

Appendix One



THE SUFI TRADITION AND THE SUFI ORDERS

*Reflections on the Manifestation of Sufism
in Time and Space*

The earth shall never be empty of the "proof
of God."

Ḥadīth

On this path the saints stand behind and before,
Providing a sign of their spiritual station.
When they became aware of the boundaries of
their state,
They spoke of what is known and the person
who knows.¹

Maḥmūd Shabistārī

They extinguished a thousand candles,
Yet the gathering remains.

Popular Sufi saying



THE MEANING OF THE HISTORY OF SUFISM

With respect to the Garden of Truth and the means of reaching it within the Sufi tradition, the text of this book is now finished. But lest one think that what has been said thus far is contrived by me or someone else and has no roots in a tradition extending over centuries, it is necessary to say a few words about the historical unfolding of Sufism. This exposition can also be helpful to the many who are accustomed to learning about a subject through its history, although it is necessary to recall how important it is to escape the entrapment of historicism in order to understand a reality that transcends time and history.

The reality of Sufism, like all spiritual reality, is in its essence meta-historical, beyond the accidents of time and space, and what we have discussed in the earlier chapters of this book pertains to a tradition whose message transcends history and geography and at the same time extends over fourteen centuries and across lands as separated as Iberia and Java, Tataristan and Senegal. The metahistorical reality of Sufism has been manifested in many times and climes, among diverse ethnic groups and in numerous languages, without its essential reality ever becoming simply an accident of particular social and historical circumstances.

We live in a world in which the transcendent dimension of reality is negated by many prevalent philosophies, and therefore reality is identified with becoming and the domain of the temporal and the transient. Even religion, which is based on the reality of the Transcendent as well as the Immanent, is often reduced to its history, and this has been especially true since the nineteenth century. At that time historicism became dominant in Western philosophy, and later reactions to this historicism, such as the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, were not able to obliterate from the minds of most educated Westerners the habit of reducing any claim of truth to its history and making historical evidence the sole criterion for judging the validity of that truth claim.

This is the philosophical background most Western scholars of Sufism have brought to their study of it, reducing the reality of Sufism to its history—a history, moreover, that, as seen by them, is limited in scope, being based solely on written documents and impervious to the all-important oral transmission. They have for the most part neglected the famous Sufi poem:

The Book of Sufi is not black ink and words,
It is none other than a pure heart white like snow.

Consequently, since the nineteenth century, when Sufism began to be studied seriously in the West, all kinds of theories of its origin were posited. Some wrote that it came into being as a result of the influence of Christian monasticism, others as a result of Neoplatonism, and yet others of Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, while another group sought its origin in India. No one at that time, of course, bothered to ask the Sufis themselves. Such views of Western orientalist are just as absurd as claiming a non-Christian origin for Christian spirituality or a non-Jewish origin for the schools of Jewish spirituality and mysticism. It remains to the great credit of the foremost academic European authority on Sufism in the twentieth century, the French scholar Louis Massignon, and the British Islamicist David Margoliouth to assert that the roots of Sufism must be sought in the Islamic revelation itself. Yet this fundamental truth does not negate the possibility of one spiritual tradition borrowing symbols, metaphysical language for the formulation of inner spiritual experiences, and other manners of expression from another tradition. The fact that St. Teresa of Ávila based her idea of the seven castles of contemplation upon a work of the Baghdādī Sufi Abū'l-Husayn al-Nūrī does not make her any less of a Christian saint, just as the love of Hallāj for Christ does not make him a secret Christian.

In any case, the historicism that provides the framework of most Western studies of Sufism must be thoroughly rejected in order to understand the reality of Sufism as understood by the Sufis themselves. This does not mean, however, if a Western scholar has discovered a manuscript that shows that a particular work was not written by such and such an author but rather by another that this discovery must be rejected. Far from it! What it means is that the reality of Sufism cannot be reduced to its external history. This metahistorical reality has manifested itself in the lives of numerous saints and followers of various Sufi orders, in a vast literary corpus including some of the greatest mystical poetry ever written, in metaphysical and philosophical writings of premier importance, in music and other arts, as well as in social, economic, and political aspects of Islamic civilization. And it is this manifestation that constitutes the legitimate history of Sufism if viewed from its own

perspective. In the pages that follow I shall turn to at least some of the most significant figures, movements, and works of that history.

Before embarking on this task, however, it is important to recall that we are dealing with a tradition that has been followed over a vast area of the globe from major cities such as Fez, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Istanbul, Isfahan, Tus, Lahore, and Delhi to small villages in the Hindu Kush as well as in the forests of Senegal, from ports by seas and rivers in Sumatra to oases in the middle of the African desert. Also, there are many important Sufi figures who never wrote a word but left an indelible mark upon the hearts of their followers and are known and still venerated locally.

Another Sufi poem asserts:

After our death seek not our remains in the earth,
For our tomb is in the breast of the gnostics.

In light of this incredibly vast spiritual tradition it is not difficult to understand why there does not exist a thorough history of Sufism on a global scale even at the level of the study of only names, works, places of pilgrimage, and so forth associated with Sufism. This is true not only for European languages, but for Islamic languages as well. Some areas such as the Maghrib, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and Muslim India have been better studied than other places such as West and South Africa, but even areas that are better known still carry many unstudied treasures that continue to be discovered.

THE ORIGIN OF SUFISM

Metaphysically speaking, the origin of Sufism is none other than God Himself. The earlier chapters of this book should have made this truth clear, for how can a path lead to God if it does not come from Him? To summarize what we have already discussed, this origin must be sought in the Word of God, that is, the Quran, and in the inner reality of the Prophet, who received this Word and transmitted it to the world. Certain verses of the Quran have a direct spiritual and inward meaning, as already mentioned, while the Quran as a whole is considered to have inner or esoteric levels of meaning, as mentioned in a *ḥadīth* of

the Prophet. Moreover, many of the *ḥadīths* themselves, especially the sacred *ḥadīths*, some of which have been already cited, contain the basic teachings of Sufism. To these texts must be added the actual initiatic power (*walāyah/wilāyah*) that God bestowed upon the Prophet and that he disseminated among certain of the companions. The initiatic chain (*al-silsilah*) of every Sufi order goes back to the Prophet and through him and the archangel Gabriel to God. The reality of Sufism on the historical plane therefore starts with the Prophet, even if the name of this inner reality as *taṣawwuf*, or Sufism, was to come a century later.

THE EARLIEST SUFIS

After the Prophet, the most important figure in Sufism is 'Alī (d. 661), who was the main inheritor of the esoteric teachings that emanated from the founder of Islam as well as of the power of *walāyah/wilāyah*. That is why he is as revered among Sunni Sufis as he is among Shi'ites, for whom he is the First Imam. There are many stories in traditional sources about 'Alī's leading a simple ascetic life, being the great champion of justice, having unbounded love for God and the Prophet, considering the primacy of truth in all aspects of his life, and other spiritual matters associated with his remarkable life. These stories in themselves demonstrate why he was and is so revered by Sufis. For example, there is the story that just before a battle that was to determine the whole future of the young Islamic community, when 'Alī was already on his horse and ready to march, one of his companions came toward him and asked, "'Alī, what is the truth?" One of 'Alī's lieutenants told the person who had posed such a question that this was not the time for it, whereupon 'Alī said that he would answer this question immediately because it was precisely the matter of truth for which they were going to battle. 'Alī then made one of the most profound discourses on the metaphysical meaning of truth to be found in the Islamic tradition. One cannot but be reminded of the responses of Krishna to Arjuna on the field of battle as recorded in the Bhagavad Gita.

'Alī's discourses, sermons, and letters were later collected in a book called *Nahj al-balāghah* (*Path of Eloquence*), which remains widely read to this day. His words and his life based on virtue and marked by sanctity have continued to inspire Sufis over the ages. Some Sufi orders such as the Baktāshī have gone in fact to the extreme of practically

divinizing 'Alī. Abū Bakr, the first caliph (d. 634), is also considered by certain Sufi orders to be in the chain linking them to the Prophet, but his role in Sufism is not nearly as central as that of 'Alī.

Contemporary with the Prophet are a few other figures whom Sufis consider their spiritual ancestors. One of these is Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 652–53), who lived a very ascetic and simple life combined with great humility. An important transmitter of *Ḥadīth*, he was compared in his spiritual and external poverty to Jesus. His contemporary Salmān al-Fārsī (d. circa 656) was a Persian who represents the prototype of a Persian Muslim. Having dreamed of meeting the veritable Prophet, he left his hometown of Isfahan and set out for Syria. He was sold into slavery and brought to Arabia, where the Prophet saw him. He was made free and became a member of the household of the Prophet. He later joined 'Alī in Iraq, where he died and where his tomb near Baghdad is to this day a famous site of pilgrimage, although other sites have also been mentioned as his tomb. Salmān is one of the founders of Sufism and spiritual chivalry (*futuwwah*), and he even plays a role in the esoteric hierarchy of certain sects in the Islamic world.

Another contemporary, Uways al-Qaranī from Yemen, who also joined 'Alī in Iraq and died in the battle of Ṣiffīn in 657, never met the Prophet but became a Muslim from afar. He is the most famous of all Sufis of Yemen and the founder of a special spiritual strand in Sufism called Uwaysī. This strand is associated with men and women who are Sufis but do not have a human master. They are led by members of the invisible hierarchy of the Sufi cosmos or by the prophet Khidr. Many major figures in the history of Sufism, such as Abū'l-Ḥasan Kharaqānī in Khurasan and Aḥmad Sirhindī, have been Uwaysī.

Of course, along with 'Alī, these figures are perhaps the most eminent of those around the Prophet who were associated with the reality that soon became known as Sufism. These men, and especially 'Alī, play an important role in the subsequent unfolding of the Sufi tradition over the centuries down to our own day.

The next generation of figures of early Sufism are called the “followers” (*tābi'ūn*), those who lived in the second half of the seventh century, and among them none is more important than Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), who was endowed with a long life, during which he instructed several generations of students in both the religious sciences and what was soon to become known as Sufism. This great patriarch of *ṭaṣawwuf*,

who was born and brought up in Medina but later moved to Basra, gave moving sermons and uttered sayings in eloquent Arabic that have been quoted in many later works. Among his well-known sayings is, "Exist in this world as if you had never set foot here, and in the next world as if you had never left it." He also wrote a number of letters, including a particularly important one on spiritual chivalry. The message of Ḥasan was otherworldliness, abstinence, poverty, and reverential fear of God, although he also spoke of the knowledge and love of God, which he contrasted with love and knowledge of the world. He is at the beginning of the ascetic phase that characterizes the first epoch of Sufism associated with Mesopotamia.

During the late seventh and eighth centuries, as the Islamic community became wealthy and many turned to worldly pursuits, the early Sufis acted as the conscience of the community, calling the faithful back to the simple and pure life of early Islamic society. This period is marked by strong ascetic tendencies, as seen also in the life of Ḥasan's student, 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. 794). Among other leading figures of Sufism of this period in Iraq one can mention Ḥabīb al-'Ajamī (d. 737), who was a disciple of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Dā'ūd al-Tā'ī (d. 777), who was Ḥabīb's disciple and who like Ḥasan left a deep impression on later Sufism.

It is not possible to discuss this period without mentioning the name of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (d. 669–670), the older son of 'Alī, and the Second Shi'ite Imam. Unlike his younger brother, Ḥusayn, who chose the active life and who was martyred in Karbalā' in Iraq, Ḥasan soon retired from political life and led a quiet and contemplative life in Medina, where he died and is buried. In the oral tradition of Sufism, he is considered as the person who taught the esoteric interpretation of the Quran and sowed the seed of Sufism in the western lands of Islam.

Another descendant of 'Alī, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), played an even more evident role than Ḥasan in Sufism. Master of both the exoteric and the esoteric sciences, he trained many disciples in both domains. He also authored the first surviving esoteric commentary of the Quran, which served as prototype and model for the long tradition of Sufi commentaries upon the Sacred Text that have continued to appear in Arabic, Persian, and other Islamic languages over the centuries. It is interesting to note that while some of the sayings of Imam Ja'far are

expressions of pure gnosis (*ma'rifah*), the law of the school of Twelve-Imam Shi'ism, which constitutes the great majority of Shi'ites, is also named after him and thus called Ja'farī Law. He was also a teacher of Abū Ḥanīfah, the founder of one of the Sunni schools of law. Ja'far al-Šādiq was the Sixth Shi'ite Imam, accepted as such not only by Twelve-Imam Shi'ites but also by Ismā'īlīs, the other important branch of Shi'ism, and he is highly revered in Sunnism. He represents the unity of the inward and outward dimensions of Islam and was a preeminent authority in both.

More generally speaking, it can be asserted that while Sufism represents the main crystallization of Islamic esoteric teachings, these teachings are also found in Shi'ism. The first eight imams of Shi'ism are in fact also Poles or Axes of Sufism and appear in the initiatic chains of many Sufi orders. The Eighth Imam, 'Alī al-Riḍā, is buried in Mashhad in Iran, and to this day pious Shi'ites who seek a spiritual master often go on pilgrimage to his tomb to ask his help in finding an authentic teacher. The common origin and various forms of interplay and interaction over the ages between Sufism and Shi'ism in its gnostic aspect, or what Persians called *'irfān-i shī'ī* (Shi'ite gnosis), constitute in fact one of the most fascinating aspects of the Islamic tradition. Suffice it to say that although the paths to the Garden of Truth are found in the Islamic universe mostly within the tradition of Sufism, it is necessary to remember that there are also authentic means of access to that Garden through the inner dimension of Shi'ism, which, although not outwardly called Sufism by many authorities during the past few centuries, is nevertheless concerned ultimately with the same reality as Sufism. This truth is seen fully in the writings of the Shi'ite gnostic Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. after 1385), who spoke of Sufism and Shi'ism as constituting a single reality.

Coming back to the historical unfolding of the manifestations of the reality of Sufism, it can be said that in the eighth century, as other aspects of Islamic intellectual disciplines such as law, theology, and grammar became defined, codified, and delineated, the spiritual knowledge and means of access to it inherited from the Prophet also became clearly defined. It became known as *taṣawwuf* ("Sufism" in English), and it is said that the first person to be called a Sufi was an ascetic of Kufa by the name of Abū Ḥāshim (d. 767). Scholars, both Muslim and Western, have argued about the origin of this word. Some

have said that it comes from *ahl-al-ṣuffah*, people of the bench, who were outstanding companions of the Prophet who often sat on a bench in front of the Prophet's mosque in Medina. Others claim that it comes from *ṣafā*, meaning purity, and some have even tried to derive it from the Greek *sophia*. The most widely accepted view is that the term is derived from *ṣūf*, which means wool, since the early Sufis usually wore a long woolen garb similar to the present-day Moroccan *jallabah* and what the prophets and patriarchs of Israel used to wear. This derivation also receives support from the fact that in early Persian the Sufis were called *pashmīnah-pūsh*, or "wearers of wool." Many Sufi masters have claimed, however, that like *Allāh*, the Name of God, *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, that is, the words "Sufi" and "Sufism", have no etymological root but that through the symbolic numerical value of the letters of *taṣawwuf*, similar to the Kabbalistic and Hassidic *gematria*, this term corresponds to *Divine Wisdom (al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah)*.

In any case, Sufism began to grow in the cosmopolitan center of Basra, where Arabs and Persians met and intermingled, as well as in other Mesopotamian cities such as Kufa. Characterized at first by strong asceticism, based on the fear of God, it laid the solid ground for the flowering of love and knowledge of God, which were to follow. In the same way that on the path to the Garden of Truth our souls must experience the reverential fear of God and the grandeur of His Majesty before they can experience love and knowledge of Him, the external manifestation of Sufism in history likewise demonstrates clearly the three phases of fear (*makhāfah*), love (*maḥabbah*), and knowledge (*ma'rifah*).

Already in the latter part of the eighth century we see the beginning of the unfolding of the cycle of love with the appearance of the first great Arab woman Sufi, Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah (d. 801), along with Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who was her contemporary. Born in Baṣra where she also died, Rābi'ah has been considered by some as a disciple of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, but this is most likely in reference to her following his spiritual teachings rather than being his direct disciple. The account of her life is mixed with many myths of spiritual significance but not based on historical verification. Over the centuries, in fact, she became the prototype of female sanctity in Sufism and was claimed by many groups. She even has several tombs purported to be authentic, all visited by pilgrims and all bearing the perfume of her sanctity. What is

known about her historically is that she was sold into slavery but was freed because of her exalted spiritual state. She shunned public life and lived as a celibate. Her function was to state the primacy of God over everything else, including Paradise. She was also a gifted poet and left behind some of the most beautiful verses of Arabic poetry on selfless Divine Love. One of her most famous poems states:

Two loves I give Thee, love that yearns,
And love because Thy due is love.
My yearning my remembrance turns
To Thee, nor lets it from Thee rove.
Thou hast Thy due whene'er it please Thee
To lift the veils for me to see Thee.
Praise is not mine in this, nor yet
In that, but Thine is this and that.²

Although more or less a recluse, Rābi'ah did teach Sufism and had disciples, the most famous among them being Ṣufyān al-Thawrī (d. 778) and Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 809) from Khurasan, who spoke so profoundly about reliance upon God (*tawakkul*) and was also the first Sufi to discuss the spiritual states while emphasizing “the light of the pure love of God.”

Before turning to the schools of Baghdad and Khurasan, it is important to mention a ninth-century figure who did not belong to either school, Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm, known as Dhū'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. circa 861). An Egyptian Sufi who traveled to Baghdad and was also known as an alchemist and philosopher, he not only spoke of the love of God and called Him the Beloved but was also the first Sufi to develop the theory of gnosis, or *ma'rifah*. He also developed the theory of annihilation (*al-fanā'*) and subsistence (*al-baqā'*), discussed above, on the basis of Quranic teachings. Like Rābi'ah, Dhū'l-Nūn was an accomplished poet who left behind many beautiful poems, usually with the theme of the love of God, and also prayers that have echoed over the ages. In one of the most famous of these prayers he says:

O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the
rustle of the trees, the splashing of the waters or the song

of the birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of the thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity, and a proof of Thy Incomparability, that Thou art the All-Prevailing, the All-Knowing, the All-True.³

Some have considered Dhū'l-Nūn as the first expositor of the doctrinal formulation of Sufism usually associated with the name of Ibn 'Arabī, who often cites Dhū'l-Nūn in his works. Dhū'l-Nūn, this extraordinary figure of early Sufism, returned to Egypt, where he died. His tomb with its mysterious vertical black tombstone is still found in one of the old and less visited quarters of Cairo.

THE SCHOOL OF BAGHDAD

One does not know what has befallen the holy sites of Baghdad after the recent tragedies that have occurred in this historical city. Until a few years ago, however, the older quarters of the city were dotted with tombs of early Sufi saints, such as Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 910), along with many of his contemporaries and disciples and of course 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), whose mausoleum dominates the city along with the shrine of the Seventh Shi'ite Imam, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, who was also a Pole of Sufism. (The Pole [*al-Qutb*] in Sufism refers to the central figure of the esoteric spiritual hierarchy that rules over the spiritual domain during each generation.) This galaxy of tombs of some of the greatest Sufi saints points to the importance of Baghdad as a center of Sufism going back to the ninth century, when what later authorities called the School of Baghdad was established.

Many place the origin of this school in the teachings of Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 815), who was himself a disciple of the Imam 'Alī al-Riḍā (d. 817). Ma'rūf had great influence not only in Baghdad but also in the later history of Sufism elsewhere. He spoke especially of the state of contentment (*riḍā*) and its importance in the spiritual life. His most famous disciple, Sarī al-Saqatī (d. circa 867), developed further the theory of states and stations, which we have already discussed, as well as the meaning of Unity (*al-tawhīd*), the central doctrine of Islam, which was more fully developed by his nephew Junayd, the central figure of the School of Baghdad. Another student of Sarī al-Saqatī, Abū Bakr al-Kharrāz (d. 899), who dealt in depth with the meaning of

tawhīd, was also a master of Junayd. It was Kharrāz who asserted that only God as the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) could utter “I” in the deepest sense of the meaning of “I,” and it was this doctrine that was celebrated by Junayd’s student, Maṣū̄r al-Ḥallāj.

One cannot discuss this early period without mentioning another eminent Baghdādī figure, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857), who was an authority in both theology and Sufism. Born in Basra, he was influenced by the teachings of Ḥāsan al-Baṣrī. Al-Muḥāsibī was instrumental in the development of the technical language of Sufism and is famous for his method of constantly examining one’s conscience and psychological states. He is also particularly known for his profound discussions of hypocrisy and means of curing this subtle sickness, with which so many souls are afflicted, often without being aware of their condition.

Let us now turn to the central figure of the School of Baghdad, Abū’l-Qāsim al-Junayd. He was so honored by the other saints of Sufism that he was given such honorific titles as “Master of the Group (of Sufis)” and the *Shaykh*, or spiritual master, of *shaykhs*. A few of his treatises are extant, dealing mostly with gnosis, and many of his sayings were preserved in later compilations. But what is most important about Junayd is that he marks the synthesis of earlier Sufism and the beginning of a new phase in its history. With him, Sufism became more organized to the extent that some refer to the Junaydiyyah Order, although the organized Sufi orders, to which we shall turn soon, did not come into being until over two centuries later.

There was a remarkable cluster of eminent Sufi figures around Junayd, some his friends, companions, and contemporaries and some his disciples. In this circle one can mention Abū’l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 907), a friend of Junayd and again a great poet. In his *Maqāmāt al-qulūb* (*Stations of Hearts*), Nūrī analyzed the psychological states of the soul in relation to the human heart. He described the various stations of the soul in its contemplation of God as seven citadels, and as current scholarship has shown, this symbolism served as inspiration for the seven castles of St. Teresa of Ávila’s *Interior Castles*. Nūrī also spoke of the garden of the heart, and through him the image of the heart as the interior garden became prevalent in Sufism.

This great troubadour of the love of God is known for numerous ecstatic poems, such as:

I would, so overflowing is my love for Him,
Remember Him perpetually, yet my remembrance—
Wondrous to tell—is vanished into ecstasy,
And wonder upon wonder, even ecstasy,
With memory's self, in nearness-farness vanished is.⁴

Hallāj is perhaps the best-known Sufi figure associated with the School of Baghdad and one of the most famous of all Sufis. Furthermore, thanks to the Herculean efforts of Louis Massignon, who wrote a monumental work titled *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, in which he compares his death to that of Christ (hence the word *passion* in the title), Hallāj became the best-known Sufi in Western academic circles. This is somewhat unfortunate because the life and destiny of this great master were truly exceptional and must not be taken as the norm for the life of Sufi saints and sages in general.

Like many other Mesopotamian Sufis and members of the School of Baghdad who were of Persian origin, including Ḥabīb al-'Ajāmī, Junayd, and Nūrī, Ḥallāj hailed from Persia and was in fact born in the province of Fars in present-day southern Iran. It is therefore even more remarkable that he should be such a great master of Arabic poetry to the extent that many have considered him, along with 'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn 'Arabī, as the most outstanding Sufi poet of the Arabic language. In any case, Ḥallāj grew up in Wasit and Tustar and attached himself early in life to Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896), with whom he journeyed to Basra. Later he went to Baghdad, where he became a disciple of Junayd, but because of Ḥallāj's audacious theophanic sayings (*shathīyyāt*), of which the most famous is *anā'l-Ḥaqq* ("I am the Truth"), many other Sufis opposed him for not being careful enough in divulging the divine secrets to the public at large. And so Ḥallāj set out for Khurasan, where he stayed for some five years. He also made the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) twice and traveled to India and Central Asia. Through these long journeys he gained many disciples and was known as a man with miraculous powers, such as healing the seriously ill.

Upon completing a third pilgrimage to Mecca, Ḥallāj returned to Baghdad, where he bought a house and decided to settle. He was, however, arrested and imprisoned in 912 on the charge of propagating heretical ideas. He became victim to political machinations at the

Abbasid court and was finally put to death in 922 on the gibbet. He faced his death cheerfully as the means of realization of Divine Love, and it was then that he composed one of his most famous Sufi poems, which begins with the line:

Kill me o my trustworthy friends,
For in my being killed is my life.⁵

It was the destiny of Ḥallāj to divulge esoteric teachings in order to restore a balance between the esoteric and the exoteric, and he paid for this act with his life, something very rare in the history of Sufism. Later generations recognized his greatness and echoed his assertion “I am the Truth” in a thousand and one ways. In fact no phrase outside of the text of the Quran has had such a profound impact and continuous usage among Sufis as the Ḥallājian *anā’l-Ḥaqq*, which expresses the highest doctrine of Unity by pointing out that only God can say “I” and that this Divine Reality resides at the center of our being and is none other than the Truth. Just to give an example of Ḥallāj’s influence, in one of his most beautiful poems Rūmī says:

Before there was in this world the cup, wine and grape,
Our soul was drunk from the everlasting wine,
From the days of the pre-eternal covenant we were beating the
drum of “I am the Truth,”
Before there was this commotion and calamity of Maṣṣūr.

The Divine “I” resides at our center now as it did at the time of Ḥallāj and will do so as long as human beings continue to walk on the earth. That is why the cry of Ḥallāj, *anā’l-Ḥaqq*, continues and will continue to reverberate in the souls of those on the Sufi path, men and women who seek the Truth, as it has done during the past millennium.

Other important Sufis, such as Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 945), continued to appear in Baghdad, but in a sense the death of Ḥallāj marks the end of a period that witnessed some of the greatest saints of early Islam, those who laid the foundation, along with masters of the School of Khurasan, of later Sufism.

THE SCHOOL OF KHURASAN

Baghdad was an important but not the only center of Sufism in the eighth and ninth centuries. Khurasan, which at that time embraced a large area including the present-day province of Khurasan in Iran, northern Afghanistan, and parts of Central Asia, also became a center of Sufism and vied in importance with Baghdad and other areas in Iraq. Khurasan produced so many Sufi saints that there developed a saying among later Sufis that while in other areas if one plants a seed it grows into a tree, in Khurasan it grows into a saint. Also it was here that Persian Sufi literature developed, a literature that transformed the religious and cultural map of much of Asia from western China to Bengal and indirectly Southeast Asia.

One of the first notable members of the School of Khurasan was Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. circa 790), who was originally a prince, like Gautama the Buddha, and like him abandoned the life of the court to devote himself fully to the spiritual life. Similar to the early Sufis of Mesopotamia, Ibrāhīm was an ascetic devoted to the life of poverty and renunciation of the world based on reliance upon God. In fact, he became the proverbial prototype of the Sufi ascetic. And yet Junayd called him "the key to the esoteric sciences." Ibrāhīm spoke not only of the renunciation (*tark*) of the world, but also the renunciation of this renunciation (*tark-i tark*), and finally indifference to the world. His contemporary, Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 803), was also an eminent Khurāsānī saint known for his asceticism, as was another contemporary, Shaqīq al-Balkhī, whom I mentioned earlier.

The School of Khurasan was known, however, primarily for its emphasis upon intoxication through Divine Love. This is seen in the greatest early figure of this school, Bāyazīd al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 874), one of the supreme saints of Islam, who became the symbol of Sufism all over the Islamic world. Although he lived in Khurasan and died in Baṣṭam in that province, where his tomb in that small town is still visited by pilgrims and the room in which he made his spiritual retreats (*khalwah*) is still preserved, there are places dedicated to his memory from the Maghrib to Bengal. This incredible figure, who left such an indelible mark upon the whole of the Sufi tradition, was the first to speak of his own spiritual ascent (*al-mi'rāj*), based on the model of the Nocturnal Ascent of the Prophet.

Bāyazīd left behind many audacious sayings, for example:

As soon as I attained to His Unity I became a bird with a body of Oneness and wings of Everlastingness, and I continued flying in the air of Quality for ten years, until I reached an atmosphere a million times as large, and flew on, until I found myself in the field of Eternity and I saw there the Tree of Oneness.⁶

He was known especially for his theophanic sayings (which are also translated as words of ecstasy), such as “Glory be unto me” in place of “Glory be to God,” or “There is no one in my garment except God.” These sayings along with similar sayings of other Sufis were compiled and commented upon later by a number of authors including the Sufi master from Shiraz, Rūzbahān Baqlī (d. 1209). In contrast to Ḥallāj, however, Bāyazīd was not oppressed by exoteric authorities and was in fact recognized as an exalted saint by those who had the privilege of being in his presence.

In discussing the School of Khurasan, one cannot neglect the master Sahl-al-Tustarī and his circle, although he did not hail from that province. Tustarī was concerned with the significance of *walāyah/wilāyah* and the inner meaning of the Quran. His writings on this subject are important in the long tradition of Quranic hermeneutics by various Sufis. His student Ḥakīm Tirmidhī from Khurasan was the author of a number of treatises on Sufism but is known especially for his *Khatm al-wilāyah* (*Seal of Sanctity*), which is a major early text on this subject. Tirmidhī was one of the first Sufis to discuss doctrinal Sufism (*‘irfān*), which became so central with Ibn ‘Arabī. The former also developed the theory of the invisible hierarchy consisting of the Pole or Axis (*al-quṭb*), the Helper (*al-ghawth*), and other members of the hierarchy who help to sustain the spiritual activity of human beings here on earth in each generation.

Before leaving this period, it is important to mention that Sufism was spreading gradually at this time elsewhere, for example in Egypt, one of the main arenas of Sufi life during the past millennium, where the influence of both Baghdad and Khurasan could be seen. One of the most remarkable Egyptian Sufis of this period was Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī (d. 965). He must have possessed an exalted spiritual station for he reached a condition of standing or halting be-

fore God and being addressed by Him. These utterances are contained in the *Mawāqif* (*The Book of Spiritual Stayings*) and the *Mukhāṭabāt* (*The Book of Spiritual Addresses*) and are remarkable for their spiritual directness. Niffārī emphasized the importance of prayer and invocation and pointed out that knowledge itself can be a veil if it is not combined with the existential realization of that knowledge. In one of the addresses we read, "To Me belongs the giving: if I had not answered thy prayer I would not have made thee to seek it."⁷

Before going any further it is necessary to mention that the School of Baghdad was usually identified as that of sobriety (*sahw*) and that of Khurasan as that of intoxication (*sukr*). Actually, every person who has realized fully the truths of Sufism and has entered the Garden of Truth has experienced both intoxication and sobriety. It is impossible to experience the Love of God without becoming intoxicated, as it is impossible to have illuminative knowledge without sobriety. Nor are these two states to be equated simply with love and knowledge for there is intoxication in drinking the wine of gnosis and there is sobriety in beholding the beauty of the Face of the Beloved. When these two schools are characterized as those of sobriety and intoxication, it is a question of emphasis and spiritual style. It cannot be imagined that Bāyazīd, who is considered as the prototype of the intoxicated Sufi, was without the perfection of sobriety any more than one can imagine Junayd, the supreme example of sobriety, to have been devoid of the state of intoxication, even if he did not manifest it outwardly.

THE PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION AND SYNTHESIS

After over three centuries during which numerous Sufi masters had appeared on the scene, by the tenth century the need was felt to assemble their maxims and teachings along with accounts of their sanctified lives in collections that have remained as classical sources of Sufism to this day. These major works, written mostly by Khurāsānī Sufis, include the *Kitāb al-luma'* (*The Book of Shafts of Light*) of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988), which includes Sufi prayers, letters, aphorisms, and some hagiography along with the explanation of Sufi terminology; *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* (*The Doctrine of the Sufis*) by Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī (d. 990 or 994), which is particularly important for early Sufi doctrines; and the *Qūt al-qulūb* (*Nourishment of Hearts*) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996),

which was especially influential in later centuries and was studied by Ghazzālī and Rūmī. To this list must be added two major hagiographic works: the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyyah* (*The Classes of the Sufis*) of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021), which is an invaluable source for the history of early Sufism; and *Hilyat al-awliyā’* (*The Ornament of the Saints*) of Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣḥāhānī (d. 1037), which is a monumental work on Sufi hagiography consisting of many volumes.

Efforts at composing works synthesizing the teachings of earlier Sufis continued in the eleventh century. The most famous work of this genre is the *Risālat al-qushayriyyah* (*The Qushayrī Treatise*) by Imam Abū’l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1074), read widely to this day in Sufi circles and containing the definitive account of the states and stations that the soul experiences on its journey to the Garden of Truth. Qushayrī, who was also a theologian, jurist, and scientist, belonged to the chain issuing from Sulamī, as did his illustrious Khurāsānī contemporary, Abū Sa‘īd Abī-Khayr (d. 1049), who was one of the most influential figures of Sufism of his day to whom some Sufi quatrains in Persian are attributed.

Until now, all these major treatises were written in Arabic even if many of their authors were Persian. But a colleague of Qushayrī by the name of ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān Hujwīrī (d. circa 1071) wrote the first major work in Sufism in Persian with the title *Kashf al-mahjūb* (*Unveiling of the Veiled*), a work that has remained popular in Persia and India to this day. Hujwīrī migrated to Lahore, where he died and is buried. Known locally as Dādājī Ganjbakhsh, he is considered as the patron saint of the Punjab and his tomb in Lahore is a major center of pilgrimage in the Indo-Pakistani world. During the annual commemoration of his death it is said that over a million people come to receive his blessings.

Another contemporary, Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 1089), who remains the patron saint of Herat, also wrote extensively in Persian and, moreover, translated Sulamī’s work on the classes of Sufis from Arabic into this language. Anṣārī was also a commentator on the Quran and the author of one of the main masterpieces of Sufi literature, the *Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (*The Stations of the Travelers upon the Path*), written in Arabic, on which many later commentaries were composed. But his most popular work is his Persian *Munājāt* (*Supplications*), which are of high literary quality and display the highest purity of intention and sincerity. This work, which was appreciated even by Hindus in India, has become a mainstay of prayer literature in the Persian-speaking world. I can still recall vividly the recitation of some of these

supplications on the Tehran radio in the earliest morning hours during the fasting month of Ramaḍān. Here are a few examples:

O God, lift this veil from the way
And abandon us not to ourselves.

O God, from nothing Thou canst bring forth everything,
And amidst everything Thou dost resemble nothing.
Thou, the creator of the world.

O God, with Thy favor there is no place for refuge at
any threshold.
Ahead lies danger, and I have no way back.
Take my hand, for other than Thee I have no refuge.⁸

THE TWO GHAZZĀLĪS

The more public presence of Sufism through the appearance of major works as well as the continuous spread of Sufi practice led to a situation in which Sufism had to be more clearly defined in relation to other aspects of the Islamic religious and intellectual tradition. This event took place in the period that was a watershed in the history of Sufism, a period dominated by the towering figure of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) and, as far as the Persian world and Persian Sufi literature as well as many Sufi orders are concerned, his younger brother, Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1126).

After the Prophet of Islam, there is no figure in Islamic history about whom as much has been written in European languages as Abū Ḥāmid, and within the Islamic world itself he continues to be a figure of immense influence. Born in the city of Tus in Khurasan, Abū Ḥāmid and his brother, Aḥmad, were orphaned early in life and brought up in the household of a friend of their father, a friend who belonged to the Sufi tradition. Both brothers, therefore, experienced the reality of Sufism early in life, but they followed different paths yet ultimately not different goals. Abū Ḥāmid was a brilliant student and devoted himself to the study of Islamic Law and theology in Khurasan. Soon he gained great fame as an outstanding scholar and while still in his thirties was offered the chair of Shāfi'ī Law at the illustrious Niẓāmiyyah University in Baghdad, an offer that he accepted. There, while possessing fame,

respect, honor, and wealth, he fell into religious doubt to the extent that he became seriously ill. Instead of trying to conceal this doubt, as have many other religious authorities, Ghazzālī, who possessed great sincerity and truthfulness, gave up everything and disappeared from public view in quest of certitude, which he found in Sufism. For years he traveled, usually incognito, in Arabia, Palestine, and Syria, undergoing spiritual discipline. Finally he returned to public life but decided to return finally to Tus, where he taught a small number of choice students and where he died and is buried.

Some have called Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī the Islamic figure with the greatest spiritual and intellectual impact after the apostolic period. Certainly his influence was immense in Sunni theology, principles of jurisprudence, and even philosophy through his criticism of the Muslim Peripatetics. Here we are concerned only with his significance in Sufism where his achievements were immense. As a leading *‘ālim* or scholar in the religious sciences, he had the authority to legitimize Sufism within the exoteric dimension of Sunni Islam. To this day those in the Sunni world who seek to defend Sufism before the attacks of some exoteric scholars appeal to the writings of al-Ghazzālī and his authority.

Al-Ghazzālī also sought to revive Islamic society by breathing the spirit anew into Islamic ethics—reviving the ethics of Islamic society from within rather than through external regimentation, which is the method of so many so-called reformist movements in the modern world. To this end he composed a monumental work in Arabic consisting of forty books and entitled *Ihyā’ ulūm al-dīn* (*The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion*), which he himself summarized in his *Kīmīyā-yi sa’ādat* (*Alchemy of Happiness*), written in exquisite Persian prose. The *Ihyā’* is without doubt the most important work of Islamic ethics. In this book the breath of Sufism brings back to life the ethical teachings of the religion and the inner significance of rites and doctrines of Islam. This text remains popular to this day along with his *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl* (*Deliverance from Error*), the masterly spiritual autobiography that has been compared to the *Confessions* of St. Augustine.

If the *Ihyā’* was meant for the larger public, a number of treatises of al-Ghazzālī dealing with esoteric knowledge were meant only for the chosen few able to understand them. Among these the most famous is the *Mishkāt al-anwār* (*The Niche of Light*), which deals with the symbolism of light in the Quran and *Ḥadīth*. In this and other late works, Ghazzālī turned to a more doctrinal exposition of Sufism and gnosis,

preparing the ground for the School of Ibn 'Arabī, to which we shall turn in the next appendix. Ghazzālī also wrote important works on Sufi methods of the exegesis of the Quran, works that were very influential in the long tradition of Sufi commentaries upon the Sacred Text.

Although not a poet in the usual sense of the word, Ghazzālī did compose some fine poems. The following poem, which has become famous and was written originally in Arabic, is said to have been found after his death under his pillow:

Say unto brethren when they see me dead,
And weep for me, lamenting me in sadness:
'Think ye I am this corpse ye are to bury?
I swear to God, this dead one is not I.
I in the Spirit am, and this my body
My dwelling was, my garment for a time...
I praise God who hath set me free, and made
For me a dwelling in the heavenly heights.
Ere now I was a dead man in your midst,
But I have come to life, and doffed my shroud.'

The life of the younger brother of Abū Hāmid, Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī, is not as well known except that he was a few years younger and grew up in the same household as his brother; but in contrast to Abū Hāmid, Aḥmad turned directly to Sufism and is considered by many as the Pole or Axis (*quṭb*) of his day. He studied in Khurasan, where he became celebrated as a Sufi master and also preacher. He was devoted to Ḥallāj and was considered by the later Sufi tradition to have attained a higher rank than his brother in the esoteric hierarchy of Sufism. He also appears in the initiatic chain (*silsilah*) of many Sufi orders.

Aḥmad was not as prolific a writer as his brother, but he left behind a number of Sufi treatises, mostly in Persian. Of these the most important is the *Sawānīh* (*Inspirations from the World of Spirits*). According to the author, the Sufi journey beyond this world involves passing through three different levels of being or reality: the heart, the spirit, and the secret. The world of the spirit is, in his terminology, the intermediate level of reality where love of God manifests itself most fully. *Sawānīh* in Sufi terminology means in fact the spiritual inspirations experienced by the traveler on the path to God in this intermediary world.

The book therefore deals essentially with the metaphysics of love and in fact marks a new chapter in Sufi writings about love. The first chapter begins with the already cited Quranic verse, "He loves them and they love Him" (5:54), and the whole book may be said to be a commentary upon this verse. Written in poetic Persian prose, this work transformed Persian into almost a sacred language for expressing Sufi doctrines and experiences, symbolically of course, since Arabic is technically the only sacred language of Islam. In any case, in light of the fact that Sufi literature in Persian transformed the cultural and spiritual landscape of much of Asia, one understands the significance of Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī.

TWELFTH-CENTURY SUFISM AFTER THE TWO GHAZZĀLĪS

In the Islamic East

The twelfth century was the beginning of the establishment of the Sufi orders, with whose founders and history we shall deal shortly. But before doing so it is necessary to cite, albeit briefly, several major figures not associated with the well-known orders. In the eastern lands of Islam one can mention Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 1140), who traced his lineage back to Kharāqānī and Baṣṭāmī and who was a seminal figure of Sufism in Central Asia. In his teachings he combined classical Sufism with the teachings of the People of Blame (*Malāmatiyyah*), discussed earlier, and gained many disciples in Central Asia. One of his main disciples was Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 1166), who brought many nomadic Turks to Islam and is the father of Turkish Sufi literature. He is the author of the *Ḥikam* (Aphorisms), written in the Turkic dialect of what is known today as Uzbekistan, this being the first Sufi treatise in a Turkic language. His teachings also influenced the Baktāshīyyah Order, which had such a wide dissemination in the Ottoman Empire.

The other main disciple of Yūsuf Hamadānī was 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujduwānī (d. 1220), the founder of the famous *Ṭarīqa-yi Khwājagān* (The Order of the Masters), from which the Naqshbandī Order came into being. In modern times a number of occultists in the West have sought contact with what they believe are the remnants of this order in faraway places in Central Asia and northern Afghanistan.

One of the most exceptional and tragic figures of this period is another Hamadānī known as ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt (d. 1131). A disciple of Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī and a devotee of Ḥallāj, he became a famous scholar at an early age. By the time he was thirty years old, he was chosen as judge. And yet he fell afoul of some exoteric authorities and was put to death at the age of thirty-three. Along with Ḥallāj and Suhrawardī (Shaykh al-ishrāq), he is considered as one of the three most celebrated martyrs of Sufism, his case, like that of the other two, being an exception to the rule that the vast majority of Sufis have lived as respected and usually revered members of their communities. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt is, along with Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī, one of the early founders of doctrinal Sufism and theoretical gnosis. His *Tamhīdāt (Preludes)* and *Zubdat al-ḥaqā’iq (The Essence of Truths)* are among masterpieces of Sufi literature and have both a mystical and a philosophical significance.

Another seminal figure of this century, Shaykh al-ishrāq Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191) was, like ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, an outspoken defender of esoteric doctrines. Born in the small town of Suhraward in western Iran, from which the founders of the Suhrawardiyyah Order who were not related to him also hailed, the young Suhrawardī studied first in Zanjan and then Isfahan, where he entered into Sufism. Later he traveled to Anatolia and Syria, where he was caught in the political turmoil following the Crusades and was put to death in Aleppo. Shaykh al-ishrāq is one of the most important of Islamic philosophers and founder of a new school of philosophy, or theosophy in the original sense of this term, called the School of Illumination, or *ishrāq*, in which Sufism plays a major role. His masterpiece, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq (The Theosophy of the Orient of Light)*, bears testimony to this fact. He represents the most important encounter between Sufism and philosophy in Islam.

Certain other Muslim figures combined philosophy and Sufism, including a number of Andalusian philosophers, such as Ibn Masarraḥ (d. 931) and Ibn Sab’īn (d. 1269), but during later centuries it was especially in Persia, India, and to some extent the Ottoman world where such figures could be found. The most famous of later Islamic philosophers, Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640), was very much interested in the integration of philosophy and gnosis, and although he followed a different path, he was deeply influenced by Suhrawardī.

One cannot discuss twelfth-century Sufism without mentioning the Sufi master who was perhaps the most important in the School of

Shiraz, Rūzbahān Baqlī Shīrāzī (d. 1209). This great master, whom Henry Corbin, the twentieth-century French orientalist and philosopher and foremost Western authority on Persian Sufism and Islamic philosophy, calls one of the main *Fedeli d'amore* of Islam (the *Fedeli d'amore* being a circle in Florence during the Middle Ages devoted to the intense love of God, a current to which Dante belonged), wrote of the continuity between human love and Divine Love as well as between earthly beauty and the Beauty of the Face of the Beloved. He wrote a luminous commentary on the theophanic locutions or words of ecstasy of early Sufis, recorded his own spiritual visions in a unique work entitled *Kashf al-asrār* (*The Unveiling of Secrets*), and composed a monumental esoteric commentary upon the Quran. The work that epitomizes his views, however, is *'Abhar al-'āshiqīn* (*The Jasmine of Lovers*), which is one of the supreme testaments to Divine Love in Sufi literature.

There were needless to say also a number of notable Sufis in the Arab East at this time, but we shall deal with them in our treatment of the Sufi orders.

In the Islamic West

As a result of the authority and domination of religious life in the Maghrib (including Andalusia) by scholars ('*ulamā'*) who followed the Mālikī school of law (one of the four existing schools of Islamic Law in Sunnism), Sufism grew later in this area than in the East although in the past several centuries of Islamic history some of the greatest Sufi masters, who still followed Mālikī Law, and most powerful Sufi currents came from this region. In the early centuries Sufism in the Maghrib was deeply influenced by figures from the East. A case in point is al-Ghazzālī, whose influence in the Maghrib was so great that it even affected the political history of that area.

There is a site some fifty miles west of Marrakesh called Sidi Shākir, named after a companion of 'Uqbā ibn Nāfi', who in the seventh century conquered the Maghrib and, according to most historians, brought Islam to that region for the first time. The Berbers of the area believe, however, that both Islam and the reality of what later became known as Sufism were brought to that region, even before 'Uqbā came to that land, by Berbers who had gone to Medīna and were received by the Prophet. In any case the site of Sidi Shākir, located in Berber territory,

gradually became a great spiritual center where Sufis would gather from the whole of North and West Africa. Tradition among Berbers attributes the beginning of Sufism in the Maghrib to this site and, along with Berbers, to early Arab saints especially the two Mawlay Idrīses buried in Fez and near Meknes.

In any case, in the twelfth century we begin to bear witness to extensive Sufi activity and the appearance of important Sufi writings in the Maghrib; for example, Ibn al-‘Arīf (d. 1141) founded the School of Almeria in Andalusia and authored a famous treatise on spiritual ethics titled *Mahāsīn al-majālis* (*Beauties of Spiritual Gatherings*), which was also read in the East. Among other figures one can mention, Ibn Barraġān (d. 1151) carried out a metaphysical reading of the Quran, and Ibn Qasyī (d. 1151) even established a Sufi state in Algarve in southern Portugal.

As far as the twelfth century is concerned, the most important figure of Maghribī Sufism, called “the Junayd of the West,” was Abū Madyān Shu‘ayb (d. 1198) from Seville. This central figure of Sufism in North Africa traveled from his original homeland to Morocco and also to the east, to Baghdad, where he is said to have received initiation from ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the founder of the Qādiriyyah Order. He returned to Morocco, where he became the disciple of ‘Alī ibn Ĥirzihim (d. 1162) of Fez and there familiarized himself with the *Iḥyā’* of Ghazzālī, a work that he loved so much that he required his disciples to read it. He also became the disciple of a famous Berber master, Abū Ya‘zā Yalannūr (d. 1177), who had his Sufi center in the Middle Atlas Mountains. Many currents of Maghribī Sufism met in Abū Madyān, the patron saint of Tlemcen, and also many of the later spiritual currents in the Maghrib emanated from him. He left behind a few short treatises and some beautiful poems, which are still recited in Sufi gatherings in North Africa, especially the *Nūniyyah* (*Poem Rhyming in the Letter Nūn*), which begins with these lines:

The world confines us when Thou art absent from us,
And our souls abandon us because of desire.
Distance from Thee is death and nearness to Thee life,
Wert Thou to be absent [but the moment of] a breath we
would die.¹⁰

Like most Maghribī masters, Abū Madyan wrote little in comparison with many of the great masters of the East, but he left an indelible mark upon the most prolific of all Sufis, Ibn ‘Arabī, whom he never met. Abū Madyan’s most important direct disciple was perhaps ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 1228), the Pole or Axis of his time and the master of Abū’l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, to whom we shall turn soon. Ibn Mashīsh also wrote little and is best known for his supplication on the Prophet that is often recited to this day. His striking tomb on top of the Atlas Mountains is one of the most powerful spiritual centers in the Maghrib.

The confluence of the spiritual influences of the great masters of the twelfth century led to a remarkable revival of Islamic spirituality in the thirteenth century. Every religion includes periods of spiritual revival that mark a kind of return to the golden age of that religion associated with the time of the founder. We see that truth in Christian Europe coincidentally also in the thirteenth century, the age of figures such as St. Francis of Assisi, who was called “the second Christ,” as well as St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas. Such was also the situation in the Islamic world during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. This period may be said to begin with al-Ghazzālī and the founders of Sufi orders and includes such colossal figures as Abū’l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and his outstanding student, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1220), the two master Sufi poets of the Persian language, Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1220) and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), and the greatest Sufi poet of the Arabic language, ‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235), to name some of the major personalities.

As for Ibn al-Fāriḍ, he was an Egyptian who began as a religious teacher but soon turned to Sufism and commenced to compose verses that are considered as peaks of Arabic Sufi poetry. Among his most famous poems is the *Khamriyyah* (*The Wine Song*), which was emulated and commented upon by many later Sufis. His tomb in Cairo remains to this day a place of pilgrimage for lovers of God. It is especially a place that attracts those mesmerized by the incredible beauty of his verses that sing through several symbols of the Divine Love that transcends all finitude.

During the past eight centuries the Islamic world has been nourished mostly by the teachings and spiritual influence of the masters of

this period and has seen earlier Sufism mostly through their eyes. This was also the period of the formation of most of the major Sufi orders, to which we now turn.

WHAT IS A SUFI ORDER?

During the early centuries of Islamic history, Sufism was taught by masters who were surrounded by a circle of disciples but without a distinct organization and rules of conduct for the collectivity of disciples as a whole. The circle of Sufis (*al-ḥalqah*) was defined by the master and those who were trained individually by him or her. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, spiritual and social conditions changed, necessitating a more organized structure. The word *ṭarīqah*, or path to God, gained an added meaning as a brotherhood and sisterhood (women were also allowed as members) with a specific name, rules of conduct, distinct ritual practices, and different emphases. All the orders were nevertheless based on the inner teachings of the Quran and the spiritual model of the Prophet and were made possible through the transmission of initiatic power (*walāyah/wilāyah*) issuing from him and transmitted from master to disciple over the centuries. This chain is called the *silsilah*, and it is absolutely essential for the continuity, legitimacy and orthodoxy of a Sufi order.

A Sufi order is identified by a name derived usually from one of the names or titles of its founder, who received the inspiration and authority from Heaven to start that order. Orders can also have branches, and how these come into being is again based on spiritual and inner causes not evident outwardly. Some orders have survived in a vibrant fashion to this day after many centuries of continuous history; others have become dormant, and yet others have died out. The orders have their gathering (*majlis*, plural *majālis*) and usually their *zāwiyah* or center. Often the master resides in one of these centers, but not necessarily so. Each order has its own litanies (*wird*, plural *awrād*), use of music and sacred dance (*samāʿ*) (or is characterized by the lack thereof), forms of Sufi courtesy (*adab*) and rules of conduct, while the invocation (*dhikr*) is universal in all the orders although even here which Divine Names are invoked and in what sequence differ from one order to another.

In contrast to what many Western scholars wrote in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stating that Sufism was a medieval phenomenon,

many of the orders are still very much alive today. To seek to follow Sufism requires finding a functioning order and an authentic master, the only exception being the path of those who are guided by invisible figures of the spiritual world such as Khidr. So although the reality of Sufism is not limited to the Sufi orders today, for all practical purposes it is in the orders that one must seek the authentic teachings of Sufism.

The Sufi orders are sacred organizations and are therefore quite naturally hierarchical, the word *hierarchy* itself coming from the Greek and meaning "sacred rule and origin," which implies gradation. The supreme leader and master of an order is usually called the *shaykh* or *pīr*, although other titles are also sometimes used. Most orders, especially those that are widespread, usually have a number of direct and highest representatives of the *shaykh* who are usually called *khalīfah*, meaning vicegerent, or sometimes *nā'ib*, meaning representative. In many cases the *khalīfah* becomes later a *shaykh* himself or herself. In most orders there is also the *muqaddam*, literally the person who has priority, designated by the *shaykh* and like the *khalīfah*, given the permission to initiate people into the order. Then there are *imāms*, whose function it is to organize and direct *majālis* when higher functionaries are not present. This hierarchy does not, however, always coincide with the hierarchy of spiritual stations attained by members of an order, although the designating of functionaries is related to their advancement and spiritual attainment on the path.

THE MAJOR SUFI ORDERS

It is not possible to give an account here of all the Sufi orders stretching over an area from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the snowy mountain peaks of Central Asia to the tropical jungles of Africa. Our goal here is to say at least something about the major orders that have affected historically (and many continue to affect today) the lives of millions of Muslims throughout the world. To give some order to this exposition we shall go by region, beginning with Iraq, where in the twelfth century the first orders appeared. But since many orders spread beyond the area where they were founded, we shall treat their history in each case even beyond their land of origin.

Iraq

The most universal and oldest of all Sufi orders, in the sense of an organized community of disciples, is the Qādiriyyah, founded by the Persian scholar and saint 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, who was born in Gilan but at the age of eighteen came to study in Baghdad, where he became an authority in both Islamic Law and Sufism. He soon became the most luminous spiritual figure of his time, visited by even founders of other Sufi orders from near and far. In fact after the age of the companions of the Prophet, no figure in Islamic history has had the spiritual radiance of 'Abd al-Qādir as far as the whole of the Islamic world is concerned.

A sober Sufi and, like Ghazzālī, an exoteric as well as esoteric authority, 'Abd al-Qādir lived an ascetic life and did not marry until he was more than fifty years old, but then he did marry and had numerous children, who spread his *barakah* far and wide. Still today, his descendants play an important role in the life of the Qādiriyyah Order in many areas of the Islamic world. 'Abd al-Qādir also left behind a number of important Sufi treatises, including the celebrated *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (*Victories of the Invisible*), containing the text of some of his sermons. Translated into Persian by 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith of Delhi (d. 1624), this work became very popular in India. The Qādiriyyah spread throughout the Islamic world, especially from the fifteenth century onward, and there are *zawāyā* (plural of *zāwiyah*) of this order today from Morocco to Malaysia, from Central Asia to South Africa.

The central practice of the Qādiriyyah is the invocation of the Names of God (*dhikr*), and there is emphasis on knowledge and unveiling (*kashf*). And yet in many areas the Qādirīs became associated with extraordinary feats such as piercing their bodies with a spoke, walking on fire, eating sharp razors, and even cutting their stomachs. I shall never forget participating in one of their *majālis* in Sanandaj, capital of the Iranian province of Kurdistan. So extraordinary were the happenings I observed with my own eyes that it was difficult to believe what I was seeing. Such phenomena do demonstrate that there is more to the reality of the human state, including the body, and the world surrounding human beings than meets the eye, but such practices must not be identified with Sufism as such. In fact, most masters have opposed these practices, which take place in a state of Divine Attraction

and under the condition of the integration of the physical body into its subtle principle.

‘Abd al-Qādir was called the Pole (or spiritual Axis) of his age by Ibn ‘Arabī, and later Sufi history gave him the title of *al-Ghawth al-a‘zam* (the Greatest Help). Numerous miracles were attributed to him, and he figures prominently in later Sufi hagiographies, especially the *Nafahāt al-uns* (*Breaths of Familiarity*) of Jāmī (d. 1492). The tomb of ‘Abd al-Qādir in Baghdad has remained over the centuries the most important Sufi shrine of that city, which contains, as mentioned, the remains of so many Sufi luminaries. Until the recent turmoil in Iraq, pilgrims used to visit it from as far as Nigeria and Indonesia and lands in between.

A younger contemporary of ‘Abd al-Qādir, Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Rifā‘ī (d. 1182) from southern Iraq, an ecstatic Sufi with great love for animals, was active independently and also founded a major order, the Rifā‘iyyah, which, like the Qādiriyyah, spread over most of the Islamic world from its center in southern Iraq. Only some poems and prayers have survived from his pen, but his spiritual radiance continues to this day. Under the Ayyubid dynasty the order spread into Syria and Egypt and in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries among the Turks, who caused its dissemination in the Balkans and carried it across the Black Sea to the land of the Golden Horde. In fact, the Rifā‘iyyah was the most widespread of the Sufi orders until it was overtaken by the Qādiriyyah in the fifteenth century. In Egypt, however, it continued to have the greatest appeal and is still strong in that land.

The adherents of the Rifā‘iyyah have been known everywhere for their unusual feats while in a state of ecstasy, such as riding lions, eating live snakes, walking on hot coals, and plucking out their eyes without being hurt, in order to demonstrate their extraordinary powers. The order, however, is not defined by such practices, any more than is the Qādiriyyah, but is known rather by the Rifā‘iyyah’s emphasis upon invocation and other spiritual activities. Jāmī in fact calls such extraordinary practices of the Rifā‘iyyah aberrations from the Sufi path. The Rifā‘iyyah have a loud *dhikr*, which is like a howling sound, so that European travelers who first met its members called them the Howling Dervishes.

Another order founded in Iraq but whose founder hailed from Persia is the Suhrawardiyyah. Its founder, Abū Najīb Suhrawardī (d. 1168), was born and raised in the town of Suhraward in present western Iran but came to Baghdad to study. Beginning as a disciple of

Aḥmad Ghazzālī, he became a Sufi master, writing the famous *Ādāb al-murīdīn* (*Rules for Disciples*) for his followers. But it was his nephew Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar Suhrawardī (d. 1234), the author of one of the most popular handbooks of Sufism, *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif* (*Confessions of Divine Knowledge*), who is the real founder of this order. Given the title of *Shaykh of shaykhs* by the Abbasid caliph, he was highly respected as both theologian and Sufi master as well as patron of spiritual chivalry (*futuwwah*). He in fact initiated the caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn ‘Llāh into the order of spiritual chivalry, which is an order based on knightly or craft activities (like the Order of the Temple and original Freemasonry in the West) but related to Sufism.

He built the mother *zāwiyah* of the Suhrawardiyyah in Baghdad, where many famous people, including the Persian poet Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sa‘dī (d. 1292), came to receive initiation. The *‘Awārif* was translated into Persian and helped in the propagation of the order eastward. Branches of the order also spread in the Arab and later Ottoman worlds, but the greatest spread of the order occurred in India. This dissemination took place especially through one of the foremost saints of Multan, Bahā’ al-Dīn Zakariyyā’ Multānī (d. 1262), who was also the master of another celebrated Persian Sufi poet, Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d. 1284). The Suhrawardiyyah Order, which emphasized sobriety and strict adherence to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and explained Sufi practices completely in light of the Quran, was a predominantly aristocratic order that cooperated with government authorities. Many Muslim sultans of India were in fact its members. Some of the members of this order were also in contact with high-caste Hindus, many of whom they brought into Islam.

The Suhrawardiyyah Order was also influential in the creation of other orders. Two of Abū Najīb’s disciples became masters of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1220), the founder of the Kubrawiyyah Order. Also the Khāksār Order, which is popular in Persia to this day, developed from the Jalāliyyah branch of the Suhrawardiyyah. This order gradually disappeared from most of the area called the Middle East today but still survives in Iraq, its original center, and in India.

Persia and Central Asia

Most Sufi orders in Persia and Central Asia had their spiritual ancestry in Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī and the School of Khurasan, which produced so

many saints and Sufi poets over the ages. One of the earliest currents that turned later into an order was the Yasawiyyah, which originated with the Persian Sufi Yūsuf Hamadānī. The name of the order comes from Aḥmad Yasawī, who, as mentioned, was one of the earliest Turkic Sufis and played a major role in the conversion of nomadic Turks to Islam. This order was also associated with the *Malāmatiyyah*.

Soon thereafter, the Qalandariyyah Order appeared in the thirteenth century, founded by Jamāl al-Dīn Sāwajī (d. after 1223), which began in Persia and Central Asia but spread to India and elsewhere. Members of this order had a rough appearance, with unruly long hair and beards, and flouted habits of urban dwellers and the prevalent social etiquette. They lived mostly in the countryside, and some displayed psychic powers. In general there was much opposition to them even from some of the other Sufis. The *qalandars* gained some respect, however, when a Sufi poet from Azarbaijan by the name of La'ī Shāhbāz Qalandar (d. 1274) went to Multan and became one of the great Sufi saints of India. The begging bowl of the Sufis (*kashkūl*) is especially identified with this order.

One of the major orders of the history of Sufism is the Kubrawiyyah, founded by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1221). Born in Khwarazm, educated originally in the religious sciences, especially *Ḥadīth*, in Persia as well as in Egypt, he turned to Sufism and was initiated into the Suhrawardiyyah Order. Soon he became a master himself and founded the Kubrawiyyah Order in Central Asia. He gained many eminent disciples, such as Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī (d. 1219) along with his disciple Najm al-Dīn Dāyah (d. 1256) and the outstanding Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. Probably the father of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (d. 1231) was also his direct disciple. Among the early well-known figures of this order were also Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah (d. 1252–53), who was an Imami Shi'ite, and the very influential metaphysician and master, 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 1336), who was moreover a major Sufi commentator upon the Quran. Another notable member of this order is 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. after 1281), the author of many enduring Sufi works, and Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī (d. 1385), who played a major role in the spread of Islam and Sufism in Kashmir. The Dhahabiyyah Order, which is still very much alive in Persia and which produced one of the great twentieth-century saintly figures of that land, Waḥīd al-Awliyā' (d. 1955), is derived from the Kubrawiyyah. This order itself more or less died out in India and Persia but survives in the region of the Pamir Mountains.

The Kubrawiyyah have left many outstanding writings in both Arabic and Persian, starting with the magnum opus of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-jalāl* (*Aromas of Beauty and Preambles of Majesty*), and Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's *Mirṣād al-'ibād* (*The Path of God's Servants*). These and other works of the order reveal the particular interest of this order in examining the meaning of color symbolism and photism experienced on the Sufi path and the subtle centers within the human macrocosm. Altogether they placed great importance on visionary experiences.

Another major Persian order, the Ni'amtullāhiyyah, was founded by Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī (d. 1367), who although born in Aleppo, traveled to Persia, studied in Shiraz, and also journeyed to Samarqand in Central Asia. He later settled in Kerman, which henceforth became the center of the new order established on the basis of the old Ma'rūfiyyah circle. He wrote over 130 works related doctrinally to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī and had disciples in both Persia and India, where the Bahmanid king of Daccan became his disciple and upon the death of the master built a mausoleum for him in Mahan near Kerman. This site is one of the most beautiful in the Islamic world, combining the *barakah* of the saint with the beauty of nature as well as remarkable architecture and landscaping. The garden of this mausoleum is among the most outstanding in the Islamic world.

Although Shāh Ni'mat Allāh was a Sunni, the order soon became Shi'ite and spread throughout Persia. During the Safavid period it became a rival to the Ṣafawīyyah Order and was finally persecuted to the extent that many of its masters took refuge in Daccan and many of the ordinary members went underground. It was only after the fall of the Safavids that a great master of the order, Ma'ṣūm 'Alī Shāh (d. 1796), returned to Persia and, although eventually martyred, reestablished the order there. Since the nineteenth century the order has prospered in that country with several branches spread in different areas. It is without doubt the most widespread Sufi order of Persia today. During the Iranian Revolution of 1979 some of the masters of the order migrated to Europe, and since then this order has spread in both Europe and America and, through the London *khānqāh*, in West Africa.

After the Qādiriyyah and Rifā'iyyah Orders, no Sufi order has been so widespread and exercised such influence upon the life of the Islamic community as the Naqshbandiyyah. Founded by Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 1389), the order soon spread from China to North Africa.

Bahā' al-Dīn was born near Bukhara, where he also studied, where he founded the order, and where he died. Based on the earlier order, *Ṭarīqa-yi Khwājagān* (The Path of Masters), founded by 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujduwārī, the Naqshbandiyyah Order was essentially a Persian order with Turkish elements integrated into it. From the beginning, the order emphasized the observance of Islamic Law and sought to reform society by bringing rulers and others in authority into its fold. It has been also always a staunch defender of Sunni orthodoxy.

The order established itself firmly in Central Asia before spreading to the part of Persia that is today Afghanistan as well as to Syria. In the sixteenth century it spread to India and soon thereafter into China and the Malay world. It also spread extensively into the Ottoman Empire, among the Kurds in general, and in the Caucasus. The spread of the order was due to a large extent to the efforts of Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār (d. 1490), who was also a powerful social figure with great wealth. He was much devoted to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, to whom we shall turn in the next appendix, and also popularized the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī in Central Asia. Aḥrār had numerous disciples, none more famous than the "Seal of Poets" of the Persian language, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, a major Sufi poet and commentator upon Ibn 'Arabī. One of Jāmī's works, the *Lawā'ih* (*Gleams*), is the first Sufi text to be translated into classical Chinese.

The great luminaries of the Naqshbandiyyah Order are too many to name completely here. In India they include Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), who was also an Uwaysī and who founded the Mujaddidiyyah branch of the mother order and who is one of the major figures of the history of Islam in India; Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762), who is the most famous Islamic thinker that India has produced; and Mīrzā Maḥzar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1781), who strongly encouraged dialogue with Hinduism. Elsewhere one can mention Khālīd al-Baghdādī (d. 1827), who revived the order in Syria and Turkey, and some of the great masters of Daghistan such as 'Abd Allāh Dāghistānī (d. 1973). With the advent of Communism the Naqshbandiyyah Order was treated very severely but still survived the Soviet Union and remains active in Central Asia, Daghistan, Chechnya, and Tataristan as well as in the Balkans. It is also still powerful among the Kurds and in Afghanistan. The late grand *mufī* of Syria, Aḥmad Kiftaro (d. 2004), was a Naqshbandī, and the branch of Shaykh Nāzīm of Cyprus has spread to Europe and America.

A near contemporary of Bahā' al-Dīn by the name of Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardībīlī (d. 1334) from the northern Persian city of Ardibil also founded a Sufi order, called the Ṣafawīyyah, an order that changed the history of western Asia. In the late fifteenth century his followers gained political power in Azarbaijan, and in 1499 the young head of the order, Shāh Ismā'īl (d. 1524), declared himself king of Persia. With the help of Turkic soldiers, the Safavids established rule over a vast area including parts of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Iraq as well as present-day Iran. They declared Twelve-Imam Shi'ism the national religion of the country and established the foundation for the modern Iranian state. The order gradually died out, but it had considerable effect on the later history of several countries in the region and remains one of the most notable examples of the effect of Sufism upon the political life of the Islamic peoples.

India

India is a land in which Sufism has flourished exceptionally well and in many different forms during the past millennium. Islam itself was brought to India to a large extent by various Sufi orders, as one can see in the nature of Indian Islam. There are four major Sufi orders in India: the Qādirīyyah, the Suhrawardīyyah, the Chishtīyyah, and the Naqshbandīyyah. Three of these orders were founded in other regions but spread to India, often with distinctly Indian branches. The Chishtīyyah, however, is solely an Indian order even if its founder was a Persian.

The origin of this order goes back to Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236), who was born in the Persian province of Sistan but later studied in Khurasan and Baghdad, where he visited 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. Considering himself heir to the teachings of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Abū Sa'īd Abī'l-Khayr (d. 1049), this great master of Khurasan, Mu'īn al-Dīn, established the Chishtī Order, which at first spread in Khurasan and Transoxiana but survived only in India, where he finally settled and died. His tomb in Ajmer remains to this day one of the major sites of pilgrimage in the Islamic world.

Mu'īn al-Dīn was followed by a number of eminent Chishtī saints, who, along with Mu'īn al-Dīn himself, were instrumental in establishing Islam in India and whose *barakah* is palpable in that land to this

day. One can mention among them Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1235), who became especially popular in Delhi; his successor, Farīd al-Dīn Mas‘ūd “Ganj-i Shikar,” known popularly as Bābā Farīd (d. 1265), who held discourses with Hindu yogis on the nature of Ultimate Reality; his successor, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliya’ (d. 1325), who was the person most responsible for the crystallization of the Chishtī Order in northern India and whose mausoleum along with that of his disciple, Amīr Khusraw (d. 1325), the greatest Persian poet of India, remains to this day a very important center of pilgrimage; and his successor, Naṣīr al-Dīn of Awadh (d. 1356), another popular saint who suffered much in his lifetime for refusing to cooperate with the sultan on various schemes. The *khalīfah* of Naṣīr al-Dīn, Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥusaynī, known as Gīsū Dirāz (d. 1422), became the most famous Sufi saint of the Daccan. The order continued in strength during the Mogul period and was revived under Shāh Kalīm Jahānābādī (d. 1729); it continues its extensive activity throughout India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to this day. Also a branch of it came to the West in the early decades of the twentieth century and is still active in Europe and America.

The Chishtiyyah Order emphasized poverty and in contrast to the Suhrawardiyyah and Naqshbandiyyah kept away from political authorities. It mingled with low-caste Hindus and played a greater role in bringing Hindus to Islam than any other order. And yet some Chishtī masters, many of whom also had Hindu disciples, carried out dialogue with Hindus on the highest intellectual level, as a study of some of their preserved discourses reveals. The Chishtīs also were always deeply devoted to Sufi music. It is mostly they who transformed North Indian music into a major school of Sufi music. The sitar (meaning “thirty strings” in Persian) is said to have been invented by Amīr Khusraw, and to this day one can hear *qawwālī* at the tombs of the saints of this order. Many Chishtī *khānqāhs* in fact have their own musicians who can perform on the highest professional level. Their role in Indian music is somewhat similar to that of the Mawlawiyyah in Turkish music.

Besides the Chishtiyyah, a number of other specifically Indian orders also saw the light of day, although they were usually branches of earlier orders. One can mention, for example, the Firdawsiiyyah Order, an offshoot of the Kubrawiyyah and an order that spread in India and not elsewhere. The order is particularly known for the writings of one of its members, Sharaf al-Dīn Munyarī (Maneri) (d. 1381). His letters

to disciples and his *Malḡūzāt* (*Discourses*) are among the most popular Sufi works written in India. Another Indian order is the Shattāriyyah, which traces its teachings to Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq and Bāyazīd Bastāmī. Founded by Shāh 'Abd Allāh (d. 1485), it spread especially in Bengal and was also influential among the Mogul ruling class. The Mogul emperor Humāyūn is said to have belonged to this order. The order also spread to the Malay world through its members who lived in Mecca and Medina. It is also of interest to note that some Shattārī masters were interested in integrating certain yogic techniques into the practices of their order.

The Arab East and North Africa

We have already dealt with Iraq, where the first Sufi orders were established. It is now time to turn to the rest of the Arab world, where besides the spread of many of the orders that were founded originally in Persia, Central Asia, and other areas of the Islamic world, local orders were also established, some of which then spread eastward. Among the orders established in North Africa and Egypt, the Shādhiliyyah is perhaps the most important and influential. Only the Qādiriyyah, Rifā'iyyah, and Naqshbandiyyah Orders have had a wider geographic dissemination than it. The founder of the order, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), is one of the supreme Poles or Axes of Sufism. Born in Morocco, he traveled east in search of a master and then back to Morocco, where he was initiated by 'Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh, with whom he stayed for some time. Then he went to the village of Shādhilah in Tunisia, hence his name, al-Shādhilī, although some believe that the name of the order is Shādhdhuliyyah, derived from the title of the master, Shādhdhulī, which means "he whom God has chosen for Himself." It was inside a cave at the outskirts of the city of Tunis that he is said to have had his supreme vision of God.

In any case, he set out from Tunisia following a vision directing him to go eastward. With many of his disciples he moved to Alexandria, where a number of his followers are buried. After participating in a state of blindness in the Seventh Crusade headed by St. Louis, Abū'l-Ḥasan set out with many disciples toward Mecca but died in the desert before reaching the Red Sea. His mausoleum in Humaythara remains to this day a center of pilgrimage to a site surrounded by pristine desert and the presence of nothing but the remains of one of God's greatest

saints. He left behind no writings except for a few prayers and litanies (*aḥzāb*), repeated to this day by Shādhilīs all over the world. What he left behind that is much more important than any writing is a spiritual legacy and *barakah* that transformed the history of many lands and the lives of many people during the next eight centuries and that remains alive today. The present book would not have been possible without his specific spiritual influence. Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī became the prototype of the sober Sufi master who made his disciples conform to the Law, earn a living, and participate in society while being inwardly detached from the world. He was a master who was drowned in the ocean of Unity (*al-tawḥīd*) while writing little. There is no doubt, however, that his was a path of illuminative knowledge and gnosis (*al-ma'rifah*), as seen by the warm reception that the writings of Ibn 'Arabī and his school have received among the Shādhilīs over the ages.

The immediate successor of Abū'l-Ḥasan, Abū'l-'Abbās al-Mursī (d. 1285), who is interred in Alexandria, also wrote little, but the third master of the order, Aḥmad ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), is the author of many works, the most famous being the *Ḥikam* (*Aphorisms*), which remains very popular even now. His tomb at the edge of the Muqattam Hills outside of Cairo is visited by Shādhilīs to this day. The Shādhiliyyah Order was brought back to the Maghrib by Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda (d. 1390), who wrote the first commentary upon the *Ḥikam*, while branches of the order spread in Egypt and further east all the way to China. The order also spread rapidly in Morocco and Algeria following in a sense the earlier spiritual currents emanating from Abū Madyan, and the order continued to flourish in the Maghrib, as seen by the appearance of such major figures as Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Jazūlī (d. circa 1470), who, on the basis of the love of the Prophet, revived Sufism in the western lands of Islam and authored the book of litanies, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* (*The Signs of Benedictions*), the most popular handbook of prayers in the Arab world. Another notable Shādhilī figure was Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 1493), who sought to revive Sufism by emphasizing the wedding of the Law and the Way. He is the founder of the Jazūliyyah, one of many orders that have branched out of the Shādhiliyyah Order over the centuries.

The major reviver of Shādhilism during the past few centuries is the Moroccan saint Mawlay al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1823), who was breathing new life and invigorating Sufism at the very moment when the French, while opposing the Catholic Church at home, were expanding

abroad by conquering many countries, including the Maghrib, and supporting anti-Islamic Christian missionary activity. Most of the Shādhilīs in Morocco and Algeria became Darqāwā and remain so to this day. The Darqāwiyyah Order was also the source of several other influential orders, such as the Madaniyyah, which spread to Libya, the Hijaz, and even Sri Lanka; and the Yashruṭiyyah, which spread to Egypt, Palestine, and the Levant and is still very much alive in Lebanon and Syria. The daughter of the founder of the order, Sayyidah Fāṭimah Yashruṭiyyah (d. 1978), is one of the notable Sufi female saints of the twentieth century. One must also mention the 'Alawiyyah Order, founded by the remarkable early twentieth century Algerian saint, Aḥmad al-'Alawī (d. 1934). This extraordinary master had disciples all over the Islamic world all the way to the Malay-speaking areas. Also he was destined to fulfill the prediction of Shaykh Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī that one day a branch of the tree of his path would spread to Europe and the West in general, for it was the 'Alawiyyah branch of the Shādhiliyyah-Darqāwiyyah Order that spread in the twentieth century in Europe and established Sufism there for the first time in a serious and permanent manner.

The nineteenth century also witnessed the appearance of another Maghribī figure who had a major role, along with his master, Aḥmad ibn Idrīs, in the revival of Sufism. His name is Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Sanūsī (d. 1859). He was of Algerian origin, studied in Fez, and entered the Shādhiliyyah Order and studied with Aḥmad Tijānī without becoming his Sufi disciple. He then went to Mecca, where he studied with important masters, especially Aḥmad ibn Idrīs, becoming his *khalīfah*. After the death of Ibn Idrīs, al-Sanūsī became the *shaykh* of the order. The Wahhābīs, who were very much opposed to Sufism, were on the rise and put many obstacles before him. He therefore left for North Africa, where he founded numerous centers. He died in a desert town near the border of western Egypt.

The Sanūsiyyah Order spread to Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. The third master of the order and his grandson, Muḥammad al-Mahdī Aḥmad al-Sanūsī (d. 1933), entered the realm of politics and fought against the Italians. Later he went to Turkey to fight on the side of Atatürk against the French. From Turkey he went to Syria and finally Medina, where he died. He wed the order to the political life of Libya, and his cousin later became king of that country. The Sanūsiyyah ruled over the country until their overthrow by Colonel Ghaddafi in 1969. Like the Safavids, they demonstrated the possibility of members of a

Sufi order becoming the actual political rulers of a country, while in many other orders the members shunned political life.

The influence of the Sanūsiyyah in both religious and political spheres is also visible in the spread of one of its branches, the Mīrghāniyyah, or Khatmiyyah, in the Sudan. Founded in Mecca by one of the disciples of Aḥmad ibn Idrīs, Muḥammad al-Mīrghānī (d. 1851), who was sent by his master to Egypt and the Sudan, the Mīrghāniyyah Order spread rapidly. The order opposed the rise to power of the Mahdī of the Sudan and was strongly suppressed for some time, but it was revived in the late nineteenth century and is today the most prominent Sufi order in eastern Sudan, also having many followers in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, and Egypt.

The Maghrib also produced other important Sufi orders, especially the Tijāniyyah, which, however, spread mostly in other parts of Africa. The Maghrib did not produce as many writings on Sufism as the East, but it did produce numerous saints and powerful Sufi currents that influenced other parts of the Islamic world. Sufism also played a profound role in the social life of the region until modern times, and even today many of its currents are more powerful and vibrant than in many other regions of the Islamic world.

As for the Arab East, outside of Iraq, Egypt is the most important country as far as founding of orders is concerned. It is a land where Sufism is very much alive to this day and where Sufi practices can even be observed by the larger public in certain mosques. One of the popular Egyptian orders is the Badawiyyah, founded by Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 1276). Born in Morocco, he settled in Tanta in the Nile Delta, where he established his order and where he is buried. He was an ecstatic Sufi with powerful charisma and is considered the patron saint of Egypt. About the same time, Burhān al-Dīn Dasūqī (d. 1288) founded the Burhāniyyah Order, which is still popular in Egypt and the Sudan. The well-known Egyptian Sufi ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (d. 1565) was a member of this order.

The other major orders, such as the Qādiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah, also spread widely in Egypt as well as Syria, as did the Mawlawiyyah Order during the Ottoman period. Egypt has also been a home for the Rifā‘iyyah and Khalwatiyyah over the centuries, not to speak of branches of the Shādhiliyyah. As for Syria, these orders have also been present there over the centuries and, as we shall see in the next appendix, Syria was also the land from which the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī

and his school spread to the whole of the Islamic world. In the twentieth century the 'Alawiyah order of Shaykh al-'Alawī spread widely in Syria under the direction of the head of his Damascus *zāwiyah*, Muḥammad al-Hāshimī (d. 1961), who himself became the *shaykh* of the order in Syria.

Sub-Saharan Africa

As far as Sufism is concerned, the destiny of Islamic sub-Saharan Africa has been closely allied to that of North Africa and to some extent Egypt. A case in point is the Tijāniyyah Order, founded by Aḥmad Tijānī (d. 1815). A descendant of the figure many consider the founder of Islam in North Africa, Mawlay Idrīs, and therefore, like Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, a descendant of the Prophet, he was an Algerian who studied in Fez and traveled to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He was initiated into the Khalwatiyyah Order in Egypt and even became a *muqaddam* of the order. But as a result of a vision of the Prophet in the oasis of Abī Samghūn in Algeria, he started his own *ṭarīqah* and returned to Fez, where he died and where he is buried. His mausoleum is a major site of pilgrimage especially for members of the order, who usually hail from sub-Saharan Africa. The Tijāniyyah Order spread in the Near East and even Indonesia but became especially important in Senegal, Nigeria, and Mauritania, where to this day it plays a major spiritual, religious, and even political role. One can hardly conceive of any aspect of life in Senegal without taking into account the Tijāniyyah, who in contrast to some other orders do not allow their disciples to enter other Sufi paths. In recent decades the Tijāniyyah have been spreading in East Africa as well, especially in the Sudan. Although its mother *zāwiyah* and the tomb of its founder is in Fez, the order is to all practical purposes a sub-Saharan African order.

Another African order of more recent origin is the Murīdiyyah, founded by Amadou Bamba (d. 1927). Despite its short history, the order is widespread in Senegal and other West African regions and also has many followers in France. The master of the order also attracted a number of Europeans and Americans who joined its ranks. Altogether, Sufism is still very popular in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in countries such as Senegal, Mali, Somalia, and the Sudan. Almost all the major orders have branches in that part of the Islamic world, especially the Qādiriyyah, Rifā'iyyah, and Shādhiliyyah in addition to the Tijāniyyah.

Sufism can hardly be separated from the life of the people who comprised the Ottoman Empire, especially the Turks. Moreover, Sufism in Turkish areas was closely related to Sufi activity in the Caucasus and the Balkans, which were mostly under Ottoman rule. Many of the orders that were established and grew in these areas were originally founded by Persians but are Turkish rather than Persian orders. First among them is the Mawlawiyyah Order, founded by the greatest Sufi poet of the Persian language, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), quoted so often in this book, or to be more precise, by his son, Sulṭān Walad (d. 1312), on the basis of the teachings of his father. Of Persian origin and born in Balkh, Rūmī, the poet whose poems now are the most widely sold in America, spent the last forty years of his life in Konya in Anatolia. His mausoleum remains in Konya to this day and is the “Ka‘bah” of the lovers of God who come there from all over the world to pay homage to this universal saint, lover of God, gnostic, and author of the *Mathnāwī* (*Rhyming Couplets*) and *Dīwān-i kabīr* (*The Grand Dīwān*). The latter work is dedicated to the remarkable antinomian Sufi, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī (d. 1248), who caused the fire of love to shoot out in flames from the inner being of Rūmī. These two works of Persian poetry, following the tradition of Abū‘l-Majd Sanā‘ī (d. 1131) and Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, brought the Khurāsānī School of Sufi poetry to its peak. These works spread rapidly in Persia and India, where they affected the literature of several local languages such as Sindhi, and became also very popular in the Ottoman world, where most of the educated knew Persian.

Rūmī was highly sensitive to the beauty of music, as mentioned already, and received as inspiration from Heaven the form of the Mawlawī *samā‘* based on whirling in the earthly imitation of the rotation of the heavens. The followers of this order were therefore called the Whirling Dervishes by nineteenth-century European travelers when they first observed their spiritual concert and sacred dance. The Mawlawī Order became known for its interiorized music and the most elaborate *samā‘* among all the Sufi orders. It influenced deeply classical Turkish music, and the *samā‘* can still be observed in Turkey despite the banning of the order by Atatürk. The Mawlawī *samā‘* is now also performed in the West, and there is even an American branch of the order that performs the traditional *samā‘*.

The influence of the Mawlawiyyah Order in the Ottoman Empire was immense, not only in cultural life but also socially and politically. Many sultans were members of the order, and wherever the Turks went they took the order with them. To this day there are remnants of the *tekkes* of the Mawlawīs in the Balkans as well as Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Although severely oppressed by the Turkish Republic, which harbored special animosity against it because of its influence, the order has survived as a living reality in Turkey to this day while the influence of the poetry of Rūmī and the music of the order continue in that country and elsewhere. His poetry remains very popular wherever Persian is read. The Mawlawī Order itself never spread to any appreciable degree in Persia or the Indian subcontinent, but the influence of Rūmī continues to be powerful on Sufism and on general culture in those lands and especially in Persia.

Another order that is almost completely Turkish but whose founder was again Persian is the Baktāshīyyah, founded by Ḥājī Baktāsh Walī (d. 1338) from Khurasan. The order was organized in Anatolia in the fourteenth century and given its definitive form in the sixteenth century by Bālim Sulṭān, a figure so important that he was called the second master of the order following Ḥājī Baktāsh himself. The order incorporated certain elements of Christianity and was strongly Shi‘ite with devotion to the twelve Shi‘ite Imams, especially ‘Alī and Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. Some within the order even divinized ‘Alī. They also incorporated the science of symbolism of letters, which the extremist movement of the Ḥurūfiyyah had spread in Anatolia. The eclecticism of the Baktāshīyyah is also revealed in their incorporation into their practices of certain shamanic elements and in the belief in the migration of souls.

The Baktāshīs established their mother *zāwīyah* or *tekke* near Kayseri in Anatolia, but their order spread all the way to Albania as well as Iraq and Egypt. Within Turkey they influenced popular piety greatly while gaining special social prominence because of their exclusive religious influence among the Janissaries, who constituted such an important element of the Ottoman army. In 1826 Sultan Mehmet II destroyed the Janissaries, and this in turn led to the destruction of many Baktāshī sites, but the order was revived in the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in the Balkans, with a major center near Tirana in Albania. This order along with others was banned in Turkey by Atatürk, and the Communist takeover of Albania dealt a heavy blow to it there.

Nevertheless, the order continues and the *shaykhs* of the order, called *bābās*, are still found in certain regions of the Balkans and even in Turkey.

A third major Sufi order that first developed in Turkey, that is, the Khalwatiyyah, also had a Persian founder, ‘Umar al-Khalwaṭī (d. 1397) from Gilan. The order was organized by Yahyā Shīrwānī (d. 1463) in the Caucasus and spread from there to Anatolia, where it soon became associated with Ottoman politics. The spiritual master of Mehmet the Conqueror, who conquered Constantinople in 1453 and brought the Byzantine Empire to an end, is said to have been a Khalwaṭī. This order became popular in Turkey with numerous branches and from there spread in the eighteenth century to the Sudan and Ethiopia as well as Southeast Asia. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it underwent a remarkable dissemination in Egypt through the influence of Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī (d. 1767). The order also spread into the Balkans, Syria, Lebanon, and North Africa. In the eighteenth century Nūr al-Dīn Jarrāḥī (d. circa 1721) started a branch of the Khalwatiyyah Order named Khalwatiyyah-Jarrāḥiyyah with its center in Istanbul. This order is particularly important because despite the ban on the Sufi orders with the coming of Atatürk, the activities of this order continued and its *tekke* in Istanbul remains spiritually vibrant. Moreover, as a result of the travels to the West and activities of one of its recent *shaykhs*, Muẓaffar Efendi (d. 1985), the order has gained many European and American adherents and in fact has several centers in the West.

From the point of view of practice, this order has always emphasized the spiritual retreat, or *khalwah*, hence its name. Doctrinally it has welcomed the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, especially the doctrine of the “transcendent unity of being” (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Also the study and practice of the occult sciences such as divination and alchemy have been widespread among its members. Of all the Turkish orders, this order has had the widest geographical spread throughout the Islamic world.

Through these and other Sufi orders, through a vast corpus of Sufi writings, which contains the peaks of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature and especially poetry, not to mention local languages from West Africa to Bengal and Java, and most of all through an ever-present *barakah* emanating from the tombs of great saints and even more important the presence of living spiritual masters, the spiritual dimension

of Islam as crystallized in Sufism has provided over the ages and continues to provide a path to the Garden of Truth. This summary history of Sufism reveals the roots of this path in a long tradition going back to the origin of Islam itself. It is hoped that knowledge of the reality and historical development of this spiritual tradition will induce those with the yearning to reach the Truth to walk upon such a path, whether it be Sufi or another authentic tradition whose authenticity can itself be judged by the living Sufi tradition even for those who are not attached to Sufism but who do not possess other means of authentication. The Sufi orders and their teachings are a light upon the path of Muslims seeking proximity to the One but can also be a light for others in quest of the only journey that is ultimately worthy of the human state, a journey that is the very *raison d'être* of human existence.

