities."<sup>1</sup> This activity persisted under the more autocratic rule of Abdul Hamid, but more discreetly. One of

## CHAPTER EIGHT

the principal representatives of Pir Nur al-Arabi in Istanbul was Hacı Maksud Hulusi (1851–1929), who soon adopted a salon approach to the transmission of malamati teachings.

Although he was born in Pristina in Kosovo, Hacı Maksud Hulusi was initiated by Pir Nur al-Arabi in Rumelia only after he had made several trips to the Near East, including the pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition to being a malamati murshid, Hulusi was also an Islamic theologian and a Naqshbandi shaykh who taught at the prestigious Fatih madrasa in Istanbul. According to his son, Hacı Maksud was nominated to occupy the chair of Shaykh al-Islam, but he declined. Hulusi was also briefly jailed for speaking out against the inequities of the government, and he was particularly disgusted at the execution of Midhat Pasha in 1884. As a result, Hulusi fell into disfavor with certain authorities, and after this he limited his formal teaching at the Fatih madrasa.

According to Martin Hartman, the German orientalist who visited him in 1909, Hulusi then worked as a bookseller and antiquarian.<sup>2</sup> Eschewing more officially religious students, he concentrated on the task given to him by Pir Nur al-Arabi. According to the modern Ottoman scholar Thiery Zarcone, “Maksûd Hulûsî was specifically in charge of speaking to scientists and people in university circles. . . . His youngest son, Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer, had the charge [later] to transmit the Melâmî teaching during the Kemalist period.”<sup>3</sup> In this way, malamati teachings began to reach a broader and more secular audience.

Since most of the malamati teachings were conveyed through *suhbat* (Turk. *sohbet*), a contemplative form of dialogue, and since this method appealed to a selective few, Hulusi chose his own home as a proper setting for his spiritual teachings. This shift in method would also be adopted by other malamatis such as Brusali Tahir Bey (see below). This less visible method, shorn of outer rituals, proved highly advantageous in the period immediately preceding the demise of the Ottoman Empire, a period marked by political intrigues.

A year following the Pir's death, in 1889 a conspiracy against Abdul Hamid II formed in the military medical college in Istanbul and soon

spread to other institutions. The conspirators called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), and they came to be known as the Young Turks. When the plot was discovered, some of its leaders went abroad to reinforce Ottoman exiles in Paris, Geneva, and Cairo, where they helped prepare the ground for a revolution by developing a comprehensive critique of the Hamidian system. Jacob Xavier observes that the remaining followers of Nur al-Arabi believed that “the draconian regime of Abdul Hamid was supported by the lower Muslim clergy, ignorant of what is authentic Islam, and [that] therefore they should support the Young Turks in their struggle against absolutism.”<sup>4</sup>

The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) continued to operate in Salonika (Thessaloniki) as a secret society under the leadership of one Talat Bey. By 1908 certain elements of the Third Army Corps in Macedonia decamped and fled to the hills in an open rebellion under the leadership of two junior officers, Enver Bey and Niazi Bey, both of whom were allied with Talat. When Sultan Abdul Hamid failed to suppress the uprising, the CUP took total control of the city of Salonika and its environs.

At first, the CUP under Enver Bey appealed to the principle of Ottomanism, “the free integration of all races and religions in a multinational state.” Echoing the earlier Young Ottomans, Enver proclaimed, “Henceforth we are all brothers. There are no longer Bulgars, Greeks, Rumanians, Jews, Moslems; under the same blue sky we are all equal, we glory in being Ottomans.”<sup>5</sup> It seemed, for a moment, that the dreams of Badruddin of Simawna and those of Pir Nur al-Arabi were about to be realized. This hope, however, proved to be illusory since Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared itself an independent state, and Crete proclaimed its decision to unite with Greece. Henceforth, the CUP would embrace the principles of Turkish nationalism rather than Ottomanism, and its policies toward minorities would soon become increasingly harsher.

In 1908 the rebellion in Macedonia quickly spread to Thrace, and a telegram was sent to the Sublime Porte demanding the restoration of

## CHAPTER EIGHT

the constitution; after elements of the army threatened to march on Istanbul, Sultan Abdul Hamid II conceded to these demands. As a result, the Committee of Union and Progress was able to establish a majority in the new parliament.

According to Zarcone, “Several malamatis were involved in revolutionary actions and politics: They plotted in Rumeli at the side of the Young Turks against the authoritarian rule of Abdul Hamid, and some of them were elected representatives in the first Ottoman constitutional assembly in 1909.”<sup>6</sup> Among those elected to the assembly was Brusali Tahir Bey (1861–1924), a colonel in the Ottoman army who had met Nur al-Arabi in 1882 in Monastir. Tahir Bey had been initiated into the Nuriyya-Malamiyya by Kemalettin Haririzade, whom the Pir had appointed as his primary representative in Istanbul on his trip in 1871. Another government figure in the parliament influenced by the malamatiyya was Mehmet Sadik (d. 1940), who had served as a president of the branch of the Committee of Union and Progress in Monastir, Macedonia.

Shortly after the establishment of the constitutional assembly, a group called the Society of Muhammad, which was tacitly supported by Abdul Hamid, attempted to launch a counterrevolution in the name of reestablishing the Shari’a. The First Army Corps in Istanbul mutinied, and the Third Army in Macedonia marched on the capital and forced Abdul Hamid to abdicate in favor of his brother, Reshad. A National Assembly was elected, Abdul Hamid II was banished to Salonika, and the CUP took power under martial law. From then on, each of the remaining Ottoman sultans retained the power of ratifying decisions made by the parliament, but the CUP ruled the government under a dictatorial triumvirate established by Enver Bey and Talat Bey (now renamed Pashas) along with Jemal Pasha. Openly religious members of the parliament were still tolerated, occupying their own section in the parliament, but, nevertheless, they began to be viewed with suspicion as potential reactionaries.

The CUP triumvirate steered the empire through the Balkan Wars, which witnessed the elimination of the remaining Ottoman holdings in Europe, aside from a small portion of Thrace. In 1910, the prime minister of Greece, Elefterios Venizelos, promoted the formation of a Christian "Balkan League," and in 1912 Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece launched the First Balkan War, defeating Turkey in less than a year.

By 1913, however, Serbia and Greece disagreed with Bulgaria on the division of Macedonia, and the Second Balkan War was launched by Bulgaria against its former allies. Rumania and Turkey seized the opportunity and also attacked Bulgaria, which was defeated within two months. The result was that Greece's total territory and population was almost doubled, with most of Macedonia falling to the Greeks. Muslim losses were staggering; approximately six hundred thousand were killed throughout Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece, and nearly one and a half million were displaced to Turkey.<sup>7</sup> The effect of these displacements was to strengthen the CUP's determination to nourish its sense of Turkish ethnic nationalism. By the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Ottomans made a fateful decision to ally themselves with the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). The decision was made reluctantly after Britain had rebuffed Turkey's bids to ally itself with the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and Russia). Since Russia still had designs on Turkish territory, and since a German general headed the modernized Ottoman army, Turkey joined the Central Powers despite Britain's pleas for the Ottomans to remain neutral.

The result by 1918 was that, aided by Britain's encouragement of pan-Arabist revolts, the Ottoman Empire's holdings in the Arabic heartlands were decimated by the British and French. The Sykes-Picot agreements, instituted in Paris in 1919, secured the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and created a fragmented Middle East largely ruled by British and French colonialists. In the meanwhile, Istanbul was occupied by the Allies, and by 1919 the Greeks had invaded Smyrna (Izmir).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

By the outbreak of World War I (1914), one out of five ethnic Greeks still lived in Ottoman domains. Though Greece at first remained neutral during the Great War, the Venizelos government joined the Allies in capturing Salonika in 1918, and shortly thereafter Greek forces participated with the Allies in the occupation of the capital.

Spurred on by these successes, many Greeks were inspired to unite ethnic Greeks still living in Ottoman domains with the motherland, a notion that Venizelos had dubbed the “Great Idea.” Encouraged by Britain’s Lloyd George, the Greek army landed in Izmir in 1919 and then moved on to capture almost half of Turkey. During this period, the Treaty of Sevres (1920) forced the Ottoman government to surrender the territory of eastern Thrace to Greece. As the Greek army pushed into central Anatolia, it pursued a devastating scorched-earth policy. As a result, over a million Muslims were slaughtered within three years, and accordingly Turkish resistance was solidified. Slowly, the Muslim populations of Asia Minor were awakening to a new, more exclusionary “Turkish” identity.

Four days before the Greeks landed in Izmir, a thirty-nine-year-old Ottoman officer named Mustafa Kemal made his way to Eastern Anatolia.<sup>8</sup> Kemal had served as a field commander on the Syrian front and had already gained a high reputation for bravery and military prowess at the battle of Gallipoli. By the summer of 1922, Mustafa Kemal now dubbed *Ataturk*, “Father of the Turks,” succeeded in defeating the Greek army, and it hastily retreated in disarray. A year later, a final peace treaty was signed at the Conference of Lausanne, and shortly thereafter Ataturk proclaimed the Republic of Turkey a fully secularized, modern nation-state.

Largely European in his outlook, Ataturk initiated sweeping changes throughout the new nation of Turkey. Much to the consternation of Muslims worldwide, he immediately dissolved the caliphate and dismantled the office of Shaykh al-Islam. Opposition against Ataturk’s secular reforms resulted in a mass insurrection in the largely Kurdish eastern provinces. There, tribal alliances were often fused with membership in

one or another of the dervish brotherhoods, principally the Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya. A leader of the Naqshbandiyya named Shaykh Sait “declared himself Commander of Warriors for the Faith and made it known that his aim was to restore the holy law of Islam, violated by a godless government.”<sup>9</sup> The rebellion, as much a bid for Kurdish independence as it was for the restoration of the caliphate, ended in defeat and public executions. Thereafter, the Independence Tribunal ordered the closure of all dervish lodges in the east.

Kemal’s religious reformation was not to end there. By November of 1926, “all dervish lodges, shrines and mausolea, including the tombs of sultans were closed and their staffs dismissed.”<sup>10</sup> Naturally, this move sent shock waves throughout the countryside, but it is said that many among the malamatiyya (as well as the Bektashiyya) failed to protest. Instead, many malamatis viewed this rather radical move as necessary to the dismantling of a decadent religious establishment that had often moved against them.

One of the malamatis who accepted Atatürk’s decision was Hacı Maksud Hulusi. He had enrolled his son Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer at the Fatih madrasa, but Kemal closed down religious schools such as this one in 1924. The father then decided that his son should attend the Askeri Sanayî Mektebi, a military high school in the district of Tophane. In 1928, after graduating at the top of his class, Bilginer worked in a munitions factory in Ankara, and in 1932 he was personally selected by Atatürk to be one of the first students sent abroad to Europe. After six years in Germany earning a master’s degree in chemical engineering, Bilginer returned to Turkey in 1938, utterly convinced of the necessity for Sufism to adapt to modern needs.

Before this period, Bilginer’s father, Hulusi, had attracted a twenty-five-year-old murid named Hasan Lütfi Şuşud (1901–88), a purported descendant of Qunawi (Ibn al-Arabi’s son-in-law and successor), who shared the same sentiments as Hulusi and his son.<sup>11</sup> Şuşud came from a prestigious family originally from Macedonia. His father, who had relocated to Izmir, was an undersecretary to the Ottoman minister of

## CHAPTER EIGHT

finance, and as such he and his family traveled throughout Anatolia inspecting banks.

Susud was first initiated as a Qadiri Sufi in central Anatolia and began the practice of dhikr (remembrance) when he was seventeen years old (in 1918). Thereafter, he attended the gatherings of various shaykhs until he secured a position at the Bank of Salonika in Istanbul in 1926. Shortly thereafter, he met Hacı Maksud, of whom he said, “The guide whom I was pleased with most was Hacı Maksud Effendi. I found what I could not find in six years, [and] in six days my state changed.”<sup>12</sup> Susud remained closely associated with Hacı Maksud until the latter’s death in 1929, and thereafter he continued his own contemplative practices until he received the approval of the Prophet Muhammad through a dream in 1932. In the meantime, Susud had promised Hulusi prior to his death to pass on his teachings to his son, but this awaited Bilginer’s return from his prolonged stay in Germany.

In 1934, Susud moved to Ankara, where he worked for the next seventeen years as the assistant of the minister of finance in Atatürk’s government. During this period, he began to research the earlier practices of the Khwajagan and adopted the practice of fasting and breath retention that some of them used. Susud’s spiritual realignment with the root school of the Naqshbandiyya made sense since his precursor, Hulusi, was also a Naqshbandi through a lineage that bypassed the Mujaddidiyya in favor of the Khwajagan. In fact, the appellation Khwajagan-Malamati was used by Susud and his followers as an alternative for the more common title Nuriyya-Malamiyya, a redirection also favored by Bilginer. This was not viewed as a departure from Pir Nur al-Arabi, since he had also returned to the earlier teachings of the Khwajagan.

By 1938 Susud reported that he experienced the first of the stages of fana, the effacement of actions, and in 1951 he returned to Istanbul. Two years later he began to teach a small circle of students in his own method, which he called *Itlaq Yolu*, “the path of liberation.” This endeavor lasted until 1970, and during all that time he taught Sadettin Bilginer to retain the tradition of

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY REPRESENTATIVE

his father, but to keep it separate from the rest of Susud's students. In 1967, Susud reported entering the phase of *fana* called the effacement of essence. It was a station that seemed to flavor his teaching, with an almost Buddhist-like accent on the emptiness at the core of human subjectivity. Hasan Lutfi Susud passed away in 1988 on the day of the Prophet's Ascension.

Like his predecessors, Susud was influenced by the earlier Naqshbandiyya as well as being an active Malamati murshid under authority granted by Haci Maksud. The fact that Susud continued the legacy of Pir Nur al-Arabi, however, was secreted away from most of his students, including some who came to visit him from Europe. No doubt, Susud's fluency in French and German aided him in conversing with these foreign aspirants, and he came to be known in the West through the work of the Gurdjieffian J. G. Bennett. Shortly before his own death, Bennett credited Susud with helping him to experience directly what he had formerly known "only in theory."<sup>13</sup> During this association, Hasan Susud's Khwajagan-Naqsh-banddiyya was translated into English in 1975 and published as *The Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia* in 1983.

In the meantime, Susud appointed Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer as his successor in the malamatiyya in 1966, thus discharging his responsibility to Haci Maksud. All these men—father, son, and chief disciple—shared a common vision to bridge the traditions of Islamic Sufism with the emerging needs of the Turkish Republic. Haci Maksud had also encouraged his son to streamline the malamati approach and to teach it to those who did not necessarily belong to a Sufi tariqa. All of these men were admirers of Ataturk's reforms. They also supported a more highly educated and less hierarchical approach to Sufism that included a European-style education.

Hasan Susud had also opened his teaching to non-Muslims, which Bilginer followed in theory, but not in practice, since his own circle of students was smaller and more provincial. It would fall to Bilginer's successor, Mehmet Selim Öziç, to fulfill this objective, and he would also restore the fuller teachings of Pir Nur al-Arabi in a way somewhat different from Hasan Susud. The latter had left behind a more simplified approach

## CHAPTER EIGHT

that excluded much of the teachings of the Pir, but they were soon to resurface through Öziç.

Mehmet Selim Öziç was born in 1930 in Diyarbakir. His father was an imam and taught him the Qur'an and Hadiths at an early age. At the age of twenty-two, Öziç met and married his wife, Arife, the daughter of a Rifa'i shaykh. He served in the Turkish Air Force for eleven years, after which he worked as a civilian in the Joint United States Military Mission to Turkey as an instructor and translator. He then worked in a publishing company in Istanbul for nine years, retiring fully in 1994.

The product of a solidly secular education, Öziç avoided the more traditional Sufi orders, but he was greatly attracted to the malamati teachings of Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer. He attended Bilginer's circle for three years, and prior to Bilginer's death (in 1983), Öziç was appointed to be his direct successor. Given Mehmet Selim's fluent English and his long-term contact with the American military, he was viewed as uniquely suited to convey malamati Sufi teachings to the West. Before his death, Bilginer instructed Öziç to find a psychiatrist or psychologist trained in the West—as well as one trained in Sufism—to help him convey the teachings in more human-scientific terms. It was because of these stipulations that Mehmet Selim Öziç chose the present author to collaborate on this book.

Öziç considers himself to be a Hanif (primordial monotheist), and he is equally at home with Christians, Jews, Advaita Hindus, and Buddhists. His greatest interest is in educating others to a progressive vision of Sufism and Islam, which is based solely on each person's spiritual capacity. Öziç first came to the United States in 1992 at the request of a student of Lex Hixon (alias, Shaykh Nur Jerrahi), who had become an American representative of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order. In 1994 he returned and visited the P'nai Or Congregation in Philadelphia, where he became fast friends with Rabbis Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Arthur Waskow. In 1996 Öziç was a primary presenter at the first conference on "Sufism and Psychology" given at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. In the late 1990s Dr. Tod Olsson, a member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences and professor of theology at Lund University, became a personal student of Mehmet Selim, and as a result the latter visited Stockholm in 1999, where

he lectured on malamati Sufism. Öziç also visited Israel three times in the late 1990s, and during a fourth trip in 2000 he was appointed as an advisor to the Ibrahimi Tariqa (Way of Abraham), an interreligious collective composed of rabbis and shaykhs in Jerusalem.

In addition to the four lines of ascription inherited from Pir Nur al-Arabi, which include the Naqshbandiyya, Khalwatiyya, Uwaysiyya, and (most importantly) the Akbariyya, Öziç has also been granted authority as an honorary shaykh of the Qadiri, Rifa'i, and Mawlawi traditions of Sufism.

Mehmet Selim Öziç considers his teaching methods to be those of his forebears who placed an emphasis on suhbat—already described as a method of contemplative dialogue—as well as the silent dhikr. These teachings also include an induction into the map of consciousness handed down by Pir Nur al-Arabi. In addition, a particular emphasis is given to the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi and his successors in the Akbariyya. In all of these ways, the current method parallels those of the earlier malamatiyya of Nishapur and the Khwajagan of Central Asia.

To summarize, Pir Nur al-Arabi began a movement to reform Sufism and bring it into greater accord with the contemporary conditions emerging during the late Ottoman period. Hacı Maksud Hulusi was assigned to Istanbul by the Pir to attract to these teachings a number of better-educated intelligentsia, and Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer followed in his footsteps by pursuing an education in science. Hasan Susud had attempted to further realign malamati teachings with the earlier emphases of the Khwajagan, and Bilginer's instruction to Öziç was to enhance this entire project by translating the malamati teachings into a psychological vernacular more relevant to modern societies.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

At each step, the malamati tradition continued to exhibit a high degree of dynamism, reaching back to its earlier sources in Central Asia while carefully moving forward into the modern world. All of this was reflected in a map of consciousness that pointed to the evolution of a different form of human being. Öziç teaches that the form of practice accompanying this map dispels the illusion of a substantive separation between human beings and ultimate Reality while, at the same time, accentuating an experience of the ego's radical indigence.

### AN INTERVIEW WITH MEHMET SELIM ÖZİÇ BEY

Between January and April 2002, Dr. Marc Applebaum and the author held several conversations with Mehmet Selim Öziç, which were recorded. The following transcripts were later reviewed, edited, and approved by all of the participants in 2009. It should be noted that the English used by Mehmet Selim Öziç has been edited and revised by the author, although Öziç read these revisions and confirmed them to be accurate. I present this interview as an example of one malamati murshid's perspective and not as a summation of all of the remaining murshids who represent Nur al-Arabi's lineage today.

#### On Malamati Sufism

**Dr. Toussulis:** To begin with, I'd like to verify some facts with you. Are you the only living successor of Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes. There was one other person, Adnan Bozkurt Dalay, but he passed away. There are also other murshids who represent the Nuriyya-Malamiyya in Turkey and the Balkans, but, on the whole, they teach in a way that resembles other Sufi tariqas.

**Dr. Toussulis:** As far as you know, did Pir Nur al-Arabi have a direct, initiatic link to the Bayrami or Hamzawi-Malamati lineages?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** No. Pir Nur al-Arabi did not have an initiatic link to the Bayrami or Hamzawi-Malamati lineages.

**Dr. Toussulis:** From what I have discovered, both Hacı Maksud and Hasan Şuşud believed that the Nuriyya-Malamiyya expressed the earlier tradition of the Khwajagan of Central Asia. Can you tell us more about that?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes, these three descendants of Pir Nur al-Arabi all asserted that the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya of Central Asia had preserved the original teaching of the Naqshbandiyya, which came to be centered on the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi. They also believed that sub-branches of the Naqshbandiyya, like the Mujaddidiyya and Khalidiyya, had departed from those teachings.

Pir Nur al-Arabi and all his spiritual descendants after Hacı Maksud and Hasan Şuşud all considered their work to be a continuation of the Khwajagan of Central Asia and the malamatiyya of Nishapur. They had a deep knowledge of Ibn al-Arabi, and they emphasized his approach. As inheritors of the Khwajagan and malamatiyya, they preferred the silent dhikr, and they preferred blending with regular people in the world. They were also critical of the ostentatious behavior they saw evidenced in some of the Sufi orders.

**Dr. Applebaum:** How would you compare the Nuriyya-Malamiyya to other, better known, Sufi approaches?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** We agree with those Sufis who emphasize a non-dualistic, nonmonistic perspective, one that is inwardly intoxicated and outwardly sober.

**Dr. Toussulis:** It seems to me that you are using the term *nondualistic* in the sense that one does not divide the Source of Existence (or “God”) from existence as such. Is that true, and if so, can you expand on that idea?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** The essence, the attributes, and the actions of God cannot be separated. All of existence is from him. “He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward” (Qur‘an, 57:3).

**Dr. Toussulis:** William C. Chittick refers to Ibn al-Arabi’s teaching as a form of “qualified monism.” What Chittick seems to mean is that human beings cannot be utterly and completely identified, or “unified,” with the Absolute without any distinction being made between the former and the latter. So how do you maintain that existence (wujud) is nondualistic, while you still maintain that there is an important difference between you (as a person) and God?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** I believe William C. Chittick is correct in using the term “qualified monism.” In my understanding human beings cannot be united or confused with the Absolute. Human beings are contingent, and their existence is relative and transitory. For me, a fully matured human being has access to the experience of unification and separation in a fluctuating manner in the station that we refer to as jam al-jam. At the station of jam, an individual experiences that nothing exists but God, but this is normally an intoxicating experience of short duration. An individual cannot live in that state for very long as mentally balanced; and as soon as he returns to soberness, he perceives other individual presences as real, though in a manner that is “qualified” by the experience of unity or oneness.

We also refer to this as the “second separation” that defines the station of hadhrat al-jam. In this station, the individual retains the knowledge that while the universe is manifest, God is hidden. The individual also acknowledges himself as being a servant in relationship to God.

In the teachings of Ibn al-Arabi, the human being, or “Adam,” is considered to be the highest manifestation of God, and he is endowed with divine attributes. If a person acts in accordance with those innate attributes, like Adam, he becomes a servant of God. We believe that the Prophet Muhammad (sa) brought those attributes together most perfectly, and he exemplified the attribute of Al-Abd, or “the servant,” most flawlessly.

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY REPRESENTATIVE

**Dr. Toussulis:** In several conversations I've had with you, you maintain that many of the Sufi orders have become rather static and imitative. In addition, you've maintained that the path of Sufism needs to be revised to fit current needs and conditions. How do you believe this can best be accomplished?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** The goal of a person on the Sufi path should be to attain a fuller self-awareness and maturity of self. During this process, such a person must become aligned with the visible and invisible dimensions of existence. A person on the Sufi path should be dynamic and refine himself/ herself in every moment. Above all, such a person must maintain an awareness of his or her own humanity as well as the humanity of everyone else.

**Dr. Toussulis:** Are you saying that authentic forms of Sufism aim at the goal of completing one's human being as fully human?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes.

**Dr. Applebaum:** That raises a question about the idea of a "complete human being," or as Sufi literature puts it, a "perfected man" (insan alkamil). Can human beings actually become "perfect"?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Human beings can never be truly perfected as human. Perfection—or as we prefer to call it, "wholeness"—can only be realized through the recognition of our own imperfectability. In our tradition, "perfection" should be viewed as relative, and human nature is distinguished from Absolute Being by its essential incompleteness. Insan al-kamil, the "mature human being," is one who has achieved a greater wholeness through a greater awareness of both perfection and imperfection. Our aim is not static—and therefore we cannot subscribe to any notion of self-perfection that is fixed; to do so would be arrogant and falsify the truth of our own being.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**Dr. Applebaum:** So would you say that from a malamati Sufi perspective you understand in *sanal-kamil* as a form of dedicating oneself to completing one's human being instead of becoming a complete human being in any static or final sense of that term?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes.

### God Union and “Fluctuation”

**Dr. Applebaum:** Classical Sufi literature has many descriptions of “union” with God. How do you, in particular, interpret this term?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Complete union with God is impossible. The experience of union with God is a temporary state of intoxication. There has to be a “sober” separation after such union in order to become more fully human. One must adopt the proper “etiquette” [adab] shown to God: this is the theocentric type of human behavior modeled most perfectly by the prophets; and classical Sufis insist that this must be part of a complete education in mysticism.

**Dr. Applebaum:** You have said that the experience of union with God, or the Source of all Being, is extremely important in the maturation of any human being. Does this experience of union require a complete transcendence of one's individual “I”?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes, a total effacement is required in order to transform individual “I-ness” into “We-ness.” But the essential uniqueness of a person is not lost in this form of relatedness. In reality your

uniqueness is *enhanced* through that greater relatedness. After effacement, there is an effacement *of the effacement*, and one returns to being an individuated human being—but with a critical difference in one’s perception and discernment.

**Dr. Applebaum:** Would it be correct to say that the classical malamati Sufi path envisions an ongoing fluctuation between experiences of separation and union?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes.

**Dr. Applebaum:** I have noticed that when you describe the malamati Sufi path you always return to the importance of being human, as such. Would it be correct to define the malamati Sufi approach as one of “spiritual humanism”?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** For me, yes. The purpose of the Sufi is to become more completely human and to transform his or her personality so that it does not engage in the erroneous perception of substantive separateness. Such a person doesn’t pass judgment on others solely on the basis of their race, religion, language, color, ethnicity, or gender. Such a person is, therefore, more balanced in relationship to other human beings: extending real tolerance to other spiritual paths and religions, and their representatives, deeply respecting others’ contributions to an emerging global culture of which we hope that the malamati path will be a part. Without such a spiritual form of humanism, I do not see any other way for human beings to achieve real equality.

### Sufism and Modernity

**Dr. Applebaum:** This suggests another question. Do you believe it’s important for practitioners of this path to find a bridge between Sufism and modern social sciences such as psychology?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes, Sufism is not just a theory—it is an active spiritual psychology, and it must keep evolving and changing in order to suit present times. Of course, modern psychology can contribute to this evolution. At the same time, modern psychology needs the insights of Sufi psychology to complete itself. A bird needs two wings to fly—a purified body/ mind and a refined spirit.

My understanding is that God's compassion is continuously given to human beings as a divine mercy that contains two attributes: Rahman and Rahim. These terms are usually translated into English as “the Beneficent” and “The Merciful.” For me—and besides the other meanings given by translators—Rahman represents God's ongoing concern for our material well-being. Rahim represents his active mercy in our spiritual unfolding.

**Dr. Applebaum:** You maintain that the malamati Sufi path is open to people of all religious perspectives and that conversion to formal Islam is not a requirement. Many traditional spiritual groups insist that the deeper truths of their way can only be realized within adherence to formal religious practices. Can you describe the malamati path's relationship to Islam?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes. The Qur'an [3:67], as you recall, calls Abraham a “Muslim” and a “Hanif” [primordial monotheist]. It says that Abraham named the people of his way “Muslims” [22:78]. This essential Islam precedes Muhammad (sa) and was further completed by him—it's not the exclusive property of any one particular culture.

**Dr. Applebaum:** As I've heard you raise several times, the difference between essential Islam and acculturated Islam. How do you distinguish between the two?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Essential Islam is the Islam of the Qur'an, which is nothing more and nothing less than a means of realizing one's fuller humanity. Essential Islam is not a religion in the sectarian sense. Instead, it is a mode of relational transaction [din] that is based upon one's surrender

to—and realization of—a No. “Beingness” above all other forms of being. So the best definition of Islam is “self-surrender to God,” and by “God” we also mean “essential reality” (haqiqa). Due to the political, national, or cultural influences, the essence of all religions have faded out throughout the years, and mostly only their outer forms remain. The same is true for the Islamic religion, which has been embraced, for more than fourteen hundred years, by various cultures. In the process, the religion of the Qur’an became sectarian, static, and institutionalized. It is this manifestation of Islam that I call “acculturated.”

**Dr. Applebaum:** To follow up on that, couldn’t it be seen as contradictory to say both that essential Islam completes the Abrahamic tradition and that other traditions like Judaism, Christianity, or, for that matter, Buddhism are valid? Mehmet Selim Bey: According to many Qur’anic verses, Islamic tradition is the continuation of the way of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Yet, people of other traditions, especially Judaism and Christianity, are mostly unaware of this idea. Even many Muslims believe that Islam is a separate tradition altogether, since they often don’t read nor do they adequately understand the Qur’an. Even if one accepts the Qur’an as one’s primary scriptural source, acknowledging the validity of other religious traditions is obligatory. All human beings are members of the same family, that of Adam. I believe that each of the world’s established religions is a partial expression of essential Islam. Thus “primordial religion” [din al-fitra] directly informs the heart of humanity as a whole.

**Dr. Applebaum:** Is this why you have insisted that the Sufi path be opened to people of all religious perspectives?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes. The Sufi path must be opened to people of all religious perspectives, and the insights of this path should be shared with mystics of all other traditions: Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, etc. It is imperative that mystics of the world's religions come together in dialogue in order to share the particular gifts given to their respective traditions. The Qur'an tells us: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)" [49:13].

**Dr. Toussulis:** From my understanding of your teaching, you don't use the term *tolerance* to mean a begrudging acceptance of others as different. You don't seem to mean that you merely accept others with tolerance until they eventually come around to accept your own particular rendering of the "truth," a common doctrine or belief. The only proviso that you seem to place on being open to dialogue is that each person needs to exhibit an attitude of mutual sincerity in seeking a truth that might lie beyond his or her present understanding. Is that true, and if so, can you expand on that?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** As you know, there have been many attempts at interreligious dialogue in the past by various religious authorities. However, nothing much will be accomplished as long as such religious authorities attempt to prove that their particular religious traditions are superior to other traditions. In the process, the real meaning of dialogue will be forgotten; worse yet, it will often be subverted by purely political agendas. A real dialogue requires that all of its participants respect their mutual equality, and in the malamati Sufi path, this is considered essential. The original meaning of *suḥbat* is intimate dialogue, spiritual conversation, and spiritual companionship. This is also the requisite of authentic interreligious dialogue.

## The Muhammadan Way

**Dr. Applebaum:** You have often spoken of taking a “progressive” approach to Islam. What does that entail?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Throughout history, essential Islamic principles have been corrupted and, at times, actually *reversed* in their intention for a variety of reasons. Of necessity, certain expressions of revelation were transformed into forms already acceptable to various cultures or nations. As a result, the intent and the reality of such a revelation could be easily lost as it became politicized or as it was manipulated by a religious institution to achieve its own ends. This occurred even though there is supposed to be no clergy in Islam, and even though it remains a tenet of Islam that the Qur’an and the Hadith [sayings] of the Holy Prophet should remain the only scriptural authority. The religion of Islam is an ever-unfolding and dynamic form of revelation that constantly elicits reinterpretation. Therefore, a rigorous form of interpretation is required today in order to put everything into a proper place and to sort out false principles that entered into Islam over time. This is what it means to me to be progressive.

**Dr. Applebaum:** Since we’re talking about the essentials of Islam, how would you describe the uniqueness of the Prophet Muhammad (sa), and how do you see his place in the prophetic tradition?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** The Qur’an clearly emphasizes that there is no “divorce” or fundamental distinction among any of the prophets of God—they are all related, part of the same tradition. The Qur’an also tells us that some of these prophets have been endowed more completely than others. This is due to the mission and time of each prophet. We believe that the Prophet Muhammad (sa) was the last prophet and the conveyer of a universal message applicable to all human beings and to all times. But this is only the case if his message is properly understood—as a

## CHAPTER EIGHT

dynamic and adaptable process. Prophet Muhammad (sa) unified the essential messages of Moses and Jesus and reconstructed the religion of Prophet Abraham, the grandfather of all prophets.

**Dr. Applebaum:** So if I understand you, you mean the Prophet Muhammad (sa) is recognized as the last prophet, the “seal of prophecy,” not because he froze the tradition in a fixed and dogmatic form, but because he summarized the essential meaning of the Abrahamic tradition and encouraged human beings to use their reason and intuition to adapt those essential teachings to present times and conditions?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes. The Prophet Muhammad’s teaching encompasses and honors the entire tradition of Abraham, and Ibn ‘Arabi confirmed and renewed this basic understanding, but a renewal of these insights and inspirations is continuously needed.

**Dr. Applebaum:** You also claim that the Shari’a should be reinterpreted to fit the United Nations Covenant on Human Rights [1947]. Wouldn’t this mean that Divine Law is being shrunk to fit modern expectations?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** *Shari’a* literally means “the broad way,” and it also carried the meaning of “a way to a watering-place.” It signifies the ethical guidelines that lead people to a source of happiness and prosperity. In the Qur’an, 5:48, the word *minhaj*, which means “a large path,” is also used. If the Shari’a is the way one interprets actually living a religion (*din*), *minhaj* is the method for such implementation. If there’s a problem I think it’s with peoples’ assumptions about Islam, not with Qur’anic principles as such.

An understanding of how to implement the religion of Islam has always varied from one nation to another, from one culture to another, from one century to another—even from one person to another. This is normal, because the Qur’an is meant to be adaptable, a scripture for all

humanity and for all times. But following the Shari'a is not equal to the religion of Islam. Neither should anyone claim to monopolize its correct interpretation or method of implementation. That would be equivalent to claiming to possess complete understanding of God's intentions—a tremendously arrogant claim. All the human rights mentioned in the United Nations Covenant are, in principle, identical with those in the Qur'an—in fact one could say they reflect the same source. So, it is hard to see how they wouldn't converge, except for those who have their own acculturated or fixed idea of the Shari'a.

### Enlightenment and Sufi Practice

**Dr. Applebaum:** You have often claimed that enlightenment is the birthright of all human beings. If that is so, what are the major obstacles preventing humanity as a whole from achieving a direct awareness of God?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** First of all, the process of enlightenment has not yet been completed, nor will it ever be, because enlightenment is inherently a dynamic process. As long as enlightenment is considered to be “Western” or “Eastern,” there will remain an egocentric attitude of separation. Today, various descriptions and definitions of enlightenment should be studied and synthesized because we are becoming more of a global culture.

The major obstacle preventing humanity from grasping the inherent nature (*fitra*) of all human beings is ignorance. Classical Sufi thought emphasizes that all human beings share the same purpose. First of all, all people are endowed with the ability to attain a direct cognition of Being (or God). Through that cognition, each person can be inspired to become a vehicle for the mirroring of God's attributes in human form. Of course, as we've said, such mirroring is contingent and partial. As an ongoing process, it unfolds throughout a person's entire life span—and it always takes place in relation to others, in community.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

So for us, enlightenment is an ongoing process, never ending, and it always happens in dialogue with others—we depend on one another, there's no solitary enlightenment!

**Dr. Toussulis:** You have always emphasized suhbat, spiritual companionship and intimate dialogue, as central to this process. Can you elaborate on its importance?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** Yes. Suhbat is as important as dhikr (inward remembrance of God); in fact the former is ideally a form of the latter. Authentic suhbat is not simply instruction or discussion. Instead, it is the form of empathic attunement to each other's consciousness that accompanies a real understanding between people. A spiritual relationship can only be actualized through deep affection and loyalty. Of course, this can never be forced. If such a relationship comes to exist, then a type of transmission can occur between the Sufi student and his or her mentor. Because of this, both the early malamatiyya of Nishapur and the Khwa-jagan emphasized the central importance of suhbat.

### The Guide and the Guided in Malamati Sufism

**Dr. Applebaum:** You have often critiqued authoritarian approaches to spiritual teaching and decried the tendency of certain Sufis to replace the worship of God with a "worship of shaykhs." The great fourteenth-century murshid Bahauddin Naqshband was known to have said: "Today the door to shaykh-hood is closed and the door to spiritual friendship has opened." How do you envision spiritual friendship in the malamati path today?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** I would put my own signature to this saying of Bahauddin Naqshband, and I would also add: "The door to shaykh-hood has always been closed, and the door to spiritual friendship has always been open."

The Qur'an asserts that neither prophets nor angels can stand between a person and God, and if not them, then what other entity can make such a claim? I know of certain groups, whose teachers encourage people to worship them as semi-divine. When this happens—as when spirituality becomes thoroughly institutionalized—“awakening” loses its essence or spirit and becomes a cultic form.

### **Malamati Sufism Today**

**Dr. Applebaum:** How do you see your work continuing the legacy of Pir Nural-Arabi, Haci Maksud Hulusi Effendi, and Mahmut Sadettin Baba? Does a central theme run through all of them, and if so, what is it?

**Mehmet Selim Bey:** They all dedicated themselves to elaborating a spiritual path that is harmonious with essential Islam, one that is progressive, not static. In a similar spirit, our purpose is to implement Sufi knowledge in accordance with an esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an and with the tradition of prophecy [Sunna]—but not as an institutional form of religion. The desire of our pirs was not to create another Sufi order, but to contribute to the renewal of Islamic spirituality through the continuance of a progressive school capable of meeting newly emerging needs. This is the legacy shared by me and the few friends who have been authorized to carry on this tradition while I am still alive and after I pass on.

With the last statement, this interview was completed. The next two chapters will detail much of what Mehmet Selim Öziç conveyed as the theoretical basis of the teaching, and these two chapters, though written by the present author, have been verified by Öziç as an accurate summation of the teachings he inherited from Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer.

## Nine

# The Seven Stations of Wisdom

### INTRODUCTION

In traditional Sufism, various maps of spiritual development include states and stations of consciousness that define the wayfarer's spiritual journey (*suluk*). In such maps, the wayfarer (*salik*) is typically imagined as inhabiting four successive phases of development. The first of these is the *Shari'a*, a phase of character refinement in which the aspirant's aptitude to conform to the ethical teachings contained in the Qur'an is tested. If a person is found to be ethically sound in this way, he (or she) is then admitted to a particular "order," or *tariqa*.

As aspirants pursue the practices of the *tariqa*, they are expected to mature in their capacity to achieve a more direct form of contemplative perception referred to as *ma'rifa*. The outcome of such contemplation is referred to as *haqiqa*, a phase of actualization that allows the aspirant to gain access to the "truth," "reality," or "actuality" (*haqq*) and to live in accordance with it.

The mapping of the phases of psychospiritual development contained in the *maqamat*, or stations, also implies the curriculum of the Sufi path as a whole. Of course, any given school of Sufism might place a different emphasis on one or another of these phases, but still, in all Sufi schools there is an adherence to a similar fourfold schema.

## CHAPTER NINE

Given differences in emphasis, however, distinctions can be made between the “people of worship,” who emphasize following the Shari’a; the “people of tradition,” who prioritize the cultivation of special inner states; and the *malamatiyya*. As noted by Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi, the people of blame, or those who focused on *haqiqa*, can be expected to surpass the other two groups, not by discarding the phases of the Shari’a and the *tariqa*, but by giving them an expanded meaning. It has often been said that there is no *tariqa* (way) without the Shari’a. In a similar fashion, *ma’rifa* cannot be gained without following a *tariqa* (meaning, in this case, a particular method of practice).

All Sufis consider the *maqamat* as totally interdependent. For example, it can be said that the Shari’a is, in fact, a form of *tariqa*, and that following the Shari’a alone could eventually yield a particular form of *ma’rifa*. Conversely, authentic understanding (*ma’rifa*) always includes an ethical orientation (the *Shari’a*) and also a method of practice that forms a particular way (*tariqa*). Thus all four phases of development, taken together, constitute a whole.

As the wayfarer eventually begins to experience the preceding phases as interrelated, he or she may begin to approach actualization, *haqiqa*. This phase integrates all the preceding stages—yet it surpasses them at the same time.

Eventually perceived as facets of an integral whole, the Shari’a, *tariqa*, and *ma’rifa* gradually merge into actualization. Conversely, all forms of mystical “verification” (*tahqiq*) are judged as more or less complete according to whether or not they encompass and surpass all the preceding phases in one’s spiritual development.

Although these phases of development are considered to be seamless aspects of a whole, one’s understanding of the preceding phases may be gradually refined as one proceeds along the way. For example, in the phase of the *tariqa*, the Shari’a may be understood more thoroughly and completely than by those who merely follow the Shari’a in an imitative fashion. In the phase of *ma’rifa*, or ripening awareness, one’s under-

standing of the tariqa can also be expected to mature so that the latter takes on a less cultic or mimetic form.

About the Shari'a, the Pir wrote: "Islamic legal authorities [*mujtahidun*] or scholars of legal investigation [*al-ulama al-ijtihad*] are unable to perceive the knowledge of the people of Unity [*tawhid*]. The knowledge of the people of Unity is Divine knowledge and it has a particular spiritual taste. The knowledge of legal authorities is narrative and rational. . . . No legal school [*madhab*] expresses itself clearly. Therefore, there is no certainty in any of these legal schools."<sup>1</sup>

What most concerned Pir Nur al-Arabi was the fruition of the Sufi way, and he described it as "the 'Mystery of Reality' [*Haqiqa*], which is to say to witness the beauty of oneness [*jamal al-wahdat*] and to remove the veil of duality." This, however, still necessitates that one possess a strongly ethical character and a basic grounding in the practice of dhikr, one which (in the past) was usually learned by a murid who has become a member of one of the Sufi orders.

Pir Nur al-Arabi said of this entry point, "You should strive to learn continuous remembrance [*al-dhikr al-daim*], which is a secret practice of the gnostic order [*tariqa*], because heedlessness is removed through continuous remembrance. The learning of continuous remembrance requires initiation and instruction by an individual of the 'people of remembrance.' *Al-Haqq*, the Almighty has said: 'Ask the people of remembrance about what you do not know' (Qur'an 16:43)."<sup>2</sup>

Notably, during his lifetime the Pir recommended that one who was inspired to follow the malamati way had first to become a practicing member of a specific tariqa, or Sufi order. As we have seen, this changed after the formation of the Turkish Republic, with its accent on secularism. During this period a number of descendants of the Pir such as Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer and Mehmet Selim Öziç relinquished preliminary training in any of the organized tariqas. By extension, students of those murshids who did not have a tariqa background were initiated

into the practice of *dhikr* directly and without the mediation of an organized Sufi order.

Regardless of this change, the practice of classical Sufism—which had always proceeded through the phases above—was kept intact. In order to preserve this legacy in conditions of modernity, however, the formal hierarchical structure that was a legacy of medieval feudalism was abandoned by the later Nuriyya.

The four phases of teaching that I have mentioned above included a progression through several stations of wisdom (*maqams*), which will be detailed below. For now, it is important to note that while direct realization (*ma'rifa*) remained the emphasis of the *malamatiyya*, streamlined practices were introduced. These, however, were always founded on the basic teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunna, as well as earlier traditions of Sufism in Central Asia.

### REMEMBRANCE (*DHIKR*)

The Qur'an states, "Dhikr Me, and I shall dhikr you; and be grateful to me, and deny me not" (2:152). "Regardless of the name with which you invoke Him, to Him belong the most beautiful Names" (17:110). "Invoke in remembrance the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with utter devotion" (73:8).

The term *dhikr* has multiple meanings. The first and foremost is remembrance; the second (more derivative) is invocation; and the third is to recite the names of God, in an individual or collective setting—particularly in a way that induces ecstasy (*wajd*).

In entering the stage of *tariqa* (pursuing a specific "way"), a Sufi becomes inwardly activated as a wayfarer. Traditionally, during this phase one is trained in the "cultivation of ecstasy" (*tawajjud*). Tradition also has it that the entire journey of Sufism is "in, by, and through Allah," but this is merely conjectural until it is directly apprehended or remembered. Ecstasy is a taste (*dhawq*) of this remembrance, and it can include a cathartic, although transitory, reunion with the lost Beloved.

Rumi memorializes the mood of this encounter: “Hearken to the flute and listen to what it says. It complains of the pain of separation, it says: Ever since I have been cut apart from my bamboo stem, my cry has set men and women weeping. The heart would be torn to pieces by yearning if I explained the agonies of pain in longing. Everyone who is far from his own element seeks reunion with his own.”<sup>3</sup>

Al-Junayd was once asked, “What makes the lover weep when he meets the Beloved?” He answered, “This is only because of his great joy over Him and because of the ecstasy born of his great longing for Him. I have heard the story of two brothers who embraced after a long separation. One of them cried, ‘Ah, what longing!’ The other responded, ‘Ah, what ecstasy.’”<sup>4</sup>

In order to arrive at such ecstasy, a Sufi may perform an “outward” (*dhahiri*) or even “forceful” (*jahri*) form of dhikr; gradually, this may lead to an inward, silent, or “hidden” (*khafi*) form of dhikr that is sub-vocal. Eventually the performance of dhikr as invocation may lead to a form of remembrance that is wordless and total, and that matures into a deeper, more tranquil felicity (*sa’ada*). Along the way, however, the Sufi will typically experience intense love (*ishq*) and longing (*shawq*), both of which are deeply felt by the aspirant and at times openly expressed.

Abdl Qadir al-Jilani, the only person considered (without a doubt) by all Sufis to be the *gawth al-a’zam* (greatest helper) and *qutb al-zaman* (spiritual axis of the time) left these instructions: “The way to free the heart, to purify it, is to remember Allah. At the beginning this remembrance can only be done outwardly, by repeating His divine Names, pronouncing them aloud so that you yourself and others can hear and remember. As the memory of Him becomes constant, remembrance sinks to the heart and becomes inward, silent.”<sup>5</sup>

The malamati Sufi Shaykh Badruddin of Simawna describes these transitions in greater detail:

The beautiful names of Allah, chanted, are like a wind that creates waves on the surface of an ocean. At first one identifies the sea with these waves.

## CHAPTER NINE

Then one sees the waves as the surface of the deep ocean. The waves sink into the sea; the wind stops; the surface is calm. The ocean is one body. So the heart of the rememberer becomes calm and unified, and the chanting of the word is not heard, for it sinks into the depths of one's soul and covers not only one's whole being but all and everything. . . . Accept that the remembrance, the one who remembers, and the one who is remembered are all one .<sup>6</sup>

This description aptly groups all of the meanings and functions of dhikr into a unified, progressive sequence. The first part assesses the practice of the “audible dhikr,” whether performed alone or, as is often common, in a circle, together. There are two dimensions of audible dhikr: one outward and the other inward.

The outward dimension of vocal dhikr involves audibly chanting the names in a windlike manner, thereby raising waves on the surface of the ocean. These waves are hidden thoughts, images, sensations, and emotions, which rise to the surface and empty themselves into the greater motion of the sea. During this period one becomes what some Sufis call an imitative drunkard. Such a one is merely a “possessor of tastings,” and his or her ecstasy is sporadic and of short duration.

The inner dimension of audible dhikr is one in which one recognizes that one habitually mistakes these surface waves with the sea itself. Progressively, the waves sink into the sea; the wind stops and the surface becomes calm. The ocean is gradually revealed as a single body composed of two activities: waves in motion and calmness. Here, as some Sufis put it, one becomes a “true drunkard.” Such a one becomes a “possessor of drinking” and is completely overcome by ecstasy. This phase of dhikr practice coincides with a preliminary type of ma'rifa, or gnosis.

In order to deepen this gnosis, another practice was commonly performed by the Khwajagan and malamatiyya, which was termed silent or subaudible dhikr, as Shaykh Badruddin puts it, one “becomes calm and unified, and [eventually] the chanting of the word is not heard.”<sup>7</sup> Here, silent dhikr is practiced so that remembrance “covers not only one's whole

being but all and everything,” and here also one falls into a state of relaxed yet vigilant awareness (*muraqaba*).

With this comes a state of more authentic sobriety, and one becomes, as some Sufis would put it, a possessor of quenched thirst. In this case ecstasy (*wajd*) could be said to have found its source in existence itself (*wujud*). Ecstasy is fulfilled, as Ibn al-Arabi reminds us in “finding the Real.” During all but the last of these transitions, one may find oneself feeling and acting, at times, like one who is *mualla* (mad in Allah). This, however, is considered to be a sign of immaturity, especially if it is indiscriminately displayed to others who are not adepts in Sufism.

Another phase of wayfaring, sometimes referred to as *tahqiq* (verification), is accomplished through *tafakkur*, a contemplative practice that conjoins ecstasy and sobriety, and deepens both into lasting serenity. According to the *Nuriyya* (the descendants of Pir Nur al-Arabi), *dhikr*, in whatever form it is practiced, is only a preparation for the practice of contemplative reflection (*tafakkur*). One should, however, be careful to distinguish between *tafakkur* and normal self-reflection or intellectual conjecture. Instead, *tafakkur* in its specific Sufi usage is defined by *Shabistari* as follows: “Reflection is going from the false toward the Real, to behold within the part the Absolute.”<sup>8</sup>

If this form of reflection is followed to its proper conclusion, it will lead to the experience of *fana*, usually translated as “annihilation,” but actually meaning a condition of self-effacement in the reality of God’s Omnipresence, for “I have not created the invisible beings and men for any other purpose than to know and serve Me” (51:56).

## *FANA*: ON REALIZING ONE'S OWN NONBEING AND GOD'S EXISTENCE AS THE TRUE SELF

In the tradition of the Nuriyya-Malamiyya, self-purification through dhikr is followed by advanced training in the stations of tawhid (unity), each stage of which is traversed through three successive forms of understanding:

1. Certainty of Knowledge (*ilm al-yaqin*), in which the student is instructed in the theoretical knowledge of such states by a teacher;
2. Certainty of Experiencing (*ayn al-yaqin*), in which the teacher initiates the student into a direct, yet transitory experience of such states;
3. Certainty of Actualizing (*haqq al-yaqin*), in which the student becomes steeped in such states so that they become a part of his or her embodied being.

The stations of tawhid themselves are divided into two parts: *fana*, here understood as a gradual effacement of the false sense of a separative self (or ego); and *baqa*, here understood as the reintegration into an authentic selfhood, which, according to Ibn Arabi, is also the condition of intrinsic servitude (*ubuda*).

The process of *fana wa baqa*, or the effacement of the false self with the reestablishment of the authentic self, can be subdivided into the following stages, which I will assess using Qur'anic references and Sufi commentaries that directly pertain to each. In his *Risala*, Pir Nur al-Arabi specifies, "It should be known that the stations of the acts, the attributes, and the essence are the levels of sainthood [*maratib al-wilaya*]." Furthermore, "The stations of unification are three. They are the station of the acts [*maqam al-af'al*], the station of the attributes [*maqam al-sifat*], and the station of the essence [*maqam al-dhat*]."<sup>9</sup>

A note of caution is needed. Although the Pir said that such stations are attainments, one should not imagine that they can be acquired or appropriated through

self-will alone. It is an axiom among all Sufis that while striving is necessary, all attainments are gifts of God and come by grace. Moreover, each individual will attain only what is possible for him or her according to the innate temperament and capacity (fitra) each has already been given. As one scholar notes, “God is known because He wants to be known. He is only known because He wants to be known and He alone determines the form and the extent of this knowledge. . . . Whatever his theoretical knowledge, the disciple, when he undertakes the suluk [journeying], does not escape from the voluntarist illusion. He considers himself to be autonomous. He is murid—willing, desiring. He still does not know that he is murid—willed, desired by Him whom he claims to reach by his own powers.”<sup>10</sup>

## THE FIRST STAGE OF FANA: EFFACEMENT OF ACTIONS

The Qur'an states: “He who awaits the meeting with his Lord, let him act piously. . . [And] let him associate no one with Him” (18:110).

According to Pir Nur al Arabi, the malamati at this stage should contemplate the axiom *lafa'il alla Allah* (nothing acts but Allah).

The Qur'an advises: “There is no creature that moves but that He holds it by the forelock” (11:56). “Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth. Who is it that intercedes with Him, except by His leave?” (2:255). Since this is so, we might contemplate whether anything whatsoever has the power to affect us, except by His permission. Even those actions that seem to befall us in an unjust way must be considered as His actions. Of course this means that a person at this stage must accept all actions, even those that seem afflictions, as ultimately empty of other than He.

The early malamati Hamdun Qassar advised, “If you are able, do not care about anything in this world. Above all do not get angry that something is not as it should be, and ask yourself, ‘Do I have the power to change it?’”<sup>11</sup> Concerning the source of “our own” acts, the Qur'an admonishes, “Do you worship something that you (yourselves) have carved, while it is God who has created you and all your handiwork?” [37:95]. “It is He who begins the process of creation [and it is He who] repeats it” [10:4]. Ibn Arabi later added: “All acts in respect of being acts belong to God, while they become acts of disobedience only in respect of God's decree making them so.”<sup>12</sup>

## THE SECOND STAGE OF FANA: EFFACEMENT OF ATTRIBUTES

Ibn al-Arabi states: “[God] is thus your mirror wherein you contemplate yourself; and you are his mirror wherein he contemplates his Names and the manifestation of the powers belonging to each of them. And all that is nothing more than Him!”<sup>13</sup> According to the Greatest Shaykh, the Creator “does not produce his creation outside Him, but in a manner of speaking clothes Himself in it,” and He “shows Himself to Himself by differentiating Himself in his hidden being.”<sup>14</sup> According to Pir Nur al-Arabi, we might, therefore, contemplate *la mawsufa illa Allah* (nothing has a quality/characteristic except Allah). According to al-Ghazali, in order to traverse this stage completely, one must realize seven main attributes as being empty of the self:<sup>15</sup>

- I Motility, Movement (or Life): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who causes my aliveness and movement? The Qur'an has declared: “There is no God but He, the Ever-Living” (2:255), and “He [only] shall quicken them, who originated them the first time” (36:79). As Ibn al-Arabi put it, “There is nothing Apparent but He in every similar and every contrary . . . in every body and every form.”<sup>16</sup>

- 2 Consciousness (or Knowing): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who causes me to be conscious at all? The Qur'an advises us, "God is witness unto everything?" (58:6). "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35). "And of all things He has perfect knowledge" (2:29).
- 3 Volition (or Will): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who grants me the power to will or to choose? The Qur'an declares, "And when He wills a thing to be, He just says, 'Be,' and it is!" (40:68). "And who could intercede except through His allowance?" (2:255).
- 4 Perception (or Seeing): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who grants me the power to clearly perceive? The Qur'an answers: "Truly it is He who watches over all things" (67:19). "For Allah is One Who Sees" (25:20), and is "Ever-Seeing" (20:35).
- 5 Comprehension (or Hearing): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who is it in me who fully understands anything? The Qur'an declares: "God is All-Hearing" (3:121). "He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" (7:200); and, "Allah can make any that He wills to hear" (35:22).
- 6 Agency (or Power): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who is it in me who has real power to affect anything? The Qur'an answers: "Say: For myself I have no power to benefit, nor power to hurt, save what Allah willeth" (7:188). "Lord of all Dominion! You give power to whomsoever You wish, and You strip power from others according to what pleases You" (3:26). "Allah has power over all things" (2:106); and "His eternal power overspreads the heavens and the earth. . . . He alone is truly exalted, tremendous" (2: 255).
- 7 Communication (or Speech): The central question we might ask of this attribute is, who is it in me who forms words and is able to speak? God directly answers us in the Qur'an: "[I] imparted to Adam the names of all things" (2:30). "I have proclaimed to you all equally" (21:109); and, "In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages in the farthest horizons and within themselves" (41:53). "Surely He knows what is spoken

aloud” (21:110); and yet, “We know [also]what the innermost self whispers within; for We are closer than hisjugular vein” (50:16).

According to the malamati Sufi tradition, at this stage all the characteristics or attributes we consider our “own” must be effaced. In a similar vein, all the attributes that lead to actions occurring to us in the world must be seen as God's, “in every kind and every species, in all union and all separation, in everything that the senses or the intellect perceive in every body and every form.”<sup>17</sup>

### THETHIRDSTAGEOFFANA: THEEFFACEMENTOFESSENCE (OR PERSONHOOD)

The central question we might ask of our persuasive sense of solid individuality is, who is it that resides in my essential being? According to the Qur’an, “There is no deity save Him . . . the Self-Subsistent Fount of all Being” (2:255).

Emir Abd al-Kader states: “Know that there is not a divine Essence on the one hand; and, on the other, essences proper to creatures which are independent and subsist by themselves upon whom He has not conferred Being. There is nothing other than the divine Essence. It is this divine Essence which, without multiplying or dividing, is the essence of creatures; and, reciprocally, the essences of creatures are identical to the divine Essence.”<sup>18</sup> Ibn al-Arabi simply exclaims: “You are His reflection! You are His heart and He is your heart.”<sup>19</sup> According to Pir Nur al- Arabi, at this point we might contemplate *la mawjuda illa Allah* (nothing exists but Allah).

As in the preceding stage, intense purgation may still accompany the process of self-effacement. Now, more than ever, the illusory, separative ego may begin to fear its own demise. To return to the Qur'an: "Our life takes its hue from God! And who could give a better hue to life than God" (2:138). "And He it is who has brought you all into being out of one being" (6:98). We must fully understand, as stated by the Qur'an, that "everything is bound to perish, except His Face . . . and to Him you shall all be brought back" (55:26–27). One's fear of (psychological) death must be surpassed, and a guide, or murshid, is often needed to act as a midwife, but a birth into a new form of being necessitates the death of the old one.

Only after attaining all three types of certainty in each of the preceding stations of *fana* can one fully enter *baqa billah*, the state of "abiding" through God's grace. In the malamati tradition of Nur al-Arabi, *baqa* is also traversed through three separate stages.

### THE FIRST STAGE OF *BAQA*: GATHERING (*JAM*)

In this station, malamatis claim that all the former realizations in the phase of *fana*—the effacement of actions, attributes, and essence—are powerfully "gathered" (*jam*) together. As a matter of fact, they are synthesized so intensely that the servant temporarily ceases to be, often falling into a state of total intoxication in which the apparent world disappears.

At this stage, the malamati is instructed to remember, *Haqq zahir, khalq batin* (with True Being externalized, creation lies hidden). Speaking from this state, Rumi exclaims, "When you have become living through Him, you are indeed He. That is utter Oneness, how could there be a partnership in that? . . . With God, two I's cannot find room. You say 'I' and He says 'I.' Either you die before Him, or let Him die. . . . But it is impossible for Him to die . . . since He is 'The Living God, the Undying' [25:58]." <sup>20</sup>

Other Sufis have said, “It is He who loves Himself in you. What else could it mean to say: ‘None loves God but God,’ that ‘None sees God but God,’ that ‘None invokes God but God?’”<sup>21</sup>

The Prophet, speaking for God in another tradition says: “My servant approaches me ceaselessly by free acts until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand by which he takes hold, and the foot with which he walks.”<sup>22</sup>

This condition completely alters one’s sense of self-identity in a way Attar has expressed as follows: “I have no news of my coming or passing away—the whole thing happened quicker than a breath; ask no questions of the moth. In the candle flame of his face I have forgotten all the answers.”<sup>23</sup> In this station, one enters a state of bewilderment, perplexity, or awe (*hayra*), and the gnostic becomes agnostic, in the truer meaning of that term, which is “unknowing.”

Although the traveler at this station is referred to by Pir Nur al-Arabi as one of the “sincere,” one cannot remain at this station for too long, for to do so would be to risk becoming “mad in Allah” (*mualla*). Because of this, the malamati guide immediately coaxes his student into the next stage of *baqa*.

### THE SECOND STAGE OF *BAQA*: THE PRESENCE OF GATHERING (*HADHRAT AL-JAM*)

At this station, the student returns to sobriety, yet the one who returns or who is reborn in this way is radically divested of the myth of separate selfhood. According to Pir Nur al-Arabi, he or she becomes one of the *muqarrabun*, “those who are close,” or those who exist in proximity to God. In this station there is still, however, a vestige of separation.

As Ibn al-Arabi has pointed out, “Some of the sober are sober through their Lord, and others through themselves. He who is sober through his Lord never addresses any but his Lord in his sobriety, nor does he hear any but Him.”<sup>24</sup>

Here, the malamati Sufi contemplates, *khalq zahir, Haqq batin* (creation is exteriorized, while Reality is hidden). The Qur'an reminds us: "Unto Allah belong the East and the West; wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of Allah" (2:115), and "There is nothing whatever like Him, and He is the One that hears and sees" (42:11).

Iraqi has this to say about the station of *hadhrat al-jam*: "Manifestation, ceaseless and perpetual is the Beloved's attribute; concealment—hidden[n]ess—that of the lover. . . . I want Union with Him, He wants separation for me—so I abandon my desire to His. . . . In Union I am the servant of self, in separation, my Master's slave; and I would rather be busy with the Friend, whatever the situation, than with myself."<sup>25</sup>

In his renewed state of separation the same poet issues this mock complaint: "The exquisite grace of the Beloved may be perfect, and as such in need of nothing—but: the saleworthiness of your beauty exists because I am your customer—isn't it so? What good is an idol with no heathen to worship it? . . . The Beloved says: 'I exist in a state of perfect joy—but this state is only fulfilled through you'; The Lover replies: 'Do not slay me for my need is useful. Without me, after all, who will remain for You to seduce?'"<sup>26</sup>

In order to secure the continuance of adoration, the next phase of development may occur in the journey.

### THE THIRD STAGE OF *BAQA*: THE INTEGRATION OF GATHERING (*JAM AL-JAM*)

The person of this station has almost become a completed human being (*insan al-kamil*), capable with practically each cycle of breath to experience the alternating transcendence and immanence of God. At this stage, the malamati contemplates, *innil mawjudi illa Hu* (no one exists but Him).

Such a one has realized the Qur'anic saying, "God is the First and the Last and the Outward and the Inward" (57:3). A person in this stage

realizes that creation is truly the locus for God to manifest the fullness of His own nature. As Iraqi exclaims: “The lover must see nothing without seeing God before it—or after it—or within it—or with it.”<sup>27</sup>

According to Ibn al-Arabi, the essence of existence (dhat al-wujud) is revealed here, as “interpenetration and (indissoluble) ‘circularity’ (or daur of God and Man) . . . [in which it is perceived that] God (al-Haqq) can only be in (external) reality (fi al-fi‘l) through the form of the creature (al-khalq), and that the creature can only be there (in reality) through the form of God. . . . [In addition] this circularity . . . is what actually exists (al-waqi) and is the way things are.”<sup>28</sup>

Here, sobriety (sahw), induced through perception of the forms, and intoxication (sukr), induced through the perception of God, alternate in such a way that the integrative state of human being as a servant and deputy gradually ripens. Although the servant may continue to recognize that “God is (both) witness (shahid) and Witnessed (mahashud),”<sup>29</sup> the servant is quite aware of recognizing God’s self-disclosure (tajalli) “by way of [both] shuhud [witnessing] and wujud [existence as it is].”<sup>30</sup> As William Chittick notes, Ibn al-Arabi is very careful to attribute wujud only to God, while shuhud belongs to both the servant and His Lord. “Everyone in wujud is the Real, and everyone in shuhud is creature.”<sup>31</sup>

In this condition one has become one of the spiritual heirs of the Prophet, who himself integrated the seeming dichotomies of intoxication and sobriety. At this stage also, a malamati considers himself (or herself) as having arrived at the initial stage of becoming an authentic Muslim (lit. “one surrendered”). Only at this point can one truthfully perform the canonical prayers with inward and outward conformity. And only at this stage can one truthfully testify to the reality of Muhammad (sa) as a “Messenger of Allah.”

In this station, the student more fully contemplates and comes to understand the second part of the testimony of Islam: Muhammadan Rasulullah (Muhammad is a messenger of God). The “Muhammad” in this case is specifically the Nur Muhammadi, the “Light of Muhammad,” which is equivalent to the light of prophecy (nur nubawwa). It is this—being guided by the ongoing light of prophecy—that the Pir expected

of those who had arrived at the station of jam al-jam, and he referred to such people as being at the station called “the phase of the prophecy” (martaba al-nubuwwa). A note of caution is needed at this point. It is important to realize that this phase should not be understood as connoting that one has in any way become equivalent to a law-giving prophet such as Muhammad. Here, Ibn al-Arabi was very careful to distinguish between “general prophecy” and “legislative prophecy.” What is meant by the phrase “general prophecy” is that one inherits the spiritual capacity that allows one to more properly discern the spiritual inheritance of the law-giving prophets.<sup>32</sup> How the Pir and his successors expected such people would actually conduct themselves in their lives will be discussed in the following chapter.



## Ten

# Human Completeness

**P**ir Nur al-Arabi envisioned *baqa* as the goal of human existence. Like many other sober Sufis before him, the Pir did not accept that union with God (*ittihad*) was an end in itself. Instead, *jam*, gathering, was as a prelude to another form of individuation—a “second separation” (*farq al-thani*).

Continuance (*baqa*) was thought to be a fundamental reorientation of the *separateness* of the human being and God, which does not constitute the permanent dissolution of the individual. Instead, according to the Pir, human maturity, “completion,” requires the comprehension of a fundamental paradox: that one is (figuratively) “one” with God and yet quite separate.

This conviction was fully in accord with the earlier *malamatiyya* and Khwajagan, as exemplified by Bahauddin Naqshband who said, “The existence of the lover who has found *baqa* with the Beloved does not become overwhelmed in the Awesome Lights of the theophanies [*tajalliyat*] and does not become nonexistent—on the contrary, it is strengthened.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first separation, the ego-bound identity is convinced of its separateness from the interrelatedness of Being. At the apex of the Sufi path, this divisive delusion is dispelled by the experience of momentary union (*jam*). The second separation that follows *jam* consists of a reintegration of the personality after the dissolution of the separative ego; and this stage is grounded in an ongoing perception of the inseparability of all beings. In short, individual existents are viewed as manifold

expressions of Being itself, and the human entity is perceived to be the primary vehicle *through which* Being realizes its inherent unity.

Paradoxically, perhaps, this recognition needs to be based on an experience of a continuum existing between the two poles of existence, which nevertheless persist in a nondualistic manner. Ibn al-Arabi reminds us, “True proximity is only consummated in the total uncreation of the created, when only the Divine Oneness subsists.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, the Shaykh reminds us that whatever is manifest in perception (*shuhud*) is the property of a creature. Thus, so-called union should not be confused with a permanent binding together of God and the human being in a reductive manner.

Emir Abd al-Kader once wrote: “If he says to you, ‘I am you and you are Me,’ listen and be silent! And if He says to you, ‘You are other than Me and I am other than you,’ listen and conform to that. . . . The sense of ‘I’ is different from that of ‘He.’ These two terms are mutually incompatible and the identification of one with the other is therefore a pure impossibility.”<sup>3</sup>

Human beings and God, Emir Abd al-Kader suggests, are not to be subsumed under the same ontological category because the former arise from the latter and return to It. Following Ibn al-Arabi, human beings are specific instantiations or expressions of the Godhead—and as such, they should never be confused with the fount of their (limited) being. In fact, a person who does not become aware of God as a transcendent Being cannot fully comprehend the circularity (*daur*) of God and human beings. “God,” in other words, designates an essentially ineffable Reality that cannot be circumscribed; and by extension, such a God cannot be assimilated or integrated into the experience of any *one* individual. Thus, the “mastery” of a mystic must always be viewed in relative terms.

From the perspective of all Akbaris, the mystic who is established at the station of gathering, or unitary “conjunction” (*ittisal*), is not yet mature, and as a result, he (or she) is still prone to the intoxication that attends such a union. Such a perception of union, moreover, is partial

and incomplete, and because of this lack the submerged ego of the wayfarer is bound to return—and it is likely to do so in a condition of ego inflation. As an antidote, the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya and Nuriyya-Malamiyya mutually insisted on a period of “drying out” after the ravishment of union—a condition referred to as *hadhrat al-jam* by Pir Nur al-Arabi.

At the same time, that which concretizes the ongoing reciprocity (or “circularity”) between human being and God is a quality we might call conscious cooperation. A human being must be aware, must repeatedly recognize, that he or she is a locus for the manifestation of God’s Being. This realization (*tahaqquq*), moreover, cannot be merely conjectural. In fact, in order to fulfill its function *as a realization*, it must be established as an ongoing, felt perception that leads to greater ethical reflection—as well as concrete action.

## THE ETHICS OF ACTUALIZATION

Continuance leads to a form of action in the world decidedly different from that of a person compelled to act through a false sense of egoism. Accordingly, the dimensions of the Shari’a and haqiqa have to be viewed as continuous.

According to Muhammad (sa), the perfection of Islam lies in *ihsan*, “to accomplish what is beautiful and good.” The word *ihsan* stems from the root *hsn*, from which the term *husna* is also derived. *Husna* not only conveys the meaning of beauty, but also of goodness or fairness. Hence, in Qur’anic usage, that which is aesthetically most pleasing to God is that which is equitable and just—and this, by extension requires the refinement of moral character: the goal of Sufism and of its parent religion, Islam.

The Prophet (sa) stated, “Verily God is beautiful and loves beauty,”<sup>4</sup> but in so doing Muhammad was not referring primarily to God’s love of physical beauty. Instead, this saying refers to God’s love of the congruent or harmonious arrangement of all of his attributes in a given character

structure. Beautification, it seems, is best accomplished through the spiritual evolution of a human being, for in another hadith, Muhammad (sa) said, “God created Adam in his own form,” which is to say that he gathered together (*jama’a*) his own attributes in the primordial human being, the completed “form” of which is discoverable in the sum of God’s own attributes, or Names. These, according to Ibn al-Arabi, are already imprinted on the heart of the human being, but they remain there in latency until activated through intention and effort. We can deduce that this requires an “act of will,” the condition that one can refer to as “conscious cooperation.”

To quote the Shaykh again: “It is said to man, ‘Bring together the good things,’ for God placed His servant in this world as a doer and a collector who collects for (God’s) sake everything He has designated for [human beings].”<sup>5</sup> Obviously from the context in which this quote appears, the attributes of God must be actively collected and harmonized through refinement of character, designated as *akhlaq*. Consequently, the attainment of moral character, the end point of Sufism (*tassawuf*), is accomplished through emptying oneself of divisive egotism and through assuming (*takhalluq*) the attributes of God, referred to as the “Beautiful Names” (*Asma al-Husna*).

The assumption of these Names, or qualities, and their harmonious arrangement is referred to as assuming the good character of the Prophet (*akhlaq al-nabi*). This is considered by the inheritors of Pir Nur al-Arabi to be the best way of emulating Muhammad (sa): a way that does not involve mimicry and false piety, a way that is nullified by airs of moralistic superiority.

Properly speaking, there cannot be an outright appropriation by the human being of the attributes of God because there is no subject to whom such qualities would apply other than to the Only Existent. For any human being, therefore, the proper etiquette of assuming these attributes necessitates the realization of one’s own insubstantiality, for “wheresoever you turn, there is the face of Allah” (2:109). The goal of assuming the qualities of God is not self-enhancement, as much as it is

a balancing of character traits so that a person might achieve proximity (*qurba*), and through that to fulfill servanthood (*ubudiya*).

According to many of its mature adherents, Sufism is nothing more and nothing less than the perfection of moral character, but such “perfection” always remains incomplete. In the station of gathering (*jam*), as the classical Sufi author Sarraj notes, “Humanity does not depart from man . . . but the inborn qualities of humanity are changed and transmuted by the all-powerful radiance . . . shed upon (these qualities) from . . . Divine Realities.”<sup>6</sup> *Jam*, in other words, is not viewed by Sarraj, or by the majority of Sufis, as a goal in itself, but as a means to approximate an integrated and socially balanced character: one that is illuminated by the continuing presence of Divinity. Contemplation of the Names, whether in *dhikr* (vocal recitation) or through the deeper contemplation of their meaning (*fikr*), is a means to this end, but this “end” is never completed, and the same holds true of mystical realization.

Thus, ethical completion and mystical “accomplishment” are viewed as mutually interdependent, yet as relative and ongoing. The irony, perhaps, is that with each of these refinements one is viewed by others as achieving nothing, because the effort is less visible or pronounced. Because of this both the *malamiyya* and their antagonists tend to view such achievements as suspect. Again paradoxically, as the norms of the Shari’a are internalized, their outward forms become more relaxed, which leads to a different reading of Islamic law.

Ibn al-Arabi (like other Sufis who preceded him) often ran afoul of certain clerical and secular authorities because of his belief that only a “completed person” can correctly interpret Islamic law and ethics. According to the Shaykh, however, this cannot occur through the abrogation of lawful conduct but only through a complete and essential interiorization of the Qur’anic structures that encompass the Shari’a—for according to the Shaykh, “The perfect man is the brother of the Qur’an.”<sup>7</sup> As already noted a number of Sufis who adopted this Akbari attitude faced intermittent, yet persistent, persecution. For this reason Sufis, on the whole, came to defer all specific questions about *the forms*

of religious law to legal specialists, while nevertheless continuing to engage in more general discussions about ethical conduct.

One of the unfortunate by-products of this development was a widening rift between proponents of the “law” and the “way.” Although many classical Sufis such as Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Ibn al-Arabi concerned themselves directly with the application of ethics in law, others abandoned the field to the increasingly state-empowered ulama who were frequently corrupted by their own—and others’—power interests.

Tensions between the ulama class and Sufis would continue to persist up to the present day, even though these tensions were softened by a large number of Sufi orders who adopted a more orthodox approach that was more conciliatory and conformist. As we have seen, however, the *malamatiyya* and *qalandariyya* of the Ottoman period began to be viewed with greater suspicion as outside the law. In actuality, as we have seen, most of these Sufis were not manifestly antinomian, but the consideration of them as such often led to tragic consequences.

As already noted, charges of heresy were nearly leveled against Pir Nur al-Arabi as late as the nineteenth century. Factually, the Pir, who had functioned as a religious judge, adopted a more lenient and flexible attitude toward Islamic law, but he never abandoned the essential structure of the Shari’a. Instead, he assumed a remarkably modern attitude, evidenced in his statement, “No legal school [*madhab*] expresses itself clearly. Therefore, there is no certainty in any of these legal schools. Everyone has free choice and each individual can follow one of these approaches.”<sup>8</sup>

After the formation of the Republic of Turkey, the descendants of Pir Nur al-Arabi placed less emphasis on the Shari’a as law and more emphasis on it as a set of ethical guidelines. This did not mean, however, that any of these *malamati* spiritual directors abandoned the Shari’a entirely. On the contrary, they placed a greater emphasis on a dynamic understanding of the Shari’a that required an ongoing reinterpretation of its contemporary applications.

In the twentieth century the loosening of the bounds of juristic thinking became more apparent as Hulusi, Şuşud, Bilginer, and Öziç all agreed that the establishment of Turkey as a secular republic necessitated a greater separation of mosque and state. Moreover, each of these men believed that a confusion of religious and state powers had led to the corruption of both.

As the republic became well established, these descendants of the Nuriyya-Malamiyya did not stop at a critique of the ulama. They also turned their attention to the (often moribund) Sufi orders. Like their earlier antecedents, they found many of the orders still propagated a hierarchical power structure that mirrored secular forms of despotism. As a partial consequence, the malamatiyya from Bilginer onward discarded the use of the term *shaykh* because of its often-corrupted titular authority, preferring instead the more generic (and functional) use of the term *murshid* as one who “points to the right direction” (*irshad*).

While remaining on cordial terms with many of the organized Sufi orders, the malamatis who followed Bilginer abandoned most of the tariqa structure, gradually preferring to see themselves as a “school.” But despite the apparent decentralization of power that accompanied this reform, devotion to a murshid still led to certain excesses resulting from cults of personality. These excesses have already been noted as a well-seated historical problem, and, as we have seen in earlier chapters, they still remain a problem today. What, then, can we make of Pir Nur al-Arabi’s claims? After all, the Pir had asserted that he himself was a *Qutb*, the meaning of which we shall examine forthwith.

## CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH MAHDIST CLAIMS

Of the three stations of *baqa*, the Pir said, “The station of *jam* is among the levels of the sincere devotees. The station of *hadhrat al-jam* is among the levels of the intimate friends of God. The station of *jam al-jam* is among the levels of prophecy.”<sup>9</sup> The last statement bears further investigation because it can easily be misunderstood by the larger

mass of Muslims who were designated by Ibn al-Arabi as the “People of Worship.”

The levels of prophecy that the “friend” may inherit are not those of lawmaking, nor is a prophet of this level one who can create an entirely new religion. Nevertheless, for the Akbaris, prophecy is ever renewed by the existence of Sufis who have attained a particular closeness to the Prophet Muhammad (sa)—and Pir Nur al-Arabi certainly saw himself as one of them.

One problem remains, however, and that is the issue of messianism or Mahdism. The term *Qutb* and the position it implies have been problematic throughout the history of Sufism because they leant themselves so readily to political ambitions. As noted in chapter 6, such claims had led to the revolts of the Baba’i, Borkluce, the Safavids, and, to a lesser extent, the Hurufis. Later, others would propose that they had inherited the position of a Qutb or Mahdi; typically they would infer that they held a position close to, if not actually superseding, that of the Prophet.

The term *qutb* in common usage refers to a central pillar that holds up a tent, and a person with this title is also considered to be one of the “solitaries” (*afrad*). In many ways, the archetypal representation of the Qutb represents an embodiment of the *Axis Mundi*: the world pillar or the central column around which the world continues to turn. This pillar also connects heaven and earth, suggesting a unification of the dimensions of human experience often designated as the sacred and the profane.

Previous to Muhammad, the idea of the Axis Mundi had been powerfully represented in many religious traditions. After the advent of Islam, it came to play an integral part in Shi’ism, and it also came to be gradually accepted among certain Sunnis and especially the Sufis. In his *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn al-Arabi referred to the Axis as a renewer (*mujaddid*), and a Qutb was said to arise once every hundred years to remedy the distortions that had crept into the Prophet’s message. At this point we come to the thorny question of the Qutb, a somewhat

mysterious personage whom Ibn al-Arabi and many other Sufis considered to be the head of their hidden hierarchy.

According to Ibn al-Arabi, the Qutb was to be considered an “inheritor” of Muhammad who could assume the role of “general prophecy” but not of “legislative prophecy.” The latter concerned establishing the fundamentals of Islamic ethics (not law) and hence was reserved for the Prophet alone (see appendix). The function of the Axis, according to Ibn al-Arabi, was to revive and to renew understandings of the Shari’a (as well as an understanding of mystical Islam), but not to change the intent, the trajectory, or the basic meaning of these traditions. Despite all of these proscriptions, however, the position of the Qutb was still one filled with an immense power, referred to as *tassaruf*, the power to influence other people’s spiritual states for good or for ill.

Because of the potential for the abuse of *tassaruf*, Pir Nur al-Arabi and his descendants curtailed the earthly power of the position of the Qutb by reinterpreting the position the Qutb held. Of the latter the Pir once wrote, “I am neither able to explain it, nor can you grasp it through anything I might say of it. This station is called *ahadiyyat al-ayn* [oneness of the self or essence], or the Station of Muhammad (sa) . . . yet we are unable to have a taste of this station. [It is said in the Qur’an] ‘And do not touch the substance of an orphan’ (17:34).”<sup>10</sup>

This paragraph contains several enigmatic expressions that require further elucidation. An “orphan” is particularly vulnerable because he or she is deprived of protecting parents, and unless adopted by its next-of-kin, such a child is often an outcast, neglected, abused, or abandoned. The Qur’anic saying quoted above refers literally to the property, the body, and the personhood of an orphan, but the Pir adopted all of this to make an allegorical point about the Prophet (sa).

A person’s “substance” can be understood as one’s spiritual essence. Muhammad (sa) was an orphan in his lifetime, not only literally but spiritually, and because he was understood so little, he stood alone. Because he thoroughly combined in his own person spiritual and mundane dimensions, Muhammad (sa) arrived at the station of *ahadiyyat al-ayn*.

In so doing, the Prophet (sa) was referred to as the “Seal of the Prophets,” and he remained, therefore, timeless, unique, and “untouchable.”

As if to warn us further, the Pir continued to write about the ineluctable station of the Prophet as follows: “We are prohibited from striving for it. However, if the Prophet of Allah personally initiates us, it can be tasted. Otherwise it is impossible.”<sup>11</sup> In this manner Nur al-Arabi underscored that those at the station of jam al-jam could strive no further. Such a person could attain a taste of the oneness of essence by being initiated by the spiritual body of Muhammad. As a result, a mature malamati or Sufi could not claim anything equaling Muhammad’s level of prophecy or his spiritual completeness.

By emphasizing that one could only approximate the Prophet’s state instead of acquiring it as a more permanent station, the Pir was making another point, albeit indirectly. The Sufi who had arrived at jam al-jam was to understand that such arrival was an opening to another possibility. Since Muhammad (sa) taught by way of grace (*baraka*), the Sufi had to remain spiritually open ad infinitum.

The last station, that of integration, was therefore considered by the Pir and Ibn al-Arabi as being, paradoxically, a station of “no station” (*la maqam*). At this point, the malamati Sufi could be guided only by the spiritual presence of the Prophet, but the “Prophet” in question was not limited to the historical Muhammad (sa); rather this Muhammad was to be understood as a representation of the Logos.

In a noncanonical tradition, God says to one of the companions of Muhammad (sa): “O Jabir, God created the light of your Prophet out of His light before He created things.” This same light may begin to be experienced at the center of the mature malamati as his or her own awakened spiritual body (*ruhaniyya*). Through that Light, which is none other than the Nur of Muhammad, or more generally, the Light of Prophecy (*Nur al-Nubuwwa*)—and by establishing a bond (*rabita*) with this ongoing intelligence or light—the servant could gradually find himself or herself situated as one point among others at the center of a limitless circumference.

As Iraqi has said, “The splendor of Beauty bestowed upon the lover's entity a light with which that very Beauty might be seen; for only through It can It be perceived.”<sup>12</sup> The light to which Iraqi refers is the awakened intelligence (aql) of the inherent spirit (ruh), and this subtle center mirrors God's self-knowledge. Although all Sufis believe that the historical Muhammad (sa) was a supreme embodiment of such a “lover,” his ahistorical position is one of exhibiting this light through a continuous dynamic that is conveyed more by his essence than by his form—and this is what is referred to as the continuing Light of Prophecy that imparts its taste to the completed malamati.

Occupying the station of no station also has a bearing on how accomplished Sufis view their own condition of being. On the one hand, they are said to be established (tamkin) in their second separation; on the other hand, their stability is one of fluctuation (talwin). Paradoxically, the mature human being is completed, but never perfected. This understanding was underscored by Shabistari in the following lines, which are often read and reread by Central Asian Naqshbandis:

Now I am neither nonexistent, nor existent in “self”;  
Neither sober nor hung over nor fully drunk.  
At times like Her eyes I am in rapture;  
Sometimes I’m disturbed like Her agitating locks.  
I’m sometimes in the furnace of my [lower] nature;  
Sometimes in the garden from seeing Her face.<sup>13</sup>

The commentator Muhammad Lahiji (often cited by Central Asian Naqshbandis) had this to say about Shabistari’s lines:

In other words, now that I am in the station of sobriety after [drunken] efacement, the essence of the matter is that I don't exist because I am sustained through that Reality and I subsist through His subsistence; and in relation to my own essence,

I don't exist since my illusory existence has been effaced and negated and has been returned to its original nonexistence. And I'm not sober because the effects of selflessness and disengagement from the intellect remain; nor am I hung over because hangover arises from the alienation of separation while I am in the essence of union; nor fully drunk because drunkenness is the state of selflessness and annihilation and I am in the station of establishment [tamkin] and I remain firmly in subsistence.”<sup>14</sup>

Leading up to the second couplet, Lahiji indicates,

Because the possessor of the level of separation after gathering [farq ba'd al-jam'] has become the locus of “He is every day in another articulation,” in the station of the changing qualities which is the superior level of establishment, the poet says,

At times like Her eyes I am in rapture;  
Sometimes I'm disturbed like Her agitating locks.

In other words, I am sometimes, like the eyes of that Beloved, in rapture from drinking that wine: rapture meaning not really sober and not fully drunk; and sometimes I'm agitated and disturbed and confused like her tresses. Since the Perfected Human is truly the interface of gathering and separation, the poet says:

I'm sometimes in the furnace of my [lower] nature;  
Sometimes in the garden from seeing Her face.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

In an expanded version of a tradition already mentioned, Ibn al-Arabi has God speak through the Prophet (sa), saying: “I was a hidden treasure and wished to be known. So I created the creatures and made myself known by them and it is through me that they have known me.”<sup>16</sup> In another tradition, Muhammad (sa) is reported to have said that God created men (by which he does not exclude women) “according to his own form”<sup>17</sup> in order that they might serve as “regents” (khulafah) of God on earth (2:30).

Occupying the station of no station also has a bearing on how accomplished Sufis view their own condition of being. On the one hand, they are said to be established (*tamkin*) in their second separation; on the other hand, their stability is one of fluctuation (*talwin*). Paradoxically, the mature human being is completed, but never perfected. This understanding was underscored by Shabistari in the following lines, which are often read and reread by Central Asian Naqshbandis:

As part of this legacy, human beings have inherited two qualities that must become balanced and thoroughly integrated: lordship (*rububiya*) and servanthood (*ubudiya*). The misappropriation of lordship gives rise to an arrogance and ego-centricity that characterize the “commanding self,” or divisive ego (*nafs al-ammara*). There is another type of lordship, however, which when balanced enables one to become a mirror through which God contemplates Himself and through which other existents who have not realized God can contemplate His likeness. According to Ibn al-Arabi, such a one “must necessarily appear, to those amongst whom he exercises this function, in the image of the one who has appointed him. Otherwise he is not truly his lieutenant (*khalifa*) amongst them.”<sup>18</sup> Notwithstanding this fact, the authentic representative of the *malamatiyya* must not encourage an “avataric” adulation among those who perceive his or her charismatic nature.

According to the Shaykh, the servanthood that accompanies (spiritual) lordship, of necessity, exhibits the following characteristics: “The men of God are those who, though they have been created according to His form, do not allow themselves to be diverted from poverty, humility, and servitude.”<sup>19</sup> These are the qualities the unceasing traveler must aspire to attain in order to become the “Adamic” vehicle through which God comes to realize, or to recognize, Himself. And to become this vehicle is the highest form of worship or service (*ubuda*) the Sufi can come to perform, but only in reality after the stage of *baqa*. After this stage, a certain radiance, or illumination (*ishraq*), may be communicated to others as *fayd*, the spiritual power that emanates from one person and inspires another. At the same time as one is endowed with it, however, the completed Sufi must endeavor to veil this charisma. Although gifted with *tassaruf*—the capacity

to transmit spiritual knowledge—the malamati murshid does not exercise this capacity with everyone and at all times. To do so would be to call attention unnecessarily to himself, as an occasionally ego-bound individual who is necessarily flawed. On the other hand, exhibition of this charism (grace) would also be like casting pearls before swine.

Iraqi had warned, “To whom [does one] speak of this Vision? ‘To Him who has a heart’ [50:37], to that one whose heart is overcome and transformed by states, one after another, and thus can receive an insight into the Divine transmutations.”<sup>20</sup> Pir Nur al-Arabi was quite clear about this when he wrote, “If an individual does not [already] have the sapiential taste of this station, he or she will be unable to reach the awareness of Qur’anic secrets, and the secrets of the prophets and of the saints. Such a one is referred to in the verse, ‘those individuals are like cattle, they are even less conscious’ (7:179).”<sup>21</sup>

Because of the immaturity, or “rawness,” of most humans, the malamati's state is often inscrutable. Borrowing Ibn al-Arabi's words, the “people of [nominal] worship” could not accurately measure the malamati's actual state, and neither could most of the Sufis (the “people of charisma”). Instead, the malamatis remained invisible or risked being misunderstood or, worse yet, they were openly reviled by such people. As a consequence, the malamatis were usually found outside of any observable school or structure, and they would limit their teaching to only a select few properly prepared to receive such a teaching.

The person of “no station” who lives in this dynamic state acts as a witness (and a partial embodiment) of the Qur’anic verse, “Every day He [reveals himself] in a fresh state” (55:29). In the process, the malamati can only rest secure in the final truth of certainty, becoming the khalifullah (or regent of God on earth) by living in a state of inherent servitude. This state of servitude, however, includes acting reflexively as a mirror of other people's inherent desires, and it risks exposing such people's hypocrisy—much to their anger and dismay.

As could be expected, revealing one's own—as well as another's—imperfections went unrewarded, ignored, or punished: the natural result of pervasive narcissism. As we have seen, such egotism, particularly

when it hides under the veil of piety, had compromised the lives of many malamatis throughout history, including Bistami, Nuri, Hallaj, Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi, Shams i-Tabrizi, Badruddin of Simawna, and Pir Nur al-Arabi. Because of their controversial nature, the greatest malamati exemplars were sometimes relegated to the sidelines of Sufism, and when they were not, they were actively hounded by legalists for being suspiciously heterodox.

As the Pir indicated, most of society, including those who are merely formally religious, value the power of the commanding ego (*nafs al-ammara*). The Pir's own life, as well of those of his predecessors, amply illustrate the persistence of this condition; and the malamatis today consider the resulting hardship to be a spur to their spiritual evolution—especially so since their own egoistic attachments are exposed in the process.

Amir 'Abd al-Kader is recorded as praying, "I am the non-being that is manifested by Your manifestation; I am the darkness that Your light illuminates. God answered: 'Persevere firmly [in this knowledge] and be careful not to claim that which does not belong to you: for the deposit [*amana*] must be returned to its owner and the loan must be paid back. The name 'contingent being' has always belonged to you and always will belong to you.'"<sup>22</sup>

It bears repeating that the fulfillment of the malamati path never consists of a complete and permanent state of union, especially one that surpassed the fragility and vulnerability of being human. In fact, union has always been considered a stage of a fuller realization, that of intrinsic servitude.

Since those who experience such a realization are contingent beings, they never lay claim to nondelimited freedom (*mutlaq*). Only God is absolutely free of all delimitation. The servants still remain fallible humans, but they function more fully as servants of the Lordship that underlies and pervades them. This does not, however, grant them the power to alter human history. As Rumi has put it, "The Shadow of God is his servant who is dead to this world but alive to Him."<sup>23</sup>

## CHAPTER TEN

Of this journey without end, Iraqi says: “Those whose thirst is quenched imagine since they have attained Union they have attained the goal and are joined with the object of their desire. They rest content with Unto Him you shall be returned [2:28]. But beware! Beware, for ’til eternity the way stations of Union’s Path are never out-traveled. No one returns whence he started, so how could wayfaring find its end or the road reach a final destination? If the place of Return were the same as the place of Origin, what good would it be to set out or arrive?”<sup>24</sup>

We should never imagine that such ceaseless traveling would (or could) interfere with one’s common humanity. On the contrary, as the Khurasanian malamati saint Abu Sa’id ibn Abi’l-Khayr remarks: “The perfect mystic is not an ecstatic devotee lost in contemplation of Oneness, nor a saintly recluse shunning all commerce with mankind, but ‘the true saint’ goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them and buys and sells in the market and marries and takes part in social intercourse, and never forgets God for a single moment.”<sup>25</sup>

Concerning the establishment of this state, Muhammad Parsa, the successor of Bahauddin Naqshband, offers the following anonymous Arabic verse:

Burned by fire is whoever feels it;  
And how can he who is fire burn?

“And similarly,” continues Parsa, “they [the established] are protected and preserved from a change in their state that might occur through their association with creation. And the levels of union that are the levels of journeying *within* Allah have no limit because the perfecting [or completion] of the qualities of the Beloved have no limits.” At this point, Parsa closes with some verses from the great Naqshbandi poet Attar:

In the way of Reality, all is about adab;  
As long as life remains, there must be real seeking.

## HUMAN COMPLETENESS

If in one breath you inhale a thousand oceans,  
You must think this slight and find your lips dry.<sup>26</sup>

In the process the lover with dry lips leaves no trace. As Rumi sang of such a one: “Can the intellect perceive thee, or love, or the pure spirit? . . . Shams-i Tabrizi has seen No-place and built from it a place.”<sup>27</sup>

This placeless place remains the only acquisition of the *malamatiyya*. According to the tradition of Pir Nur al-Arabi, it can never be fully acquired by anyone, nor can it be communicated to anyone who is not already in a state of “opening” (*fath*). The *malamati* “masters” are not ones who assume they have reached such a stage, nor are they likely to allow others to assume as much.

If there is a *Qutb* that represents a hidden hierarchy, one could be sure that he (or she) would never announce himself as such, nor would such a person condone the assertions of others (or their intimations) that he or she had arrived at such a place. Instead, as Badruddin of Simawna once claimed, the condition of the *Qutb* is latent in every human being.

Spiritual realization, though never complete, can only be sought through the efforts of those who are inwardly drawn to follow this way. In the process, the only realistic objective that could be expected would be the further illumination of one’s own humanity. Naturally, this would be quite disappointing to esotericists who anticipate a different form of mystery, and arriving at the Source they might find it startlingly empty, unadorned. Even more so, the Source might reveal their nakedness, but the raw reality revealed therein would be far more translucent and open to Existence as it is.

In the process, one might realize with Muhammad Parsa that “the levels of union that are the levels of journeying *within* Allah have no limit because the perfecting [or completion] of the qualities of the Beloved have no limit, and anything in this world that one attains to concerning the levels of union is just the first level in relation to those that still remain.”<sup>28</sup>

Truly the purpose of the malamati path is not human perfection or the attainment of the suprahuman, but rather a greater human relatedness, greater transparency, and a deeper relationship with the Divine. It may be appropriate to close with some lines from Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi's Meccan Revelations: "The relation of stations to a Muhammadan is like the relation of names to Allah. He is not determined in any station to which he may be related. . . . 'Every day he is in a different state' [Qur'an 55:29]. . . . The Muhammadan pole or individual changes perpetually. . . . For transformation pervades the world entire and pervades him."<sup>29</sup>

## Epilogue

### Looking Toward the Future

Throughout this book I have tried to advance several theses: firstly, that Sufism is undoubtedly a form of mysticism rooted in, and shaped by, Islamic thought.<sup>1</sup> Like its parent religion, however, Sufism is rich and varied; and, as whole, Sufis do not all conform to a particular legal representation or theological interpretation of Islam. As also noted in this book, there is a classical tradition of Sufism, and, in the main, many of the writings of these classical authors reflect the contributions of Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi—whose epithet “the Great (or Greatest) Shaykh” is well deserved. Because of that—and because of its roots in Qur’anic teaching—Sufi teachings still exhibit a high degree of uniformity. Not all schools or orders of Sufism, however, subscribe to the doctrines of the Akbaris (the followers of Ibn al-Arabi), and this, too, has been noted in this book. The key question I would now like to pose is, what is the future of Sufism in the West?

Throughout this book, I have reiterated that all sacred traditions are founded in—and continue to be shaped by—particular cultural contexts. As sociohistorical circumstances change, so do the articulations of sacred traditions. We should not, therefore, seek one overarching representation of “authentic” Sufism that is immutable. In the same vein, we should not view Islam itself as a static religion. Instead, both Sufism and Islam exhibit an essentially dynamic character, and both can continue to adapt to contemporary needs.

Events subsequent to 9/11 seemed to substantiate a great divide between the world of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the largely secular “West.”

## EPILOGUE

Among certain extremists, this gap seems to be unbridgeable, yet history shows that a purported clash of civilizations, fanned by ignorance and intolerance, is historically untenable. Instead, as noted by historians such as Richard W. Bulliet, a continuous cultural interchange between Muslims and Christians shaped an “Islam-Christian Civilization” that gave rise to the modern world.<sup>2</sup> Islamicate civilizations contributed to our heritage of history, geography, philosophy, and science, and they also contributed to our common understanding of human rights.<sup>3</sup> These cultural achievements have occurred despite the militancy of so-called jihadists and the reactions of their opponents. Unfortunately, the clamoring of a few extremists are deemed more newsworthy, yet the “hijacking” of Islam by such politicians has by now been well documented by scholars who, themselves, remain devout Muslims. No doubt a badly politicized Islam (or Sufism)—like other intolerant religious forces—remains a danger to us all.<sup>4</sup>

Still, forward-looking Sufis are subtly influencing world events—and without much fanfare. Such people have done much to moderate extremism on both sides of the illusory divide that constitutes the current “clash of civilizations.” A number of these Sufi-influenced agents of change are well known to the public, including Professor Emeritus Abdul Aziz Said, holder of the first chair in Islamic Peace Studies in the United States and director of the Peace Studies Program at American University, Washington; Omid Safi, one of the cofounders of the Progressive Muslim Union (since resigned), who has also served on the board of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University; Shaykh Ahmed Abdr-Rashid (aka J. E. Rash), director of Legacy International, an NGO dedicated to conflict resolution and intercultural exchange programs; Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, cofounder of the American Society for Muslim Advancement and chief spokesperson of Park51, originally called the Cordoba House; and a number of others.

Although more notable in the West, such activists are not new to the world of Sufism. As I have detailed in this book, ideas derived from the European Enlightenment began to have a more direct impact on the

Islamicate world from the time of Napoleon onward, and this affected certain expressions of Sufism during the late Ottoman period. By extension, later representatives of the way of blame in republican Turkey, such as Mehmet Selim Öziç, have been strong adherents of interfaith cooperation and global, cultural interchange. The ideas of the Enlightenment are not incompatible with Islam, though we've often been led to believe otherwise.

In America, one can discern a certain pattern to the spread of Sufism that closely parallels other "melting-pot" cultures such as the Ottoman Empire (Turkey and the Balkans), Persianized Central Asia, Mogul India, and largely Malay-speaking Southeast Asia. As noted in this book, Sufism spread in those areas gradually, while peacefully coexisting with already established religious and secular traditions. In these regions, Sufis were generally open to and actually absorbed the perspectives and practices of other spiritual traditions as long as they were compatible with the central Islamic tenet of *tawhid* (God's Unity). As a consequence of these historical developments, one can discern elements of Neoplatonic, Zoroastrian, Christian Hesychist, Jewish Kabbalistic, Advaitin Hindu, and Buddhist influences in various Sufi schools and practices. As noted in this book, these elements have been carefully blended into a Sufism that never lost its essentially Islamic character. Moreover there is abundant evidence that Sufism also exerted a counterinfluence in certain Christian, Jewish, and Hindu sects. It is probable that these "interreligious enrichments" will be encountered again (though in even stronger forms) in Europe and America.

Although one should be careful not to adopt an "Americo-centric" point of view, there is a consensus among certain Sufi leaders worldwide that the United States, in particular, offers several advantages for hosting a *renewed* Sufism. These include the existence of a rich multiethnic and multiracial society that is strongly secular, yet deeply religious; the existence of a form of government that (though less than perfect) supports and protects religious freedom and intellectual pluralism; and the existence of a wide number of spiritual practitioners

## EPILOGUE

who have developed, though perhaps somewhat haphazardly, a strong body of mystical experience. Paradoxically, perhaps, modern societies manifest an increase in societal disorder matched by a renewed search for lasting ethical values. All these conditions are believed by certain Sufis to foster the deepening of genuine spiritual hunger that fuels a more genuine spiritual quest. As far as envisioning the specific shape of things to come, I predict the following as a *probable* future for the various forms of Sufism that have emerged in Europe and America.

As I've repeated throughout this book, we should rid ourselves of the notion that an overarching school of Sufism, more authentic than the rest, will gradually supplant the others. Sufism, as a whole, has never functioned as a unified, hierarchical organization; and if there is a *Qutb* or "Axis of the Age," you can be sure that he will not be advertising himself as such. This seems to contradict the allegorical notion of a "hidden hierarchy of saints": an idea that might once have served a purpose, but has also been manipulated by certain charismatic leaders to gain power.

There have always been schools of Sufism that accentuated its inherent universalist, esotericist, or essentially Islamic character, and these will always take issue with one another. Despite this, there may be schools of Sufi thought that are more thorough and complete. In the future, such schools must educate their members more broadly as to the classical criteria defining authentic Sufi spiritual practice. The vital ethical norms that have governed student-teacher relations in the past need to be retained, but *not* at the expense of Sufism's adaptability to modern conditions. In recent years, an attempt has already been made by Idries and Omar Ali Shah to promote such an approach, but with only partial success.

As I mentioned in chapter 4, it is a pity that Idries Shah's otherwise notable contributions have been marred by his questionable association of the fabled Sarmoung Brotherhood with Sufism. His followers' declaration of Shah as the "Head" of all Sufis worldwide is equally questionable. Many of these misleading assertions were published in books

that were probably authored by Shah himself under pseudonyms. There are strong indications that a number of others probably were written by closely allied disciples under his close supervision. All of this has already been detailed by James Moore in his article “Neo-Sufism: the Case of Idries Shah” (see bibliography). Notably, Moore seems to excuse Gurdjieff from employing a similar form of chicanery, even though the promotion of the Sar-moung myth has caused a lot of unnecessary confusion for decades. Suffice to say, such mythmaking is highly unnecessary if one wishes to unearth the universally applicable constituents of Sufism today.

Among the general public, an interest in universalist Sufism is likely to increase, especially if such an approach is unencumbered by the more specifically politicized aspects of Islam, which have become polarized against Western culture and values. We have only to witness the recent heightened interest in Rumi. Sufism has an important contribution to make to all of the world’s religious traditions. It may also serve well as a bridge between Middle Eastern and Western cultural worldviews—both of which are founded on a combination of Abrahamic and Hellenistic traditions. Certain forms of Sufism are also supportive of an Islamic form of spiritual humanism. Although it may differ from anthropocentric European humanism, it nevertheless shares many similarities with its cousin. This has been evidenced in my interviews with Mehmet Selim *Öziç*.

With the advancement of Sufi scholarship, represented for example by the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society, purely English-speaking academics in secular fields such as sociology, psychology, and cultural anthropology will gain greater access to classical texts, which may stimulate further historical and human-scientific research. Feedback from nonpartisan approaches to Sufi studies may help traditionalists to better understand themselves and to adapt to specifically modern (and Western) conditions of modernity.

Better English language studies may stimulate a more informative

inter-religious dialogue among Sufis, Christians, Jews, and eventually Buddhists and Hindus who share similar mystical insights and who coexist more closely together in America than elsewhere. Enhanced interfaith dialogue might foster a greater understanding and tolerance among the less-informed and more-prejudiced laity who are members of mainstream religious traditions worldwide. Certainly, an interest in perennialism is likely to increase, given the enhanced interconnectivity of people on our planet, and this must be encouraged.

Importantly, the revival of Sufi knowledge among mainstream Muslims in the United States and Europe, and the gradual opening of their organizations to more outwardly orthodox Sufis, could have an effect on Islam not only in America, but worldwide. What we might call the reintroduction of a revitalized Sufism to mainstream Islam might foster the diminishment of several problems that obstruct the further evolution of Islam as an exoteric tradition. These problems include a rigidified sectarianism, legalism, and (sometimes) hidebound traditionalism maladaptive to the modern world, a world that is rapidly becoming a global village. Several notable scholars have noted that neither Sufism nor Islam is inherently incompatible with the development of secular societies, and that Sufis need not adopt all the features of a Muslim “neoethnicity” that clashes with other forms of communal self-identity.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, Sufism, in its least ossified forms, may have much to offer to America. The reason? Sufism, in the main, is not narrowly Islamic but represents the essential din (religion), which has been revealed, according to a famous saying of Muhammad (sa), “among 124,000 prophets,” each of whom, according to the Qur‘an, “spoke to people in their own language.” All of the great traditions have developed aspects of this one essential din, and this concept has been extended to Buddhism and Hinduism by a number of Sufis throughout history. According to such Sufis, it was the purpose of the Prophet Muhammad—and, by extension, the tradition of those who followed him—to rediscover the underlying unity that had been expressed differently by

## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

varying religious traditions and to restore that unity to its original purity and purpose. From this activity derived the supposed Sarmoung symbolism of bees gathering pollen from various flowers to create the nectar of grace. America, I believe, might just be the place to form a beehive that produces a honey of an even fuller potency, and the result might rejuvenate *both* the greater body of Sufism and Islam.



# Appendix

*Risala i Salihyya*  
(The Testament of the Righteous)  
by Pir Nur al-Arabi

*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

**I**t should be known that there are three divine Self-disclosures [*tajalli al-ilahi*]. The first is the theophany of the actions; the second is the theophany of the attributes; the third is the theophany of the essence of His perfection.

It is necessary to acquire authentic knowledge in these and to be able to witness all three disclosures, and thereby to know the stations of Unity.

At the very beginning, striving is needed for an individual, since God said: “Strive with your possessions and your selves” (Qur’an 9:41).

The term *strive* is defined in various ways. However, the Muhammadan way of striving is such that, first, you should try to learn canons of the religious law. Correct and incorrect actions can be determined through knowledge of the law. If one is ignorant of the law, that individual will lag behind because of his or her inattentiveness.

Second, you should strive to learn continuous remembrance [*al-dhikr al-daim*], which is a secret practice of the gnostic order [*tariqa*], because heedlessness is removed through continuous remembrance. The learning of continuous remembrance requires initiation and instruction by an individual of the “people of remembrance.” Al-Haqq, the Almighty, has said: “Ask the people of remembrance about what you do not know” (Qur’an 16:43).

It is understood from the above verse that the duty of the master shaykhs is to teach and explain the methods of remembrance only. They

do not, however, have the right and authority to determine the number of repetitions of this remembrance.

The third point is the “Mystery of the Reality” [*Haqiqah*], which is to witness the beauty of oneness and to remove the veil of duality.

A person will need the teaching and guidance of a real and perfect guide in order to comprehend and unveil the Mystery of Reality, and the Unification and Identification [*ittihad*] as well.

## THE STAGES OF UNIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

The stations of unification are three. They are the station of the acts [*maqam al-af'al*], the station of the attributes [*maqam al-sifat*], and the station of the essence [*maqam al-dhat*].

The stations of identification are four. They are *jam*, *hadhrat al-jam*, *jam al-jam*, and *ahadiyyat al-jam*. The people of completion [*ahl al-kamal*] use many different terms for these stations. It should be known that the stations of the acts, the attributes, and the essence are the levels of sainthood [*maratib al-wilaya*]. The station of *jam* is among the levels of the sincere devotees [*maratib al-siddiqin*]. The station of *hadhrat al-jam* is among the levels of the intimate friends of God [*maratib al-muqarrabin*]. The station of *jam al-jam* is among the levels of prophecy [*maratib al-nubuwwa*].

### 1. Unification of the Acts

Know that the beginning of the stations of knowing reality [*haqiqah*] is called “unification of the acts” [*tawhid al-af'al*]. This station can be defined as follows:

It should be witnessed with sapiential taste [*dhawq*], i.e., through the meta-analytical faculty of knowledge, that the actions are due to the “forms of the intermediary world” [*suwar-i barzakhiyya*] that belong to the Real [*al Haqq*]. The “forms of the intermediary world” is a reference to the forms of the world as perceived before [their appearance in our

world]. As examples, a cloud is a form, the sky is a form, a mountain is a form, animals are forms, human beings are forms. Hence they are called “the forms of the intermediary world.” It follows that the actions being carried out by these forms [however] completely belong to God.

In the station of the unification of the acts, the courtesy of an individual is to ascribe all actions to God, whether good or evil in our perspective. Good or evil acts are [only] so in relationship to us. In relationship to God all acts are good, and He is free of such terms. Therefore, the people of God ascribe acts to God, but they never say, “God committed adultery.” This is because the relationship is what created the term [or occasions] of “adultery.” The goodness and the badness of an act could not be determined if the act had no relationship to a servant.

The connecting remembrance of the traveler to the act [af'al] is: la fa'ila illa Allah (nothing acts but Allah).

“Allah created you and your doings” (Qur'an 37:96).

Many supporting passages are to be found in the Qur'an: “We bear them on land and sea, and sustain them with good things” (17:70). “Fair in the eyes of men is the love of what they feel passion for: women, sons, and mounds of gold” (3:14).

Qadi Baythawi, whose statements may be taken as authoritative, has said: “In reality, God is the one who makes the servant see everything as beautiful.”

## .2Unification of the Attributes

The second station of unification is the station of unification of attributes [tawhid al-sifat]. The definition of the unification of the attributes is: life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing, speech all belong to the Haqq. What that means is that Allah is the one who is alive, Allah is the one who hears, sees, and speaks. Allah is the one who wills and who has power. Thus, through tasting, the traveler will know that his essence is being qualified with these attributes.

These attributes will constitute a mirror, wherein the traveler can witness the presence of the qualified [hadhrat al-mawsuf].

The evidence for these attributes is found in the Qur'an: "Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsistent" (2:255).

The meaning of the verse above is that life belongs to the Haqq only, and the life seen in things is the life of the Haqq. The people of tradition [ahl al-sunna] and the people of theology have agreed that things live through the divine life.

"Knowledge thereof rests with Allah" (67:26). This indicates that the knowledge belongs to the Haqq.

"There is no power save with God" (18:39), ". . . the Lord of Power and Glory, above what they ascribe to Him" (37:180). "All might belongs to God" (2:165). All three verses indicate that the power belongs to the Haqq [alone].

"He is Hearing and Seeing" (42:11). This indicates that the hearing and seeing belongs to the Haqq.

The connecting remembrance for this station is: *la mawsufa illa Allah* (nothing has a quality/characteristic except Allah).

### **3.Unification of the Essence**

The third station of unification is unification of the essence [tawhid al-dhat]. The [totality of] existence belongs to the Haqq; others have no existence. It is written in the Qur'an: "There is no god but He. Everything perishes except His Face" (28:88). "All that is upon [the earth] will pass away, yet the Face of your Lord will endure" (55:27).

In other words, everything is created and perishable, and only the essence of Allah is not perishable. Saying that things are created means that they are non-existent. As such, they have no [true] existence. But [He is] the existent. All others have no existence. The connecting remembrance for this station is: *la mawjuda illa Allah* (nothing exists but Allah).

The companions of these three stations are people of Allah. They are also called “people of effacement”; they are not held responsible in accordance with the level of their stations. Since they are unable to fully witness their stations, they follow their intellect in most cases. They are people of taste, and they are responsible for their actions according to the level of their intellect. Therefore, they are sometimes excused and are occasionally warned [against inappropriate behavior]. They are excused, no matter what emanates from them, during the period when they are with the gnostic taste [dhawq] of the stations in which they dwell. They are warned about what emanates from them during the period when they lose the taste of the station in which they dwell.

The possessors of these stations are people of friendship. Friends [awliya] are not free from two states. They are people of witnessing when they are experiencing their stations. They are people of the veil when they are veiled in their stations—the same as the rest of the people.

For the friends the following verse is revealed in the Qur’an: “Behold the Friends of Allah upon whom there is no fear nor sorrow” (10:62).

If asked, who are the people of Allah? the answer is as follows: The people of Allah are those who through wisdom know the acts, attributes, and names of the Real [al Haqq], and whose acts, attributes, and personhoods are annihilated [fani] in the essence of the Real, in the Attributes of the Real, and in the Acts of the Real, and those who witness that the acts, the attributes, and the essence that manifest through them belong to the Real.

#### **.4Jam (Gathering, or Comprehensiveness)**

Jam is the fourth station of unification and the first station of subsistence. In this station the Real manifests through the faculties of the individual, and that individual himself is hidden, i.e., the Real is externalized and all of creation lies hidden.

“Verily, Allah sees through His servant” (40:44). To this station can also be attributed the tradition [*hadith*]: “Verily Allah speaks through the tongue of his servant: Allah hears whoever praises Him.”

In this station, things as forms of engendered existence become hidden in the Real. This is similar to the condition of individuals when they close their eyes. At that time, the images of things become hidden in their memories. In the station of gathering things become hidden in the knowledge of God, and the Essence of God [*Dhatullah*] manifests.

When the possessors of this station look to things around them, no matter what prior judgment they had of those things, they [now] observe forms wholly as divine faces and attributes of the Real.

“Allah and His angels bless the Holy Prophet” (33:56). Allah is the one who issues His own divine attributes. Indeed, “Allah witnesses that there is no deity to be worshiped save Him” (3:18). And by this is also meant that Allah encompasses all things with His Essence.

This station is not a permanent station of unification; instead, it is more akin to being immersed in divine ecstasy temporarily. Due to the witnessing and tasting of spiritual experience, the possessor of this [temporary] station experiences the manifestation of the Real in His full perfection and experiences things being hidden in the essence of the Real.

In this condition creation is perceived as similar to a shadow that does not have real existence, but is (nevertheless) perceived as darkness. Created things are held as having real existence only in the knowledge [*ilm*] of the perceiver. This station is also called “nearness by obligatory acts.”

### 5. *Hadhrat al-Jam* (the “Presence of Comprehensiveness”)

*Hadhrat al-jam* is the fifth station of unification and the second of identification, both of which comprise subsistence.

In this station the Real is hidden and creation is manifested. In the previous station, created things were hidden in the knowledge of the

Real or hidden in the divine knowledge. Now, the Real manifests, from His own existence, the Names that were kept in that divine knowledge.

In this station, the Real is the one who hears and knows, but through His own potentiality as servant. The latter retains His own potentiality, and the life, power, hearing, and seeing of the servant is through the Real. The Hadith al-Qudsi states: “When I love my servant, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks.”

This station is also called “drawing near through supererogatory practices.” The possessor of this station is one of the muqarrabin (those who are drawn close unto God). There is a tradition about them: “The good act of the righteous or virtuous one is a sin for those drawn close to God.”

## 6. Jam al-Jam (Comprehensive Gathering)

The third station of identification, and the sixth station of unification, is comprehensive gathering. If the spiritual traveler in this station is asked about the meaning of the third verse in the chapter “The Iron” (57:3), which states, “He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Concealed,” he or she will answer, “I am the First, I am the Last; and I am Manifest, and I am the Concealed.” Or if another person across from the traveler asks, “Who am I?” he or she acknowledges, “You are the First, you are the Last, and you are the Manifest and you are the Concealed.”

These answers are [provisionally] correct. The reason is that, the Real is [known to be] manifesting in all of these forms through His own existence in the witnessing of the traveler. And the purpose of His existence [manifesting in all of the forms] is apprehended by the gnostics. Conversely, if an individual does not have the sapiential taste of this station, he or she will be unable to reach the awareness of Qur'anic secrets, and the secrets of the prophets and of the saints. Such a one is referred to in the verse, “Those individuals are like cattle, they are even less conscious” (7:179).

Brothers! If you can comprehend this statement, you will comprehend the mystery of Solomon and the Kingdom of the Most Glorious. If you do not comprehend this, it will be useless to come here and you will never attain the taste of it.

## 7. Ahadiyyat al-Ayn (“Oneness of Essence”)

In addition, you should know that there is yet another station beyond this one. However, I am neither able to explain it, nor can you grasp it through anything I might say of it. This station is called ahadiyyat al-ayn, or the Station of Muhammad (sa). This station belongs to the Pole of the Age [al-Qutb al-Zaman]. He is the one who teaches us only by way of grace, yet we are unable to have a taste of this station [on our own].

“And do not touch the substance of an orphan” (17:34). The true orphan is the Prophet Muhammad (sa), and he is the possessor of this station, and this is the Station of Ahadiyya (also known as Ahadiyyat al-Jam). We are prohibited from striving for it. However, if the Prophet of Allah personally initiates us, it can be tasted. Otherwise it is impossible.

*Translated for this book by Mehmet Selim Öziç with the assistance of Robert “Abdul Hayy” Darr, 2007.*

# Notes

## CHAPTER ONE

1. Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems, and Discourses, Annotated and Explained* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2004).
2. Stephen Kinzer, "Konya Journal: Festival of Rumi, Poet of Life's Dance," *New York Times*, December 29, 1998, A4.
3. Gamard, *Rumi and Islam*, xiv.
4. William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), 174–75.
5. Kinzer, "Konya Journal."
6. Ahmad al-Ghazali, *Sawanih: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits*, trans. Nasrollah Pourjavady (New York: KPI Limited, 1986), 23. Ahmad al-Ghazali was the brother of the more famous Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, jurist, theologian, and mystic.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West* (Oxford, England: Oneworld, 2000), 173.
11. W. M. Thackston, Jr., trans., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1994), 152.
12. Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 36.
13. Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Sufi Message*, vol. 8, *Sufi Teachings* (Delhi, India: Motilala Banarsiddas Pub., 1990), 13; Shah, *The Sufis*, 25; Javad Nurbaksh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1978), 107; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1972), 26n5.
14. See for example, a critique of Idries Shah in L. P. Elwell-Sutton, "Sufism & Pseudo-Sufism," *Encounter*, May 1975, 9–17. At the same time, see Idries

## NOTES

- Shah's critique of "sufiologists" in *The Way of the Sufi* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), 13–35.
15. Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: The Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
  16. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The New American Library, Mentor, 1958), 321.
  17. Most of the biographical details about Hazrat Inayat Khan have been taken from this book, the only one of its kind. Elisabeth Keesing, *Hazrat Inayat Khan: A Biography* (The Hague: Munshiram Manoharial Purblishers, 1981).
  18. See Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).
  19. Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, *The Message in Our Time* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 69.
  20. Before Sufism officially arrived in America in the last century, it had already established two important beachheads centuries before. Intriguingly, the first inroad may have been made by African slaves. In a groundbreaking work published in 1998, Sylviane A. Diouf presented conclusive evidence that many black slaves imported to the Americas were Muslims. Diouf provides evidence that the Islam they practiced was most probably heavily influenced by Sufism. See Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
  21. Vilayat Inayat Khan, *Message in Our Time*, 323–24.
  22. *Ibid.*, 424, 427; emphasis added.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. An overview of Nasr's philosophical approach can be found in William C. Chittick, ed., *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007).
2. Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984). For an overview of Schuon's work see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., *The Essential Frithjof Schuon* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2005).
3. Mark Sedgwick, "Western Sufism and Traditionalism," <http://www.traditionalist.org>; published in Danish translation as "Vestlig sufisme og traditionalisme" in *Den gamle nyreligiøsitet, Vestens glemte kulturarv* [Old New Religiousness: The West's Forgotten Cultural Heritage], ed. Mette Buchardt and Pia Bøwadt (Copenhagen: Anis, 2003), 139–51.

## NOTES

4. Patrick Laude, "Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the Context of the Perennialist School," *Religio Perennis*, <http://www.religioperennis>, 10.
5. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 124–25, 138.
6. Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 15–16.
7. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, *Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 59.
8. For an excellent study of these conflicts see Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
9. See Devin J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1998).
10. Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 145.
11. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 120 (see chap. 1, n. 13).
12. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 43, 82.
13. Victor Danner, "The Early Development of Sufism," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 254.
14. Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 106 (see chap. 1, n. 13).
15. Parviz Morewedge, "Islamic Mystical Doctrines," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 71.
16. See John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardi and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000); John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001); Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002).
17. See Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), and Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
18. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, 36–37.
19. A term favored by William C. Chittick.
20. Thackston, *Signs of the Unseen*, 119 (see chap. 1, n. 11).
21. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, 117.
22. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 24.

## NOTES

23. Attributed to al-Kattani in *Principles of Sufism by al-Qushayri*, trans. Barbara R. Von Schlegell (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1990), 304.
24. Thackston, *Signs of the Unseen*, 55 (see chap. 1, n. 11).
25. Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 56.
26. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, 123–24.
27. Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester, England: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), 63.
28. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and His Times* (Canberra, Australia: Ma'rifat Publishing House, 1980), 263–273.
29. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, 123.
30. For an extensive treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's position see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 87–106.
31. By *occultists* I mean those who seek a knowledge known only by the initiates of a "secret" or "hidden" order of being, most particularly a hidden society: from the Latin, *occultus*, "covered up." This term is not to be taken as a synonym for *esotericism*, which is based upon seeking hidden causes that are "more inward."

## CHAPTER THREE

1. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge, Keegan, Paul, 1914); Arthur J. Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sufism* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1943); Louis Massignon, *The Passion of Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, 4 vols., trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, Bollingen, 1982); Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam* (see chap. 2, n. 12).
2. This can be inferred from Ibn al-Arabi's identification of the malamiyya with the "highest of men." The Shaykh wrote: "The People of Blame are the masters and leaders of the folk of God's path. Among them is the master of the cosmos, that is Muhammad the Messenger of God—God bless him and give him peace!" (William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989], 372–75). Elsewhere, Ibn al-Arabi declares, "Without any doubt at all I am the Heir of the knowledge of Muhammad and of his state, both secretly and manifestly" (Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn Arabi* [Cambridge, England: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993], 119).

## NOTES

3. Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993), 109–10.
4. A reference to a Christian being appointed to the “Council of the Saints” (*diwan al-awliya*) can be found in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 90–91.
5. Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Kernel of the Kernel*, transl. Ismail Hakki Bur-sevi (Sherbourne, England: Sherbourne House, n.d.), 1.
6. Ibrahim Gamard has already taken issue with an “occultist” misrepresentation of Sufism. Gamard maintains that this is mostly due to individuals like Idries Shah, Bennett, and Gurdjieff perpetuating a form of dualistic Gnosticism. I am not entirely in agreement with Dr. Gamard’s identification of these occultists with Gnosticism, in particular, although I do agree with a number of his other critiques. See Ibrahim Gamard, “Why Gurdjieff’s ‘Fourth Way’ Teachings Are Not Compatible with the Mevlevi Sufi Way,” 2004, Daru i-Masnavi of the Mevlevi Order, <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/mevlevi-vs-gurdjieffism.html>.
7. This is particularly true of John Bennett, who said of Gurdjieff, “He put on a mask that would tend to put people off, rather than draw them towards him. Now, this method—which is called by Sufis, the *Way of Malamut*, or the methods of blame—was highly esteemed in old times among the Sufis” (J. G. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma* [New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973], 71).
8. See James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle* (New York: Putnam, 1980), and K. Paul Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995). Both Webb and Johnson have stressed the probable origins of the Seekers of Truth in the Theosophical Society. Certainly P. D. Ouspensky and A. R. Orage were both prominent speakers on that subject before they became disciples of “G.”
9. Concerning this tale, Gurdjieff’s most balanced biographer speculates, “Gurdjieff’s provocative claim to have found and entered ‘the chief Sarmoung Monastery’ is in effect a litmus test, differentiating literal minds from those preferring allegory” (James Moore, *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* [Rockport, MA: Element Books Ltd, 1991], 31).
10. Interestingly, the word *Sarmoun* (alt. *Sarmoung*) was used in ancient Greek to designate followers of the Buddha.
11. See G. I. Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963), 30. The exact quote is, a “famous esoteric school, which, according to tradition was founded in Babylonia as far back as 2500 b.c.”

## NOTES

12. The premier biographer of Gurdjieff, James Moore, notes that the French system of eurythmics influenced the Gurdjieff movements. Moore also reports that an extensive study of Mevlevi (Sufi) music and movements was conducted by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in Istanbul in 1920–21 (Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 362, 144). This points to the Gurdjieffian system of movements being a creative synthesis of other forms.
13. For scholarly information on the Occult Revival consult Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994). For a highly balanced account of the Golden Dawn, I recommend Martin Booth's *A Magick Life: A Biography of Aleister Crowley* (New York: Coronet, 2001).
14. For an extensive analysis of the political side of Theosophy, see Johnson's *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*. The following religious leaders had extensive contacts with Theosophists: Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), an activist monk and Sinhalese nationalist who promoted the idea of Pan-Buddhism; Swami Dayanada Saraswati (1824–83), who founded the Hindu reform society Arya Samaj, a group that first proposed Indian self-determination and freedom from the British Raj; and Jamal al-Afghani (1839–97), the father of Pan-Islamism and founder of Islamic modernism and (perhaps paradoxically) Islamic fundamentalism.
15. In all fairness, it should be noted that a number of influential Gurdjieffians, including Jacob Needleman and James Moore, have abandoned this notion.
16. Indeed, James is famous for stating, "My experience is what I agree to attend to."
17. Two very fine synopses of the practical applications of Gurdjieff's method are Charles T. Tart, *Waking Up: Overcoming the Obstacles to Human Potential* (Boston: Shambhala, 1982); and Jacob Needleman, *Introduction to the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, IN: Morning Light Press, 2009).
18. While referring to the Gurdjieff movements exercises, Moore, for example, notes, "No contemporary Central Asian geographer or anthropologist reports such structured dances (Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 351).
19. Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 83.
20. Reputed to have been passed on by Kenneth Walker, a close student of Ouspensky (and others), quoted in Colin Wilson, *The Strange Life of P. D. Ouspensky* (London: The Aquarian Press, 1993), 114–16.
21. John G. Bennett, *Witness: The Autobiography of John G. Bennett* (Tucson, AZ: Omen Press, 1974), 157.

## NOTES

22. Wilson, *Strange Life*, 111.
23. Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 297.
24. Madame Jeanne de Salzmänn's report of Gurdjieff's last words, quoted in Moore, *Gurdjieff*, 315.
25. Bennett, *Witness*, 274.

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. Bennett, *Witness*, 284 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
2. Robert Graves, introduction to *The Sufis*, by Idries Shah, ix-x (see chap. 1, n. 10).
3. Rafael Lefort, *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1968), 32, 34.
4. *Ibid.*, 67.
5. Bennett, *Witness*, 355 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
6. James Moore, "Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah," *The Gurdjieff Journal: Fourth Way Perspectives* 6 (n.d.), 1:24.
7. Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 80-81.
8. Bennett, *Witness*, 355, 358 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
9. *Ibid.*, 356.
10. Benjamin Ellis Fourd, "An Appraisal of Sufi Learning Methods," reprinted in Idries Shah, *Sufi Thought and Action* (London: Octagon Press, 1990), 56.
11. A Correspondent of the *Times*, "Abshar Monastery," reprinted in *Documents on Contemporary Dervish Communities*, collected, edited, and arranged by Roy Weaver Davidson (London: Hoopoe Ltd., Society for Organising Unified Research in Cultural Education, 1966), 5.
12. Desmond R. Martin, "Below the Hindu Kush," *The Lady* 162, no. 4210 (December 9, 1965). Republished as "Account of the Sarmoun Brotherhood," *Documents on Contemporary Dervish Communities* (London: Society for Organising Unified Research in Cultural Education, 1966).
13. Bennett, *Witness*, 372 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
14. Shah, *Way of the Sufi*, 141 (see chap. 1, n. 14).
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 286.
17. Shah, *The Sufis*, 23, 26 (see chap. 1, n. 12).
18. *Ibid.*, 27-28, 32.
19. Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah, *Islamic Sufism* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1971), 14.

## NOTES

20. Ibid.
21. Omar Ali Shah, *The Course of the Seeker* (Los Angeles: Tale Weaver Publishing, 1988); *The Sufi Tradition in the West* (New York: Alif Publishing, 1994), 20.
22. Quoted in Moore, “Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah.”
23. Bennett, *Witness*, 362 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
24. Ibid., 366.
25. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma*, 57–60 (see chap. 3, n. 7).
26. Bennett, *Witness*, 366–67 (see chap. 3, n. 21).
27. Ibid., 366.
28. Ibid., 368–69.
29. Hasan Lütfi Shushud, *The Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia* (Coombe Springs Press, 1983), 157.
30. These quotes were supplied to me in translation by Dr. Nevit O. Ergin, a long-term student of Hasan Şuşud and founder of the Society for Understanding Mevlana in San Mateo, California.
31. Quoted in Shushud, *Masters of Wisdom*, 89.
32. Rumi, *Divan*, Quatrain 395, trans. Ibrahim Gamard, published on website of the Divan ‘I Masnavi of the Mevlevi Order, [http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections\\_popular.html](http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections_popular.html).

## CHAPTER FIVE

1. J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
2. Shushud, *Masters of Wisdom* (see chap. 4, n. 31).
3. After the Prophet Muhammad’s name, it is customary in Islamic usage to include the greeting *salla allahu ‘alayhi was salam* (peace and blessings be upon him), often abbreviated as sa.
4. Quoted in Javad Nurbaksh, *Traditions of the Prophet: Ahadith* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1981), 39.
5. Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 249.
6. Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 265.
7. Ali B. Uthman al-Jullabi Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub of Al Hujwiri: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1976), 65.
8. Hamid Algar, “Elements de provenance malamati dans la tradition primitive Naqshbandi” (translated into English for the present work by Dr. Annick

## NOTES

- Safken), in *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans* (Malamis-Bayrami: Studies of Three Muslim Mystical Movements), ed. Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarccone (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998).
9. Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 265.
  10. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 86 (see chapter 2, n. 12); Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 265; Algar, "Elements de provenance malamati."
  11. Morris S. Seale, "The Ethics of Malamiyya Sufism and the Sermon on the Mount," *Muslim World*, 58 no. 1 (1968).
  12. Quote from Sulami's *The Malamatiyya Epistle*, in Sara Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi and the Malamati Movement in Early Sufism," in *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1994), 607.
  13. Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi," 599.
  14. This term is used by Tirmidhi (d. 908) to describe malamati activity. See Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi," 612.
  15. Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 265–66.
  16. Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi," 603
  17. See Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry*, trans. Sheikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al Halveti (London: East West Publications, 1983).
  18. Sviri, "Hakim Tirmidhi," 589.
  19. This anecdote was related to me by a Sufi who had received it as an oral transmission. Other anecdotes of a similar spirit can be found in Farud Al-Din Attar, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Arkana, 1966).
  20. Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), 26–27.
  21. Terry Graham, "Abu Sai'd ibn Abi'l-Khayr and the School of Khurasan," in *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 108–9.
  22. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality, and Writings of Al-Junayd* (London: Luzac & Co., 1976), 91.
  23. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 20, 28.
  24. *Ibid.*, 103.
  25. *Ibid.*, 50

## NOTES

26. A hadith (traditional saying) of the Prophet Muhammad, in Javad Nur-baksh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2 (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 50.
27. Herbert Mason, "Hallaj and the Baghdad School of Sufism," in Lewisohn, *Classical Persian Sufism*, 72.
28. See Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, and Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1994), 88.
29. Algar, "Elements de provenance malamati," 3.
30. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*, 71, referring to Paul Kraus and Louis Massignon, eds., *Akbar al-Hallaj, Texte ancien relatif a la predication et au supplice du mystique musulman al-Hosayn b. Mansour al-Hallaj*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1936), 50–51.
31. Reynold A. Nicholson, trans., *Kashf Al-Majub of Al Hujwiri: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism* (London: Luzac and Co., 1976), 65.
32. Graham, "Abu Sa'id," 96.
33. Ibid.
34. J. T. P. de Bruijn, "The Qalandariyyat in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sana'i Onwards," in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992), 79.
35. Graham, "Abu Sa'id," 104.
36. Suhrawardi, quoted in Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 32.
37. Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 11.
38. René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 147.
39. Ibid., 154, 155.
40. de Bruijn, "The Qalandariyyat," 77.
41. Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 214.
42. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Servants*, 90.
43. Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood*, 235.
44. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Servants*, 86.

## CHAPTER SIX

1. Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 76.

## NOTES

2. Kafadar adds: "A new 'race' was born—that of the Osmanlis—out of the mixture of ex-pagan Turks and ex-Christian Greeks" (*Between Two Worlds*, 33). This view is supported by Lord Kinross, who states, "Intermarriage became common between Greeks and Turks, contributing to the birth and the growth of a new mixed society" (J. P. Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* [New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1977], 26).
3. William C. Chittick notes, "Ibn al-Arabi made use of Neoplatonic terminology in expounding the metaphysical and cosmological doctrines that [his successor] al-Qunawi accepts and develops" ("The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to Al-Qunawi," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992], 1179–80).
4. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 83–84 (see chap. 5, n. 28).
5. Quoted in H. T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 136.
6. *Ibid.*, 136.
7. Michel Balivet, *Islam Mystique et Révolution Armée dans les Balkans Ottomans: Vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le "Hallâj des Turcs" (1358/59–1416)* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995), 38–41. Balivet uses the name Bedreddin instead of Badruddin to transliterate the Turkish inflection commonly used.
8. *Ibid.*, 41, 42, 43.
9. *Ibid.*, 42.
10. *Ibid.*, 46, 47, 49.
11. *Ibid.*, 50.
12. *Ibid.*, 52–53.
13. *Ibid.*, 63.
14. *Ibid.*, 78–79.
15. *Ibid.*, 78.
16. *Ibid.*, 72.
17. *Ibid.*, 73.
18. *Ibid.*, 79.
19. *Ibid.*, 73.
20. Shaikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, commentary and trans., *Inspirations on the Path of Blame by Shaikh Badruddin of Simawna* (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1993), 38.
21. *Ibid.*, 39.

## NOTES

22. Ibid., 150.
23. Balivet, *Islam Mystique*, 73.
24. Victoria R. Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order," part 2, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 12 (1993). Holbrook's dating seems unlikely since the Ardabali's death preceded that of Somuncu Baba's by some seventy-four years, and Ardabali was known to be an avid critic of Ibn al-Arabi's theories. This did not seem to be the case with Somuncu Baba.
25. According to Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Gulat Sects* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 4, Erdebeli's discourses to his son are collected in a book called *Kitab al-Manaqib* (The Book of Exemplary Acts).
26. Ibid., 25.
27. Victoria R. Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order," part 1, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 9 (1992), 23.
28. This is suggested by Holbrook, *ibid.*, 25.
29. Abulbaki Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler* (The Malamati Way and Malamatis) (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaasi, 1931/1992). (Unfortunately, this work has not been translated into English.)
30. Holbrook's translation ("Ibn 'Arabi," part 1, 26) of Abulbaki Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaasi, 1931), 41.
31. C. H. Imber, "Malamatiyya: In Ottoman Turkey (3)," CD-ROM edition v. 10 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 1999).
32. See Imber, *ibid.* Given an absence of writings from the fifteenth century, Imber focuses on surviving documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and these documents, largely compiled by heresiologists, indicate the malamatiyya in Ottoman Turkey had largely departed from Sunni Islam. Whether or not this was the case will be investigated later in the present chapter.
33. The Ottomans, who used a variety of names for their new capital continued, at times, to call it *Kostaniyye*. After the fall of the city, however, it was also referred to as *Islambol*, meaning filled with many Muslims. The most common term used in common Turkish was, nevertheless, *Istanbul*, and most scholars agree that this term was a rendering of the Greek phrase *eis tin polis*, "into the city." For purposes of simplicity, I will use the name Istanbul throughout this text to refer to the capital of the Ottomans (after 1453). For further references to the various names used, see Philip

## NOTES

- Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 20.
34. Lefton S. Stavrianos, *The Ottoman Empire: Was It the Sick Man of Europe?* (New York: Rhinehart, 1957).
  35. Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakshiya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, Press, 2004), 41.
  36. According to Suraiya Faroqhi, who summarizes the theory of Irene Melikof, "Sultan Bayazid, who was known for his generous donations to many [tekkes], including the Bektashi sanctuary of Koyun Baba, in return expected the dervishes to wean the [Turcoman] tribesmen away from the mixture of folk Islam and Shi'i beliefs which they had espoused up to that time. . . . However, in order to communicate with their flock, the Bektashi missionaries had to adapt to the culture of the tribesmen, and as a result were assimilated to the heterodox milieu they had been sent out to change" ("Conflict, Accommodation and Long Term Survival of The Bektashi Order and the Ottoman State," in Alexandre Popovic and Giles Veinstein, eds., *Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Betkachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach* [Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995], 16).
  37. For further information on the history of the Hurufi movement, see Hamid Algar, "The Hurufi Influence on Bektashism," in Popovic and Veinstein, *Bektachiyya*, 39–53.
  38. Holbrook, "Ibn Arabi," part 2, 31.
  39. Imber, "Malamatiyya," (end of article).
  40. Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi," part 2, 15.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995), 132–33.
2. Also known as Sayyid Muhammad Nur al-din al-Husayni and (in the Balkans) Arap Hodja. A paucity of studies on Pir Nur al-Arabi needs to be noted. While the legacy of Pir Nur al-Arabi is unique, little (if anything) is known of him in the West apart from some recent articles (in French) by Xavier Jacob and Thierry Zarcone in *Melamis-Bayramis* (see chap. 5, n. 8). Some details are also furnished in H. T. Norris's *Islam in the Balkans* (1993). With the notable exception of Abdalbaki Golpinarli, who wrote in the thirties, no other Turkish scholar has researched the life and thought

of Nur al-Arabi in detail. An unpublished Ph.D. thesis on the Pir's life can be found at the University of Belgrade (in Serbo-Croatian), but this is difficult to access. An entry in English by Colin Imber on the malamiyya in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* fails to mention the Pir at all.

Apart from a few scholarly works, a small number of hagiographies have been written by successors of the Pir such as Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer (1991, 1994) and Yusuf Ziya Inan (1971, 1976). Until recently the senior shaykhs of predominantly Turkish Sufi orders such as the Jerrahiyya and Mevleviyya, were well aware of Nur al-Arabi and his continuing tradition, but other Sufis remained less informed. A Jerrahi shaykh residing in the United States, Tosun Bayrak, offers a short biography of Nur al-Arabi in his *Inspirations on the Path of Blame* (see chap. 6, n. 20), a book largely based on an earlier work by Mahmud Sadettin Bilginer that was published posthumously in 1991.

3. Badrul Wali came from a long line of Sayyids, and his lineage is cited by Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler*, 231 (see chap. 6, n. 29). The line of ascription (*isnad*) is given as follows: "Sayyid Muhammed Nurul Misriyyul Mahalleviyyul Bedriyyul Huseyni-Sayyid Ibrahimul Kudsi- Seyyid Bedrul Veli- Seyyid Muhammed- Seyyid Yusuf-Seyyid Bedr- Seyyid Yakub- Seyyid Mutahhar- Seyyid Salim- Seyyid Muhammed- Seyyid Zeyd- Seyyid Ali- Seyyid Hasanul Arizul Akbar- Seyyid Zeyd- Imam Zeynel Abidin Ali- Imam Huseyn- Imam Ali abu Talib."
4. Over the next one hundred years, with the advent of ethnic nationalism in the Balkans, massive ethnic cleansing would ensue, and millions of Muslims would eventually be expelled to the mainland of Anatolia, which was later to become a Turkish state. Christians suffered similarly during Muslim reprisals throughout territories that remained more firmly under Ottoman control.
5. Serif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 78-79.
6. *Ibid*, 82.
7. During his own time, Nur al-Arabi's sphere of influence spread throughout Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia, as well as in certain cities of Anatolia, including Istanbul, but the Pir never achieved prominence beyond these places.
8. Among the most renowned reformers of this period, we find the following: in sub-Saharan Africa, Ahmad al-Tijani (d. 1815) and Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817); in the Maghrib, Ahmad Ibn Idris (d. 1837) and Amir Abdl

## NOTES

- Qadir; in India, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi. See Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking, and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (London: Curzon Press, 1998).
9. Also nearly contemporary with Pir Nur al-Arabi were reformers like Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (d. 1762), Ahmad al-Tijani of Algeria (d. 1815), Ahmad Ibn Idris (d. 1837) in Arabia, Muhammad al-Sanusi in Libya (d. 1859), and Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817) in Niger and Nigeria.
  10. We should also include among them Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi, even though the latter, as we have seen was a major critic not only of Ibn al-Arabi, but even more so of those who followed him such as Qunawi.
  11. What we do know is that he never mentions them in his paper *Risala Mamba'un nur fi Ru'yatil Rasul* (Source of the Light through the Prophet's Vision). In that paper he respectfully praises Quwaysini and Dervish Mehmet, whom he met later, but, strikingly, he omits any mention of Shaykh Yusuf.
  12. Ibrahim al-Shamariki (lit. "Ibrahim of Damascus") carried the transmission of the Uwaysi-Akbariyya from his shaykh, Muhammad Abu Najaba. Ibrahim had also inherited the Shabani-Halveti lineage from another (possibly less important or earlier) shaykh, Abdullah al-Halabi. Clearly the two main lines of ascription (Uwaysi-Akbari) had been merged for six generations preceding Shaykh Ibrahim. Ibrahim al-Shamariki's Uwaysi lineage passes back through Abd al-Ghani Nablusi (d. 1731), who was also a member of the Qadiri and Naqshbandi Orders. Al-Ghani Nablusi, a well-known commentator on Ibn al-Arabi, lived and died near Shaykh al-Akbar's mausoleum in Damascus. Several of his commentaries are preserved (in Arabic). For more information on Nablusi, see Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: Abdul al-Ghani al-Nablusi, 1641-1731* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).
  13. Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler*, 234 (see chap. 6, n. 29).
  14. Kinross, *Ottoman Centuries*, 474 (see chap. 6, n. 2).
  15. Bayrak, *Inspirations on the Path of Blame*, 63 (see chap. 6, n. 20).
  16. Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler*, 237 (see chap. 6, n. 29).
  17. Qualities of the *Qutb* are given in chapter 10.
  18. Kinross, *Ottoman Centuries*, 504 (see chap. 6, n. 2).
  19. Holbrook, "Ibn 'Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions," part 2, 25 (see chap. 6, n. 24).
  20. Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 408.

## NOTES

21. Kinross, *Ottoman Centuries*, 534 (see chap. 6, n. 2).
22. The complete relevant quote reads, "Sayyid Muhammad Nur al'Arabi (d. 887), while calling himself a Malamati, had a Naqshbandi spiritual descent. However, this Egyptian Sufi's teachings, which were established in Macedonia, had very little to do with the Naqshbandi traditions. Regarding his Malamati obedience it seems that he was initiatically linked to the Malamatiya second period. We must not see in him a Naqshbandi with Malamati tendencies, but rather, as a dedicated partisan of the *wahdat al-wajud* for whom order affiliation did not matter much" (Algar, "Elements de provenance malamati," 36 [see chap. 5, n. 8]).
23. Pir Nur al-Arabi's chains of transmission mentioned can be found in Golpinarli, *Melamilik ve Melamiler*, 241–42 (see chap. 6, n. 29).
24. See appendix, *Risala i Salihyya* (The Testament of the Righteous) of Pir Nur al-Arabi, translated by Mehmet Selim Öziç with the assistance of Robert A. H. Darr, 2007.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 232 (see chap. 7, n. 5).
2. For a summary of Hartman's observations see Jacob Xavier, "Les renseignements de Martin Hartman sur les Melamis (1909)," in *Melamis-Bayramis* (see chap. 5, n. 8).
3. Thierry Zarcone, "Mehmet Ali Ayni et les cercles melami d'Istanbul au debut du XX siècle," in *Melamis-Bayramis*, 246 (see chap. 5, n. 8).
4. Xavier, "Les renseignements de Martin Hartman," 214.
5. Kinross, *Ottoman Centuries*, 576 (see chap. 6, n. 2).
6. Zarcone, "Mehmet Ali Ayni," 244.
7. For exact figures, see McCarthy, *Death and Exile* (see chap. 7, n. 1).
8. The following section largely depends upon the details of Atatürk's biography as provided by Andrew Mango, *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2002).
9. *Ibid.*, 323.
10. *Ibid.*, 437.
11. For fuller details about the life of Hasan Şuşud, see *An Excursion into the Depths of Tasawuf: Discourses by Hasan Shushud*, compiled Mehlih Yansel, trans. Refik Algar (privately published and limited to 86 copies, 2004).
12. *Ibid.*, 524.
13. Bennett, *Witness*, 368 (see chap. 3, n. 21).

## CHAPTER NINE

1. Pir Nur al-Arabi, *Misri Niyazi Divani Serhi* (A Commentary on the Poetry of Niyazi Misri), translated into modern Turkish by Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer (Istanbul: Esmâ Publication, 1982), 183. Translated into English by Mehmet Selim Öziç for the present publication.
2. From the *Risala i Salihyya* (The Testament of the Righteous) of Pir Nur al-Arabi, translated by Mehmet Selim Öziç with the assistance of Robert A. H. Darr, 2007. See appendix.
3. Translated from the opening verses of the *Mesnevi* by Pir Vilayat Khan, *Sufi Masters* (Paris: The Sufi Order, 1971), 1.
4. Llewellyn Vaughn-Lee, *Traveling the Path of Love: Sayings of Sufi Masters* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1995), 134.
5. Al-Jilani, *The Secret of Secrets* (Cambridge, England: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992), 41.
6. Bayrak, *Inspirations*, 133 (see chap. 6, n. 20).
7. Ibid.
8. Mahmud Shabistari, *The Garden of Mystery*, trans. Robert Darr (London: Archetype, 2007), 9.
9. Pir Nur al-Arabi, *Risala i Salihyya*. See appendix.
10. Michel Chodkiewicz, "The vision of God according to Ibn Arabi," in *Prayer & Contemplation*, ed. Stephen Hertenstein (San Francisco: Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 1993), 57.
11. Bayrak, *Inspirations*, 56 (see chap. 6, n. 20).
12. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 293 (see chap. 3, n. 2).
13. Chodkiewicz, *Ocean without Shore*, 40 (see chap. 2, n. 25).
14. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 186–87.
15. These may be found in Abdu-R-Rahman Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazali on Divine Predicates and Their Properties* (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1974).
16. Chodkiewicz, "The Vision of God," 58.
17. Ibid.
18. Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Spiritual Writings of Amir 'Abd al-Kader* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 81.
19. Chodkiewicz, *Ocean without Shore*, 37 (see chap. 2, n. 25).
20. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 184, 191 (see chap. 1, n. 4).

## NOTES

21. Fakruddin Iraqi, *Divine Flashes*, trans. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 79–80.
22. Traditional saying (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammad, quoted in Nur-baksh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2, 50 (see chap. 5, n. 26).
23. Peter Lamborn Wilson and N. Pourjavady, *The Drunken Universe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1984), 70.
24. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 228 (see chap. 3, n. 2).
25. Iraqi, *Divine Flashes*, 115, 116.
26. *Ibid.*, 122.
27. *Ibid.*, 121.
28. Ibn al-Arabi, quoted in James W. Morris, “Ibn ‘Arabi’s Spiritual Ascension,” in *Les Illuminations de La Mecque: Textes Choisis*, ed. Michael Chodkiewicz (Paris: Sinbad, 1988), 381.
29. Ibn al-Arabi, quoted in William C. Chittick, “Towards Sainthood: States and Stations,” in *Les Illuminations de La Mecque*, 276.
30. Ibn al-Arabi, quoted in Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 226 (see chap. 3, n. 2).
31. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 227 (see chap. 3, n. 2).
32. In *Seal of the Saints* (see chap. 3, n. 3), Chodkiewicz reveals a typology of sainthood based upon the notion of “prophetic inheritance.” While this concept, in general, is well accepted by Sufis, it is still extremely controversial in mainstream Islam. The idea of anyone “inheriting” from the Prophet Muhammad (sa), who is considered to be the “seal” or the last of the prophets, is repugnant to most Muslims, many of whom still consider Ibn al-Arabi highly suspect. That this suspicion was (until recent times) a largely “fundamentalist,” rather than traditionally mainstream reservation, has been amply documented in *An Ocean without Shore* (see chap. 2, n. 25). Nevertheless, Ibn al-Arabi’s assignment of “general,” rather than “legislative” prophecy to foremost Sufi saints such as the Axis of the Age (*Qutb al-Zaman*, one of whom is also presumably present today) and his claim that this “general prophecy” extends the *Qutb’s* regents (and Ibn al-Arabi asserts that they may be *either* male or female) remains deeply shocking to most Muslims, including many Sufis. This shock is hardly dispelled by Ibn al-Arabi’s contention that his claim is based upon a substantiated saying of the Prophet (sa), viz. “The learned are the heirs of the Prophets”; nor does it help that Ibn al-Arabi produces credible evidence that the saints alone are worthy of the name “learned” (*ulama*).

## NOTES

### CHAPTER TEN

1. Muhammad Parsa, *The Qudsiyya* (Tehran: Kitabkhaneh Tahuri, 1975), 68. Translated by Robert Abdul Hayy Darr for this book.
2. Quoted by Claude Addas, "The paradox of the duty of perfection in the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 15 (1994): 45.
3. Chodkiewicz, *Spiritual Writings of Amir 'Abd al-Kader*, 80 (see chap. 9, n. 18).
4. A famous hadith quoted in AnneMarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 35.
5. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 175 (see chap. 3, n. 2).
6. Arthur J. Arberry, *Pages from the 'Kitab al-Luma'* (London: Luzac & Co., 1947), 426.
7. Chodkiewicz, *Ocean without Shore*, 95–96 (see chap. 2, n. 25).
8. From Pir Nur al-Arabi's commentary on the *Divan* of Niyazi Misri, 183 (see chap. 9, n. 1). Translated by Mehmet Selim Öziç for this book.
9. Pir Nur al-Arabi, *Risala i Salihyya*. See appendix for complete text.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Iraqi, *Divine Flashes*, 75 (see chap. 9, n. 21).
13. Shabistari, *Garden of Mystery*, 170 (see chap. 9, n. 8).
14. Muhammad Lahiji, *Mafatih al-'ijaz fi sharhe Gulshane Raz, Muhammad Lahiji*, 4th edition (Tehran: Chapkhaneye Aftab, 1989), 714. Translated by Robert A. H. Darr for this book.
15. Ibid.
16. Quoted by Addas, "The paradox of the duty of perfection," 38.
17. Prophet Muhammad (hadith), in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 70 (see chap. 3, n. 3).
18. Addas, "The paradox of the duty of perfection," 38.
19. Ibid., 42.
20. Iraqi, *Divine Flashes*, 82 (see chap. 9, n. 21).
21. Pir Nur al-Arabi, *Risala i Salihyya*; see appendix.
22. Michel Chodkiewicz, trans., *The Spiritual Sayings of Amir 'Abd al-Kader* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 77.
23. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 136 (see chap. 1, n. 4).
24. Iraqi, *Divine Flashes*, 107 (see chap. 9, n. 21).

## NOTES

25. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *Traveling the Path of Love: Sayings of Sufi Masters* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1994), 23.
26. Muhammad Parsa, *The Qudsiyya* (Tehran: Kitabkhaneh Tahuri, 1975), 69. Translated by Robert Abdul Hayy Darr for private use, and by permission for this book.
27. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 140 (see chap. 1, n. 4).
28. Parsa, *The Qudsiyya*, 69. Translated by Robert Abdul Hayy Darr for this book.
29. Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 104.

## EPILOGUE

1. This epilogue is partly based upon an earlier work published by the author, "A Possible Future for Sufism in America," *Gnosis* (Fall 1995).
2. Richard W. Bullett, *Islam-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
3. This statement is not meant to absolve many representations of Islam today that actually work against a commonly emerging consensus on human rights. In fact, most reductive or literalistic interpretations of Islam have actually *impeded* such rights. The need to reappraise human rights in Islamic thought is addressed by Abdullahi an-Naim in two books, *Toward an Islamic Reformation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) and *Islam and the Secular State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), both highly recommended. See also: Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1992); Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Khaled Abou El Fadl, et al., *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
4. On this topic, see Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam: A New Vision for Muslims and the West* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004); and Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).
5. See, for example, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). For additional thoughts on the problems in the communalist style of identifying as a "Muslim," see Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

# Glossary

The following is a compilation of English translations provided by several noted scholars: Chittick (1989); Burckhardt (1976); Massignon (1997); and Trimmingham (1971). All terms are Arabic, unless noted otherwise. It should be noted that Persian terms (Pers.) are also commonly used in Turkish Sufism.

***abdāl*** (pl. *badāl*): substitute, a class of the *malamiyya* who stand in the place of Muhammad's closest companions. In certain usages, a synonym of *madhub* (see below).

***adab***: courtesy, or etiquette of the path; alternately, action appropriate to the moment.

***afṛād*** (sing. *fard*): singulars, or solitaries; according to Ibn al-Arabi one of the highest grades of the *malamiyya*. Among the "Council of Saints (*Diwan al-Awliya*)."

***ahadiyya***: oneness, often designating the Absolute Oneness; the indivisible aseity known only to Itself (see also *Dhat al-Mutlaq*, *Ghayb al-Ghuyub*, *Hahut*, *Huwiyya*). In the school of Pir Nur al-Arabi, *Ahadiyya* in its aspect as ineffable essence also discloses itself as *Ahadiyya al-Ayn* (Oneness of Essence) and *Ahadiyyat al-kathra* (Oneness in multiplicity).

***ahadiyyat al-jam***: gathering (or coincidence) of oneness; the realization of the provisional existence of the self in relation to God, the only true existent.

***akhfa***: most hidden; the subtle center or faculty of *ruh* that reveals separation after Divine Union (see also *farq ba'd l-jam*).

## GLOSSARY

**akhlaq:** good character traits, or operational ethics.

**al-asma al-husna:** the most beautiful names of God; usually numbered as ninety-nine and often used in the practice of *dhikr*.

**Allah:** God; the most comprehensive Name of the Absolute, including both manifest (*zahir*) and unmanifest (*batin*) attributes of Divinity.

**aql:** intellect; in original (Qur'anic) usage a synthesis of reason and intuition; in later usage simply the faculty of reason.

**arif:** knower, or gnostic. One who possesses *ma'rifa*.

**ashiq:** ardent lover; also title used for a Bekatshi bard.

**awtad** (sing. *watad*): pegs or pillars; four leading *afrad* who are assigned to the "four climes" or regions of the Earth to spiritually uphold.

**ayin:** self.

**ayn:** essential essence or identity.

**ayniyya:** identity; in some Sufi systems the first effusion of Allah to Himself as Himself.

**ba'ya:** clasp of hands; a pledge of allegiance to a spiritual order and its guides. This form of initiation can be of four forms or degrees: *ba'ya taslimiyat* (to pursue fundamental "education"); *ba'ya tabarruk* (to receive *baraka*, or grace); *b'aya tarbiyya* (to pursue actual "training" or "upbringing"); *b'aya haqiqat* (to pursue the actualization of Reality).

**baba** (Pers.): father; intimate term used for a murshid or shaykh.

**baqa:** remaining or abiding; the state of continued "existence through God," after *fana*.

**baraka:** the spiritual energy or "grace" believed to emanate from Allah, usually through the chain of transmission (*silsila*) of an order or school.

## GLOSSARY

**barzakh:** the gulf between manifest and unmanifest Existence.

**bast:** spiritual expansion or elation.

**daur:** rotation, circularity, as in the reciprocal relations between human beings and God; also when an entire circle of dervishes performing *dhikr* moves as a whole in clockwise fashion.

**dede** (Turk.): grandfather; designating an elder dervish, or (sometimes) the precursor of a *baba*.

**dergah** (Pers.): inner court, the tomb of a saint and also the center that serves as the headquarters of a particular branch of an order or school.

**dervish** (Turk., from Pers. *darwish*): one who waits at the threshold; a practicing member of an order; synonymous with the Arabic term *faqir* (“poor one”). May also be used to signify a traveler on the Sufi Path who has attained spiritual maturity.

**dhat al-mutlaq:** absolute essence; the aspect of the Godhead that is nonmanifest (*la tayyun*), or the Void (*al-Khala*), in the sense of an “empty fullness”; that which is “beyond being,” the aseity.

**dhawq:** taste; a temporary mystical rapture.

**dhikr:** remembrance of God; may represent a state or (often) an invocational practice. In the latter sense, there are three forms: outward and audible (*dhikr al-dhahirii*); silent, or hidden (*dhikr al-khafi*); and ongoing and (usually) wordless (*dhikr al-daim*).

**diwan al-awliya:** council of saints; according to Ibn al-Arabi (and others), the hidden hierarchy that oversees Sufism (see also *awtad*, *Qutb al-Zaman*).

**fana:** annihilation; cessation of ego-awareness, which may be accomplished in various degrees or at various depths.

## GLOSSARY

*farq*: separation, especially from God.

*farq ba'd l-jam*: the experience of individual differentiation after Union; also referred to as the second separation (*farq i-thani*) to distinguish it from the first separation, which is ignorance of God's Oneness (see also *akhfa*).

*farq al-thani*: the second separation, distinguished from the first separation, which is ignorance of God's Oneness; also referred to as individual differentiation after Union (*farq ba'd l-jam*). (See also *akhfa*.)

*fiyd*: effusion or "emanation."

*fikr*: reflection; used by some Sufis as a synonym of formless meditation (see also *muraqaba*, *mushahada*).

*fitra*: innate disposition of a person or thing.

*hadhrat al-jam*: gathering of presences; also sobriety, or a return to the world of appearances (see also *farq ba'd l jam*).

*hal* (pl. *ahwal*): state; a transitory mystical condition (akin to *dhawq*) gained through divine grace rather than effort.

*al-Haqq*: the Truth, Real, Actual; for certain Sufis a synonym of God.

*haqiya*: essential reality.

*hayra*: bewilderment; the state of "divine unknowing" sometimes viewed as superior to gnosis.

*hudhur*: individual presence, as opposed to *hadra*.

*huwiyya*: the domain of "He-ness"; also, a signifier of *dhat al-mutlaq* or *hahut*.

*ihsan*: virtue; the perfection of beautiful character traits.

*ijaza*: authorization; in written form, an *ijaza nama*, meaning a license to teach.

## GLOSSARY

*ikhlas*: sincerity.

*ilhan*: inspiration.

*ilm*: theoretical knowledge, as differentiated from *amal* (praxis).

*iman*: faith; achieving the degree of “trusting and trustworthy.”

*insan al-kamil*: in the school of Ibn al-Arabi and followers, the archetypal prototype of the perfected human being; otherwise, a spiritually mature individual.

*irada*: spiritual decisiveness; personal will or wish (contrasted with *mashi'a*, God's wish).

*irfan*: apprehension or knowledge, connoting direct perception.

*irshad*: to give light to or enlighten; direction or quality of guidance.

*ishq*: passionate or ardent desire (especially of God).

*ishraq*: illumination; a term most often used by Suhrawardi and his followers for mystical realization.

*islam*: self-surrender to God. Capitalized, the specific religion of Islam.

*itlaq*: liberation from dualistic perception.

*ittihad*: making into one; God-Union, as in complete absorption in (and identification with) God.

*jadhba*: force of attraction exerted upon a person by God, when it is ordained that such a person should return to God.

*jam*: gathering; synonymous with apparent union (*ittihad*).

*jam al-jam*: gathering of gathering, connoting a synthesis of *hadhrat-al-jam* and *jam*. The highest state of human being in which one fluctuates continuously between union and separation.

*kashf*: unveiling, or intuitive insight.

## GLOSSARY

***kathra***: multiplicity.

***khafi***: hidden; the subtle center or faculty of *ruh*, which reflects Divine Union; sometimes referred to as *sirr-i-sirr* (secret of secrets).

***khalifa***: regent or representative; a person deputized to take the place of a *shaykh*; also a successor of a *murshid*.

***khalwa***: seclusion; usually referring to a spiritual retreat, usually of forty days or longer; synonymous with the Persian *chille* (trial, or ordeal).

***khaniqah*** (Pers.): lodge, or Sufi convent (see also *tekke*).

***khwajagan*** (Pers., sing. *khwaja*): Master, the title given to the earliest precursors of the Naqshbandi Order. In later usage, equivalent to the Turkish *hodja*.

***latifa*** (pl. *lataif*): subtle body or subtle center.

***lawami***: effulgence, light phenomena sometimes accompanying mystical opening.

***madhab***: school of thought, or methodology. Most often a school of jurisprudence.

***madhub***: attracted; one who is magnetically drawn toward God. Sometimes also used as a synonym for *mualla* or occasionally for *abdal*.

***madrasa***: study center or religious school; most commonly used today for the Islamic version of a seminary.

***mahabba***: affection or love.

***malami***: blameworthy; a class of Sufis who appear to contradict the laws of Islam without actually doing so. According to Ibn al-Arabi the “people of blame” (*malamiyya*) represent the innermost teachings of Sufism and Islam. The term *malamatiyya* is also commonly used for this group.

## GLOSSARY

**maqam** (pl. *maqamat*): station; a more permanent condition of mystical realization requiring effort.

**ma'rifa**: mystical knowledge of all types held to be valid (from *arifa*, “to raise up”).

**martaba** (sing. *maratib*): modes, phases, or stages, of self-disclosure (*tajalli*).

**masklaq Muhammadi** (Turk. *Mesleki Mohammed*): profession of Muhammad; a term used by the followers of Pir Nur al-Arabi to describe their own vocation.

**mualla**: one who is “mad in Allah”; sometimes used synonymously with *madhub*.

**muhasibi**: rendering account; usually referring to self-reflection and the systematic examination of one's shortcomings.

**murad**: one who is wanted or wished for by another or by Reality itself (from *irada*, “wish”).

**muraqaba**: self-examination; sometimes synonymous with vigilant awareness or formless meditation. (See also *fikr* and *mushahada*.)

**murid** (pl. *muridun*): one who wishes to be a Sufi (from *irada*, “wish”); an aspirant who has accepted (and been accepted by) a spiritual director.

**murshid**: guide, from the Arabic *irshad*, “to offer spiritual direction” (see also *shaykh* and *pir*); one who possesses guidance or has the capacity to guide an aspirant.

**mushahada**: witnessing; the state of directly perceiving Reality (*Haqq*).

**nafs**: self or soul, in the sense of the individuated quality of personhood; the individual “I” that must be purified or refined in order

## GLOSSARY

to experience transcendence; sometimes used as shorthand for the “divisive ego.”

**namaz** (Pers.): equivalent of *salat*.

**nur al-nubawwa**: the light of prophecy; also referred to as *nur Muhammadi* (the light of Muhammad); a luminosity (*nuriyya*) that is an effusion of the *Ayniyya*.

**pir** (Pers.): elder; synonymous with the Arabic *shaykh*; in Turkey, designating the founder of an order.

**qalandar**: a wandering dervish, usually of antinomian tendencies or style. According to Karamustafa (1994), this term is probably derived from the Persian *kalandar*, meaning “coarse stick, uncouth, uncultivated man.”

**qalb**: heart; the essential inwardness of a person.

**qurba**: proximity; usually denoting closeness, but not union, with God.

**qutb**: pole or axis, more specifically, *Qutb al-Zaman* (Axis of the Time), a title given to the hidden guide of all Sufis, also known as *ghawth* (succorer or nurturer).

**rind** (*pl. rinden*; Pers.): “rogue,” a Sufi who manifests drunken behavior and uses shock as a tactic.

**ruh** (*pl. awrah*): spirit; the faculty of spiritual intuition. In some Sufi writers, the equivalent of the original *aql* (intellect).

**sadaqa**: veracity, or honesty and loyalty.

**sahw**: sobriety; the condition of the mature practitioner who has returned to normative consciousness after an experience marked by *sukr*.

**salik**: traveler, a seeker of spiritual realization.

## GLOSSARY

**sama** (Turk. *sema*): audition; listening to recitals of sacred music. Among Mawlawis (alt. Mevlevis), equivalent to the ceremony of turning or whirling.

**Shari'a**: ethical principles or laws deduced from the Qu'ran and Sunna; from *shar*, "the road leading to water."

**shath**: utterance; usually of an ecstatic (and sometimes antinomian) type.

**shawq**: yearning.

**shaykh**: lit. "elder," appointed director; a title given to the leader of an order.

**sifat**: qualities, especially those of God; sometimes equated with God's Names.

**silsila**: chain; the lineage of a *tariqa* descending from the Prophet Muhammad (sa), through his Companion Ali or (in some cases) Abu-Bakr. The chain of transmission includes all preceptors of an order up to present times.

**subha** (Pers. *suhbat*; Turk. *sohbet*): Companionship involving intimate dialogue; also instruction through discussion.

**sufi**: wearer of wool, possibly derived from *ashab-ul-suf*, the "people of the bench," those who performed additional practices with the Prophet Muhammad after meeting him for prayers at the original mosque in Medina. This term may also have derived from *fayl-as-Suf*, the Arabic transliteration for the Greek *philosophia*. If so, the name *Sufi* would mean "person of wisdom" (Gk. *sophos*).

**sukr**: intoxication; frequently accompanying self-effacement or mystical ecstasy.

**tafakkur**: contemplation; usually of God's Names or Attributes (see also *fikr*).

## GLOSSARY

**tahqiq:** realization, in Sufism, usually of a spiritual nature.

**tajalli:** self-disclosure or emanation; especially of God (in or through Existence).

**takhalluq:** taking-on; being adorned with the qualities of God.

**tariqa:** way to; often an order of Sufism founded by a recognized member of a *silsila*.

**tasarruf:** holding sway, domination by, or disposability to, something (for example, a Divine Quality); technically, spiritual authority.

**tassawuf:** self-purification; the exact (but more accurate) equivalent of the orientalist term *Sufism*.

**tawhid:** affirming Unity; also used by Sufis to connote a direct perception of the central tenet of Islam: namely, Allah's absolute singularity. Also (usually temporary) unification with Allah.

**tekke** (Turk.): lit. "corner," or lodge, synonymous with *khaniqah* (Pers.) and *zawiyya* (Ar.).

**ubuda:** servitude; the intrinsic condition of human beings in relation to God.

**ubudiyya:** servanthood; the activation of *ubuda*; used for "intimate dialogue" (Turk. *sohbet*) with a Murshid.

**uwaysi:** one who follows in the footsteps of Uwais Qarani, a contemporary of Muhammad (sa) who, though never meeting him in person, was spiritually instructed by him. An *uwaysi*, therefore, is one who receives instruction from a spiritual guide who is at a distance or deceased.

**wahdat al-wujud:** unicity of being, a term coined by al-Qunawi, the successor of Ibn al-Arabi; the absolute nonduality of Existence.

## GLOSSARY

**wahdat al-shuhud:** unicity of vision; witnessing the absolute unity of the Creator in proximity (*qurba*) to the unity of the individual existent, which remains separate. A term coined by Simnani and adopted by the Naqshbandi reformer Ahmad Sirhindi.

**wahiddiya:** uniqueness in associability, which persists through multiplicity.

**wahy:** revelation. Unlike *kashf*, which is perceived by mystics, revelation, which may contain divine decrees, is usually reserved for prophets.

**wajd:** ecstatic being, or ecstasy; from the same root as *wajada* (discovery) and *wujud* (existence).

**wali** (pl. *awliya*): protecting friend, sometimes translated as “saint”; someone who has attained a high degree of realization.

**wara:** scrupulousness; abstaining from wrongful actions.

**warid:** sudden inspiration.

**warith:** inheritor, especially of the Prophet (sa); a term used by Ibn al-Arabi to identify one of the functions of the *afrad*.

## Bibliography

- Abdel-Kader, Ali Hassan. *The Life, Personality, and Writings of Al-Junayd*. London: Luzac & Co, 1976.
- Abu-Manneh, Butrus. "The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century." *Die Welt des Islams* 12. Ansari, Muhammad, 1979.
- Addas, Claude. "The paradox of the duty of perfection in the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 15 (1994).
- . *Quest for the Red Sulfur: The Life of Ibn Arabi*. Translated by Peter Kingsley. Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society, 1993.
- Algar, Hamid. "Devotional practices of the Khalidi-Naqshbandis of Ottoman Turkey." In *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, edited by Raymond Lifchez. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- . "Elements de provenance malamati dans la tradition primitive Naqshbandi." In *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*, edited by Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarccone. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998.
- . "The Hurufi Influence on Bektashism." In *Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- . "Malamatiyya: In Iran and the Eastern Lands." Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. CD-ROM vol. 10. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 1999.
- . "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi in Early Naqshbandi Tradition." *Journal of the Ibn 'Arabi Society* 10 (1991).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali. *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994.
- Andrae, Tor. *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987
- Ansari, Muhammad Abdul Haq. *Sufism and Shariah: A study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism*. Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1986.
- Arberry, A. J. *Discourses of Rumi*. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1961/1972.
- . *Pages from the 'Kitab al-Luma.'* London: Luzac & Co., 1947.
- Azmeh, Aziz al-. *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Politics*. London: I. B. Taurus & Co, 2001.
- Baldick, Julian. *Imaginary Muslims: The Uwaysi Sufis of Central Asia*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Balivet, Michel. *Islam Mystique et Révolution Armée dans les Balkans Ottomans: Vie du Cheikh Bedreddin le "Hallâj des Turcs" (1358/59–1416)*. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- Barnes, John R. "The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire." In *The Dervish Lodge; Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, edited by Raymond Lifchez. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Bashir, Shahzad. *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakshiya between Medieval and Modern Islam*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004.
- Baylani, Awhad al-din. In *Whoso Knoweth Himself*. Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi. Hunterian Collection Translation. London: Beshara Publications, 1976. (A book most probably written by Baylani but attributed to Ibn Arabi.)
- Bayrak, Tosun. *Inspirations on the Path of Blame*. Shaikh Badruddin of Simawna. Interpretation and Commentary by Shaikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti. Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1993.
- Bennett, John G. *Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma*. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- . *The Masters of Wisdom*. London: Touchstone Books, 1977.
- . *Witness: The Autobiography of John G. Bennett*. Tuscon, AZ: Omen Press, 1974.
- Bilginer, Mahmut Sadettin. *Allah ve İnsan* (Allah and Human Being). 3rd edition. Istanbul: Esma Yayinlari, 3. Baski, 1991.
- Bilginer, Mahmut Sadettin and H. Mustafa Varli, eds. *Simavna Kadisi Oglu Seyh Bedrettin: Varidat Serhi - Serheden: Seyyid Muhammed Nur* (Seyh Bedrettin, son of the Simavna Judge: An Interpretation of his work entitled "Varidat" by Seyyid Muhammed Nur). Istanbul: Cevik Matbaacilik, 1994.
- Birge, John K. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac Oriental, 1937/1993.
- Brown, John P. *The Darvishes, or Oriental Spiritualism*. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1868/1968.
- Brujn, J. T. P. de. "The Qalandariyyat in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sana'i Onwards." In *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992.
- Buehler, Arthur F. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998.
- Burckhardt, Titus. *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*. Translated by D. M. Matheson. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: Thorsons Publishers, Ltd., 1976.
- Bursevi, Ismail Hakki. *Kernel of the Kernel*. Translator unknown. Sherborne, England: Beshara, n.d.
- Chittick, William C. "The circle of spiritual ascent according to Al-Qunawi." In *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, edited by Parviz Morewedge. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992.
- . "Ibn Arabi and his school." In *Islamic Spirituality; Manifestations*, vol. 2, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. New York: Crossroads, 1993.
- . *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- . *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989.
- . *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983.
- . "The Way of the Sufi." In *Sufi: The Magazine of Khaniqah Nimatullahi*, Summer 1992. (A very accurate, though highly conservative, assessment of Sufism by a major scholar of Ibn al-Arabi.)
- Chittick, William C., ed. *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007.
- Chodkiewicz, Michel. *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993.
- . *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993.
- . *The Spiritual Writings of Amir 'Abd al-Kader*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.
- . "The vision of God according to Ibn 'Arabi." In *Prayer & Contemplation*, edited by Stephen Hertenstein. San Francisco: Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, 1993.
- Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule: Government and Islam, Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Daftary, Farhad. *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- De Jong, F. "Malamatiyya: In the Central Islamic Lands." Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. CD-ROM v. 10. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 1999.
- De Jong, Fredirick, and Bernd Radtke. *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversy and Polemics*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Emre, Yunus. *The Drop That Became the Sea*. Translated by Kabir Helminksi and Refik Algan. Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1989.
- Ernst, Carl W. "The man without attributes: Ibn Arabi's interpretation of Abu Yazid al-Bistami." In the *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 13 (1993).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- . “The stages of love in early Persian Sufism from Rabe’a to Ru-zbehan. In *Sufi: The Magazine of Khaniqah Nimatullahi*, Summer 1992.
- . *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985.
- Ersanli, Busra. “The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era.” In *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, edited by Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi. Boston: Brill, 2002.
- Ewing, Katherine Pratt. *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Fakhry, Mahid. *Al-Farabi, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism*. Oxford, England: Great Islamic Thinkers, Oneworld. 2002.
- . *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Faroqhi, Suriya. “Conflict, Accommodation and Long Term Survival of the Bektashi Order and the Ottoman State.” In *Becktachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Betkachis et les groupes relevant de Haji Bek-tach*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Giles Veinstein. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- Fine, John V. A. *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- Finkel, Caroline. *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.
- Fowden, Garth. *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*. New York: Avon Books, 1989.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. London: Continuum, 1989.
- Gamard, Ibrahim. *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems, and Discourses*. Woodstock, NY: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2004.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gamard, Ibrahim, and A. G. Rawan Farhadi, trans. *The Quatrains of Rumi*. San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008.
- Gerolymatos, Andre. *The Balkan Wars: Conquest, Revolution, and Retribution from the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Ghazali, Abu Hamid al-. *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali*. Translated by W. Montgomery Watt. London: Oneworld Publications, 1953/1994.
- Ghazali, Ahmad al-. *Sawanih: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits*. Translated by Nasrollah Pourjavady. New York: KPI Limited, 1986.
- Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804–1999*. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Golpinarli, Abulbaki. *Melamilik ve Melamiler*. Istanbul: Devlet Matbaasi, 1931/1992.
- Gondicas, Dimitri, and Charles Issawi, eds. *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1999.
- Goodwin, Jason. *Lords of the Horizon: A History of the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Henry Holt, 1998.
- Graham, Terry. "Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l Khayr and the School of Khurasan." In *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993.
- Grousset, R. *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*. Translated by Naomi Walford. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Gurdjieff, George I. *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963.
- Haar, J. T. "The importance of the spiritual guide in the Naqshbandi order." In *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992.
- Hakim, Sanai. *The Walled Garden of Truth*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The Venture of Islam*, vols. 1, 2, 3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Holbrook, Victoria R. "Diverse Tastes in the Spiritual Life; Textual Play in the Diffusion of Rumi's Order." In *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nima-tullahi Publications, 1992.
- . "Ibn Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order," part 1. *Journal of the Myhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 9 (1991).
- . "Ibn Arabi and Ottoman Dervish Traditions: The Melami Supra-Order," part 2. In the *Journal of the Myhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 12 (1992).
- Hornerkamp, Kenneth L., trans. "Introduction to Stations of the Righteous and the Stumblings of Those Aspiring: Two Texts from the Path of Blame by Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami al-Naysaburi." In *Three Early Sufi Texts*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003.
- Hujwiri, Ali B. Uthman al-Jullabi. *The Kashf Al-Mahjub*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: Luzac, 1976.
- Imber, C. H. "Malamitiyya: In Ottoman Turkey (3)." Extract from the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. CD-ROM vol. 10. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill. 1999.
- Inan, Yusuf Ziya. *Melamiligin Tarihi Gelisimi* (The Historical Development of the Malami Tradition). Istanbul: Bayramasik Yayınevi, 1976.
- . *Muhammed Nur'ul Arabi: Hayati, Sahsiyeti, Eserleri* (Muhammad Nur al-Arabi: Life, Personality and Works). Istanbul: Osmanbey Matbaasi, 1971.
- Iraqi, Fakruddin. *Divine Flashes*. Translated by William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.
- James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: New American Library/Mentor, 1958.
- Jilani, Abdl Qadir al-. *The Secret of Secrets*. Translated and interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti. Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Jili, Abd al-Karim al-. *Universal Man*. Translated by Titus Burckhardt. Sherborne, England: Beshara Publications, 1983.
- Johnson, Paul K. *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.
- Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. "Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia." In *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993.
- . *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah, 1994.
- . *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.
- Keesing, Elisabeth. *Hazrat Inayat Khan: A Biography*. The Hague, London, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharial Purblishers, 1981.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *The Great Arab Conquests*. Cambridge, MA: De Capro Press/Perseus Books Group, 2007.
- Khan, Hazrat Inayat. *Sufi Teachings: The Sufi Message*, vol. 8. Delhi, India: Motilala Banarsiddas Pub., 1990.
- Khan, Pir Vilayat Inayat. *The Message in Our Time: The Life and Teaching of a Sufi Master*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Kinross, (Lord) J. P. *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*. New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1977.
- Knysh, Alexander D. *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999.
- Kumanlioglu, Hasan Fehmi. *Hiz. Pir Seyyid Muhammed Nur'ul Arabi: Hayati, Sahsiyeti ve Tasavvufi Gorusleri* (Hadhrat Pir Seyyid Muhammed Nur'ul Arabi: Pir Sayyid Muhammad Nur-al Arbi: His Life, Personality, and Perspectives on Sufism). Izmir, Turkey: Anadolu Matbaacilik, 1995.
- Lahiji, Muhammad. *Mafatih al-'ijaz fi sharhe Gulshane Raz, Muhammad Lahiji*. 4th ed. Tehran: Chapkhaneye Aftab, 1989. Translated

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- by Robert A. H. Darr for private use and for use in the current publication by permission of the translator.
- Le Gall, Dina. "Forgotten Naqshbandis and the Culture of Pre-Modern Sufi Brotherhoods." *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 87–119.
- Lefort, Rafael. *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*. London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1968.
- Lewis, Bernard. *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.
- Lieven, Dominic. *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Lings, Martin. *What Is Sufism?* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
- Lewis, Franklin D. *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2000.
- Lewisohn, Leonard. *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari*. Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1995.
- . "Overview: Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism." In *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992.
- Lewisohn, Leonard & Christopher Shackle, eds. *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2006.
- Madelung, Wilfred. *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Mango, Andrew. *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2002.
- Mansel, Philip. *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Mardin, Serif. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962.
- Marsot, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid. *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Mason, Herbert. "Hallaj and the Baghdad School of Sufism." In *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993.
- Massignon, Louis. *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*. Translated and introduced by Benjamin Clark. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1997.
- . *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, vols. 1–4. Translated by Herbert Mason. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (Bollingen), 1982.
- Mazower, Mark. *The Balkans: A Short History*. New York: The Modern Library, 2000.
- McCarthy, Justin. *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995.
- . *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire*. New York: Arnold, 2001.
- . *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923*. London: Longman, 1997.
- Meier, Fritz. *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*. Translated by John O’Kane. *Islamic History and Civilization*, vol. 30. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 1999.
- Meyer, Karl E., and Sharcen B. Brysace. *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999.
- Momen, Moojan. *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Moore, James. *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth*. Rockport, MA: Element Books Ltd., 1991.
- Morewedge, Parviz. "The Neoplatonic Structure of Some Islamic Mystical Doctrines." In *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, edited by Parviz Morewedge. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992.
- Moosa, Matti. *Extremist Shiites: The Gulat Sects*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Najm al-Din Razi. *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return: A Sufi Compendium by Najm al-Din Razi Known as Daya*. Translated by Hamid Algar. Persian Heritage Series 35. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1982.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Ideals and Realities of Islam*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.
- . "Persian Sufi Literature: its spiritual and cultural significance." In *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992.
- . "The Rise and Development of Persian Sufism." In *Sufi: The Magazine of Khaniqahi Nimatullahi*, Winter 1992-93.
- . *Sufi Essays*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1972.
- . "Sufism and spirituality in Persia." In Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., *Islamic Spirituality; Manifestations* (vol. 2). New York: Crossroads, 1991.
- Nicholson, Reynold A., *The Mystics of Islam*. London: Routledge, Keegan, Paul, 1914.
- . *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1921/1980.
- Nicholson, Reynold A., trans. *The Kashf Al-Mahjub of Al Hujwiri: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*. London: Luzac, 1976.
- . *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*. 6 vols. London: Luzac, 1926/1992.
- Nizami, K. A. "The Naqshbandi Order." In *Islamic Spirituality; Manifestations*, vol. 2, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. New York: Crossroads, 1991.
- Norris, H. T. *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.
- Nurbaksh, Javad. *In the Tavern of Ruin*. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1978.
- . *Traditions of the Prophet: Ahadith*. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1981.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- . *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1983.
- Ortayli, İlber. “The Policy of the Sublime-Porte towards Naqshbandis and Other Tariqas during the Tanzimat Period.” In *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*, edited by Elisabeth Ozdalga. Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1999.
- Ozak, Ahmet Yashar. “Les Malami-Bayrami (Hamzavi) et l’administration ottomane aux XVI-XVII siècle.” In *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*, edited by Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998.
- . “Remarques sur le rôle des derviches kalenderis dans la romation de l’ordre bektachi.” In *Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l’ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- Parsa, Muhammad. *The Qudsiyya*. Tehran: Kitabkhaneh Tahuri, 1975. Translated by Robert Abdul Hayy Darr for private use, and for use for this publication with permission of the translator.
- Plomer, William. *The Diamond of Jannina: Ali Pasha 1741–1822*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1970.
- Popovic, Alexandre. “La troisième phase des Melamis dans les Balkans.” In *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*, edited by Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998.
- Popovic, Alexandre, and Giles Veinstein, eds. *Becktachiyya: Etudes sur l’ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Haji Bektach*. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Renard, John, ed. *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 2004.
- Ridgeon, Lloyd. *Aziz Nasafi*. Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 1998.
- Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbas. *A History of Sufism in India*. 2 vols. New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharial Publishers, 1978.
- . *Shah Wali All and His Times*. Canberra, Australia: Ma'rifat Publishing House, 1980.
- Rumi, Jalalu'ddin. *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*. 6 vols. Translated by R. A. Nicholson. London: Luzac, 1926/1992.
- . *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi*. Introduced and translated by W. M. Thackston, Jr. Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1994.
- Sachedina, Abdulaziz Abdulhusein. *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Viking, 1979.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
- . "Sufism and spiritual life in Turkey." In *Islamic Spirituality; Manifestations*, vol. 2, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. New York: Crossroads, 1991.
- Schuon, Frithjof. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984.
- Seale, Morris S. "The Ethics of Malamitya Sufism and the Sermon on the Mount." *Muslim World* 58, no. 1 (1968).
- Sells, Michael A. *Early Islamic Mysticism*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Shabistari, Mahmud. *The Garden of Mystery*. Translated by Robert Darr. London: Archetype, 2007.
- Shafi, Omid. *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Shah, Idries. *The Sufis*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964.
- . *The Way of the Sufi*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1968.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Shah, Omar Ali. *The Course of the Seeker*. Los Angeles: Tale Weaver Publishing, 1988.
- . *The Sufi Tradition in the West*. New York: Alif Publishing, 1994.
- Shah, Sirdar Ikbal Ali. *Islamic Sufism*. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1971.
- Sirriyeh, Elizabeth. *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking, and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*. London: Curzon Press, 1998.
- Smith, Margaret. *Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*. Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing Company, 2003.
- Stavrianos, Lefton S. *The Ottoman Empire: Was It the Sick Man of Europe?* New York: Rhinehart, 1957.
- Stewart, Devin J. *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1998.
- Sushud, Hasan Lütfi. *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. Moorcote, Ellingstring, near Ripon North Yorkshire, England: Coombe Springs Press, 1957/1983.
- Sviri, Sara. "Hakim Tirmidhi and the Malamati Movement in Early Sufism." In *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1994.
- Thackston, Jr., W. M., trans. *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi*. Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1994.
- Tor, Andrae. *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987.
- Tietze, Andreas. "A document on the persecution of sectarians in early seventeenth century Istanbul." In *Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1995.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn. *Traveling the Path of Love: Sayings of Sufi Masters*. Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1994.
- Vaziri, Mostafa. *The Emergence of Islam: Prophecy, Imamate, and Messianism in Perspective*. New York: Paragon House, 1992.
- Von Schlegell, Barbara R., trans. *Principles of Sufism by al-Qushayri*. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990.
- Vryonis, Speros. *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971.
- Walbridge, John. *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardi and the Heritage of the Greeks*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000.
- . *The Science of Mystic Lights: Qutb Din Shirazi and the Illuminist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- . *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001.
- Wells, Colin. *Sailing from Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2006.
- Westra, Laura. "Self-knowing in Plato, Plotinus, and Avicenna." In *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, edited by Parviz Morewedge. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992. (An excellent overview of how Neoplatonic thought contributed to the earliest formulation of "self-knowing" in mystical Islam.)
- Wilson, Colin. *The Strange Life of P. D. Ouspensky*. London: The Aquarian Press, HarperCollins, 1993.
- Wilson, P. L., and N. Pourjavady. *The Drunken Universe*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1984.
- Xavier, Jacob. "Les renseignements de Martin Hartman sur les Melamis (1909)." In *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*, edited by Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998.
- Yavuz, Hakan. "The Matrix of Modern Turkish Islamic Movements: The Naqshbandi Sufi Order." *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*,

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- edited by Elisabeth Ozdalga. Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1999.
- Zarcone, Thierry. "Mehmet Ali Ayni et les cercles melami d'Istanbul au debut du XX siècle." In *Melamis-Bayramis: Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*, edited by Athalie Clayer, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone. Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998.
- Zelkina, Anna. *In Quest for God and Freedom: Sufi Responses to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

# Index

- A
- Abdulaziz, 132–33
- Abdulhalik Kazani, 128
- Abdul Hamid II, 134–35, 139–42
- Abdul Hamid Khan, 55–56
- Abdulkaadir Efendi, Sayyid, 134
- Abdul Majid, 127, 132
- Abdurrahim Fedai Effendi, 136
- Abdur-Rashid, Shaykh Ahmed, 202
- Abraham, 149, 156, 160
- Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri, 33
- Abu Bakr as-Sadiq, 25, 126
- Abu Dharr, 27
- Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, 22, 86
- Abu Sa'id Abi'l-Khayr, 83–84, 86, 198
- Abu Sufyan, 25
- Abu Uthman al-Hiri, 75
- actions
- effacement of, 146–47, 173–74
  - theophany of, 209
  - unification of, 210–11
- actualization (*haqq*), 165–67, 185–89
- Adam, 152, 157
- Adnan Bozkurt Dalay, 150
- Afghanistan, 55, 61, 65
- ahadiyya al-ayn* (oneness of essence), 191, 210, 216
- ahadiyyat al-jam* (gathering of oneness), 130–31, 210
- Ahl-al-Bayt*, 129
- Ahmad al-Ghazali, 5–6, 84, 86
- Ahmad Ibn Idris, 123–24
- Ahmed the Cameleer, 111
- Ahrar, Khwaja, 67
- Ai'sha (wife of Muhammad), 26
- Akbar, 13–14
- Akbariyya (Sufi order)
- Ibn al-Arabi and, 39
  - influence of, 104
  - Nur al-Arabi and, 125, 137
  - persecution of, 187–88
  - prophecy and, 190
  - wujudi* doctrine of, 93–94, 109
- Alauddin, 98
- Alevi-Bektyashis, 113
- Alexander the Great, 29
- Algar, Hamid, 31, 74, 81–82, 136–37
- Ali ibn Abi Talib (cousin of Muhammad), 24–28, 110, 129
- Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, 28
- Ali Pasha Tepelen, 120–21
- Alp Arslan, 86, 87
- Andrae, Tor, 22
- annihilation (*fana*)
- as effacement of actions, 146–47, 171, 173–74
  - love and, 7
  - Nur al-Arabi and, 126, 130–31
- Ansari, 33
- Ansariyya (Islamic order), 24–25
- apostasy, 40

## INDEX

- Applebaum, Marc  
 Öziç interview by, 150–63  
 ‘Aq Shams al-Din, Hamza, 105–6, 106–7
- Arabi, Pir Nur al-  
 as Akbari, 125  
 direct instruction of, 125–26, 128–29  
 Enlightenment ideas and, 121–22  
 followers of, 136, 147, 171, 188  
 initiations by, 131, 133  
 initiations of, 126–31, 150–51  
 life and death of, 118–20, 136  
 lineage and orders of, 136–38  
 as *Qutb*, 134, 189  
 as reformer and reviver, 123–24, 129–31, 149  
 representatives of, 139–40, 142  
 as *sayyid*, 129
- Arberry, Arthur J., 22, 39
- Ardabali, Safiyyadin al- (“Erdebili”), 104, 108
- artisans, 76
- Aryan Dev (Sikh guru), 13
- Askeri Sanayi Mektebi (school), 145
- as-Saqati, sevenfold map of, 81
- Ataturk (Mustafa Kemal), 144–45, 147
- Attar, 86, 178, 198–99
- attributes  
 effacement of, 174–76  
 of God, 186  
 theophany of, 209  
 unification of, 211–12
- authoritarianism, 162–63
- awakening, 48
- awareness (*muraqaba*), 171
- Axis Mundi (world pillar), 190–91
- Axis of the Age (*al-Qutb al-Zaman*; Axis Mundi), 57, 130–31, 134, 169, 204, 216
- ayans* (notables), 111–12, 120
- ayn al-jam* (unification of essence), 73, 88
- B
- Baba Farid, 13
- Baba’i, 92–93
- Badruddin, Shaykh of Simawna  
 on *dhikr*, 169–71  
 followers of, 108–9  
 life and training of, 98–104  
 Muhammadan Way and, 125  
 Nur al-Arabi and, 127, 131–32  
 on *Qutb* as latent, 199
- Badrul Wali, 119
- Baghdadian Sufis, 77–78
- Baker, Ora Ray, 15
- Bakhsh, Moula, 14
- Balim Sultan, 109
- Balivet, Michel, 101
- Balkans, 97, 120, 122–23, 139
- Balkan Wars, 143
- Banu Hashim (clan), 24
- Banu Ummayya (clan), 25
- baqa* (state of abiding)  
 as goal of existence, 183  
 stages of, 177–81  
 three stations of, 172, 189–90
- baraka* (grace), 192
- bards (*ashiqs*), 85
- Barelwi, Sayyid Ahmad, 124
- Barks, Coleman, 3
- Barkuk, 99
- Bayazid I, 95, 97

## INDEX

- Bayazid II, 107–9  
 Bayazid Pasha, 102  
 Bayrak, Tosun, 103  
 Bayrami-Malamiyya (Sufi order),  
     106, 110, 112  
 Bayramiyya (Sufi order), 105–6,  
     150–51  
*Beelzebub's Teachings to His Grand-*  
*son* (Gurdjieff), 49  
 Bektashiyya (Sufi order)  
     abolishment of, 120–21  
     *kizilbash* and, 113  
     in Ottoman Empire, 95–96,  
         107–12  
     practices of, 97  
 Bennett, John G.  
     Gurdjieff and, 58–59  
     hidden origins of Sufism and, 11,  
         49  
     Idries Shah and, 54–56  
     Khwajagan and, 62–65  
     Ouspensky and, 52  
     as perennialist, 43  
     Şuşud and, 62–63, 147  
 Beshir Aga, 112, 134  
 Bilginer, Mahmut Sadettin, 137, 140,  
     145–49, 167–68  
 Bistami, Bayazid (Abu Yazid al-), 28,  
     67, 73, 77–78, 88  
 blame (*malam*), 5–6, 79  
 blameworthy, 38, 40–41, 72, 74, 79.  
     *See also* malamatis/malamiyya  
 Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna, xi, 47–48  
 Bly, Robert, 3  
 Bogga-Eddin, 44, 64  
 Borkluce Mustapha, 100–102  
 Bosnia, 112  
 Brook, Peter, 44  
 Brusali Tahir Bey, 140, 142  
 Buddhism, 23, 50  
 Bullet, Richard W., 202  
 Byzantine Empire, 25–26  
  
 C  
 Campbell, Joseph, 45  
 Catherine the Great, 122  
 Cemal Kafadar, 93  
 Central Powers, 143  
 Chaldiran, battle of, 109  
 Charles V (Spain), 118  
 child tax, 95  
 Chishtiyya (Sufi order), 13–14  
 Chittick, William C., 30–31,  
     152, 180  
 Chopra, Deepak, 3  
 Christianity, 23, 91, 95–96, 101  
 circularity (*daur*), 180, 184–85  
 clothing, 81, 108  
 collected traditions (*ahadith*), 22  
 Committee of Union and Progress  
     (CUP; Young Turks), 140–42  
 communication, 175–76  
 comprehension, 175  
 consciousness, 45–46, 49, 174  
 Constantine, 91  
 contemplative dialogue (*subhat*), 140,  
     149, 158, 162  
 continuous remembrance  
     (*al-dhikr al-daim*), 137–38,  
     167, 209  
 Coombe Springs, 59, 62  
 Corbin, Henri, 30  
 creation, 40  
 Crimean War, 132  
 CUP (Committee of Union and  
     Progress). *See* Young Turks

## INDEX

- D
- Danner, Victor, 28
- Dara Shukoh, 14
- Dard, Khwaja Mir, 129–30
- Darr, Robert “Abdul Hayy,” ix–xiii, 55, 57–58, 65, 67
- Darwish Muhammad, 128–30
- daur* (circularity), 180, 184–85
- Day of Judgment, 103
- de Brujn, J. T. P., 87–88
- “Declaration of the People of the Tradition,” 56
- Decree of Muharram, 136
- “defective feature,” 50
- dervishes (*qalandars*)
- blending into population, 105–6
  - dance of, 4–5
  - Kurdish, 144–45
  - malamatism and, 82
  - in Ottoman Empire, 114
- de Salzmann, Jeanne, 52, 58, 62
- desire (*ishq*; love), 5, 83, 86, 169
- dhawq* (taste), 6–7, 130–31, 168–69, 210
- dhikr* (practice of remembrance)
- forms and practice of, 97, 169–71
  - meanings of, 18, 168
  - names of God and, 187
  - silent, 66, 149, 151
  - Şuşud and, 146
- dialogue, contemplative (*subhat*), 140, 149, 158, 162
- din* (religion), 157, 160
- direct instruction, 125, 128
- direct realization (*ma'rifa*), 165–66, 168
- divination, 110
- Doukas, 101
- dreams, 125–26, 146
- dualism, 40
- E
- ecstatic utterances (*shathiyat*), 77–78
- Eddy, Mary Baker, 15
- Edebali, Shaykh, 93
- effacement
- of actions, 145–47, 173–74
  - of attributes, 174–76
  - of effacement, 155
  - of essence, 176–77
- egoism, 41, 197
- elephant (metaphor), 8
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, x
- enlightenment, 161–62
- Enlightenment ideas, 121–23
- Enver Bey, 141–42
- Ernst, Carl W., 31, 82
- esotericism, 31
- espionage, 135
- essence
- effacement of, 147, 176–77
  - of existence, 180
  - theophany of, 209–10
  - unification of, 212–13
- essentialists, 10
- essential reality (*haqiqa*), 157, 165–67, 210
- essential union (*ayn al-jam*), 73
- Etemadi, Homayon, 55, 58
- ethics, 185–89, 191
- etiquette (*adab*), 76, 154
- evolution of human consciousness, 49
- existence (*wujud*), 152, 171
- existentialism, 40

## INDEX

- F
- factionalism in Islam, 24
- faith, 46
- fana* (annihilation)
- as effacement of actions, 146–47, 173–74
  - love and, 7
  - reflection and, 171
  - stages of, 172–77
- Farghani, 39
- fasting, 73
- Fatih madrassa, 140, 145
- Fatima, 24
- Fazlallah Astarbadi, 110
- Fazlur Rahman, 32
- Fenari, Molla, 99, 104
- Fertile Crescent, 25–27
- formalism, 31
- forms of the intermediary world, 210–11
- Foucault, Michel, 11
- freedom (*mutlaq*), 197
- Freemasons, 48, 53
- free thinker (*zindiq*), 103, 109
- Freud, Sigmund, 50–51
- fundamentalism, 31
- fuqr* (spiritual poverty), xiii, 66–67, 72–73
- Fusus al-Hikam* (Ibn al-Arabi), 37
- Futuh al-Makkiyya* (Ibn al-Arabi), 190
- futuwwa* (chivalric orders), 104
- G
- Gardner, Gerald B., 54
- gathering (*jam*)
- as means to balance, 189
  - second separation and, 183
  - stages of, 177–79
  - as station of identification, 210, 213–14
- Gazi Israel, 98
- generosity (*futuwwa*), 76
- Ghazali, Abu Hamid al-, 174–76
- Ghazi Muhammad, 124
- ghazis* (raiders), 13
- Ghaznavids (early Turks), 85
- ghulat* (extremist Shiites), 96
- Glubb, John, 58
- gnosis (*ma'rifa*), 5, 10, 12, 77, 170
- gnosticism, 42
- God (Allah)
- attributes or names of, 168, 186
  - as beyond all contingencies, 67
  - as essential reality, 157
  - nondualism and, 151–52
  - as one and singular, 40
  - Trinitarian concept of, 96
  - union with, 154–55
- Godlas, Alan, 30–31
- Golden Dawn, 47
- Golpınarlı, 105, 137
- grace (*baraka*), 192
- Graham, Terry, 78
- Graves, Robert, 53
- Greatest Shaykh. *See* Ibn al-Arabi, Muhyiddin
- Great Powers, 121, 123
- Great Schism of 1054, 91
- Great White Lodge, 47
- Greco-Turkish ethnicity, 93
- Greece, 143–44
- Grousset, R., 87
- Guénon, René, 19–20, 41
- guilds (*akhiyya*), 76, 104

## INDEX

- Gurdjieff, George Ivanovitch  
 departure from classical Sufism, 66–68  
 hidden hierarchy and, xi, 44–52, 66, 71  
 occultist approach of, 11  
 path of blame and, 43  
 Sufism and, 62–63  
 system of, 50–52, 64  
 Theosophy and, 48
- H
- Habsburgs, 114–15  
*Hacegan Hanedani* (Şuşud), 63  
*hadhrat al-jam* (drying out), 185, 189  
*hadhrat al-jam* (presence of gathering), 152, 178–79, 189, 210, 214–15  
*Hadith al-Qudsi*, 215  
 Hadji Bayram Wali, 105–6, 130  
 Hafiz, x  
 Halveti-Jerrahi Order, 148  
 Hamadhani, Ayn al-Qadhat al-, 33  
 Hamdun al-Qassar, 75, 173–74  
 Hamza Bali, 112  
 Hamzawi-Malamatiyya (Sufi order), 112–13, 117, 134, 150–51  
 Hamzawiyya (supraorder), 112–13, 134, 137  
*Hanif* (primordial monotheist), 148, 156  
*haqiqqa* (essential reality), 157, 165–67, 210  
*Haqq, al-* (Real), 167, 210, 213, 215  
*haqq* (reality), 165  
 Haririzade Kemalettin Effendi, 133  
 Hartman, Martin, 140  
 Harvey, Andrew, 3
- Hasan al Basri, 28  
 Hasan (grandson of Muhammad), 24  
*Hatti-Humayun* (proclamation), 132  
*Hatti-Sharif* (Noble Edict), 127–28  
 Hazrat Inayat Khan, 9, 11–17, 20  
 Hellenistic thought, 23, 29, 92, 94  
 Helminski, Camille, 3  
 heresy, 33, 110–12, 127, 188  
 Hermeticism, 27, 29, 53  
*Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell), 45  
 heterodoxy, 95, 109  
 hidden hierarchy  
   Gurdjieffians and, 44–52  
   Idries Shah and, xi, 53–68  
   Khwajagan and, 71–72  
   *Qutb* and, 191  
 Hidden Idris, 112  
 hierarchy. *See also* hidden hierarchy  
   among Muslims, 41  
   among saints, 72  
   in Sufism, 42  
 Hifzi Pasha, 127, 131  
 Hinduism, 23  
 Hixon, Lex, 148  
 Hodgson, Marshall, 23  
 Holbrook, Victoria, 104, 113–14, 134  
 Huda'i, Shaykh Aziz Mahmud, 102–3  
 Hujwiri, 82–83  
 Hulusi, Haci Maksud, 137, 140, 145–47, 149  
 human beings  
   completed, 187–88  
   as contingent, 67  
   lordship of, 195  
   as manifestations of prototypes, 110–11  
   perfection and, 111, 153–54

## INDEX

- as servants of God, 152–53, 178,  
195, 197
- humanism, 111
- humility, 67
- Hurufism (heresy), 110–11
- Husayn (grandson of Muhammad),  
24, 26, 108
- Husayni Husni Pasha, 133
- Husseyin Ahlati, 99–100
- hypocrisy (*nifaq*), 74, 83
- I
- Ibn al-Arabi, Muhyiddin (“Greatest  
Shaykh”)  
Akbari tradition of, 39  
classical Sufism and, 22, 201  
followers of, 94, 118  
influence of, 99  
interpretation of Islamic law and,  
187–88  
love and, 5  
malamatism and, 125, 166, 200  
Muhammadan Way and, 124–25  
Naqshbandiyya and, 151–52  
quotations from, 33, 174, 176,  
180–81, 184, 193  
spiritual hierarchy and, 41, 66, 72  
*wujudi* approach of, 112–13
- Ibn Khaldun, 28–29
- Ibrahimi Tariqa (Way of Abraham),  
149
- identification, stations of, 213–15
- Idries Shah  
Bennett and, 58–59  
departure from classical Sufism,  
66–68  
elephant metaphor of, 8  
Gurdjieffians and, 65
- hidden origins of Sufism and, 9,  
11, 49, 53–68  
Kwajagan and, 59, 62  
questions about, 204–5  
quotations from, 59–60, 60–61
- ignorance, 161
- illumination (*ishraq*), 195
- Imamate, 113, 129
- Imam Rabbani. *See* Sirhindi, Shaykh  
Ahmad
- Imber, C. H., 106, 113
- incarnationism (*hulul*), 79
- individuation, 183
- Initiates of Theosophical Masters*  
(Johnson), 48
- initiatic chain (*silsila*), 38
- initiations, 126–31, 133, 150–151
- insan al-kamil* (perfected human be-  
ing), 111, 153–54
- Inspirations* (Huda’i), 103
- integration, 179–81, 192
- Interregnum, 98
- interreligious dialogue, 158, 202–3
- intoxication (*sukr*)  
after station of gathering, 184–85  
of qalandariyya, 84–85  
sobriety balancing, 77–82, 88,  
154, 180
- Iraqi, 39, 179, 193, 196
- irregular (*ghulat*), 109
- ishq* (love; ardent desire), 5, 83, 86,  
169
- Islam  
child taxation and, 95  
conversion to, 26, 97  
essential *versus* acculturated,  
156–57  
history of, 13, 24–25

## INDEX

- lines of mysticism in, 72  
 as nomocentric, 32, 42  
 progressive approach to, 159–61  
 as surrender, 66, 157  
 West and, 201–2
- Islamicate, 23  
 Islamic law. *See* *Shari'a*  
*Islamic Sufism* (Ikbāl Ali Shah), 56  
 Ismaili Islam, 36  
 Ismail Pasha, 131  
 Ismail (Shah of Iran), 108  
 Istanbul, 139  
*Itlaq Yolu* (Path of Liberation), 63,  
 146–47  
 Izutsu, Toshihito, 30
- J**  
 Jafar as-Sadiq, 27–28  
 Jalaluddin Rumi, 98  
*jam al-jam* (comprehensive gathering)  
 cycles of, 152, 179–81, 189–92  
 as station of identification, 210,  
 213–16  
 James, William, 10, 50  
*jam* (gathering)  
 moral character and, 187  
 as prelude to individuation, 183  
 sincere devotees and, 152  
 as station of identification, 210,  
 213–14  
 as synthesis, 177–78, 189  
 Jami, 39  
 Jandi, 39  
 Janissaries (*yeni cheri*), 94, 112, 120  
 Javad Nurbakhsh, 9  
 Jemal Pasha, 142  
 Jesus, 103
- Jilani, Abdl Qadir al-, 33, 169  
 Jili, 39  
 Johnson, K. Paul, 48, 50  
 Judaism, 23  
 Junayd, Shaykh Haydar Ibn, 108  
 Junayd al-Baghdadi  
 as founder of first school of Sufism, 28, 76–77  
 as professional *ulama*, 33  
 quotations from, 78–79, 80–81,  
169  
 Justinian, 91
- K**  
 Kabir, 3  
 Kader, Emir Abd al-, 176, 184, 197  
 Kamal, Torlak, 100  
*kapi kullari* (slaves), 94–95, 107  
 Karamustapha, Ahmet, 88, 95  
 Karbala, massacre at, 26  
 Kashani, 39  
 Kazani, Shaykh Abdulhalik, 127  
 Kemal Effendi, 136  
 Khalidi (Sufi subgroup), 61  
 Khalili, Ustad Kahlilullah, 55, 57, 67  
 Khalwati (Sufi order), 107–8, 113  
 Khan, Hazrat Inayat, x, 9, 11–17, 20,  
44  
 Khan, Pir Vilayat Inayat, 11, 17, 20  
*khullafah* (representatives), 139–40  
 Khurasan, 79, 82–85, 106  
 Khurasanian mysticism, 72, 75,  
 77–78, 86, 104, 198  
 Khwajagan  
 characteristics of, 74, 76, 81–82  
 as early Sufi group, 59, 62  
 hidden hierarchy and, 71  
 hypocrisy and, 65–66

## INDEX

- maqamat* and, 64  
 Nur al-Arabi and, 137  
 spiritual practices of, 66  
 Khwajagan-Malamati, 146  
 Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya, 65, 151  
*Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya* (Şuşud),  
147  
 Kinross, Lord, 127–28, 132, 135  
*kizilbash* (redheads), 108–9, 111, 113  
 knowledge, 5–7  
 Konya (Turkey), 4, 99–100  
 Kuchuk Kaynarji, Treaty of, 122  
 Kurds, 144–45
- L
- language  
 Greek, 29  
 in Ottoman Empire, 96–97, 121  
 Turkic, 62
- Laude, Patrick, 20–21  
 law, 32–33, 82. *See also* *Shari'a*  
 Lefort, Raphael, 54  
 legalists, Islamic, 33–34, 79–80  
 Lepanto, battle of, 114  
 Lessing, Doris, 58  
 letters (*huruf*), 110  
 levels of self-disclosure, 172, 210  
 Lewis, Bernard, 85  
 Lewisohn, Leonard, 30–31  
 liberation, 65  
 light  
     of Muhammad, 180–81  
     of prophecy, 180, 192  
 Lings, Martin, 11, 20–22, 26–27, 36  
 Lloyd George, David, 144  
 Logos, 192  
 longing (*shawq*), 169  
 Lord of Time, 57, 67
- lordship (*rububiya*), 195  
 love (*ishq*; ardent desire), 5, 83, 86,  
169
- M
- Macedonia, 127, 131, 136, 141–42  
 Madani, Khwaja Hashim, 14  
 “mad in Allah” (*mualla*), 171, 178  
*madrassa* (religious school), 94  
 Mahatmas, 47–48  
 Mahdi (“rightly guided”), 103, 111,  
113  
 Mahdism, 190  
 Mahmud II, 120  
 malamatis/malamiyya (Sufi order).  
     *See also* blameworthy  
     as blameworthy, 40–41  
     as blending into population, 72,  
     105–6, 196–97  
     centers in Ottoman Empire, 116  
     characteristics of, 76, 82–83  
     early Khwajagan and, 68  
     evolution of, ix, xi–xiii  
     influence of, 112–13  
     legacy of, 163  
     as less observant of Islam, 41–42  
     middle period of, 91–115  
     Nur al-Arabi and, 129, 136–37  
     Öziç and, 148, 150–54  
     placeless place of, 199  
     politics and, 107, 113–14, 117–19  
     salon approach of, 140  
     as spiritual humanism, 155  
     succession in, 147  
     Şuşud and, 64  
     term, 72–73, 89  
     Turkish reform and, 144–45  
     universalism and, 43

## INDEX

- mamluks* (Turkish soldiers), 85,  
100
- Mansur al-Hallaj, 33, 79–80, 82–83,  
96
- maqamat* (spiritual stations)  
Gurdjieff and, 51  
impermanence of, 6  
Khwajagan and, 64  
as map of spiritual journey,  
165–81  
Nur al-Arabi initiated into, 125  
of unification, 172, 210
- Mardin, Serif, 135, 139
- ma'rifa* (direct perception), 165–66,  
168
- Martin, Ada, 15
- Martin, Rabia, 44
- Maruf al Karkhi, 28
- Maryamiyya (Sufi order), 20
- Massignon, Louis, 22, 39
- master-disciple relationships, 38, 81
- Masters  
Khwajagan, 71–72  
in Theosophy, 48  
of Unification, 77
- Masters of Wisdom, The* (Bennett), 63
- Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia, The* (Şuşud), 147
- Masters Revealed, The* (Johnson), 48
- Mathnawi* (Rumi), 37
- mawalis* (non-Arab Muslims; clients), 26–27
- Mawlawiyya/Mevleviyya (Sufi order),  
5. See also Rumi, Mevlana Jala-  
luddin
- Mecca, 128–29, 136
- Meccan Revelation* (Ibn al-Arabi),  
200
- Meetings with Remarkable Men* (Gur-  
djieff), 44, 47–48, 54, 56, 64
- Mehmet Chelebi, 98
- Mehmet I, 102, 104
- Mehmet II, 106–7
- Mehmet Sadik, 142
- Melami Axis, 134
- Mesopotamian (malamati) mysti-  
cism, 72
- metadoxy, 93
- Middle Ages, 92
- Midhat Pasha, 135, 140
- minhaj* (large path), 160
- Mir Ahmad Muhtar Efendi (Molla  
Bey), 133–34
- missionaries, Kizilbash, 108
- modernity, 155–58
- Molla Bey. See Mir Ahmad Muhtar  
Efendi
- Moore, James, 49, 205
- Morewedge, Parviz, 29
- movement, 46, 174
- mualla* (mad in Allah), 171, 178
- Muawiya, 25–26
- Mufaku, Muhammad, 96–97
- Mughal (Timurid) dynasty, 13–14,  
16, 108
- Muhammad, Prophet  
descendents of, 119, 129  
direct instruction from, 125–26,  
128  
dreams and, 146  
as forefather of Sufism, 30  
history of Islam and, 13  
Idries Shah on, 60–61  
life of, 23–24  
light of prophecy and, 180–81  
mission of, 23

## INDEX

- as orphan, 191, 216  
 quotations from, 72–73, 75, 80,  
     185–86, 194–95  
 uniqueness of, 159–60  
*Muhammadan Rasulullah*, 180  
 Muhammadan Way (*Tariqat i-Mu-*  
     *hammedi*), 124–25, 129  
 Muhammad Lahiji, 193–94  
 Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society, 205  
 Mujaddidi-Naqshbandiyya (Sufi  
     order), 61, 127–29  
 Murad I, 94  
 Murad II, 102  
*murad* (willed), 173  
 Murata, Sachiko, 30  
*murid* (willing), 173  
*murshid* (spiritual guide), 14, 150,  
     177, 189  
 Muslim raiders (*ghazis*), 13, 92  
 Mustafa Trabzoni, 128  
 mysticism, Islamic, 12, 39, 72
- N
- Nablusi, Daud Abd al-Ghani, 125,  
     137  
 Names of God, 168, 186  
 Naqshband, Bahauddin, 64–65, 81,  
     162, 183  
 Naqshbandiyya (Sufi order)  
     “defective feature” and, 50  
     history of, 39, 59–60, 107, 113  
     Khwajagan and, 71, 151  
     Kurds and, 144–45  
     malamatis and, ix  
     Nur al-Arabi and, 130, 136–37  
     Shah family and, 54, 60–61  
     subgroups of, 61  
     Şuşud and, 146  
     teachers of, 120  
 Nasr, Seyyed Hossein  
     perennialist approach of, 11,  
         19–20  
     quotations from, 9, 20–21, 28, 30,  
         35, 41  
     traditionalism of, 30  
 nationalism, 122–23  
 Navarino, battle at, 121  
 Neoplatonism, 27, 94  
 New Age, 4, 17, 44, 46–47  
*New York Times*, 2–4, 7  
 Niazi Bey, 141  
 Nicholson, Reynold A., 3, 22, 39  
 Nishapuris, 76, 83  
 Nizam al-Mulk, 86  
 nomocentric (law-centered), 29, 32,  
     42, 88  
 nondualism, 40, 151–52  
 notables (*ayans*), 111–12, 120  
*Nur al-Nubuwwa* (Light of Proph-  
     ecy), 180, 192  
 Nuri, 78  
 Nuriyya-Malamiyya (Sufi order). *See*  
     *also* Arabi, Pir Nur al-  
     compared to other approaches,  
         151–52  
     criticism from, 189  
     history of, 134, 139, 146  
     Şuşud and, 71  
*Nur Muhammadi* (light of Muham-  
     mad), 180–81
- O
- occultists, 41–43  
 Occult Revival, 46–47  
 Oghlan Shaykh, 110, 111  
 Olcott, Henry Steel, 47–48

## INDEX

- Olsson, Tod, 149
- Orage, A. R., 48
- order (*tariqa*), 20
- Orhan, 94
- orphan, 191, 216
- Osmanli Dynasty, 93
- Osman the First, 93
- Ottoman Empire. *See also* Sublime Porte
- cultural influence and, 107
  - decline of, 135–36
  - Europe and, 111, 121–22
  - Interregnum of, 98
  - Islam in, 103, 113–14
  - malamati activity in, 116
  - rebellion in, 100–102, 104
  - rights within, 132
  - as “sick man of Europe,” 136
  - Sufi orders in, 107–8
  - wars and alliances of, 114–15, 117–18
  - World War I and, 143–45
  - wujudi* doctrine in, 93–94
- Ottoman Reorganization, 123
- Ouspensky, Madame, 58
- Ouspensky, P. D., 48–49, 51–52, 64
- Öziç, Mehmet Selim
- authority of, 149
  - interview with, 150–63
  - life and training of, 147–49
  - Pir Nur al-Arabi and, 137
  - role of, 149, 167–68
- P
- Parsa, Muhammad, 198–99, 199
- Path of Liberation (*Itlaq Yolu*), 63
- path (*tariqa*), 20–21, 32, 38, 137, 166–67, 209
- Patriotic Alliance, 133
- People of Ali (*Shiat al-Ali*). *See* Shia Islam
- people of blame, 166. *See also* malamatis/malamiyya
- people of no station (*la maqam*), 41
- People of the Community (*Ahl al-Sunna*). *See* Sunni Islam
- People of the House (*Ahl-al-Bayt*), 24, 27
- people of tradition, 166
- people of worship, 166
- perception (*shuhud*), 175, 184
- perennialism, 9–11, 42–43
- perfected human being (*insan al-kamil*), 111, 153–54
- persecution
- of Akbaris, 187–88
  - of Hurufis, 110–11
  - of malamatis, 106, 113
- Peter the Great, 114, 122
- pluralism, 42
- poets and poetry, 39, 84–86
- poverty, xiii, 66–67, 72–73
- power
- as agency, 175
  - of commanding ego, 197
  - to influence, 191, 195–96
  - Qutb* and, 191
  - relinquishing, 67
  - in Sufi orders, 189
- practice, spiritual, 7
- prayer, Khwajagan, 63
- primordial monotheist (*Hanif*), 148, 156
- primordial religion (*din al-fitra*), 157

## INDEX

- proper conduct (*adab*), 83  
 Prophetic Way (*tariq al-nubuwwa*),  
   34  
 prophets and prophecy, 160, 180–81,  
   190–91  
 proximity to God. *See* *baqa*  
 psychology, 155–56
- Q
- Qadi Baythawi, 211  
 Qadir, Abd al-, 124  
 Qadiriyya (Sufi order), 39, 59, 107,  
   144–45  
*qalandar* (dervish)  
   characteristics of, 84, 87–89  
   defying Shari'a, 82–83  
   in Ottoman Empire, 114  
   rebellion of, 100–102  
 Qalandariyya (Sufi order), 82–89  
 Qashani, al-, 94  
 Qaysari, 39  
 Qaysari, Daud al-, 94  
 “qualified monism,” 152  
 Qudsi, Sayyid Ibrahim, 119  
 Qunawi, Sadruddin, 39, 94, 99  
 Qur'an  
   on actions, 211  
   on attributes, 174–76, 213  
   commentaries on, 37  
   on essence, 213  
   essential Islam and, 156–57  
   exegesis of, 27  
   as metaphorical, 103  
   on power of Allah, 173  
   on religious traditions, 158–60  
   on remembrance, 168  
   on stations of identification, 213,  
   215–16  
   Sufism as grounded in, 30  
   on unforgivable sins, 74  
   way of blame in, 72  
 Qurayshi (tribe), 24–25, 32, 67  
*Qutb* (*Qutb al-Zaman*; Axis of the  
 Age)  
   as hidden, 57, 204  
   Jilani as, 169  
   as latent, 199  
   Nur al-Arabi as, 134, 189  
   as pillar, 190–91  
   taste of, 130–31, 216  
 Quwaysni, Shaykh Hasan al-,  
   119–20, 125, 127, 131
- R
- Rahmat Khan, 14  
 raiders (*ghazis*), 13  
 Ramadan, 73  
 Rashid Pasha, 127–28  
 Rauf, Imam Feisal Abdul, 202  
 Real (*al Haqq*), 210, 213, 215  
 rebellions  
   Badruddin and, 102–3  
   Borkluce and, 101, 103  
   against British Raj, 124  
   doctrines leading to, 111  
   Kurdish, 144–45  
   Mahdism and, 190  
   of mawalis, 26  
   metaphors and, 103  
   nationalist, 122  
   in Ottoman Empire, 100–102,  
   104  
   Young Turks and, 141–42  
 redheads (*kizilbash*), 108–9, 111,  
   113  
 reflection (*tafakkur*), 171

## INDEX

- reform and reformers. *See also* Tan-  
zimat (reorganization)  
Ataturk and, 144–45, 147  
in modern Sufism, 153  
Pir Nur al-Arabi as, 149  
Shah Wali Allah as, 34–35  
Sirhindi as, 33  
of Sufism, 124–25, 189
- regent (*khalifullah*), 196
- relativism, 31
- religion (*din*)  
divine principle of, 14, 19–20  
exoteric forms of, 19–21  
nomocentric, 32, 42  
Sufism and, 205–6  
validity of all, 157–58
- remembrance (*dhikr*), 66, 168–71  
continuous, 137–38, 167, 209  
“remembrance of the heart” (*dhikr al-qalb*), 7
- representatives (*khullafah*), 139–40, 142
- Reshad, 142
- Reshat Efendi, Seyyit Bekir, 134
- Resurrection, 103
- revelation in Islam, 31
- Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Abu Hamid), 86
- reviver (*mujaddid*) of Sufism, 35
- Risala i Salihyya* (Nur al-Arabi), 137, 172, 209–16
- Roman Empire, 91–92
- Romanticism, 17, 47
- Rosicrucians, 53
- Rumelia, 111, 120
- Rumi, Mevlana Jalaluddin  
interpretations of, 2–6  
Islamic views of, 2–3, 22  
love and, 5–7, 86  
quotations from, 7, 32, 33, 169, 177, 197, 199  
as universalist, x  
writings of, 37, 39
- Russo-Turkish War, 122
- S
- Saadi, x
- Sabeans, 29
- Sadr-ad-din, 104
- Safavids, 109
- Safawiyya (Sufi order), 108
- Safi, Omid, 202
- Said, Abdul Aziz, 202
- sainthood, levels of, 210
- saints (*awliya*), 21, 72
- salik* (wayfarer), 165
- Salman Farsi, xx, 27
- salon approach of teaching, 140–41
- Sanai, 86
- San Stefano, Treaty of, 135
- Sari as-Saqati, 77
- Sarmoung Brotherhood, 45–46, 56–57, 61, 204
- Sarraj, 187
- Sassanid Empire, 25–27, 29
- sayyids* (descendants of Muhammad), 108, 119, 129
- Schimmel, Annemarie, 22, 28, 31, 39, 58, 74–76
- Schnachter-Shalomi, Zalman, 148
- school of Islamic law (*madhab*), 38
- Schuon, Fritjof, 19–21, 41
- science of the self (*al-ilm bi'l-nafs*), 76
- Seal of Muhammadan Sanctity, 125
- Searchers of the Truth, 48

## INDEX

- secret societies, 42–43
- secularism, 144–45
- Sedgwick, Mark, 20
- Seekers of Truth, 44
- self, Gurdjieff’s seven forms of, 51,  
64
- self-disclosures (*tajalli al-ilahi*), 209
- self-idolatry (*shirk*), 74–75
- self-inquiry (*mushasibi*), 74
- self-remembering, 50, 57
- self-righteousness, 83
- self-surrender, 157
- self-transformation, 46, 49–50
- self-witnessing, 64
- Selim I, 109
- Selim Pasha, 131
- Seljuk Turks, 85–87, 92, 98
- separation (*tafrid*)  
    first and second, 183–84, 193
- Serif Mardin, 123
- servanthood (*ubudiya*), 195
- servants, 152–53, 178, 197
- service (*ubuda*), 195
- Sevres, Treaty of, 14
- Shabani-Khalwati (Sufi order), 125
- Shabistari, 39, 193
- Shadilliyya (Sufi order), 39
- Shah, Idries, xi
- Shah, Omar Ali, 61
- Shah, Sirdar Iqbal Ali, 54–57, 61–62,  
71
- Shah Ismail, 124
- Shamariki, Ibrahim al-, 125
- Shari’ah* (Islamic law)  
    as “broad way,” 32–33  
    misinterpretation of, 73–74  
    modern interpretation of, 160–61  
    Pir Nur al-Arabi on, 167
- spiritual development and,  
        165–66
- Sufism and, 21, 35–36
- Sharif Effendi, 128, 133
- shathiyat* (ecstatic utterances), 77–78
- Shaykh al-Islam, 104, 112, 144–45
- shaykhs*  
    authoritarianism of, 162–63  
    term, 189
- Shaykh Sait, 145
- Shia Islam (*Shiat al-Ali*), 24, 26–28,  
34, 129
- Shibli, 78, 80
- shirk* (self-idolatry), 74–75
- shuhud* (perception), 40, 184
- Siffin, battle at, 26
- Simawna, 98
- sincerity (*ikhlas*), 74
- sins, 74
- Sirhindi, Shaykh Ahmad (Imam  
    Rabbani), 33–34, 36, 39–40
- sleep, 48
- Smith, Margaret, 22
- sobriety (*sahw*), 77–78, 80, 180, 185
- Society of Muhammad, 142
- Somuncu Baba, 104–5
- spiritual journey (*suluk*), 165
- spiritual poverty (*fuqr*), xiii, 66–67,  
    72–73
- Station of Muhammad, 191
- stations of identification  
    comprehensive gathering,  
        215–16  
    gathering, 213–14  
    oneness of essence, 216  
    presence of comprehensiveness,  
        214–15  
    stations of “no station,” 192–93, 196

## INDEX

- stations of unification (*tawhid*),  
 172–81  
 acts, 210–11  
 attributes, 211–12  
 essence, 212–13
- stations of wisdom (*maqamat*)  
 of *baqa*, 130  
 of *fana*, 131  
 as map of spiritual development,  
 165–81, 168  
 Nur al-Arabi initiated into, 126  
 striving, 209
- student-teacher relationships, 38, 81
- subhat* (contemplative dialogue), 140,  
 149, 158, 162
- Sublime Porte, 121, 133, 135, 141–  
42. See also Ottoman Empire
- “Subtle Research with Commentary  
 on the Inspirations of Shaykh  
 Badruddin of Simawna” (Nur al-  
 Arabi), 131–32
- Sufis, Teachers of Gurdjieff, The* (Le-  
 fort), 54
- Sufis, The* (Idries Shah), 53
- Sufism  
 complexity of, 7–8, 36–38  
 differing views of, 9  
 dualistic approach to, 40  
 elephant metaphor of, 8, 20  
 forms of, 9–10, 31, 35–36  
 history of, 21–22, 34–35  
 influence of, 53, 62  
 influences on, 23  
 Islam and, 1, 27–29  
 Northern and Southern branches  
 of, 65–66, 72  
 phases of practice of, 165–68  
 reform and revival of, 33–35  
 studies of, 1–17, 37  
 term, 76–77  
 in West, 14–15, 203–7
- Sufi way (*tariq al-walaya*), 32, 34,  
158
- Suhrawardi, Abu al-Najib (Martyr),  
22, 82, 84–85, 104
- sukr* (intoxication), 78–80, 85–85,  
 154, 180, 184–85
- Sulami, 83
- Sulami, ‘Abd al-Rahman, 75
- Suleiman, 87
- Suleyman the Magnificent, 109, 114,  
 117–18
- suluk* (spiritual journey), 165
- Sunni Islam (*Ahl al-Sunna*)  
 history of, 24, 26–27  
 Ottomans and, 103  
 Sufis and, 1, 34
- supraconfessional, 101, 111, 132
- supraorder, 112, 137
- Şuşud, Hasan Lütfi  
 Bennett and, 62–63  
 Khwajagan and, 71–72  
 life and training of, 64, 145–47  
 quotations from, 65–66  
 role of, 149
- Sutton, L. P. Elwell, 58
- Sviri, Sara, 76
- Sykes-Picot agreements, 143
- symbolism, 106
- syncretism, 30, 49–50, 85, 87
- T
- tafakkur* (contemplative reflection),  
 171
- Talat Bey, 141–42
- Talat Effendi, 120, 125

## INDEX

- Tamerlane, 13, 97–98, 100  
 Tanzimat (reorganization), 120, 122,  
 127–28, 132, 134–36  
*Tariqa al-Muhammadiyah*, 124–25,  
129  
*tariqa* (path or way), 20–21, 32, 38,  
 137–38, 166, 209  
*tassaruf* (power to influence), 191,  
 195–96  
*taste* (*dhawq*), 6–7, 130–31, 168–69,  
210  
*tawhid* (stations of unification),  
 172–81, 210–16  
 taxation, child, 95  
 Taymiyya, Ibn, 36, 39, 40  
 teaching, 165–68  
 tekkes, 120, 139  
 temperament (*mashrab*), 75  
 theophany, 209–10  
 Theosophical Society, 44  
 Theosophy, 47–49  
 Thoreau, Henry David, x  
*Times* (London newspaper), 56–57  
 Timurid (Mughal) dynasty, 13–14,  
16, 108  
 Togrul-beg, 86  
 tolerance, 158  
 Toussulis, Yannis  
   Öziç interview by, 150–63  
 traditionalism, 6, 19–39  
 transcendence, 154–55  
 Transcendentalism, x  
 translations  
   of Greek texts, 29  
   of Sufi works, 21–22  
 Treaty of Carlowitz, 115  
 Trimingham, J. Spencer, 74, 76  
 Triple Entente, 143  
 Turkey, 144–45, 189  
 Turkmen Babas, 92–93  
 Turkmens, 87  
 Twelve Imams, 108, 129  
 Twelver Shia, 35–36
- U
- Ukhtomskii, Esper, 48–49, 50  
*ulama* (clerics)  
   in Ottoman Empire, 118–20,  
   131–33  
   power and, 188–89  
   *shathiyat* and, 78  
   Sufis as, 33, 86, 98, 118  
 Umar, 25  
 Umar Sikkini, 105–6, 110  
 Umayya, 26–27  
 unicity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*),  
40  
 unicity of perception (*wahdat al-*  
*shuhud*), 40  
 unification of essence (*ayn-al-jam*),  
88  
 “unified I,” 50  
 union (*ittihad*), 6, 77, 81, 154–55  
 unitarian (*wujudi*), 73  
 United Nations Covenant on Human  
 Rights, 160–61  
 United States  
   Inayat Khan in, 15–16  
   Sufism in, 203–7  
   Sufi studies in, 30–31  
 unity of all religions, 14  
 universalism, 1–2, 11–17, 20, 43  
*usul al-fiqh* (foundations of law), 32,  
119  
 Uthman, 25–26  
 Uwaysi-Akbari line, 125, 127

## INDEX

- V
- Valad, Sultan, 5
- Vedanta Society, 44
- Venizelos, Elefterios, 143–44
- W
- Wahabi Islam, 36
- wahdat al-wujud* (Akbari doctrine), 109, 137
- Wali Allah of Delhi, Shah, 33–36, 40–41
- Waskow, Arthur, 148
- wayfarer (*salik*), 165, 168
- way of blame, 72, 89. *See also* malamatis/malamiyya
- West
- esoteric traditions of, 53
  - hidden hierarchy and, 67–68
  - Islam and, 201–2
  - Sufism and, x, 14–15, 148, 202–7
  - Sufi studies in, 30–31
- willed and willing, 173
- Williams, L. F. Rushbrook, 58
- will (volition), 174
- Wilson, Peter Lamborn, 30
- witnessing (*shuhud*; *mushahada*), 40, 180
- Work, Gurdjieffian, 51–52, 54, 62
- worldview of Sufism, 22, 23
- World War I, 143–44
- wujud* (existence), 94, 152, 180
- wujudi* (unitarian; existentialist), 40, 93–94, 112–13
- X
- Xavier, Jacob, 137, 141
- Y
- Yanya, 119–20
- Yazid I, 26
- Yeats, William Butler, 47
- Young Ottomans, 123, 132–33
- Young Turks, 140–41
- Yusuf Effendi, 119, 125
- Z
- Zahir Shah (Afghan king), 55–56, 58
- Zarcone, Thiery, 137, 140, 142
- zindiq* (free thinker), 103, 109

**archegos**