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Part One

The early period

1

The origins of Sufism

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Introduction

For historians of early Sufism it is instructive that many of the Sufi Orders (sing. *ṭarīqa* / pl. *ṭurūq*) that appeared by the end of the thirteenth century traced their spiritual lineage (*silsila*) from the prophet Muḥammad to the celebrated teacher and master Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910), to demonstrate the authentic and legitimate nature of their teachings and practices. Junayd is represented as a major link for the Sufi orders; he is often located at the pinnacle of a stem before the various branches grew and subsequently developed in their own colourful, specific ways of expressing devotion and piety.¹ While there is sufficient primary material to demonstrate the importance of Junayd for the doctrinal and practical proliferation of the movement that became known as Sufism, it is unfortunate that its history prior to the era of “the peacock of the poor” (*tāwūs al-fuqarā*) as he is known, is less than clear. It does seem to be the case, however, that there was more than a single stem from which the later Sufis derived inspiration. But because the roots of what became recognised as the Sufi movement by the late ninth and early tenth century in and around Baghdad are muddled and unclear, subsequent generations of Sufis from the eleventh century onwards composed manuals that included sections that sought to illuminate the

opaque origins of the movement, thereby legitimising both rituals and teachings that were disputed. A good example of the Sufis' need to justify their worldview is found in Sulamī (d. 1021), who claimed in the introduction to his *Jawāmi' Ādāb al-Ṣūfiyya* ("Collection of Sufi Rules of Conduct") that he wrote the work, so that those who criticise the Sufis could actually know something about their way of life and customs.² And Qushayrī (d. 1072) despaired of the state of Sufism in his own lifetime, due to the misappropriation of the tradition by charlatans, who thereby instigated further opposition to Sufism. "One should not give their [the Sufis'] opponents a cause to condemn them, since in this country, the suffering of this path at the hands of its opponents and accusers has been particularly severe."³

This introduction to the first section of this volume joins the search for Sufi origins. There is no innovative theory in this chapter, rather, it simply seeks to question the ideas and assumptions regarding the origins of the movement that have been offered by both Sufis themselves and modern Western observers, revealing the preconceived notions and conclusions held by many within these groups. As such, the chapter seeks to highlight the dangers of accepting at face value these agenda-loaded theories, and it holds that the horizontal levels in which individuals and movements are embedded at any historical moment disclose valuable details related to the development of Sufism. The vertical search for origins has been entwined with all manner of deliberate deviations and obfuscations.

The chapter contains three main sections. First, the chapter commences by examining the emic philological and historical explanations of the movement that were offered by Hujwārī, writing in the eleventh century, who was one of first Sufis to take up the "origins" argument. Hujwārī's philological attempts are representative of one method to discover the origins of the term, and other Sufis gave semantic definitions of the movement, linking it with the "piety" of previous

generations and in some cases with individuals whose lifestyles and beliefs are difficult to identify as “Sufi.” As such these associations reveal more about the Sufis of the time than they do about the origins of the movement. The second section of the chapter traces etic views of nineteenth-century Western scholars who embarked on a similar investigation of Sufi roots, but for the purpose of demonstrating the derivative nature of Sufism, which suggested its “inauthentic” quality. After the first awkward steps of these Orientalists (who have been termed “externalists” – seeking to locate the origins of Sufism outside of the Islamic tradition,⁴ and who were steeped in the “Aryan” prejudices of the times), European scholars of the second half of the twentieth century have tended to accept the Sufis’ claim that the movement was fundamentally inspired by reflection upon Islamic sacred texts. Having sampled the “origins” theories of both the early Sufis and later Western scholars, the third section turns to the arguments offered to explain a possible shift from asceticism and renunciation to what has been termed “mysticism.” Examples are given of the kinds of Qur’ānic verses that were suggestive of a more intimate relationship between God and humans.

Sufi philological and historical explanations

In the eleventh century, the celebrated author of one of the most comprehensive Persian manuals of Sufism, ‘Alī Hujwīrī (d. 1071) reported an oft-cited maxim of Abū’l-Ḥasan Fūshanja (d. 958–959) that “today Sufism is a name without a reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name.”⁵ This saying holds many layers of significance. It may serve not only as an implicit criticism of the charlatans who associated with the movement for various kinds of benefits that could be accrued, but it also points into history when Sufism supposedly enjoyed a utopian, golden period. The search for origins is frequently an attempt to capture an ideal, when the “pristine” teachings were within reach. Of course the community of the Prophet served as the

ultimate “imagined *umma*” for all Muslims, but with the sealing of prophethood on Muḥammad’s death, the Sufis of Hujwārī’s age looked to the next best models, that is, the succeeding generations, when the memory of a sacred society that enjoyed an intimate communication with the Divine was still fresh in the memory. In order to capture the essence of that early community Sufis had recourse to three main methods. The first focussed on a lexical analysis of the term Sufī itself, the name that had no reality, or meaning. Sufis such as Fūshanja were well aware that it was a futile attempt to search the Qur’ān from cover to cover, as the word “*ṣūfī*” or “*taṣawwuf*” (Sufism) does not appear in sacred scripture. Hujwārī’s *Kashf al-Mahjūb* included a section in which he speculated on four possible reasons why the term gained currency.⁶ The first reflected the similarity of the word Sufī (*ṣūfī*) with the Arabic term for wool, or *ṣūf*, the connection being that the Sufis typically wore a gown or garment made of wool,⁷ which as coarse and scratchy, leads to connections with asceticism, and distinguished the cloak from the more expensive cotton or silk varieties.⁸ Hujwārī’s second reason connects the word “Sufism” to the idiom “first rank” (*ṣaff-i awwal*), which brings to mind the believers hurrying to be in the first row of believers at congregational prayers. And then a connection is made with the *aṣḥāb-i Ṣuffa* (or the People of the Veranda – those who lived in close proximity to the Prophet – in his mosque – and were scrupulous and pious in performing devotions). And Hujwārī finally spoke of *ṣafā*, or purity, since the Sufis “have purged their morals and conduct” from anything inappropriate.⁹

These emic discussions about the lexical origins of the word “Sufi” clearly reveal the concerns of eleventh-century Sufis, and may not help us understand how the term was understood in the eight to ninth centuries. Later Sufis were conscious of this, and therefore a second method to understand the term, a semantic investigation by ascetics and early Sufi, focussed on the realities

of their specific kinds of devotion. The sayings of early “Sufis” foregrounded practice and ethics through edifying and pithy statements that could easily be memorised.¹⁰ For example, Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896) said, “Sufism is to eat little, and to take rest with God, and to flee from men.”¹¹ And Sarī Saqaṭī (the maternal uncle of Junayd, the subject of Chapter 3) who died in 867 is reported by the aforementioned Qushayrī as saying the quickest path to Paradise was, “Don’t take anything from anyone, don’t seek anything from anyone and don’t possess anything which you would give to anyone.”¹² The third method to identify the origins of Sufism was historical, and probably borrowed heavily from the semantic investigations mentioned above, typified in the claim of Junayd that “We derived Sufism not from disputation, but from hunger and abandonment of the world and the breaking of familiar ties and the renunciation of what men account good.”¹³ Junayd’s claim points to belief in a close connection between the Sufism of his time and certain devotional practices, such as renunciation and repentance (*tawba*),¹⁴ which was evident among those pious individuals before the recognisable social movement that became Sufism. The terms used for these renunciants were *zuhhād*, *nussāk* and *‘ubbād*.¹⁵ Later Sufis pointed out that the first person to be called a “ṣūfī” was one Abū Ḥāshim (d. 767–768) in Syria who had a *khānaqāh* (convent).¹⁶ But later Sufi writers consistently made associations of such early individuals with renunciation, fear of God and trust in God (*tawakkul*), and “they underwent austerities, devoted extraordinary amounts of time to Qur’ānic recitation and prayer, and generally cultivated a solemn attitude towards life.”¹⁷ Descriptions of anything “mystical,” a term liberally applied by modern scholars to Sufism without much thought as to its meaning, is notably absent. An associated ahistorical method was to link the pre-Islamic prophets with the tradition, thus suggesting its perennial nature. In this respect it is worth recalling Suhrawardī (d.

1234) who has the prophet Abraham claim that his community could not bear the burden of the Sufi cloak.¹⁸

The difficulty of defining Sufism, either philologically or semantically, seems to have been as difficult in Hujwārī's age as it has been for modern scholars. If the focus of analysing Sufism is on the very first generation of Baghdadi Sufis, then it is difficult to determine shared characteristics, except perhaps piety and devotion. But this is far too simplistic a definition, as it would be necessary to determine the extent of piety and devotion that would have been necessary in order for an individual to be called a Sufi. The problem of defining Sufism is neither solved by concentrating on specific ritual acts, such as the *dhikr* (or the repetition of one of God's names), which has been recognised as a familiar and distinctive Sufi act of devotion. The problem with focussing on *dhikr* is that this was an act performed by all pious Muslims, which implies that all pious Muslims were Sufis, and this does not seem to have been the case. Perhaps Sufism of this early period was more characteristic of faith in achieving "proximity to or mediation with God?"¹⁹ But how is it possible to determine beliefs, which are an interiorised element of personal faith? The attempt to discover the origin of Sufism, or define Sufism, with recourse to Sufi texts raises more questions than answers. In itself, this is not necessarily a negative outcome, as it is only with an inquisitive and questioning mind that the sheer scope of the difficulty at hand becomes apparent, rendering it possible to offer tentative solutions.

Clearly, there is still much to discover about the very early years leading up to the establishment of Sufism as the main representative of an interiorised and devotional form of Islamic piety. For example, differences and similarities in stages of renunciation, or asceticism, from a Qur'ānic or post-Muḥammad period to the beginning of the "Sufi" era need to be explored. Variegation among early pietist, devotional and ascetic individuals and groups (such as those in Khurāsān,

including the Karrāmiyya and the Malāmatiyya,²⁰ and the various proto “Sufi” movements in Basra and Baghdad) provide ample scope for discussion, as do the contexts in which all of these movements emerged. The early European quest for Sufi origins focussed on external factors (such as non-Islamic philosophies or religious traditions); this quest seems to have been undertaken to demonstrate the inability of Muslims to develop such a tradition independent of other civilisation. Although the weakness of nineteenth-century European thesis of external origins has become evident to all, it would be a mistake to reject possible influences and contributions from non-Islamic, pietist and intellectual traditions that left a heavy imprint in the Near East. Christianity and monasticism remained very strong in the region, as Melchert observes that reports of conversations between Muslim ascetics and Christian hermits are numerous.²¹ (Indeed, the existence of the so-called Pact of ‘Umar that listed the regulations by which non-Muslim groups could co-exist in peace with Muslims is an indication of the numerical strength of non-Muslim communities in the region).²² Of course, the discussion here is not one of Sufi “origins” but of *exchange* of ideas and influence between other religious traditions and Islamic pietist movements. Moreover, from 750 CE onwards the Islamic world was practically and intellectually developing a range of different perspectives on how the community should be advanced.²³ So, for example, the science of ḥadīth was developing with the compilation of voluminous collections, with specific rules for approving or disapproving specific narrations; theological debates raged in Baghdad, including disputes between rival Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite schools on how to understand the anthropomorphic verses in the Qur’ān;²⁴ philosophical arguments (some of a Neo-Platonic tenor) raged about the nature of God, facilitated by the creation of the *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, or the Grand Baghdad Library, the task of which was to translate Greek texts into Arabic;²⁵ Shi‘i ideas circulated around eminent individuals who were recognised

as Imāms;²⁶ and the Sunni law-school were coalescing into recognisable entities. In other words, various constituencies in the Islamic world were competing with each other in an attempt to create space for their self-expression. It would have been only natural for a range of ascetics, renunciants and other pious individuals to participate in this process, thereby creating a place for themselves, where they would be free to engage in their own specific forms of devotion.²⁷ And of interest too is that ideas and/or representatives of these groups enumerated above were to be appropriated soon afterwards into the ranks of the Sufis. These included Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) the famous theologian and preacher,²⁸ Ibrāhīm Adham (d. 782) who abandoned his position as King of Balkh and took up a life of seclusion,²⁹ Sufiyān al-Thawrī (d. 778) a great ḥadīth scholar, ‘Abdallāh ibn Mubārak (d. 797) who is known to have engaged in jihad with non-Muslims on the frontier of the Islamic world (perhaps as a form of renunciation),³⁰ Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyād (d. 802) a thief who became an ascetic,³¹ Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), the great scholar of ḥadīth,³² and Ja‘far al-Šādiq, who is known more commonly as the sixth Shi‘i Imām (d. 765). It is easy to see why subsequent generations of scholars adopted such diverse individuals as exemplars of early Sufism; renunciation, piety, asceticism and Islamic scholarship of all varieties have remained essential components of the Sufi path (except perhaps for the antinomian variety). While such individuals were clearly not “Sufi” in the sense of ninth-century School of Baghdad, their inspiration and contribution to piety was a heritage that the Sufis adopted with alacrity.

The modern Western search for the origins of Sufism

Definitions of words are obviously linked with the contexts in which the definers find themselves, full of pre-suppositions, prejudices, ideals and judgements; objectivity is an elusive goal for even the most discerning. As Karl Popper so succinctly observed, “We do not know. We can only guess.”³³ Whereas devotional concerns underpinned the attempts to discover the origins

of Sufism for adherents in the pre-modern Islamic world, Western scholars in the modern period likewise have endeavoured to uncover the source of Sufism, but for very different reasons. The nineteenth-century worldview was influenced by several competing ideologies, including a muscular form of Christianity and racist ideas which promoted the idea of the superiority of Western civilisation. One of most explicitly obvious examples of this was propounded by E. H. Palmer, a fellow of Oriental Studies at the University of Cambridge, who observed that he planned a study to prove that Sufism developed from the “Primaeval Religion of the Aryan race.”³⁴ Similar ideas were advocated in the late nineteenth century by the French philosopher Ernst Renan, whose anti-Islamic perspectives should be considered in the wider perspective of his views on religion. For example, he believed that Jesus “managed to purify himself of Jewish influence and emerge an Aryan.”³⁵ A different perspective was advanced by the Jewish Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher who proposed the idea, popular at the time, that Sufism emerged due to the influence of external features, including Neo-platonism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, rather than it being a development of ideas and beliefs inherent within Islam.³⁶ There were some, such as E. G. Browne (d. 1926) – (Sir Thomas Adams professor of Arabic at Cambridge University) – whose views are complex and seemingly ambivalent. On the one hand, he appeared to endorse the nineteenth-century views in statements that describe the Islamification of Iran as “skin-deep” and

soon a host of heterodox sects born on Persian soil – Shi‘ites, Sufis, Isma‘ilis, philosophers – arose to vindicate the claim of Aryan thought to be free, and to transform the religion forced on the nation by Arab steel into something which, though still wearing a semblance of Islam, had a significance widely different from that which one may fairly suppose was intended by the Arabian prophet.³⁷

Yet Browne also claimed that there was “latent in the Muhammadan religion the germs of the most thorough-going pantheism,” and that “there is no doubt that certain passages in the Kur’an are susceptible to a certain degree of mystical interpretation.”³⁸ Browne’s latter sentiments were echoed by the American, Duncan B. MacDonald (d. 1943), who taught at the Hartford Theological Seminary, and believed that “Like almost everything else in Islam the seeds were already in the mind of Muhammad.”³⁹ Browne’s British student, R. A. Nicholson (d. 1945) who was to occupy the same academic position as his mentor, made some advance on the preceding European thinkers, seemingly agreeing with the medieval Sufi theorists, claiming that “the seeds of Sufism are to be found in the powerful and widely-spread ascetic tendencies which arose within Islam during the first century a.h.”⁴⁰ However, he concluded that although early Sufism “was not independent of Christianity,” and that “Greek philosophy” (Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism) contributed hugely in its development, that an early Sufi, Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī,⁴¹ was influenced by Persian and Indian ideas,⁴² only later did the Sufis attempt to authenticate their beliefs with reference to Islamic scripture (Qur’ān and ḥadīth).⁴³ The view that Muslims and Sufis were incapable of developing their own form of spirituality, or piety and asceticism, from indigenous roots most notably by R. C. Zaehner, the Spalding Professor at Oxford University, who claimed in 1961 that Sufism was wholly derived from Christianity,⁴⁴ and that Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī’s teacher bore the name al-Sindī, which explains for the similarities between Vedanta and Sufism. For Zaehner, Baṣṭāmī played a central role in directing the future orientation of the Sufi movement. Even more recently the Goldziher-Nicholson perspective has been repeated, as Julian Baldick, in his 1989 composition *Mystical Islam*, stressed the external influences in the development of Sufism.⁴⁵ A much more cautious approach, however, has been the norm, typified in the works of Nicholson’s student, A. J. Arberry (d. 1969) (who also held the same

Professorship at Cambridge) as he refused to be drawn into the debate concerning origins. He simply stated that “mysticism is undoubtedly a universal constant,” and that “its variations can be observed to be very clearly and characteristically shaped by the several religious systems upon which they were based.”⁴⁶

One of the impediments in tracing a chain of influence from the ninth- and tenth-century Sufis of Baghdad back into history is the relative absence of texts, treatises, letters and other forms of writing that can be identified as “Sufi scented.” One of the inspirations for the Baghdad school of Sufism were the essays penned by Muḥāsibī (d. 857) (see Chapter 2), which discussed both theological issues and the cultivation of piety and appropriate character traits. But before Muḥāsibī scholars are left with very little to assist in the endeavour to discover the roots of Sufism.⁴⁷ An important contribution which departed from the 19th European tendency to filter everything through a non-Islamic sieve was advanced by the French Orientalist, Louis Massignon, in his 1922 survey “*Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*.” His analysis of the words that the early Sufis and pietists employed caused him to conclude that “through constant recitation, meditation, and practice, [the Qur’ān] is the source of Islamic mysticism, at its beginning and throughout its growth”⁴⁸ Different generations of pietists and Sufis have focussed on specific verses and words of the Qur’ān, but the earliest representatives of Islamic ascetics and renunciants focussed on themes such as fear of God, and reliance or trust upon God. The subsequent era, which witnessed the emergence of the movement that named itself Sufi, emerging from Baghdad in the ninth century concentrated on verses that focussed on love, and the ontological relationship between God and man. Massignon concluded that the message of Ḥallāj, who was executed in 922, and became celebrated as a Sufi martyr for love, was built upon the terminology, allegories and his predecessors’ rules for life, and that he

was vilified because he made public doctrines of a “mystical vocation that had sprung up throughout the first centuries of Islam through mediated readings of the Qur’ān and the interiorization of a fervent, humble ritual life.”⁴⁹ But not all modern scholars have been as enamoured with Ḥallāj, as Abun-Nasr has observed that he “paid with his life for preaching Sufi tenets in Baghdad which blatantly breached the doctrinal limits of Islamic orthodoxy.”⁵⁰ Impressive as Massignon’s scholarship is, Green suggests that it is also guilty of being too vertical, and due attention needs to be paid to the horizontal contexts in which Sufis found themselves. In particular he reminds us that,

the environment in which Muslims lived in such regions as Syria, Iraq and Egypt was one in which they were outnumbered by Christians. More thoroughly Christianized than even Western Europe at this time, the Middle East Fertile Crescent was a landscape of churches, monasteries and saintly shrines ... Tombs of Christian saints and prophets were recognised as Muslim pilgrimage centres; monasteries served Muslims as wine-serving country clubs for poets and as libraries for literati; and Christian scholars helped translate into Arabic the heritage of Graeco-Roman thought ...⁵¹

Moreover, Green argues that the appearance of Sufism in Baghdad at the end of the ninth century does not mean that it did not exist prior to this period, especially as we are dealing with an oral culture, and it was a movement that may have been at pains to keep its doctrines and practices secret. The vertical model of asceticism/renunciation segueing almost seamlessly into Sufism certainly demands to be questioned, and due consideration of the horizontal contexts in conjunction with the vertical appears more likely to provide a realistic depiction of how the tradition developed. The adoption by later Sufis of ascetics, renunciants and scholars must be understood within the context of later historical dynamics of history, society and politics. In

addition, the renunciants' choice of themes and words may reflect inspiration from the Qur'ān, but this may not be exclusively so.

The “mystical” turn

Another of the largely unexplained topics related to the emergence of Sufism concerns the emergence of “mysticism.” Some contrast the largely pietistic and renunciate nature of the early movement which was transformed into a more fully blown form of what some call “mysticism.”⁵² This perspective still needs to be fully explored as the claim that “asceticism easily passes into mysticism” remains unconvincing.⁵³ In 1996 Christopher Melchert proposed that asceticism (or more specifically) self-mortification “at the individual level conduces to the experiences of mystical states.” He proceeded to offer two social reasons behind the change, but his discussion was unfortunately confined to a few lines. First, he mentioned the increasing political power of soldiers which encouraged a turn towards mysticism, as arbitrary political power assists mysticism, whereas the reverse, the check on the concentration of political power aids asceticism. Second, Melchert considered the development of institutions (he seems to mean the *khānaqāh*) for “religious specialists” as conducive for mystical piety.⁵⁴ A more detailed explanation for the turn to mysticism was offered by Gerhard Böwering several years later who analysed the “radical and lasting” life-changing experiences of “direct encounter with God” of several mid- to late eighth-century ascetics/renunciants. He observed that these individuals were “perceived as men who saw themselves as an elite.” Moreover, “Seeing themselves as divinely chosen people, as God’s Friends (*awliyā*) and saints, the Sufis held their spiritual achievement to be equal to the experience of the prophets and laid claims to a reciprocal relationship with their Creator.”⁵⁵ In other words, the kind of repentance (*tawba*) of this new group differed from the past group who had considered their repentance as a form of fear of God alone, which lay no

obligations upon the Creator. This new form of *tawba* entailed a two-way process: “They [the new ascetics/renunciants] discovered the foundations of their election in *tawba*, their total and unconditional turning to God, a movement accepted and rewarded by unequivocal divine self-revelation.”⁵⁶ This explains why the very early Sufis foregrounded an ontological intimacy, or similarity between man and God, which they discovered in several Qur’ānic verses (mentioned below). Typifying this special relationship was the Qur’ānic covenant, when God took mankind from Adam’s loins and asked them if they testified to his Lordship, a verse which was seminal in the teachings of the very early Sufis, including Sahl al-Tustarī,⁵⁷ Ḥallāj,⁵⁸ and Junayd⁵⁹:

And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes, we have testified.’ [This] – lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, ‘Indeed, we were of this unaware’ [Q. 7.172].

The Qur’ān as a “mystical” text

Massignon was aware of the difficulty that many non-Muslims had in perceiving the Qur’ān as the inspiration behind the Sufi movement. He said, “Europeans unfamiliar with Semitic concision, with the brief lightning flashes of Psalms for example, communally suppose that the Qur’ān has no mystical tendencies.”⁶⁰ Those verses that the Sufis would frequently cite have included Q. 2.115, which is read as an indication of God’s pervasiveness throughout the various realms of existence: “*To God belongs the east and west. Wherever you turn your head there is the face of God.*” There are several reasons offered for non-mystical understandings, and the historical background to this verse points to the conflict and turmoil Muḥammad faced on the change of direction of prayer (*qibla*) from Jerusalem to Mecca.⁶¹ Sufis were to interiorise this

verse, preferring to foreground an interpretation that presented God as intimately close to the believer. Chapter 53 of the Qur'ān is also significant because it narrates an episode when Muḥammad received revelation (from Gabriel according to most Muslim accounts, although some “dissenters” hold that the event was an encounter between Muḥammad and God).⁶² The same verse alludes to the so-called “Night Journey” and the ascent (*mi'rāj*) was pivotal for later Sufis, serving as a kind of blueprint for the encounter of the individual with God.

Among the verses that led to speculation on the God-man relationship with regard to intimacy/similarity, perhaps the most celebrated are those mentioned below. Q. 5.26–27 states, “*All that dwells upon the earth is annihilated, yet still subsides the Face of your Lord, majestic, splendid.*” From this verse, according to Hujwīrī, the earliest individual to develop the concepts of annihilation (*fanā'*) and subsistence (*baqā'*) was al-Kharrāz (d. 899) and subsequent Sufis came to speculate on the nature of existence, and the possibility of escaping from everything that causes a separation between God and the creation, thus rendering a possible encounter with God, even before the resurrection. Yet herein lay the ontological problem; on achieving *fanā'*, who, or what, remained in the state of *baqā'*? Was it the individual, or was it God? And in what way was it even possible to talk of the individual before the majesty of God, who alone possesses real existence? It is easy to see why the complexity of ontological questions proliferated among Sufis in succeeding generations. Once the “mystical” dimension of Islam became more pronounced (after the early period of Sufism), this kind of verse in the Qur'ān inspired much discussion.⁶³ The early period which witnessed the emergence of schools of “Sufism” in Baghdad and Basra also had individuals contemplate ontological issues based on verses such as 50.16 “*We indeed created man; and We know what his soul whispers within him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein.*” Sahl al-Tustarī of the Basran school presented an interpretation of such

verses.⁶⁴ At a similar time Bāyazīd Bastāmī (d. 875) was reported to have made the ecstatic utterance “Glory be to me,” which was taken as an inappropriate meditation on the Q. 21.22 and 17.43 “*Glory be to God!*” Ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥ*) became a feature within Sufism from the time of Bastāmī and Ḥallāj, and they should not be associated with the renunciants and ascetics. The love-inspired Sufis justified their perspective with such verses as Q. 5.54: “*God will assuredly bring a people He loves, and who love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers, men who struggle in the path of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher.*” This verse was particularly important because of the misgivings of those unsympathetic to the early Sufis, in particular, Ghulām Khalīl, the populist preacher in Baghdad (who is discussed by Harith Ramli in the present volume) who accused the city’s nascent Sufi community of loving God rather than fearing him. But love became one of the defining concepts of Sufism, typified in the figure of Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 801) who is famously reported to have said that she worshipped God not because she feared his fire or because she desired his Paradise. Her worship for God was due to her love and longing for him.⁶⁵ But by the time of Ghulam Khalil’s inquisition in 877–878 it was already too late to prevent the growth and development of a love-based devotionism. This is not to say that asceticism and renunciation died or faded away, as forms of such piety remained important components of Sufi activity, and other kinds of devotional Islamic lifestyles.

This introduction scratches only the surface of a period of Sufism about which very little is known, partly due to the paucity of sources. Much more research is required on issues such as similar movements outside of Arab areas, including those originally based in Khurāsān, namely, the Malāmatiyya and the Karrāmiyya,⁶⁶ the role and participation of women during this period,⁶⁷ the influence of Shi‘ism,⁶⁸ the relationships with the Sunni schools of Law, and the various

psychological conflicts, diverse personalities and relationships that existed among the early Sufis. It does seem clear that what is commonly regarded as Sufism was an umbrella term for an incredibly wide and complex pious movement, seeking an interiorised understanding of Islam that brought the Divine intimately close to the believers.

Despite serving as a brief introduction, this chapter provides a springboard that enables readers to proceed with subsequent chapters that investigate the great early thinkers (Muḥāsibī, Junayd and Bisṭāmī), and those of the classical period (Ghazālī, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, Ibn ‘Arabī and Rūmī), when Sufism mushroomed and became widespread and popular throughout the Islamic world among all sectors of society. The choice of these individuals is not arbitrary. Muḥāsibī, Junayd and Bisṭāmī were three of the most influential pietists and “Sufis” of the eighth/ninth century but for very different reasons, as should become clear from reading the next three chapters.

Subsequently the focus is on the towering figure of Ghazālī whose works, whether philosophical or ethical, are generally infused with an interiorised understanding of Islam. His attempt to create space for a Sufism within the lives of the believers is evident within both his four-volume *magnum opus*, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (“The Revival of the Islamic Sciences”) and also in his lesser studied Persian works, and it is evident in his practical adoption of Sufism, which led to him abandoning the most prestigious teaching position in the Islamic world. Yet his version of Sufism does not reach the same flights of ecstatic pleasure that are contained in the writings of the subsequent three individuals: ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, Ibn ‘Arabī and Rūmī who are perhaps three of the most enjoyable Sufi authors to read. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt has a certain style and intimacy of writing that leaves the reader believing that the message is directed specifically at him or her, having been whispered gently into the ear. It is difficult to put ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s works down, especially his Persian masterpiece *Tamhīdāt*. And indeed, the chapter on ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt in this

book is indicative of the Sufis' concern to base their worldviews on the Qur'ān. For very different reasons Ibn 'Arabī is a master who bewilders his readership with the sheer breadth of his knowledge of Islamic sciences, and the ability to breath new meanings into them. And William Chittick observes that his work reflects "a vast synthesis of the basic fields of learning, including Quran, Hadith, language, law, psychology, cosmology, theology, philosophy, and metaphysics."⁶⁹ He is not an easy read, but his influence upon Sufism in particular and Islamic sciences in general cannot be underestimated, typified by an attempt to ban his works in Egypt in 1979.⁷⁰ And likewise, the teachings of Rūmī are considered by Muslims to be grounded in the Qur'ān, as the well-known verse says, "The *Mathnawī* of Mawlānā (Rūmī) is the Qur'ān in Persian. How can I describe him? He is not a prophet but he has a book!"

The subsequent chapters of the first section examine specific themes that were significant for early Sufism (and indeed, for the later period too). For example, the chapter on "Early Sufism and its Opponents" illustrates the kinds of difficulties faced by the movement and why the search for legitimation in its origins became crucial. Linked to this is the chapter on gender, more specifically female participation. The early Islamic community arguably had debates about roles for women, and Sufis were also engaged in this conversation. Examining the manuals from the classical period demonstrates why and how women could either be included or excluded from the tradition, a feature that continues in some Islamic communities today. The subsequent three chapters on travelling, Qur'ānic ethics, and love and divine beauty help to explain how Sufism was propagated and was able to expand throughout the Islamic world by the end of the thirteenth century, a period that witnessed the blossoming and flowering of the movement in ritual, theoretical and literary ways, and enjoyed widespread popularity.

¹ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 12–13; See also E. Ohlander, “al-Junayd al-Baghdādī” p. XX n. 1 in the present volume for a more detailed references on this point.

This is not to say that there were other pious movements at the time of Junayd (and after), which did not have and did not seek to have any kind of linkage with him.

² See Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, *A Collection of Sufi Rules of Conduct*, trans. and intro. Elena Biagi (Cambridge: Sufi Books, 2011), p. 2.

³ Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, trans. Alexander D. Knysh (Reading: Garnet 2007), p. 3.

⁴ The term used by Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 26.

⁵ Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb of Al-Hujwiri*, trans. R.A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1911), p. 44; the same saying is reported by Sulamī and Anṣārī (see Gerhard Böwering, “Fūšanjī Heravī, Abu’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* X, fasc. 3, (2000), pp. 230–231.

⁶ Other Sufis reported similar ways to perceive “Sufism.” See, for example, Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, pp. 288–289.

⁷ See the chapter by Abuali in this volume. The investigation into the origins of the Sufi gown deserves a thorough study to itself. Western academics have tended to link the gown to the influence of Christian monks who lived in the Near East in the seventh century (see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 35). Schimmel is a little circumspect and even judiciously uses the word “possible” with reference to the connection with Christian monks. It should be noted that Muslims of this early period of Islamic history made connections of the woollen cloak with Christianity, see Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 14–15. For the claim that the term has a Christian origin during the second half of the eighth century around Baghdad, see G. Ogén, “Did the term *Sufi* Exist before the Sufis?” *Acta Orientalia* (Copenhagen) 43, (1982), pp. 33–48.

An alternative theory holds that wearing wool in the Umayyad period (661–750) was associated with social debasement, as these garments were worn by criminals who were paraded in the streets. It is easy to see how such sartorial preferences might have dovetailed into the worldview of renunciants and repentants. (See Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life* (London: Hurst, 2007), p. 28. See also an important discussion in Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, pp. 19–21.)

⁸ Schimmel speculates that the inspiration behind the woollen gown may have been from Christian ascetics. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 35.

⁹ *Kashf Al-Mahjūb of Al Hujwiri*, p. 30. To Hujwīrī's lexical discussion we may add offered by al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050) who saw similarities between "Sufī" and *sophos*, the Greek for wise man. (See S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 114.)

¹⁰ Seventy-eight definitions of Sufism and Sufī from the earliest masters (from the ninth century to the tenth–eleventh centuries) were collected by Nicholson later sources. (Care must be taken in assessing these as they reflect the prejudices and concerns of the compilers that Nicholson used, for example, Qushayrī, ʿAṭṭār, and Jāmī, that is, Sufis from the eleventh–fifteenth centuries.) See R. A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 32.2, (1906), pp. 333–348. Carl Ernst considers Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Sulamī "a good choice" as the formulator of the concept. Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), p. 20.

¹¹ Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism," p. 333. For a full study of Tustarī see Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision in Classical Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).

¹² Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, p. 24.

¹³ Cited by Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism," p. 329.

¹⁴ On repentance prior to "Sufism" see Gerhard Böwering, "Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy," *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, eds. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 45–67. See also Atif Khalil, *Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism* (Albany: SUNY, 2018), a work that looks at the concept from the eighth to eleventh centuries.

¹⁵ Christopher Melchert, "Origins and Early Sufism," *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 3.

¹⁶ His location in Syria and the use of the term "Sufī" is reported by ʿAbdallāh Anṣārī (d. 1089). See A.G. Ravan Farhadi, *Abdullah Ansari of Herat: An Early Sufi Master* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), p. 47. Sarraj (d. 988) claimed that the term "šūfī" was known in the lifetime of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), (see *al-Lamaʿ fī al-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson, trans. into Persian by Mahdī Mujtabā (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 2002–3), p. 80).

¹⁷ Melchert, "Origins and Early Sufism," p. 3.

¹⁸ Lloyd Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi: A Sufi Code of Honour* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 28.

¹⁹ Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, p. 8.

²⁰ Studies that are worthy of mention include J. Chabbi, “Remarques sur le developement historique des mouvements ascetiques et mystiques au Khurasan”, *Studia Islamica* XLVI, (1977), pp. 26–38; Sara Sviri, “Hakim Tirmidhi and the Malāmātī Movement in Early Sufism,” *Classical Persian Sufism. from Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullah Publications, 1993), pp. 583–613. Sulamī, *La Lucidité implacable: épître des hommes de blame*, trans. Roger Deladrère (Paris: Arléa, 1991); Christopher Melchert, “Sufis and Competing Movements in Khurasan,” *IRAN* 39.1, (2001), pp. 237–247.

²¹ Melchert, “Origin and Early Sufism,” p. 6. See also Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 34. See also similar comments by Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Mediaeval Palestine* (Cambridge: HCMES 2008), p. 25.

²² On the Pact of ‘Umar see Mark R. Cohen, “What Was the Pact of ‘Umar? A Literary-Historical Study,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23, (1999), pp. 100–157.

²³ Victor Danner has surveyed this particular period in Islamic history. See his “The Early Development of Sufism,” *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (London: SCM Press, 1989), pp. 239–264. Some of his ideas are not convincingly argued, such as his attempt to distinguish the gnostics (who follow the way of knowledge from strictly ascetic types (*zuhhād*) and those who followed the way of love (*cubbād*)). He suggests that the *cubbād* were mystics, which of course begs the question of whether the gnostics were mystics too, and if so, what differentiated the two groups. Nevertheless, Danner’s attempt at the larger contextualisation of Islamic currents is useful.

²⁴ Also of interest is the relationship between the Mu‘tazītes and the Sufis. See Osman Aydinli, “Ascetic and Devotional Elements in the Mu‘tazilite Tradition: The Sufi Mu‘tazilites,” *The Muslim World* 97.2, (2007), pp. 174–189; Florian Sobieroj, “The Mu‘tazila and Sufism,” *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, pp. 68–92.

²⁵ On this institution see M. G. Balty-Guesdon, “Le Bayt al-ḥikma de Baghdad,” *Arabica* 39.2, (1992), pp. 131–150.

²⁶ See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi‘ism*, trans. David Streight (Albany: SUNY 1994), pp. 5–28.

²⁷ On the early ascetics see Mun‘im Sirry, “Pious Muslims in the Making: A Closer Look at Narratives of Ascetic Conversion,” *Arabica* 57.4, (2010), pp. 437–454.

²⁸ For Ḥasan al-Baṣrī see Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Mourad

claims that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī should be regarded at best as a mild ascetic, and that it is problematic to read anything mystical into his activities or writings.

²⁹ On whom, see Richard Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums: Sheiche des Ostens* [“Old Examples of Sufism: Sheikhs of the East”] (Berlin: Harrassowitz, 1996), pp. 135–282.

³⁰ Christopher Melchert, “Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* and Early Renunciant Literature,” *Violence in Islamic thought from the Qur’ān to the Mongols*, eds. Robert Gleave and István Kristó-Nagy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 49–69.

³¹ J. Chabbi, “Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād, un précurseur du ḥanbalisme (187/803),” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 30, (1978), pp. 331–345.

³² Of particular relevance see Gavin Picken, “Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī: A Study of Early Conflicting Scholarly Methodologies,” *Arabica* 55.3/4, (2008), pp. 337–361.

³³ Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 278.

³⁴ See Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, “Editorial Introduction: Sufism in Western Scholarship, a Brief Overview,” *Studies in Religion* 43/3, (2014), pp. 357–359.

³⁵ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 32. For a discussion of Renan and his Orientalist views, see the discussion by Atif Khalil in this volume.

³⁶ Ignaz Goldziher, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 116–166.

³⁷ E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1927), p. 134.

³⁸ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 134–135. Such sentiments suggest that the beliefs of people like Browne are complex, and moreover, his general and whole-hearted support for Iranian independence from the imperialist powers (Britain and Russia) demonstrate that the verbose rantings of Edward Said in his *Orientalism* need to be treated with caution.

³⁹ Duncan B. MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 184.

⁴⁰ Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism,” pp. 304.

⁴¹ On whom see Chapter 4 of the present volume.

⁴² Nicholson’s suggestion on this particular point was adopted in the second half of the twentieth century by the Oxford Professor, R. C. Zaehner, who elaborated on the fact that Baṣṭāmī’s religion guide bore the name al-Sindī

(indicating an Indian origin) (R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1960), p. 93. For a more comprehensive discussion on Zaehner and the debate around Baṣṭāmī see Lloyd Ridgeon, “Mysticism in Medieval Sufism,” *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon, pp. 125–149.

⁴³ Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism,” pp. 329–330.

⁴⁴ R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 160–161.

⁴⁵ Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989).

⁴⁶ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (Oxford: Routledge, 1950), p. 12.

⁴⁷ Of course, this depends on how influence and inspiration are assessed. So, some scholars might include here Ibn Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-zuhd wa ’l-raqā’iq*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd (Riyad: Dār al-mi’rāj al-dawlīyah, 1995). Ibn Mubārak is cited approvingly on several occasions in Qushayrī’s *Risāla*. Or Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, ed. Muhammad Zaghlul (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1994), or many among his other collections. Ibn Ḥanbal is included in Hujwīrī’s list of “Eminent Sufis of Later Times,” *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp. 117–118). Feryal Salem has summarised seven works in the *Kitāb al-zuhd* genre, all composed before the advent of Baghdadi Sufism. See her *Emergence of Early Piety and Sunni Scholasticism: ‘Abd Allah b. al-Mubarak and the Formation of Sunni Identity in the Second Islamic Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 129–138.

⁴⁸ Louis Massignon, “Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane,” [*Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clarke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press: 1997), p. 73].

⁴⁹ Massignon, “Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane,” p. 210. The validity of Massignon’s observation is clear with reference to the ideas of al-Kharrāz (d. 899) who made claims to God’s love, and the blurring of the God-man divide. See his *Book of Truthfulness (kitāb al-ṣidq)*, trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

⁵⁰ Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace*, p. 37. Needless to say, the quote begs the question of what specifically constitutes “Islamic orthodoxy.” On Ḥallāj’s death see Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), pp. 102–110.

⁵¹ Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, p. 19. Some scholars have disagreed with Massignon’s views. One notable example is R. C. Zaehner, who regarded Sufism as completely derivative of Christianity. (R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 160–161. Now, it is problematic to speak of

Western scholars as a separate category from Islamic scholars, because many of the best researchers are Muslims who work in Western institutions of higher education. Regardless of labels such as “Western” or “Islamic” some of the best short surveys of early Sufism include Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); a useful source that gives a selection of early primary material is Michael A Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

⁵² Christopher Melchert, “The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.” *Studia Islamica* 83.1, (1996), pp. 51–70.

⁵³ Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism,” p. 304.

⁵⁴ Melchert, “The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.,” pp. 62–63.

⁵⁵ Böwering, “Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy,” p. 53.

⁵⁶ Böwering, “Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy,” p. 64.

⁵⁷ See Sahl al-Tuatarī, *Tafsīr Tustarī*, trans. Annabel Keeler & Ali Keeler (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), pp. 75–76.

⁵⁸ The life and contribution of Ḥallāj was covered in extensive detail by Louis Massignon. See his four-volume work, *The Passion of al-Hallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁵⁹ See Martin Nguyen, “Sufi Theological Thought,” *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 331.

⁶⁰ Massignon, “Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane,” p. 95.

⁶¹ On this verse, see the Western, secular interpretation offered by F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 207–209.

⁶² See the comments of Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, p. 33

⁶³ Andrew Wilcox, “The Dual Mystical Concepts of Fana’ and Baqa’ in Early Sufism,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38.1, (2011), pp. 95–118.

⁶⁴ Sahl al-Tuatarī, *Tafsīr Tustarī*, p. 86. For the Baṣran school of Sufism, see Christopher Melchert, “Baṣran Origins of Classical Sufism,” *Der Islam* 82, (2005), pp. 221–240.

⁶⁵ See Rkia Cornell, *Rabi’a from Narrative to Myth: The Many Faces of Islam’s Most Famous Woman Saint, Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2019).

⁶⁶ See footnote 29.

⁶⁷ One of the most interesting works relating to women in the period of the ascetics and renunciants, and early Sufis is Sulamī's *Dhikr al-Niswa al-Muta 'abbidat as-Sufiyyat* (Remembrance of Believing Sufi Women), trans. Rkia Cornell in her *Early Sufi Women* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2001). See also Christopher Melchert, "Before *ṣūfiyyāt*: Female Muslim Renunciants in the 8th and 9th Centuries CE," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5, (2015), pp. 115–139.

⁶⁸ On this relationship, and the figure of Ja'far Ṣādiq (the sixth Shi'ī Imām) see Paul Nwyia, *Exegèse Coranique et Langage Mystique* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique 1970). See also *Spiritual Gems: The Mystical Qur'an Commentary Ascribed by the Ṣūfīs to Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/175)*, trans. and annotated by Farhana Mayer, (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011). The above work needs to read in conjunction with the judicious review of Hamid Algar, *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 8.4, (2015), pp. 507–511. Of particular interest in the relationship between Sufism and Shi'ism is the concept of the pre-existent column of light. In the Sufi tradition this dates back to at least the era of Sahl-i Tustarī (d. 896). See his commentary of Q. 7.172 (*Tafsīr Tustarī*, p. 77). In the Shi'ī tradition, the column of light appears in traditions recorded by Kulayni (d. 941). See S Husain Mohammad Jafri, "The Early Development of Legitimist Shi'ism with Special Reference to the Role of the Imam Ja'far al-Saqiq," PhD University of London (1966), p. 277.

⁶⁹ William Chittick, "The Anthropology of Compassion," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 48, (2010), <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/anthropology-of-compassion.html> (accessed 02 July 2019).

⁷⁰ *The New York Times*, "Egyptians Furious about a Ban on 12th Century Mystic's Work," March 15, 1979.