IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE

Doctoral Thesis

KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN (‘SOLITUDE WITHIN SOCIETY’): AN ISLAMIC ETHICO-MYSTICAL RESPONSE TO THE DIALECTICAL TENSION BETWEEN SOLITARY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Metin Noorata

Thesis Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Recep Şentürk

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A thesis submitted to the Alliance of Civilizations Institute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Civilization Studies

Thesis Supervisor
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Istanbul 2022

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ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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September 6, 2022

ABSTRACT

KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN (‘SOLITUDE WITHIN SOCIETY’): AN ISLAMIC ETHICO-MYSTICAL RESPONSE TO THE DIALECTICAL TENSION BETWEEN SOLITARY AND SOCIAL LIFE

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This dissertation explores the question of why world civilizational traditions came to idealize either solitary or social life through a conceptual history and theoretical approach. It will be demonstrated that the idealization of one of these two ways of living was highly germane to the different ways in which civilizations had envisioned the good life, esp. in terms of virtue and piety. In addition, the study will investigate whether there existed a tension between life in solitude and one in society; what this dialectic entailed in theory; and how it was dealt with in practical terms. In this context, part one of the first chapter begins by assessing the civilizational traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, Greek antiquity, and Christianity. This assessment will be used as a counterpoint to frame the analysis in part two on the civilization of Islam. It will be argued that in light of Islam’s vision of the good life, the tension between solitude and society becomes not only a relatively more prominent feature in Islam when compared to its counterpart traditions, but that it also becomes characteristic of a dynamic interplay and takes on much more of a polemical tone in the realm of both theory and praxis. Chapter two conceptually situates the said dialectic within the Islamicate civilization through a literary survey of Muslim advocates, detractors, and reconfigurators of solitude. Chapters three, four, and five draw on the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī Sufi *ṭarīqah* as a case study and

mainly focus on their (ostensibly contradicting) principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* (lit: 'solitude within society'), viz. an ethico-mystical precept that stipulates mystical absorption in God and spiritual detachment from the world, and at the same time insists on maintaining an active social presence and participation in temporal activities. More specifically, chapter three delivers an ideational and socio-historical investigation on *khalwat dar anjuman* – a concept that is interpreted to be a reconfiguration of the conventional idea of solitude in both its ascetical and mystical variants – in order to pinpoint how it emerged as an alternative orientation for mystical attainment. Chapter four deals with more practical considerations, analyzing how the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs negotiated other-worldly mystical pursuits and this-worldly mundane activities through their practice of *khalwat dar anjuman*. And, finally, chapter five concludes with an examination of how the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs persevered in confronting modern realities vis-à-vis the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*. It will be argued that *khalwat dar anjuman* was paramount in reconciling – as opposed to resolving – the dialectical tension between solitude and society from both a conceptual and practical standpoint. Moreover, although *khalwat dar anjuman*, admittedly, existed in both theory and practice prior to its formulation, its novelty lies in how it was conceptualized and turned into an operative principle at the organizational level, and also how it essentially transformed the general landscape of Sufi thought and salvational activity in the here and now. All in all, this dissertation partly aims to give substance to the point that *khalwat dar anjuman* served not only to justify and sanctify involvement in worldly matters, but that it also fostered a radical shift as a consequence of its basic premise which posits society as the sole arena where all spiritual and mystical activities are to be carried out and realized.

Keywords: Islam, *khalwat dar anjuman*, conceptual history, world civilizations, Khwājagān Naqshbandī, Sufism.

ÖZ

HALVET DER-ENCÜMEN (‘HALK ARASINDA HALVET’): YALNIZ VE TOPLUMSAL YAŞAM ARASINDAKİ DİYALEKTİK GERİLİME İSLAMÎ ETİK-MİSTİK BİR YANIT

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Bu tez, dünya medeniyet geleneklerinin neden halvette ya da toplumsal yaşamı idealize ettiği sorusunu kavramsal bir tarih ve teorik bir yaklaşımla araştırmaktadır. Bu iki yaşam biçiminden birinin idealize edilmesinin, medeniyetlerin iyi yaşam tasavvuru ettikleri farklı yollarla son derece ilgili olduğu gösterilecektir, özellikle erdem ve dindarlık açısından. Ayrıca, çalışma halvetteki yaşam ile toplumdaki yaşam arasında bir gerilimin var olup olmadığı da araştırılacak; bu diyalektiğin teoride neyi gerektirdiği; ve pratik açıdan nasıl ele alındığı. Bu bağlamda, birinci bölümün birinci kısmı, Yahudilik, Budizm, Yunan antik cağı ve Hıristiyanlığın medeniyet geleneklerini değerlendirerek başlamaktadır. Bu değerlendirme, İslam medeniyeti üzerine ikinci bölümdeki analizi çerçevelemek için bir kontrpuan olarak kullanılacaktır. İslam’ın iyi yaşam tasavvuru ışığında, halvet ve toplumsallaşma arasındaki gerilimin, İslam’da muadili geleneklerle karşılaştırıldığında sadece nispeten daha belirgin bir özellik haline gelmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda dinamik bir etkileşimin karakteristiği haline geldiği ve hem teori hem de pratik alanında çok daha fazla polemiksel bir ton aldığı iddia edilecektir. İkinci bölüm, söz konusu diyalektiği kavramsal olarak Müslüman savunucuların, aleyhtarların ve halveti yeniden yapılandıranların edebi bir incelemesi yoluyla İslam medeniyeti içinde konumlandırmaktadır. Üçüncü, dördüncü ve beşinci bölümler, bir örnek olay incelemesi olarak Hâcegan-Nakşibendî tarikatından yararlanır ve esas olarak onların

(görünüşte çelişen) halvet der-encümen (‘toplum içindeki yalnızlık’) ilkelerine odalanır. Halvet der-encümen Allah ile mistik bir özümseme ve dünyadan manevi olarak ayrılmayı şart koşar ve aynı zamanda aktif bir sosyal mevcudiyeti ve zamansal faaliyetlere katılımı sürdürmede ısrar eden etik-mistik bir kaidedir. Daha spesifik olarak, üçüncü bölüm, mistik edinim için alternatif bir yönelim olarak nasıl ortaya çıktığını belirlemek için halvet der-encümen üzerine düşüncesel ve sosyo-tarihsel bir araştırma sunar. Bu kavramı, geleneksel halvet fikrinin hem zühd hem de mistik varyantlarında yeniden yapılandırılması olarak yorumlanmakta. Dördüncü bölüm, Hâcegan-Nakşibendîlerin halvet der-encümen uygulamaları yoluyla mistik arayışları ve dünyevî faaliyetleri nasıl uzlaştırdıklarını analiz ederek daha pratik mülahazaları ele almaktadır. Son olarak, beşinci bölüm, Hâcegan-Nakşibendîlerin, halvet der-encümen ilkesi karşısında modern gerçeklerle yüzleşmede nasıl sebat ettiklerinin bir incelemesiyle sona ermektedir. Halvet der-encümen’ın, halvet ve toplum arasındaki diyalektik gerilimi hem kavramsal hem de pratik açıdan uzlaştırmada – çözmenin aksine – çok önemli olduğu iddia edilecektir. Ayrıca, halvet der-encümen, kuşkusuz, formülasyonundan önce hem teoride hem de pratikte mevcut olmasına rağmen, yeniliği, onun nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığı ve örgütsel düzeyde işlevsel bir ilke haline getirildiği ve aynı zamanda tasavvufî düşüncesinin ve dünyadaki kurtuluş faaliyetinin genel manzarasını nasıl dönüştürdüğü konusunda yatmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez kısmen, halvet der-encümen’ın sadece dünyevi meselelere müdahil olmayı meşrulaştırmaya ve kutsallaştırmaya hizmet etmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda toplumu tüm manevi ve mistik faaliyetlerin gerçekleştirileceği tek yer olarak konumlandıran temel öncülünün bir sonuncu olarak radikal bir değişimi teşvik ettiğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam, halvet der-encümen, kavramsal tarihi, dünya medeniyetleri, Hâcegan Nakşibendî, tasavvuf.

DEDICATION

To my mother and father for their incalculable love and for making me who I am today. And to my wife who has stood ever so patiently and supportively by my side.

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Words cannot express how grateful I am to my wonderful mother, Şerafet, who has instilled in me good values and a high sense of discipline, and to my late father, Habibullah (may Allah have mercy on his soul), whose example has left an indelible impression on my character and work ethic. I am also thankful to my beloved siblings, Cemil, Betül, and Ömer for always believing in me. And finally, I could not have undertaken this arduous task without the continued support of my wife, Aigul, whose unswerving encouragement and beautiful patience proved crucial throughout the entire research and writing process.

Metin Noorata
September 6, 2022

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PREFACE

I take this opportunity to preface the general discussion by underscoring that religion in pre-modern times – or during the pre-Soviet era if taken from the context of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah in Transoxania – played a central role throughout societies at large and, moreover, had a major bearing on people's daily life. With this in mind, the reader would be in a position to better appreciate both the considerable significance of which religious ideas and practices have had throughout much of pre-modern history, and the inherent potential for which they had possessed to impact societies at large and to likewise stimulate and create major transformations. Moreover, in contrast to the pre-modern past where religion was not demarcated or divorced from other spheres of existence, modern tendencies trend toward compartmentalizing such spheres.

A major concern of mine – particularly one that has developed in my recent academic career – has been with the age-old divide between subjectivism and objectivism. What I am particularly referring to is the divide that sprung forth during the Enlightenment period. A defining characteristic of Enlightenment thought was the idea that one was to orient themselves either on the side of objectivity or of subjectivity, and although these two were not necessarily conceived as being mutually exclusive, one was deemed to be far more consequential than the other. In our present age, this divide has come to take on a somewhat similar form where we find post-moderns appealing exclusively to subjectivity and acknowledging no real divide between subjectivity and objectivity. Leaving us with no room for an opposition is what ultimately eliminates the tension between subjectivity and objectivity altogether.[1]

At this point, I came to observe that in the modern era there was no apparent middle course between the two extremes of subjectivism and objectivism, and that in our post-modern world there has been no basis for their reconciliation and no real connection or communication that could be established between the two. (Take for

[1] This is in line with an idea highlighted in *Sociology and the real world* that "postmoderns did a thorough job of canceling the opposition [of dualities] but forgot to retain the tension, especially between the verbal and the real world that the verbal enables us to know" (Lyng & Franks, 2002, p. 6).

instance sociologism, on the basis of which everything is reduced to a sociological analysis whereby human individuals are in and of themselves made to be irrelevant. Or, likewise, with psychologism where everything is reduced to the human subject whereby all things become merely products of the subjective human mind).

Thus beyond the extremes of both radical subjectivism and radical objectivism – which are rooted in various discourses of philosophy, epistemology, and political ideology – I wondered what religious traditions prior to the advent of modernity had to say or offer in this regard. What I came to realize was that religions too have often steered toward one of two extremes while, nevertheless, granting the presence of a tension. (Take for example the philosophical doctrine of dualism which saw the body and soul as two separate entities, and here some religions who espousing this idea rejected the former in favor of the latter. Although, it should be noted, the rejection of the corporeal body was not necessarily a consequence of a denial of its actual existence but a means by which the incorporeal soul was to be uplifted). However, within religious traditions, I further came to realize that there existed not an outright rejection of these two extremes but rather a critical tension between them, a tension which to me was most apparent in Islam.

What brought me to studying the Naqshbandiyyah and their perspective on solitude in particular was not so much an interest that I could readily say was linked to Sufism and/or Sufi movements per se. My intrigue from the outset has been more so owed to discovering the existence of any such examples that offer a middle ground between subjectivism and objectivism. Therefore, my interest in the Naqshbandiyyah as a Sufi movement is only incidental, while my primary concern with them is more along the lines of how they conceptualized solitude and formulated it in a very specific way so as to (abstractly) synthesize two otherwise very distinct and opposing elements – solitude and society. What I am referring to here is one of the Naqshbandīs' foundational precepts known as *khalwat dar anjuman*. If we were to break down the concept, *khalwat*, or 'solitude', incorporates internal subjectivity for which no one but the individual self can experience, while *anjuman*, or 'society', incorporates external reality.

INTRODUCTION

Situating the study

This study diverges from those conducted on Sufism in general and the Naqshbandiyyah in particular in both past and present. A major theme in studies on Sufism (e.g. Christopher Melchert) and in those specifically on the Naqshbandiyyah (e.g. Jürgen Paul) have drawn on what is known as conflict theory, while focusing predominantly on political, cultural, and, most especially, historical aspects (e.g. topics centered on modern reformist movements, intellectual networks, and ethnographic studies on societies of today). My aim, however, is to analyze the Naqshbandiyyah – its movement, practitioners, associates, religious environment, political affiliations, economic undertakings, and social dealings – by emphasizing their ideas and practices with respect to both other-worldly and this-worldly concerns. In taking on this task, I employ the notion of tension, as used in sociological (Talcott and Weber) and civilizational theory (Eisenstadt), as an analytical tool in gauging how the Naqshbandiyyah dealt with and reconciled other-worldly and this-worldly tensions, and how this effectively translated in more practical terms.

Relevance of research

Reasons for undertaking a detailed investigation of the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* could be substantiated in a number of ways. The concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* traces back nearly a millennia ago in the medieval past during the twelfth century, and yet over the course of history and until today, however, there have always been those who have consistently upheld and reinforced *khalwat dar anjuman* as a guiding principle in their daily lives. Moreover, for centuries in the not too distant past it had its fair share of practitioners throughout the Muslim world, particularly in major regions of Transoxania, Anatolia, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Arabian Peninsula. Likewise, today, its practitioners are even more so widespread, including regions across Europe and America, in Inner Asia and the Malay Archipelago, and in parts of Central Asia where *khalwat dar anjuman* had originated. According to a recent study on post-Soviet Central Asian society, a

widely known Persian maxim, *dast ba kār dil ba yār*, "The hand at work, the heart with God" – which is essentially encapsulated in and perhaps even derived from the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* – was what the Muslim populace under their repressive rulers in Central Asia are said to have held on to, and, evidently, continue to do so today, revealing thus the indelible legacy of which the Naqshbandiyyah have impressed on the people in their practice and understanding of religion.[2]

Theoretical approach

I peruse the term the 'Axial Age' as it provides – however approximate – a starting point in analyzing the point in history where humans began to consciously differentiate between the transcendental and the mundane. Notwithstanding, I must admit that I do not partake in an uncritical commitment to the Axial Age discourse. For instance, I do not subscribe to the underlying assumptions put forward by Karl Jaspers and Charles Taylor who argue that human beings as we know them today became self-reflexive and discovered the idea of transcendence during this epoch, signaling thus a shift from pre-axial culture which is defined as static, and axial and post-axial as dynamic. There seems to be little evidence to suggest a hierarchy between axiality and pre-axiality, however; and I further see little reason to project the pre-Axial Age as less dynamic so as to amplify the importance and superior characteristic of the Axial Age – which implicitly grounds the notion that us moderns are somehow superior in nature to pre-Axial man (read as uncivilized man).

Levels of analysis

There are three major levels on which this study is conducted: (1) the macro level through a civilization-specific analysis of world civilizational traditions in chapter one and the Islamicate civilization in chapter two; (2) the meso level through a group-specific analysis on the Bukharan Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah in chapter three, and emerging patterns of resistant movements in the modern age in chapter five; and (3) the micro level through an individual-specific analysis on practitioners of *khalwat dar anjuman* in their respective socio-historical contexts in chapter four.

[2] The study which I refer to here is M.E. Louw's (2007) *Everyday Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia*. It focuses on the everyday religious practices and lived realities of Uzbek society; the fieldwork on which the book is based, however, is almost exclusively carried out in the historical city-center of Bukhara.

Research methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology, one that is in the main argumentative. It is, more specifically, supported by a twofold research methodology: (1) a socio-historical, in which importance is given to both contextualizing historical occurrences and systems of thought, and analyzing them in terms of how they interacted in the midst of social change; and (2) an interpretative analysis. With that said, although this study utilizes a number of analytical tools from other disciplines – i.e. history and sociology – it is nevertheless cross-disciplinary in essence. What I mean by cross-disciplinary is that I have not restricted the scope of my analysis to one particular field and/or method of inquiry.

The research scope is limited to the Islamicate civilization while offering contrastive arguments with other civilizational traditions. I have utilized primary sources in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish including translated texts in these languages as well as those in English.

In defining, elaborating, and constructing a framework around terms such as religion and civilization, as well as in analyzing specific concepts such as solitude and its variants, I have utilized both a substantive and a functional approach; the former entails a focus on the *content* of ideas and theories whereas the latter on their *function*. I further make use of operational definitions – see below under 'usage of terms'. For instance, the framework of this study, unless specified otherwise, will approach 'society' as the collective representation of humans interacting and engaging with others in the world, and 'solitude' as representing the individual act of physically escaping and disassociating from the world; accordingly, solitude becomes the inverse of society. I take this opportunity to underscore *physical* escape so that to contrast it from *nonphysical* escape, as the latter falls under the category of spiritual, inner contemplative solitude (known in Arabic as *al-khalwah al-ma'nā*). Throughout the dissertation, I also use 'solitude' with modifiers such as 'meditative', 'ascetic', 'contemplative', and so forth, in order to distinguish its different forms – again, see below under the section 'usage of terms' for more on solitude.

My inquiry into Islam as a religion and tradition – unless otherwise noted – will be in the realm of Sunnī Islam by virtue of the fact that the Naqshbandiyyah and its

adherents were part of the wider Jamā'ī-Sunnī tradition.

The general discourse of this thesis approaches Sufism as delineating a certain standard and mode of living within the Islamic tradition and not merely as a spiritual awakening or philosophical exercise subsumed in a discrete mystical tradition. It is furthermore important to note, for the purposes of this study, that my approach to the subject matter will strictly be in the general context of religion and spirituality, and will therefore abstain from rendering a political, historical, and philosophical scheme of the civilizational traditions covered in the study.

Literature review

Academic works written over the past few decades have significantly added to our understanding of the Naqshbandiyyah and its various offshoots. On the early Khwājagān period, including Bahā' al-Dīn and his immediate successors, two particularly important scholarly contributions which require mentioning are those by Hamid Algar and Jürgen Paul. For the Mujaddidī sub-branch in Mughal India there is Necdet Tosun and Arthur Buehler. As for the Khālidī sub-branch in Ottoman lands there is Butrus Abu-Manneh. And finally, among the noteworthy efforts on analyzing the transformations of the Naqshbandiyyah in the modern era we may include Itzchak Weismann.

Khalwat dar anjuman, or 'solitude within society', constitutes one of eleven ethico-mystical precepts of the Naqshbandī Sufi *ṭarīqah*, the set of which are commonly referred to as the *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah* (lit: sacred words). Many studies have pointed out the paramountcy of *khalwat dar anjuman*, while only a few have alluded to – let alone analyzed – its consequential implications on the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī cohort as well as on its individual adherents.

In observing the significance of the *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah* in connection to Sufi praxis in general, Erik S. Ohlander points out that "such observable dimensions of Sufi ritual represent but the veneer of a much deeper life-orientational praxis subsumed under a complex set of inner principles and attitudes" (Ohlander, 2011, p. 428). There is, therefore, a practical aspect of *khalwat dar anjuman* which, in one respect, can be understood as a technique or tool that one utilizes for some end. And then

there is what we may refer to as its behavioral or psychological aspect where *khalwat dar anjuman* represents a life-practice for which one consciously adopts and whereby one's thought process and overall character are shaped and patterned in a specific way.

In one of the fields pioneering studies on the Naqshbandiyyah, Hamid Algar (1976) notes that *khalwat dar anjuman* "proceeds from the recognition that seclusion from society for the purpose of devotion may paradoxically lead to an exaltation of the ego, which is more effectively effaced through a certain mode of existence and activity within society, inspired by devotion to God" (Algar, 1976, pp. 133-134). This particular sentiment which Algar highlights in his initial assessment of *khalwat dar anjuman* dates back to the formative period of the Khwājagān and can be found in works as early as Ghujduwānī's *Waṣāyā*.[3]

In his book *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and activism in a worldwide Sufi tradition*, Itzchak Weismann (2007) presents a thematic study on the socio-political history of the Naqshbandiyyah-proper. He draws on the post-Aḥrāran era in particular[4] and, in this framework, he writes, "Most consequential among these principles [– i.e. *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah* – of the Naqshbandīs] in the public arena was *khalwat dar anjuman* (solitude in the crowd), a paradox implying that the spiritual master should involve himself in the social and political affairs of his community" (*ibid*, p. 1) (insertion mine). Weismann observes that amid the spread of the Naqshbandiyyah beyond Transoxania from the tenth/sixteenth century onward, "Many [Naqshbandī] masters also proved ready to combine their path with the paths of the dominant Sufi traditions in their region. Diversity was most salient in the political field: the Ottoman Naqshbandis were basically quietist, their counterparts in India invariably sought the proximity of the rulers, and the Khojas of Eastern Turkistan became themselves the rulers" (*ibid*, p. 44) (insertion mine).

Devin DeWeese (1996), who brings to our attention the existence of regional rivalries within the formative movements of the early Transoxanian Khwājagān, draws on the encounter between Bahā' al-Dīn and Malik Ḥusayn and argues that the

[3] The *Waṣāyā* serves as an important source text of the early Khwājagānī movement, providing a crucial glimpse of its paradigmatic figure, 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī. It is also known to have been inserted into later works of the Naqshbandiyyah-proper including, for instance, the widely acclaimed *Rashaḥāt*.

[4] For his general analysis on this epoch, see Weismann, 2007, pp. 35ff.

former's antithetical response to the latter's inquiry on whether his way was founded on hereditary-based successorship, vocal *dhikr, samā'*, and *khalwah* – i.e. it was in fact founded on a merit-based successorship, silent *dhikr*, preclusion of *samā'*, and *khalwat dar anjuman* – was essentially aimed at disassociating the 'reformist' Bukharan Khwājagān from practices conventional to both *ṭarīqah*-based Sufism in general, and in particular the Yasawiyyah whom DeWeese frames as one of their rival counterparts (DeWeese, 1996, p. 198).

Devin DeWeese (2011b) has further focused on differences that emerged between various Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. In his discussion on *khalwah* as a standard Sufi practice in general and one of the distinct markers of certain groups such as the Khalwatiyyah in particular, DeWeese draws on the story of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband and the then ruler of Herat, Malik Ḥusayn, and points out that the practice of *khalwah* and the appellation "Khalwatī"[5] had "undoubtedly took on special significance in the competitive atmosphere prevailing among Sufi communities of Central Asia during the 14th century, when we find *khalvat* linked with a ritual and organizational complex involving the vocal *dhikr*, *samā'* (the use of music in ritual and devotional practice), and hereditary succession" (DeWeese, 2011b, p. 286). In his negation of the four just-mentioned practices, Bahā' al-Dīn "went on to offer an explicit contrast to only one, as he explained the dictum *khalvat dar anjuman* ("seclusion within the crowd"), itself part of a rhetorical dialectic intended to undermine the stock assumptions of 'normative' Sufi practice, which became a famous element of the Naqshbandī meditative and social program" (*ibid*).

In his monograph on 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 897/1492), Hamid Algar (2013) describes Jāmī as "a culminating figure in the elaboration of Perso-Islamic culture" (Algar, 2013, p. vii), while he further interprets his general disposition and condemnatory viewpoint of others as being "fully conducive to a certain mode of 'solitude within society' [*khalwat dar anjuman*]" (*ibid*, p. 108).

Alongside the other seven founding principles of the Naqshbandiyyah, *khalwat dar anjuman* is said to have originated with 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī (d. 575/1179). Current scholarship has shown, most notably in the works of Hamid Algar, that these principles "should be regarded as a general statement characteristic of Central Asian

[5] This implied one who belonged to a discrete group of Sufis known as the Khalwatīs.

Sufism of his [i.e. Ghujduwānī's] day, rather than as a defined doctrine" (Weismann, 2007, p. 20). In other words, *khalwat dar anjuman* is said to be an expression of how Islam was practiced, lived, and perceived by Muslims in a specific region on the one hand, and on the other hand it was something that was not peculiar to its said practitioners. It was, however, after the passing of time that *khalwat dar anjuman* became an insignia of the Naqshbandiyyah.

Weismann interprets *khalwat dar anjuman* as something that "betrays their Malamati origins" due to its 'mystical superiority' (Weismann, 2007, p. 28). Although early Khwājagānī sources do not divulge any direct influence from the Malāmatī tradition, later sources particularly in the era subsequent to Bahā' al-Dīn do well to bear this out. The *Malfūẓāt* by Mīr 'Abd al-Awwal which contains a collection of statements by 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār is said to be the first Khwājagān-Naqshbandī text that makes explicit reference to the Malāmatīs as their spiritual predecessors (see Paul, 2012, 154). Yet mention of the Malāmatīs in relation to the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs can also be found in earlier works such as the *Faṣl al-khiṭāb* by Muḥammad Pārsā, a direct successor Bahā' al-Dīn (see Pārsā, 1988, pp. 595-600).

Jürgen Paul (2012) in his "Solitude within society: Early Khwājagānī attitudes toward spiritual and social life" contends that the Khwājagān went from being a quietist and apolitical Sufi *ṭarīqah* to one that gradually saw itself become (wholly) involved in the politics of its time while they assumed a significantly extensive and formidable sway over the people and rulers of Transoxania from the mid fifteenth century onward, particularly under the auspices of Aḥrār. This particular study by Paul represents the only one of its kind that centers the discussion around *khalwat dar anjuman* in the context of the nascent Khwājagān.

Jo-Ann Gross, whose works are primarily focused on the towering figure of 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār, writes that, "*Khalwat dar anjuman* legitimized the participation of the Naqshbandīs in the political and economic spheres, and encouraged shaykhs to earn a living to support their livelihood and to provide for their disciples" (Gross, 2002, p. 16n46).

In Annemarie Schimmel's (1994) *Deciphering the signs of God*, she writes, "true worship is *khalwat dar anjuman*, 'solitude in the crowd'; that is, the continued

recollection of God in one's heart while doing one's duty in the world – *dast bi-kār dil bi-yār*, 'The hand at work, the heart near the friend', as the Persian saying goes" (Schimmel, 1994, pp. 149-150). In Schimmel's (1976) survey on the Sufi tradition entitled *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, she takes the Khurasanian Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī al-Khayr's (b. Mayhana, 967) understanding of *karāmat* (miraculous deeds) and of the ideal Sufi saint who "goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them and buys and sells in the market and takes part in social intercourse, and never forgets God for a single moment," and connects this with the "ideal [which] was defined later by the Naqshbandī mystics as *khalwat dar anjuman*, complete absorption in proximity to God in the midst of a crowd; the perfect mystic's concentration can no longer be disturbed or altered by any external event or occupation" (Schimmel, 1976, p. 243). This shows us that *khalwat dar anjuman* was already being practiced during the fourth/tenth century in Khurasan as an ideal of spiritual living through social engagement. This comes as no surprise given that Persianate culture at the time was strongly imbued with the Malāmatī ethos.

Aims, objective, contribution

At the junction of various disciplines including civilization studies and intellectual history, the general concern of this study revolves around the history of concepts and the role of individuals in history. My specific objective is to analyze *khalwat dar anjuman* with regard to its development and impact – both in terms of continuity and change – and likewise to give meaning to its lived reality.

Through my analysis of *khalwat dar anjuman*, I shall, in one respective, seek to explore the transformative effects of (religious) ideas on both individuals and societies as a whole throughout the wider Islamicate civilization. More than any other ideal, as it seems, it was *khalwat dar anjuman* that for so long served as a cornerstone of the Naqshbandiyyah to engage in the world in various ways, whether it be socially, politically, or economically. Further, inasmuch as the Naqshbandiyyah synthesized the concepts of 'solitude' and 'society', as is evident in their formulation o f *khalwat dar anjuman*, I attempt to explore how this also served a purpose of reconciling in practice the tension between solitary and social life across a vast trajectory in space and time.

On another note, Sufi ideas and terms, together with Sufism as a whole, is all too often decontextualized from its historical and scriptural origins. Sufi concepts were, at their core, based on how people perceived, practiced, and, essentially, lived Islam. (Witness how writers on Sufism in its classical age were already highly critical of unorthodox practices of quasi-Sufis, the *mutaṣawwifa*).[6] The salient mention or notion of Islamic origins in the discourse of Sufi studies tends to be on spiritual lineages or affiliations (*silsilah*s). In an attempt to fill this gap, I aim to retrace and reconnect a key Sufi concept, namely *khalwat dar anjuman*, to how Muslims in various historical and geographical contexts had perceived ideas analogous to it.[7]

An exceptionally large number of studies on the Naqshbandiyyah have been dedicated to expounding on a multitude of issues ranging from intra-Sufi tensions to political entanglements, prevailing in almost all cases a framework dominated by historical narratives. Therefore, while studies have put in substantial effort in outlining the historical importance and pivotal role of the Naqshbandiyyah within the Sufi tradition, an insufficient amount of scholarly labor has been apportioned to analyzing the methods of instruction and pedagogical teachings of the Naqshbandiyyah and its overall significance within the civilizational tradition of Islam. Although there are a number of studies that have emphasized in their rightful context the transitional stages and turning points of the Naqshbandiyyah, most have nonetheless trended toward – intentionally or unintentionally – dispensing with their

[6] For an anthology dedicated to controversial aspects of Sufism, see F.D. Jong & B. Radtke (1999), *Islamic mysticism contested: Thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics* (pp. 468-491). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. cf. A.T. Karamustafa (1994) *God's unruly friends: Dervish groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City, Utah: The University of Utah Press.

[7] This is in line with what Erik S. Ohlander (2010) identifies in the distinction between past and recent scholarship on Sufism, where the former was seen "as a foreign accretion grafted upon an incongruous Semitic substrate, or modernist or romantic models which have interpreted its flowering during the later medieval period as a sign of either decadence or the watering down of the lofty ambitions of its classical paragons" while the latter "has become increasingly less interested in questions concerning the origins or evolution of Sufism as such" (Ohlander, 2010, p. 523). Moreover, "past phenomenological approaches have typically posited an object of study defined by the transcultural and transhistorical category of 'mysticism' which, in this case, just happens to be 'Islamic', recent social and cultural history approaches have attempted to redefine the object of study as something drawing much closer to cases of 'Muslim' mysticism*s*. Here, substantive focus has been shifted from largely disembodied religious discourses to the empirically accessible traces of the activities of historical actors plotted firmly in time and space. In the same way, interpretive focus has been shifted from analyses rooted in theological or philosophical interpretive schema to what might be described as historicist interrogations of the social and cultural embeddedness of the empirically accessible traces of actors so identified. As a convenient descriptive category, here 'Sufism' has increasingly come to be seen as referring to an interrelated complex of historically-defined mystical and ascetical movements marked by a shared reference to certain practices, texts, and institutions, rather than a discrete, univocal religious movement marked predominantly by its relation to 'mysticism'" (*ibid*).

intellectual and spiritual thrust, both of which, as I argue, were consequential throughout its history.

The precept of *khalwat dar anjuman* is mentioned in almost all contemporary works dealing with the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, and although in a practical and descriptive sense much has been said regarding its significance among the Naqshbandīs, there has been little emphasis in terms of the origination, meaning, and intricacies of *khalwat dar anjuman*, as well as its overall implications in, for instance, the mental and spiritual state of an aspiring Muslim.

The contribution of this thesis lies in how it approaches *khalwat dar anjuman* as a response to not only a Sufi-specific issue, but also as a part of the wider Islamic discourse that addresses the tension between solitary and social life. It likewise aims to fully grasp the emergence and practice of *khalwat dar anjuman*, and gives special consideration to the nature of the corpus of ideas and practices, and their development within the Sufi tradition, across time and space.

Breakdown of chapters

Part one of the first chapter surveys the civilizational traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, Greek antiquity, and Christianity. The frame of analysis is structured on the question of why each tradition idealized either solitary or social life. The nature of the tension between the two is also assessed by focusing on how each tradition envisioned the good life. The first part then concludes with a comparative assessment. The second part demonstrates how Islam introduces a new civilizational dynamic through its vision of the good life. Amid this context, the nature of the tension between the social and solitary life in Islam is emphasized. Chapter two carries out a conceptual history within Islam on solitude, its detractors, and *khalwat dar anjuman*. Chapter three focuses on the ideational content of *khalwat dar anjuman*, exploring particularly its intimations from a socio-historical context. The fourth chapter critically reflects on *khalwat dar anjuman* in terms of how it was implemented in various spheres of human existence by its advocates and practitioners. The final chapter, namely chapter five, looks at the significance and relevance of *khalwat dar anjuman* in the modern and post-modern age.

A note on source materials

One major classificatory feature of source materials in the pre-modern era is what may loosely be categorized as narrative sources. More specifically, these incorporate writings such as annals and chronicles as well as monographs, biographical and hagiographical accounts, and treatises.

A great deal of the sources perused in this study are biographical and hagiographical, many of which, in the context of Islam at least, delineate life accounts in a noticeably embellished way, and whose purpose is not simply to entertain but is practically-oriented to motivate its readers to be virtuous in character and righteous in action.

Unless noted otherwise, all translations of passages quoted from the original Arabic and Persian are my own. For clarity purposes the note 'translation mine' is typically given in parenthesis throughout the study. Single quotes were used to indicate that the translation is my own, while double quotes were reserved for any direct quotation from a translated or original source text written in English.

Usage of terms

Throughout the dissertation I tend to use the word 'solitude' as an all-encompassing term for words synonymous to it such as seclusion, retirement, privacy, and so forth. Because I am interested in variant modes of absence as well as a term that is most appropriate with regard to its opposition to the term 'society', 'solitude' seems to serve best for purposes of which I shall now explain. Although I may on occasion refer to the latter set of synonymous words mentioned above – partly because they are widely used throughout source works in general – I have opted, nonetheless, to use adjectival modifiers alongside 'solitude' – primarily for the purpose of avoiding confusion and for the sake of consistency – rather than use separate terms altogether to elucidate what I mean by a specific mode of absence. I, therefore, refer to, for instance, 'communal solitude', 'temporary solitude', 'perpetual solitude' in place of 'seclusion', 'privacy', 'retirement', respectively. As alluded to earlier, what is common to all the terms that have been mentioned so far is some form of absence

from one's surroundings, be it in a physical or non-physical way, and this absence could be from public life, society, or humanity altogether. Additional reasons for my preferential usage of 'solitude' is owing to the fact that apart from the *act* associated with that of solitude, 'solitude' could also be used to refer to some form of psychological or inner *state*, e.g. 'mental solitude', 'contemplative solitude', 'spiritual solitude', and so forth. What I ultimately mean by 'solitude', therefore, is a mode of life or living that involves some form of absence, that is, in terms of a physical act and/or a non-physical state, and words synonymous to solitude such as 'seclusion', 'retirement', and 'privacy' are used in a non-specific way when it comes to actions, whereas 'solitude' together with its cognate terms – e.g. 'communal solitude' – will be used to refer to both actions as well as states.

Terms related to 'solitude' are therefore more restrictive, that is, for the purposes of this thesis at least, and 'solitude' takes into consideration those whose decision to withdraw from society – whether as a community or alone – is often defined in opposition to 'society'. Although 'seclusion' is also used in opposition to 'society', nonetheless hermits that live in the wilderness who have cut themselves off from all human contact are those that can be said to have taken up not seclusion but rather solitude as a way of living. 'Solitude' also does better when referring to someone who, for instance, is immersed in some religious, philosophical, or mystical thought, which in this case would be a type of contemplative solitude.

I have also opted to use certain terms in their original Arabic without rendering them into English. The Arabic term '*ṭarīqah*', for instance, is retained throughout the study since the notion of a Sufi *ṭarīqah* – commonly translated as a Sufi 'order', 'movement', or 'current' – incorporates not merely a single but a dual signification: (1) its horizontal dimension as an organizational structure with a far-reaching network; and (2) its vertical dimension as a mystical schema mapping out the path to realizing God's presence in the world.

CHAPTER I: THE TENSION BETWEEN SOLITARY AND SOCIAL LIFE ACROSS THE AFRO-EURASIAN COMPLEX: A CIVILIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Part I: Civilizational traditions anterior to Islam

"All great undertakings are matured in solitude"[8] *— Unspecified writer on monasticism*

"The law of God develops and maintains the powers existing in germ within us. — Who does not know that man is a civilized and gregarious animal, neither savage nor a lover of solitude? Nothing, indeed, is so compatible with our nature as living in society and in dependence upon one another and as loving our own kind"[9] *— St. Basil*

1.1 Introduction

As far as recorded history tells us, it was in the first millennium before the common era (BCE) that we find newly emerging trends of philosophical and religious thought taking shape in many a civilization across the world. This epoch-making, revolutionary moment is what Karl Jaspers (1953) coined as the 'Axial Age', roughly spanning from 800–200 BCE.[10] It was an age believed to have marked a crucial turning point in human history as we witness the crystallization of ideas and institutions across world civilizations. And while the underlying assumptions of the Axial Age discourse cannot be ignored,[11] I have found its designation useful as it captures in this particular era the wide-scale internal and external tensions that had arisen throughout global societies, and also pinpoints the emergence of transformative ideas of individual thinkers whose impact is hitherto felt. In this context, according to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1982),

> "The revolution or series of revolutions, which are related to Karl Jaspers' 'Axial Age', have to do with the emergence, conceptualization and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendental and

[8] Quoted in *Studies in early mysticism in the Near and Middle East* (Smith, 1995, p. 10).

[9] Quoted in "Saint Basil and the rhetorical tradition" (Kustas, 1981, p. 255).

[10] For his pioneering work, see Karl Jaspers (1953) *The origin and goal of history* (M. Bullock, Trans.).

[11] See my 'theoretical approach' for more on this. To give a brief example, Karl Jaspers clearly draws on Hegel's philosophical conception of history where the notion of Spirit or Mind as it appears in history is central. Unlike Hegel's hierarchical mode of thinking which sees the historical moment in question as beginning in the East and culminating in the West, Jaspers' pluralistic approach sees this moment as an independent phenomenon which had simultaneously transpired across the globe.

> mundane orders. This revolutionary process took place in several major civilizations including Ancient Israel, Ancient Greece, early Christianity, Zoroastrian Iran, early Imperial China and in the Hindu and Buddhist civilizations. Although beyond the axial age proper, it also took place in Islam" (*ibid*, p. 294).

Islam, as a part of the post-Axial phase, which spans from 200 BCE–1800 CE, is therefore situated at the very edge of this revolutionary continuum. As to why this is the case will be made more clear in the second part of the present chapter.

Part one will focus on assessing four civilizational traditions, namely, Judaism, Buddhism, Greek antiquity, and Christianity. The intention here in choosing two Abrahamic and two non-Abrahamic traditions is to ensure a reasonably balanced approach to the issue at hand. My overall objective is to understand why these traditions came to idealize either solitary or social life through a conceptual and historical analysis of how the good life was envisioned in each case.

Part two considers the civilizational tradition of Islam along similar lines, although a more detailed analysis is given in ensuing chapters. I will make the case that the tension between solitude and society becomes not only a more prominent feature in Islam when compared to its counterpart traditions, but that it also becomes characteristic of a dynamic interplay and takes on much more of a polemical tone in the realm of both theory and praxis. I should finally note that, in this chapter, I primarily focus on ideas, and secondarily on broader historical contexts that informed them.

1.2 Judaism

Judaism saw the development of its own religion, culture, and civilization through its multiple encounters with other civilizations,[12] where each and every encounter with the Other spurred the Jews to rethink their traditions and adapt themselves accordingly. Under such circumstances, Judaic practices and ideas have varied substantially throughout the ages. What remained a residing feature of Judaism, however, was its this-worldly orientation, especially insofar that the world was to be embraced and not rejected (see Weber, 1978, vol. 1, p. 611). Its more specific and

[12] These include civilizations of Babylon, Egypt, Hellenic Greece, Christianity, Islam, and the modern West.

religiously conditioned purpose in this respect was to establish justice of a 'cosmic moral order', as Marshall G.S. Hodgson (1977) puts it. It was further believed that personal salvation was to be attained in the here and now, just as collective redemption was to occur with the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth. We, nevertheless, also find certain forms of reclusive tendencies to have been exhibited by Jews periodically across various historically specific contexts. However, as shall be demonstrated, solitude in either case would play a secondary role over the course of Judaism's vast and complex history. This is mainly because the Jewish good life, which was believed to be a life of pious submission to the biblical laws, could never fully accommodate – let alone idealize – life in solitude. As such, Judaic considerations on the good life as a religious ideal was to be found squarely within the social realm. What will further be made apparent is that the Judaic notion and practice of solitude had little to no consequence in terms of a direct tension to life within society, partly because the solitary life, as Benjamin Blech (1992) points out, "goes against the most basic of biblical concepts" (Blech, 1992, p. 166).

I will begin by reflecting on why the Jews had come to idealize, for the greater part of its history, the social life rather than the solitary one. This will then be followed by an analysis of the significance of solitude in Judaism, which will serve to demonstrate its peculiar albeit secondary role in Jewish history. To this end, the following thematic contexts will be considered: (1) solitude as the sacred realm of revelation and divine-connectedness among the prophets; (2) solitude as a form of voluntary and involuntary isolation of individuals and communities; (3) solitude as a component of contemplative and ascetic practices; and (4) solitude as a mark of distinction as interpreted in both applied and theoretical mysticism. The specific contexts observed below suggest that religious acts in relation to solitude were either a result of imposition by choice, a divine commandment, or submission to providence – all of which correspond to the individual or societal level. Therefore, solitude in Judaism has not always been personally motivated given that its enforcement occasionally came down from an external source. In either case, solitude has historically served a number of objectives in the Judaic tradition, specifically as a realm of testing, preparation, purification, deliverance, and punishment. And because solitude served a specific purpose toward a greater end, there thus seems to be no conceptualization of solitude in Judaism as an end in itself. As for its functionality, solitude was a psychological and spiritual source of

assurance and strength – esp. for the biblical prophets – and likewise served as a training ground for some greater mission.

The Jews in the early biblical period did not have any definitive reasons to compel them to live a solitary life for it was faith in itself that proved sufficient. There was also no such requirement for a Jew to go beyond his or her faith in an attempt to please God or come into contact with Him. This is because God was believed to have expressly revealed His contentment with the Jews as a people through various sorts of divine blessings, and moreover continued initiating contact through a multitude of prophets and messengers across many generations. Similarly, until the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, worship for the most part was restricted to ritualistic practices and sacrificial offerings which had taken place at the temple in Jerusalem.

The Covenant that Abraham and later Moses were given by God are known to have accorded the Jews an illustrious distinction over all other peoples, hence their claim as the chosen nation of God. It was therefore the Jewish *community* that would be granted a discernible precedence over the *individual*. As a result, with the exception of the prophets and messengers, all this, again, seems to have left little to no possibility for Jews to aspire for a life separate from the community. Likewise, given that piety in the pre-exilic phase was defined by faith in One God and trust in God's covenant, there was essentially "no room for asceticism as a self-imposed discipline of the soul" (Suffrin, 1926, vol. 2, p. 97). Moreover, since prosperity, particularly of the modest sort, was "regarded as His smile on His land and people," consequently meant that, "No mortification of the flesh or renunciation of the world was necessary to arrive at the highest stage of Jahweh-pleasing holiness" (*ibid*).

Throughout much of their history, Jews have also aligned most of their objectives and expectations within the here and now. This is substantiated in light of the fact that,

> "Judaism points forward to a state of human perfection and bliss to be brought about by the complete unfolding of the divine in man or the revelation of God's full glory as the goal of history. And herein lies its great distinction also from Christianity. Judaism's scope lies not in the world beyond, the world of spirit, of which man on earth can have no

> conception…Its sole aim and purpose is to render the world that now is a divine kingdom of truth and righteousness; and this gives it its eminently rational, ethical, and practical character" (Kohler, 1904, vol. 7, p. 363).

A combination of factors have moreover led the Jews to look for reasons within themselves to understand what they were experiencing and what this meant for them in the future. Among these factors included: the destruction of the Second Temple, the fall of the priesthood and rise of the rabbis (i.e. the formation of Rabbinic Judaism), and the end of prophecy. It was from this point onward that Jewish spirituality and mysticism began to take on an important role in Judaism. God was now interpreted as being immanent instead of transcendent, which would therefore see the individual and one's relation to God begin to be interpreted in peculiarly different ways. For instance, fulfillment of the law is not a means to please God, instead the act itself is believed to be evidence of God's pleasure, which thus renders the act of obedience to the law as an end in itself.

Jewish sages are all known to have lived within the community with apparently no exception. As one writer observes, "Two basic elements of extreme asceticism—total abstinence from sexual intercourse and a life of solitude—were entirely absent from the world of the sage. All their lives they lived among the people and did not part from their families" (Halvey, 1973, vol. 14, p. 653). Hence, the Jewish sage Hillel (110 BCE–10 CE), to whom is ascribed a central place in the origination of the Talmud and the Mishnah, stressed clinging to the community in the following dictum attributed to him: "Do not separate yourself from the community" (*ibid,* p. 640). This is said to have reinforced the centrality of the community in Judaism and would likewise become a core guiding principle for Jews in general even until today. Along these lines, Benjamin Blech (1992) points out that,

> "For the Jew, solitude goes against the most basic of biblical concepts. If "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" is the major principle of the Torah, then clearly it cannot be performed in isolation. A person must merge with others and dare not withdraw from the community. "All Jews are responsible one for another" implies a relationship of common concern, acceptance of communal responsibility, and living within a social structure where the world is not forsaken as unredeemable, but improved in the hope of bringing about a messianic era here on earth. "My Kingdom is, indeed of this world," says God to the Jew, "and it is your role to hasten the coming of that glorious era…For us Messiah has not yet come. We must help bring him. And we believe that the day can be brought closer if we do God's will

here on earth. That is why a Jew may not take a vow of solitude, nor can a Jew accept the legitimacy of celibacy" (Blech, 1992, p. 166).

A primary objective of the Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah has interestingly been set on understanding and making sense of the Jewish people's past, current, and future situation. To illustrate the peculiar lens through which Kabbalists have interpreted biblical history, we may give the example of Moses, who is said to have meditated in his prayers on the Divine Names of God which had thus granted him power to save the ancient Israelites. Therefore, it is said that through meditation "one can channel extremely powerful spiritual forces" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 113). Jewish mysticism was thus imbued with an objective and anticipation that was altogether worldly, and this was thoroughly in line with its positive orientation toward the here and now.

The notion of salvation has also retained its worldly intimation among Jews as a whole today. As a point in case, Rabbi Herzog (1901–1983) "was the author of the "Prayer for the State of Israel" that is recited in synagogues throughout the world on the Sabbath. He was also responsible for including the phrase, "*reshit ẓemiḥat ge'ulateinu* – the beginning of the emergence of our salvation," in the beginning of the prayer" (Goldman & Derovan, 2007, vol. 9, p. 70). As such, concern over life rather than death has remained far more central and pressing for Jews in general. This was especially so in Rabbinic Judaism which had come to dominate the religious scene from the second century onward.

Let us now briefly reflect on the significance of solitude among the Hebrew prophets and messengers, and how it correlates between revelation in particular and divine-connectedness in general. The historical beginnings of solitude in a theistic context traces us back to the early Hebrew prophets[13] and messengers who had flourished throughout much of the biblical period (20th – 4th century BCE).[14] Its two greatest exemplars being Abraham (Circa 1813–1638 BCE) and Moses (Circa 1391–1271 BCE)

[13] There are three patriarchal figures, namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, alongside a line of prophets that had emerged over the centuries such as Moses, Joshua, Solomon, and David, all the way down to the last – by no means, according to Jewish belief, final – biblical prophet Malachi from the fifth century BCE.

[14] The biblical phase is significant for our purposes insofar that it laid the very foundations of Judaism as a distinct and identifiable religious tradition from the fourth century BCE onward. Here, the Hebrew prophets take on a central role as God's representatives on earth who are portrayed in the Bible as leaders persistently sent to bring the ancient Israelites back on the right path.

are acknowledged based on tradition to have had some form of contact with the extramundane and, moreover, received divinely-inspired words of revelation either from God directly or through His emissaries of angels. What is indicative of the revelatory moment is this: that God does not reveal Himself or anything of His knowledge other than in solitude. Revelation in a phenomenal sense is akin to inspiration, and in this context, "all the great founders of the world religions had experienced 'revelations' […]. They were extraordinarily creative individuals, each of them inspired by a unique personal experience, which most often occurred in solitude" (Zeitlin, 2007, p. 47). A further implication of the solitude undertaken by the prophets is that it served as both a model and a point of reference for those who followed in their path.

Solitude is also one of many recurring motifs in biblical history. The stories of the lives of the prophets and their respective community of peoples reveal a general sentiment with regard to solitude as a positive form of physical disengagement from society. However, isolation tended to be imposed, and it often came in the form of a trial. It was therefore believed that if successfully carried out, then the imposition of communal solitude would be lifted. The Bible depicts solitude as the scene in which divine deliverance was sought, that is, at both the individual and collective level, by both prophets and communities, respectively. Having been exiled numerous times over the course of its history, the Jewish people often found themselves cast into the wilderness of the desert, and yet, interestingly enough, as a community – a fairly large one at that. With that said, of the historical events that shaped the development of Judaism as a religious tradition, we find that the lengthy periods of exile that the Jews had suffered on many occasions were certainly one of the more momentous historical events. The exile of the Jews usually came in the form of involuntary isolation from the outside world. Isolation, both communally and individually, was significant in the Judaic tradition especially as a means of purgation. For instance, Moses and his people had wandered in the desert for forty years as a community, and only thereafter is God said to have granted them the Promise Land.

Solitude would play a particularly important role in devotional acts of contemplation and asceticism. In this context, temporary and perpetual solitude have both taken on some form of significance among various Jewish groups. In general, Judaism places a great amount of emphasis on prayer, worship, and religious study, all of which

necessitate solitude to some degree. We also see this with the Hebrew prophets who, other than the occasional revelatory moment in solitude, found themselves engaging in solitude for study and contemplation. Although the Jewish tradition never adopted the practice of solitude as a form of physical disengagement from society in any institutional sense, there were, however, Jewish groups inclined towards a spiritual life essentially detached from the world and from anything that hinted at the mundane. Jewish ascetic groups such as the Hasideans and Essenes, alongside Jewish monastic communities such as the Qumranites and the Therapeuts are key examples. The Hasideans[15] (or Ḥasidim; sing. Ḥasid, "Pious One") were a group of ascetics known for their strictness in upholding the law of the Torah and fervency in their devotional acts. Some of their religious observances included an hour of meditation before and after devotion, as well as nine hours spent daily for spiritual exercises.[16] They had cherished quietude, yet were by no means quietists in any political sense.[17] The Hasideans have nonetheless been identified less as a sect, and likewise came to "appear in general as the ideal representatives of Judaism."[18] According to theory, the Hasideans are said to have reappeared as the sect known as the Essenes,[19] an insular group of esoteric-minded Jews from Palestine who lived communally in remote locations and rejected worldly pleasures, and in this sense were neither *in* the world nor *of* the world. They did not engage in commerce and instead adopted poverty as their way, and some were even celibates. (Much of what the Essenes represent anticipate the Christian monastic tradition, particularly its cenobitic form). Although the Essenes withdrew themselves from mainstream society, they engaged in communal life. There were also Jewish monks who stressed contemplation such as the Therapeauts in Alexandrian Egypt, and having been influenced by the Hellenic Greeks, the Therapeauts were relatively more severe in their practices compared to the Essenes as the former practiced "long hours of prayer and strict fasting" (Mohler, 1971, p. 27). The Qumran monks (fl. Circa 200 BCE–135 CE), whose emergence coincided with the reign of the Jewish dynasty known as the Hasmoneans (140–37 BCE), consisted of a group of Jews who fled Jerusalem in rejection of the sacrifices

[15] The Hasideans are not to be confused with the Ḥasidic mysticism of twelfth century Germany or with the Ḥasidic movement that emerged in eighteenth-century Poland. Theory has it that over time the Hasideans were incorporated into the Jewish sect of the Pharisees, and likewise had influenced the teachings of the Essenes (see https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hasidean).

[16] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7316-hasidaeans.

[17] *ibid*.

[18] *ibid*.

[19] The Essenes established their religious platform in opposition to the Sadducees and Pharisees, who were the other two major groups at the time. Moreover, others have also argued that it was the Pharisees and not the Essenes who had succeeded the Hasideans.

that were being carried out at the Second Temple by the priesthood whom the monks saw as corrupt. Apart from their detachment from the outside world and their practice of segregation from within, the community was known to have come together for meals and prayer. And since wealth was shunned among the Qumranites, all members of the community pooled their funds and worked together. Purity was of primary importance to the extent that not just anyone could prepare food; only those free from impurities were able to do so. In spite of their seclusion, the Jews of Qumran, who saw themselves as the 'Sons of Light', possessed aspirations to one day return to the Temple in Jerusalem in order that they may purify it from the contamination of the priesthood, or what the Qumranites contrastively referred to as the 'Sons of Darkness' (Newman, 2006, p. 107). It would therefore seem to be the case that the main reason why the Qumranites imposed isolation upon themselves was to essentially preserve their purity and avoid the taint of those who did not adhere to their standards of religious conduct and temple rituals (see Mohler, 1971, p. 25).

In both Kabbalist and Hasidic teachings we find a great deal of emphasis being made on the immanence of God. The eighteenth century spiritual revivalist movement of Hasidism, who had fused Kabbalist ideas into their teachings, placed great emphasis on meditative practices. The movement's founder, Israel ben Elizer (Circa 1690–1760), better known as Baal Shem Tov, had lived in solitude for several years in the mountains, and underscored in his teachings God's immanence in the world and the potentiality of entering into communion with God through meditation: "In your mind, you must constantly mediate (*hitboded*) on the love and reverence of God. Even when you are studying, it is good to pause occasionally and to meditate in your mind. This is true even though it may take time from your sacred studies" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 274). Seeking out God through meditation was important insofar that it was not carried out alone in solitude.[20] The seventeenth-century Jew-turned-apostate Shabbetai Ẓevi (1626–1676) had taken great interest in Kabbalah and is said to have had his fair share of solitude throughout his early and later life. After completing his talmudic training, Ẓevi took to solitude at the age of fifteen for the purpose of self-study. For the next six years it is said that at certain intervals he would withdraw

[20] In this respect, Elizer cautions his followers: "When you wish to enter a [high] state of meditation (*hitbodedut*), you should have someone else with you. When a person does this while alone, he can be in great danger. Two people should therefore be together, and one should meditate, [mentally secluded] with his Creator" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 275) (insertions in original).

himself "from human contact into solitude to wrestle with the demonic powers by which he felt attacked and partly overwhelmed" (Scholem, 1973, vol. 14, p. 1222). His ascetic tendencies at one point led him to wander the Ottoman cities, attracting the attention of Jewish rabbis who were nonetheless critical of Ẓevi's antics (*ibid*, p. 1223). In his years in solitude, Ẓevi would have messianic visions, which he originally interpreted as a spiritual ailment of sorts, but it was only until he met a fellow Jew named Nathan in Gaza, who although was meant to cure him of his malady instead confirmed Ẓevi's visions as the Messiah (*ibid*, p. 1224). Ẓevi was nevertheless one of the exceptional cases in Jewish history whose life finds little expression among other prominent Jews.

Eschatological apocalyptic motivations has been one leading cause of escape and isolation in Judaism. For example, Kabbalist mystics who fled Roman persecution consequently lived in a cave for twelve years and finally returned to the outside world with the newfound insight that they had acquired while in isolation. The Qumran monks had likewise fled corruption and set up a community in order to fulfill the ideal of a pure life. Specific forms of meditative solitude are also known techniques in Jewish spirituality.

Solitude as interpreted in applied and theoretical Jewish mysticism was considered to be a mark of distinction. This is largely due to the Hellenic Greeks who are known to have exercised both political and intellectual influence over the Jewish diaspora in Alexandrian Egypt.[21] Interpretative techniques and other forms of methodical approaches hitherto unknown to the Judaic tradition were introduced by Jewish philosophers who took from the Stoics in particular and the Greeks in general their allegorical approach and metaphysical language, respectively (Suffrin, 1926, vol. 2, p. 99). Under these influences, Jewish philosophers began to speculate on the nature of the lives of past prophets and their relationship with God, and one philosopher in particular, namely Philo, uses the concept of solitude to explicate these issues.[22]

[21] The Hellenistic phase (4th century BCE – 2nd century CE) is where Judaism is introduced to new modes of thought and interpretation, which had a discernible impact in what over time furnished Judaism with a philosophical, mystical, and teleological tradition.

[22] Greek ideas and their influence on the Bible is said to have been minimal in consideration that much of the Bible had already been redacted with the coming of Alexander the Great. Yet the overall impact of the Greeks on the Jews were especially evident when it came to the latter's adoption of various methods of interpretation.

At the forefront of Jewish philosophers in the Hellenistic era – especially among those who sought to synthesize scripture and philosophy – were Aristobulus (181–124 BCE) and his successor Philo (20 BCE–70 CE). Aristobulus held that what compelled humans to asceticism was due to the existence of an inherent dichotomy between the body and soul/mind, whereas Philo took this further and postulated that "man's highest aim is a mystic union with the Deity, attained through asceticism and flight from the world, the former as a means of liberating the spirit from the trammels of the flesh, the latter as a safeguard against relapse into the sensual" (Suffrin, 1926, vol. 2, p. 99). Philo refers to the 'sanctified life' as one who lives in contemplative solitude, and thus sees two of 'the truest marks of a virtuous person' as that of solitude and ecstatic contemplation (Putthoff, 2017, p. 88). In this particular framework on solitude, Philo looks to the lives of the earliest prophets starting with Adam whose perpetual solitude with God was interrupted by the coming of Eve: prior to his separation from God,

> "Adam (mind) once lived in solitude and thus in a perpetual state of assimilation to God, However, solitude was broken when it received its companion, Eve (body), and Adam (mind) found himself at a distance from God. The mind has not experienced true solitude since that moment" (*ibid*).

Then there is Abraham, who, according to Philo, lived a life unlike that of Adam. Abraham was able to maintain his solitude and "thought that no life was so pleasant as one lived without association with the multitude;" "And that is natural, for those who seek God yearn to find Him and love the solitude which is dear to Him, and in this way first of all hasten to make themselves like[23] His blessed and happy nature" (*ibid*). Philo thus sees Abraham as the ultimate personification of solitude. Contemplation coupled with solitude is the realm in which one undergoes an 'intensive physio-cognitive engagement' with sacred texts, for which such texts are said to be both the outcome of mystical experience and the medium through which one reaches God (*ibid*, p. 89). In contemplative solitude, the power of reason is what Philo argues as *the* unlocking force within the human mind; here, through a contemplative mimetic process, one may attain an ontological state of immortality,

[23] To live a solitary life, according to Philo, allows for one's mind "to assimilate to [God's] happy and blessed nature" (*Ontological aspects of early Jewish anthropology,* p. 88). Philo further argues that the process that ultimately leads to assimilation to God revolves around the mind where it is liberated and becomes transcendent such that it "spe[eds] upwards and turn[s] its gaze upon the intelligible order which is superior to the visible and upon Him who is maker and ruler of both alike" (Putthoff, 2017, p. 88).

thus resembling an aspect of God's divine nature (*ibid*, p. 90). However, only the prophets wholly attain *Telos*, whereas all others, who are to model themselves after the prophets, can only move towards *Telos* without actually reaching it; Philo connects this with the example of Moses, who in his 'perfectly wise' nature had reached *Telos* as he "discarded the pleasures and completely ridded himself from bodily hindrances" (*ibid*). Philo's teachings, however, found a more positive reception in Christianity as his legacy seems to have had little impact on ensuing Jewish religious traditions in the coming centuries, especially in relation to the more dominant denominations of Rabbinic Judaism.

In more recent times, the Jewish encounter with modernity which witnessed in parts of Europe the emergence of reformist movements such as Hasidism[24] and Haskalah,[25] was followed by waves of immigration to the Americas and Israel where those who adhered to traditional ways formed communities of their own so that "they could live in self-imposed isolation from the threats posed by the modern world, while others joined existing communities, on which they gradually came to exert a marked influence" (Lange, 2000, p. 69).

As we have observed, the role played by solitude in Jewish thought and practice was secondary and instrumental. The solitary life never turned into its own object since the good life in Judaism is believed to be found strictly within the Jewish community. Therefore, in light of our observation, no real tension seems to have existed between solitude and society, that is, in any practical or theoretical sense. We moreover saw that there were no institutions that catered to solitude apart from the scant historical examples of certain Jewish monastic communities. Jews in general have consequently clung to life in society because the expectation was that salvation was to be granted to them in the here and now on a collective basis rather than an individual one. So, for example, in Jewish eschatology, the central focus rests on the fate of the Jews as a nation in the context of this world and not in an afterlife (Kohler, 1903, p. 209). In cases where some Jews are known to have embraced the

[24] Hasidism arose during the eighteenth century in Poland and is noted for having "challenged not only the authority of the rabbis, but their whole system of values, and it is hardly surprising that its fast- growing popularity was met by resistance on the part of the authorities" (Lange, 2000, p. 68).

[25] Haskalah was a nineteenth-century Jewish movement in Germany which had developed out of the Enlightenment. They were known for having "attacked and mocked the obscurantism and superstition of the rabbis and their abuse of their powers, and advocated secular values, and the replacement of the traditional education by modern, western-style schools" (Lange, 2000, pp. 68-69).

ascetic impulse of keeping a distance from the wider society, even these undertakings were carried out through a communal effort. In fact, it was only among the Hebrew prophets and messengers that solitude was pursued in any strict sense at the individual level. For them solitude represented the scene in which they conversed with God, and by extension, Jewish prayer and meditation thus became the scene in which one reenacted – although in a way that was relative and imperfect – the divine-connectedness experienced by the prophets. The Judaic tradition, however, would never develop solitude into a distinct or organized practice, be it institutionally or otherwise. Solitude as a realm of devotion and worship in Judaism was adopted more systematically in Christianity which, as we shall see later, developed into a full-scale monastic tradition over a relatively short period of time.

1.3 Buddhism

> *"Between the Sangha and the surrounding secular society is a constant tension, which can only abate when the precepts cease to be observed. The shaven heads and eyebrows and the yellow robes of the monks signify their resolve to maintain this tension…the Sangha represents the incompatibility of the worlds inside and outside, in which different orders prevail"*[26]

Buddhism from its early beginnings, circa the sixth century BCE, was founded on a strictly divided and rigid class formation between the educated spiritual elite and the uneducated laity. The ideal way of life in Buddhism was represented by none other than the former class which broadly consisted of solitary hermits and cenobitic monks. And in either case, life in solitude as opposed to one in society was what remained highly idealized in Buddhism across the centuries. The former class who were of enlightened and ordained monks have invariably enjoyed a privileged status among the wider public. Maintaining a distance from conventional society was key to upholding their elite status and preserving their image as an unworldly cohort dedicated entirely to other-worldly concerns. The latter class are categorized as the general community of unenlightened Buddhists who were to find meaning in their life by serving the monks as an essential part of their spiritual journey. These Buddhists were simply meant to spend most of their lives toiling in the mundane as a means of deriving and increasing their spiritual merit, which in part entailed providing sustenance to the former class. This peculiar configuration is what has

[26] Ishi, 1986, p. 8.

essentially reinforced the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane in Buddhist thought and practice. In this way, Buddhist monks, as one author observes, were "the only Buddhists in the proper sense of the word," rendering them the elites of society (Conze, 2003, p. 54). It has therefore been among the spiritual elite, who by virtue of their complete rejection of the world and dedication to individual or communal solitude, that the Buddhist equivalent of the good life could be realized in any true sense. Any personal tension between the solitary and social life was cast aside as a direct result of Buddhism's radical class separation. Meanwhile, the social tension between the two classes would reside and be kept at bay as long as Buddhist directives continued to be obeyed by the people. I will elaborate on these points and provide substance to why the solitary and not the social life was idealized in Buddhism by constructing my analysis around three broad schemes of inquiry: Pre-Buddhist traditions that prevailed at the time of Gautama Buddha; the spiritual journey and subsequent career of Gautama Buddha as a leader of a community; and the emergence of different schools of Buddhist thought.

Prior to the emergence of Buddhism in the second half of the first millennia BCE, solitude (esp. in its eremitic form) was a major sphere of spiritual living in the indigenous traditions of India. Pre-Buddhist ascetics conventionally practiced solitude under austere conditions (e.g. prolonged fasting and vows of silence), particularly as a method of self-purification and for attaining mystical realms (e.g. non-existence). Moreover, pre-Buddhist solitary ascetics lacked any concern to spread their teachings "or to find disciples, since their knowledge of the Doctrine was not communicable to others" (Wijayaratna, 1990, p. 111). As for communal forms of spirituality, this appears to have been all but absent during this period and is something that therefore truly emerges with the development of Buddhism.

Solitude was a significant realm of spiritual praxis in the Buddha's pre-enlightenment phase. According to traditional accounts, Siddhartha Gautama (Circa 560-480 BCE), known as the Buddha or 'the Enlightened one', was a young aristocrat-turned-ascetic who underwent several years of intense self-abnegation in order to put an end to his *samsara* (cycle of birth and death) and ultimately attain *nirvana* (spiritual enlightenment). In the midst of his meditative solitude, he would arrive at the conclusion that excessive self-mortification was all but futile and thus claimed the 'Middle Way' between extreme hedonism and extreme asceticism as the

liberating path to enlightenment and salvation. This on the whole meant freedom from the lowly life of the world and all its sufferings.[27]

After emerging from his lengthly withdrawal, Gautama Buddha informed his five companions of his spiritual breakthrough, preached to them his doctrine (*Dharma*) and code of discipline (*Vinaya*),[28] and instructed them to spread the wisdom and verity of his way far and wide. The Buddha's take on solitude thus becomes more apparent in his post-enlightenment phase as he came to distinguish between two distinct forms of solitude, namely, physical solitude and spiritual solitude.[29] Although, indeed, subsequent to his enlightenment the Buddha deemed physical solitude as non-compulsory and began to stress the importance of the (Buddhist) community, solitude nevertheless continued to hold a status of both praise and encouragement. All things considered, the Buddha is said to have permitted some and disallowed others from entering into solitude. Yet permanent solitude was not allowed since Buddhist "monks living in forest dwellings were obliged to stay in contact with other members of their Community and with lay followers" (Wijayaratna, 1990, p. 112). The Buddha himself had nonetheless abandoned his royal status and family life alongside all the responsibilities that came along with them. According to one work, "the dramatic social tension produced by this conflict is the subject of the text, *Yasodaravata*, the lament of Siddhattha's wife in reaction to her husband's "desertion" of family, his renunciation of social and political duties, and her consequent status of what amounted to widowhood" (Swearer, *The Buddhist world of south-east Asia*, pp. 9-10). This is one of the main reasons why the individualistic impulse was far more pressing in Buddhism since no substantial concern was given to neither the family, social, or political life.

There are passages of some length on solitude in one of the oldest, extant canons of Buddhist monastic discipline, the Pali canon. The Buddha's exchange with an old hermit monk is an example of one such passage:

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[27] It is to be noted that Buddha's adoption of the way of moderation was, as one author remarks, "a radical departure from the religious practices of the times" (Hawkins, 1999, p. 38).

[28] What we know of Buddha and his teachings are based on texts that were canonized centuries following his death, and broadly-speaking, these fall into two classificatory source works of *Dharma* and *Vinaya*.

[29] Inner solitude as the ideal form of solitude in Buddhist thought is often expressed by way of analogy to that of the lotus (*padma*) flower: "the lotus flower blooms above the muddy waters of stagnant ponds, the lotus is used as a symbol for purity of mind that develops out of the pollution that is samsara but remains unsullied by it" (Buswell & Lopez, 2014, p. 606). In other words, while even in the midst of earthly defilement, enlightenment is attained as a result of inner purity. For the Buddhist, therefore, to be like the lotus flower meant to keep his or her inner purity intact while living in the world.

> "Thera, you do indeed practice one kind of solitude; but I will tell you how to achieve complete solitude. In the solitude that I am talking about, Thera, all that which is past must be relinquished. All which is in the future must be relinquished. Desire and lust in the present must be fully mastered. This is the way, Thera, that the true ideal of solitude can be completely realized…The sage who overcomes everything, who knows everything, who is attached to nothing, who is completely free because he has renounced everything, who is without thirst – he is the true sage. This man I call "one who lives alone"" (Quoted in Wijayaratna, 1990, p. 113).

There is a clear emphasis in the Buddha's counsel to the monk on the notion of spiritual solitude as a necessary supplement to physical solitude. It should be further noted that the Buddha does not altogether discount the practice of physical solitude but simply draws attention to its insufficiency.[30]

According to the Buddha, visual beauty evokes sensual pleasure, finding pleasure in them leads to seeking them, which ultimately leads to attachment to pleasure, whereby desire emerges and enslavement to it ensues. Thus one who is enslaved to desire, irrespective of one's physical engagement in, or disengagement from society, is "a monk who lives with someone else" (Quoted in *ibid*, p. 115). In comparison, the Buddha recounts to one of his disciples:

> "A monk who lives thus free from desire, Migajāla, even if he lives in the village, among monks and nuns, among men and women, among kings, royal ministers or members of other religious sects, even then such a monk can be called "one who lives alone," because he has given up desire, his companion" (Quoted in *ibid*, p. 116).

A disciple of the Buddha, Arahant Sāriputta, likewise spells out the non-essentiality of physical solitude and the true form of solitude as being that of non-attachment and purity of mind:

> "A man can live alone in the forest and practice austerities, while still harboring many impure thoughts in his mind; on the other hand, a man can

[30] This is why we find stanzas in the Pali canon that highly praise the solitary life; this has even been used as evidence by some to claim that the earliest Buddhist movements were recluses at their very core, although others have substantiated, for instance, based on inconsistencies with Buddha's other teachings, that the emphasis on solitude throughout the canons in fact reflected the views of 'solitary-buddhas' of an era prior to the Buddha since,"No "solitary-buddhas" are found at the time when the Buddha's Doctrine is preached and his Discipline practiced" (Wijayaratna, 1990, pp. 109-110).

> live in a village or a town and practice no austerities, but still his mind can be free of impure thoughts. Of these two, the one who leads a pure life in the village or the town is far superior and more advanced than the one who lives alone in the forest with impure thoughts" (*ibid*).

The *telos* of Buddhist teachings, which is summed up in the four noble truths,[31] stresses the idea of escaping from the inherent bad (read as suffering) that permeates the world. In this sense, solitude was one way of actualizing this goal.[32] Owing to the Buddha's pragmatic approach, physical solitude was good insofar that it secured a propitious environment for meditation and served a soteriological purpose.[33] Likewise, what ultimately secured liberation was by acquiring inner solitude, the most supreme state of being, which stipulated a threefold understanding of solitude: (1) detachment from all possessions; (2) mental detachment from all carnal desires; and (3) detachment of the body from others – the third type, namely solitude of the physical type, is meant to reinforce the former two (*ibid*, p. 114). Thus, just as physical solitude is meant to dispense with all spatial and phenomenal distractions, inner solitude is meant to relieve one from all non-spatial[34] and mental distractions.

Although the Buddha expressed his reluctance to construct his teachings into a rigid dogma, his followers over time, however, took the core of his teachings as a strong, immutable precedence on many key theoretical and practical issues. With that said, variegated positions on solitude and its practice are known to have been held among the diverse schools of Buddhist thought. Two major schools in Buddhism, the Theravāda and Mahāyāna, are still in existence today in southern and northern parts

[31] The Buddha is said to have discovered the four noble truths after his extensive meditation under the bodhi tree, and these axiomatic expressions are: the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. It was the last of the four noble truths, namely the path to the cessation of suffering, that the Buddha devised his 'Eightfold Path' as the middle way to the liberation of suffering.

[32] Along these lines, Emile Durkheim observes apropos these truths that, "The Buddhist is not interested in knowing whence came the world in which he lives and suffers; he takes it as a given fact, and his whole concern is to escape it" (Durkheim, 1964, p. 31).

[33] Similarly, Buddha's advocacy of the way of moderation redefined the way in which physical solitude was perceived and carried out. The body, according to the Buddha, is not to be destroyed through austerities – which is what he initially attempted for six long years and then eventually rejected – but rather it is to be brought under moderation in order to enable the practice of meditation more effective. In other words, physical solitude may only be seen as a way of stimulating meditation.

[34] Non-spatial here denotes the things of the past, present, and future. These three temporal frames are described in Buddhist thought as possessing a source of power to inflict torment, for which the past and future are to not hold any sway over the mind, while the present is to be obliterated in terms of attachment by means of "full control of desire and "thirst" in the present moment, [so that] one sees things as they really are in the present, with the penetrating knowledge that they are impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and without self (*anattā*)" (Wijayaratna, 1990, pp. 114-115).

of Asia, respectively.[35] The alternative perspectives held by Buddhists in the turn of events following the Buddha's demise will thus shape the discussion below.

Buddhism had gradually taken on an institutional character, one that culminated in the third century BCE under the patronage of the emperor Aśoka (274–236 BCE). The organizational shift engendered, in one respect, prominence to the process of ordination into the monastic community. The communal monks and solitary hermits constituted the entire assemblage of Buddhists who were known as the *Samgha*. The Buddha, who after having both established the path of moderation and concluded that enlightenment necessitated neither extreme asceticism nor physical solitude, had spent over four decades promulgating his teachings to the general public in an effort to lead them out of their suffering and have them enter into the enlightened state of Nirvana. And although in later phases, Buddhist teachings are known to have embraced the practice of eremitic solitude, the more dominant trend from its initial phase onward has been the communal solitude.

As alluded to earlier, a few centuries following the death of the Buddha came the emergence of organizational structures, including monasteries and hermit communities, and with it a twofold classification of its followers gradually developed into clergy and laity. This division meant that members in each social group were assigned a set of obligations and rights. On the one hand, the monks who dedicated their lives on the path towards buddhahood would act out their social role by keeping contact with the laypeople while avoiding any participation in economic activity. As such, the monks were solely dependent on the laity for the most basic essentials such as food and clothing (Wijayaratna, 1990, p. 117). The laypeople, on the other hand, were expected to keep to the Three Jewels[36] – the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Samgha* – through the example set by the monks and nuns (*ibid*, p. 130). While the monks were considered as part of the higher Ordination, needless to say, the laypeople were of the lower. Only those wholly committed to the monastic life could

[35] Both schools, whose subsequent fragmentations led them to develop into a total of eighteen sects (see W.W. Rockhill, *The life of Buddha and the early history of his order*, 1884, p. 182), nonetheless share a core foundation when it comes to Buddhist principles and beliefs (e.g. the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path). Apart from their geographical divisions, further differences between Theravāda and Mahāyāna respectively include the following: language/scripture (Pali/Pali Canon versus Sanskrit/Sutras); primary objective (Arhat and Nirvana versus Bodhisattva and postponement of Nirvana); and meditative practice (silent meditation versus vocal hymn).

[36] The Three Jewels are said to serve as a testimony of refuge whereby ritual worship is said to always commence by uttering three times that refuge is what they seek in the Three Jewels (Gombrich, 2006, p. 1).

potentially attain *enlightenment* in the form of *escape from another life*, while the laypeople could only attain *spiritual blessings* in the form of *rewards in another life*. In this sense, the laity's salvation in essence is of a this-worldly kind:

> "instead of renouncing desire (and the world), Buddhists [lay] rather aspire to a future worldly existence in which their desires may find satisfaction… What is desired in kammatic Buddhism is the extinction of samsaric suffering, but not samsaric pleasure. This, then, is worldly—even when projected into a remote rebirth, the goal is worldly—rather than otherworldly salvation" (Spiro, 1982, p. 67)

As another author observes,

> "Between the Sangha and the surrounding secular society is a constant tension, which can only abate when the precepts cease to be observed. The shaven heads and eyebrows and the yellow robes of the monks signify their resolve to maintain this tension…the Sangha represents the incompatibility of the worlds inside and outside, in which different orders prevail. Within the monastery, Thai monks wear the yellow robe with the right shoulder exposed. But outside they go with both shoulders covered…a symbolic act reminding the monk of the difference between the Sangha's domain and the secular world" (Ishi, 1986, p. 8).

It has invariably been the case that the ordinary lay "were of secondary importance in the community" (Yu, 1986, p. 215) and were in fact not Buddhists in any true sense. The lay would occupy themselves with all types of worldly matters, and this was contrary to the spirit of "Buddhism [which] was little concerned with family life, marriage, and divorce" (*ibid*). We also find no impulse on their part to flee their social environment neither as an expression of their renouncement of the world or their commitment to the core objectives of Buddhism.

In summary, with the good life from a Buddhist perspective dictating complete detachment from the mundane and rejection of the world, it would ultimately be the solitary life within a structured community of monks that became highly idealized throughout all of Buddhist history. We began by observing that spirituality in pre-Buddhist traditions of India was mainly an independent feat. The Hindu caste system which had prevailed prior to the arrival of Buddhism gave entitlement to a certain class of people and consequently justified their subjugation over the lower classes. Gautama Buddha would therefore develop his teachings in what could only be

interpreted in part as a response to this established social configuration. At this point, the community from a Buddhist perspective began to be given priority over the individual, and spirituality would likewise assume more of a social significance and function. And yet, as a by-product, Buddhism would come to simultaneously create a rigid dichotomy between two spheres of human existence. Similarly, while indeed certain conditional precepts were laid down by the Buddha which had been intended to prevent people from becoming perpetual hermits, life in individual or communal solitude nonetheless remained a far more desirable option for subsequent Buddhists. The practice of solitude in this context became of the essence, serving as a spiritual realm where the Buddhist monk and nun is said to empty the 'stuff' of individuality and the vessel of his or her mind from all forms of worldly attachments.[37] After the Buddha's demise, attaining spirituality of the highest order, as it were, therefore became restricted to the monastic life until the present day.

1.4 Greek antiquity

A wide range of philosophical outlooks prevailed during the time of Greek antiquity between the eighth century BCE until about the sixth century CE. Yet, despite this multiplicity, ancient Greek philosophers – esp. from Socrates (fl. fifth century BCE) onward – were by and large unanimous in the belief that the social life was necessary and, indeed, an essential ingredient to living the good life. Moreover, with the good life fundamentally defined in terms of a life lived virtuously, it was further believed that one could best observe and ideally exercise virtue in a social setting rather than in solitary.[38] However, as those who adopted the contemplative life, Greek philosophers, not unexpectedly, required a certain measure of solitude as well. Specifically, a Greek philosopher's engagement in solitary activities – a feat that was generally undertaken as a personal motivation and thus had rarely assumed a prescriptive significance – represented the realm in which intellectual and metaphysical virtue was thought to be acquirable. The conditions for leisure and philosophical speculation, nevertheless, was believed to be rendered possible as a direct result of the political and, by extension, social life. This is also one of the main reasons why, as we shall see later, engagement in political and social affairs was

[37] The 'stuff' of individuality constituted the body, feelings, perceptions, impulses and emotions, and acts of consciousness (Conze, 2003, p. 14).

[38] It should be noted that for the ancient Greeks, virtue was commonly "conceived as the excellent disposition of the soul" (Sellar, 2006, p. 127).

regarded as so crucial and valuable. In reference to what has been said so far, the point that I will give substance to is that while the (intermittent) solitary life during the time of Greek antiquity was considered key to *philosophizing* on the good life, it was nonetheless the social life that was idealized – esp. in a normative sense – owing to its perceived paramountcy to *realizing* the good life. The scope of my analysis will solely take into consideration perspectives of individual philosophers, including Socrates (469–399 BCE), Plato (Circa 429–347 BCE), Aristotle (384–322 BCE), and Epicurus (341–270 BCE), and only then secondarily other major philosophical schools. Reason being that it was among the philosophers that these issues were tackled in any critical way and not by your ordinary citizen or any non-philosopher for that matter.

While ancient Greek philosophers most certainly did not idealize living as a solitary, many of them did exhibit – on a personal level at least – the mental tendency of one. The task of philosophizing, as one might anticipate, had also naturally required a great deal of solitude. However, as shall be proposed in what follows, among the Greek philosophers there seems to have been a shared belief (latent or manifest) in their reasoned conclusions regarding the good life, namely, that the prospect of living a good life would be reduced considerably, if not completely, in the event that one decides to embrace the solitary life. And although, in some cases, individual Greek philosophers had conceivably experienced a tension between solitary and social living, our analysis will further suggest that no inherent tension between the two had existed in their actual philosophies.

Socrates[39] is arguably one of the best known philosophers among the ancient Greeks to have both unambiguously expressed his idealization of social living and possessed in a marked way the frame of mind of a solitary.[40] For instance, Socrates' ascetic temperament, which was partly reflected in his own philosophical outlook, saw him roaming the city streets of Athens barefoot and often lost in sublime contemplation (see Aristophanes, 1938, pp. 544, 547, 550). It is said that he had in fact "prided

[39] Although Socrates, to our knowledge, did not write any philosophical works, we learn all we need to know about him and his general philosophy through his contemporaries such as Plato, Aristophanes, and Xenophon, as well as later biographers of his including, foremost among them, Diogenes Laertius (fl. Circa mid third century CE).

[40] In a somewhat similar way, Peter France (1997) observes with regard to Socrates that, "In his indifference to possessions and public opinion Socrates had the cast of mind of the solitary; but it was combined with an intense sociability that kept him in the city" (France, 1997, n.p.).

himself on his plain living" and for being "nearest to the gods in that he had the fewest of wants" (Laertius, 1959, vol. 1, p. 157). He argued that a wise person does not seek the approval of society but instead strives to be self-sufficient. In other words, rather than using one's time and energy to fulfill more of one's needs, human desires ought to be minimized so that one's abilities are put to better use. This was implicative of utilizing one's mental capacities more efficiently which, from a philosopher's point of view, meant cogitating more frequently in the solitude of one's mind.

Despite his pronounced ascetical inclinations and lifestyle, Socrates ascertained that living in an orderly society was imperative for attaining the good life because it guaranteed its members protection under the rule of law (see Xenophon, 1875, pp. 389-390). In this vein, as one author notes, "The solitary outcast, according to Socrates, has even less chance of achieving happiness than the oppressed citizen or servile courtier" (O'Connor, 1994, p. 160). Furthermore, Socrates also encouraged others to find gainful employment, and likewise to maintain their physical health and strength as he believed this would render it more likely that one be "thought worthy of favor, acquire great glory, and attain the highest dignities; and on these accounts, pass the rest of their lives with greater pleasure and honour, and bequeath finer fortunes to their children" (Xenophon, 1875, p. 463). He was also in the habit of expressing his criticism of anyone who being in a state of poverty took no effective measures to change his circumstances so as to improve his own well-being and that of everyone under his care (see *ibid*, pp. 416-417). Individuals who carry out their occupational duties in the best possible manner are, in Socrates' estimation, "The best men, and those most beloved by the gods…but he who did nothing well, he [i.e. Socrates] said, was neither useful for any purpose, nor acceptable to the gods" (*ibid*, p. 454). In consideration of Socrates' unrivaled legacy – being "the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, good and evil" (Cicero, 1824, pp. 227-228) – which presumably left one of the most considerable impressions on subsequent generations, it comes as no surprise that the great majority of philosophers in the coming ages would idealize, as he did, the social life, although, as we shall now see, for contrasting reasons.

Widely known for his discipleship under Socrates and for his theory of Ideas, Plato

offers one of the more systematic treatments of philosophical issues including his take on the ideal political system, which, interestingly, he employs as an idiom of the good human individual. It is in this particular context that his idealization of the social life becomes especially discernible. We may start by observing that Plato in his *Republic* theorizes that whatever may be discerned as characteristic of the ideal state likewise holds true of the human individual who, as dictated by nature and necessity, is a *social* being. Now, to elaborate, the first part of Plato's *Republic* begins with a discussion on the virtue of justice, specifically with respect to right action, as a quality of the individual (see Plato, 1920, pp. 6ff.). The discussion, however, yields no valid conclusion as to what justice is, that is, according to Socrates – the active voice through which Plato ultimately introduces and develops his own philosophical ideas (see *ibid*, p. 42). Subsequently, Plato observes that examining any matter of a small magnitude is more difficult to carry out – at least with any comparable precision – to one that is relatively larger. Based on this pretext, Plato sets out in the second part of the work to outline the idea of justice in his contrived state with the intention of using his final verdict to bear on the individual (see *ibid*, pp. 58-70). Simply put, the virtuously good and model political state is but a mirror image of the virtuously good and model human individual. Plato likewise tells us that virtues, particularly wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, are found in consummate form among a select minority (i.e. philosophers) who are thus the only truly qualified, ideal types to rule a state in keeping with the principles of virtue (see *ibid*, pp. 139ff.). The ideal life that Plato constructs throughout his *Republic* is one that is essentially lived by the philosopher who, in effect, permeates in his influence and power over both the social and political life.

Aristotle, the most distinguished pupil of Plato who would later rival his teacher in influence and prestige, reveals one of the more emphatically positive attitudes toward the social life. According to Aristotle, "the wise man would fall in love and take part in politics; furthermore he would marry and reside at a king's court. Of three kinds of life, the contemplative, the practical, and the pleasure-loving life, he gave the preference to the contemplative" (Laertius, 1959, vol. 1, p. 479). As for the good life, this for Aristotle is best characterized as a virtuous life dedicated to the pursuit of happiness. Furthermore, he tells us that happiness is constitutive of both internal and external goods, and can be classified in the following three ways: "goods of the soul, which indeed he designates as of the highest of value; in the second place bodily

goods, health and strength, beauty and the like; and thirdly external goods, such as wealth, good birth, reputation and the like" (*ibid*, p. 477). Nevertheless, Aristotle is careful to point out that the good life is contingent upon assigning precedence to the common good over the individual good. He expresses this particular idea in the beginning of his *Ethica Nicomachea* in the passage that reads as follows:

> "For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states" (Aristotle, 1941, p. 936).

Later, Aristotle informs us that the social life is not only necessary for humans, but that it is also intrinsic to one's nature to live within a social environment:

> "From the point of view of self-sufficiency, the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since *man is born for citizenship*" (*ibid*, p. 942) (emphasis mine).

Aristotle therefore interprets self-sufficiency as an internal good which corresponds to the ultimate good that is happiness. In this respect, he writes, "Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action" (*ibid*). As the ultimate internal good, happiness for Aristotle is said to be contingent on external goods since "there are some things the lack of which takes the lustre from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not likely to be happy" (*ibid*, p. 945). All in all, the good life for Aristotle is a life lived virtuously where the attainment of happiness becomes *possible* only in the social realm. (Note that I emphasize the *possibility* of happiness since, as far as Aristotle was concerned, it is something that could only be admitted after the event of biological death).

The philosophical system developed by Epicurus (341–270 BCE), while evidently averse to certain social customs and practices, was peculiarly accommodating to the material world. It is likewise within reason to suggest that Epicurus had idealized the social life above and beyond the solitary one considering his entire philosophical

enterprise was principally concerned with the individual in an imagined ideal community. Along these lines, we are told that based on Epicurean philosophy:

> "The wise man…[does not] marry and rear a family. Occasionally he may marry owing to special circumstances in his life. Some too will turn aside from their purpose…Nor will he take part in politics…nor will he make himself a tyrant; nor will he turn Cynic…nor will he be a mendicant. But even when he has lost his sight, he will not withdraw himself from life…He will have regard to his property and to the future…He will be armed against fortune and will never give up a friend. He will pay just so much regard to his reputation as not to be looked down upon. He will take more delight than other men in state festivals…if he should be in poverty, and he will pay court to a king, if need be […]" (Laertius, 1925, vol. 2, pp. 645-647).

The ideal community thus envisioned by Epicurus was one where its members all shared and lived by the same ethical standards, much like cenobites. Virtue stood as one of its core pillars for it represented "the *sine qua non* of pleasure, *i.e*. the one thing without which pleasure cannot be, everything else, food, for instance, being separable, *i.e*. not indispensable to pleasure" (*ibid*, p. 663). In this way, Epicureans saw virtue not as an end in itself but a means to an end, namely that of pleasure, which for Epicurus simply meant the absence of bodily and mental pain. As such, the Epicurean good life is rooted in a type of ethical egoism in which the individual's own security from fear and harm is considered paramount. Epicurus mentions the circumstances under which an individual may live separate from the people in the following passage: "When tolerable security against our fellow-men is attained, then on a basis of power sufficient to afford support and of material prosperity arises in most genuine form the security of a quiet private life withdrawn from the multitude" (*ibid*, p. 669). Be that as it may, given that Epicurus consistently models his version of the good life in the context of a structured social environment, the Epicurean would still be recommended to aspire to live with other like-minded individuals even if the conditions to live in solitude were to be secured.

Zeno of Citium (334–262 BCE), a contemporary of Epicurus, founded what became known as Stoicism, another major philosophical school that emerged during Greek antiquity and flourished well beyond its time and borders. Unlike more conventional philosophical schools, observers have generally considered Stoic philosophy as being "above all an attitude or way of life;" similarly, "Following Socrates, the Stoics present philosophy as primarily concerned with how one should live" (Sellars, 2006,

p. 2). In this way, as an ontologically materialist and morally practical philosophy, Stoicism purports not just to theorize on what virtue entails but to actually show how virtue is to be exercised in the real world. The Stoics also posit that humans are social by nature and that the good life is to be centered on the pursuit and cultivation of virtue, or, as Zeno puts it, a "life in agreement with nature" (Laertius, 1959, vol. 2, p. 195). While this confirms Aristotle's basic presuppositions, Stoics diverge on the point that virtue is not just any good, rather for them it is in fact the *only* good, and for this reason it needs to be upheld unconditionally (see *ibid*, p. 197). And since Stoics further deem virtue as the only good relevant to one's well-being, they therefore conclude that one ought to take a nonreactive stance to all other, irrelevant aspects of life (e.g. external goods and forces). Being nonreactive did not consequently entail avoiding the world, rather, life as it presented itself to the Stoic was to be embraced, and any hardship endured, irrespective of circumstances (see Epictetus, 1937, pp. 145-146). Therefore, from a moral standpoint, only virtue was both good in itself and relevant to an individual's well-being. They believed that human life only had *value* insofar that it partook in virtue, thus, unless one's virtue was at stake, paying regard even to one's own life should be avoided. This idea seemingly contradicts what Stoics theorized about self-preservation, which they saw as constituting the most basic human instinct since "nature from the outset endears it to itself" (*ibid*, p. 193). However, Stoics had also developed a political philosophy in which self-preservation was interpreted in more elaborate terms and beyond the individual self:

> "[…] as we develop as rational beings we do not narrowly associate out self-preservation with out own physical survival," since the idea of preservation was to be as a "process of widening one's circle of concern [that] should not stop once it encompasses all of human society…[and in time] should extent to include the entire cosmos, generating a concern for the preservation of all human beings and the natural world" (Sellars, 2006, p. 131).

The individual given to Stoicism is likely to experience a tension between living in the real world and in some imagined 'cosmic city'. The solution to this tension, as proposed by Stoic philosophy, was to take an anti-realist position by altogether abandoning the idea that cities actually existed (see *ibid*, p. 132). As for the tension between solitary and social engagement, a most pertinent example in this case would be the Stoic philosopher and Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121–180

CE). While known for engaging in prolonged intervals of solitary retreat for study and reflection, Marcus Aurelius nonetheless objected to the idea of retreating from society in the following passage in his *Meditations*:

> "Men seek retreats for themselves, houses in the country, seashores, and mountains; and thou too art wont to desire such things very much. But this is altogether a mark of the most common sort of men, for is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself. For nowhere, either with more quiet or more freedom from trouble, does a man retire than into his own soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts that by looking into them he is immediately in perfect tranquility; and I affirm that tranquility is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind" (Aurelius, 1937, pp. 211-212).

In this sense, being in a state of equanimity does not require fleeing from the world for, according to Marcus Aurelius, it would not only be unfitting but likewise beneath the Stoic to do so.

Based on the various philosophies that we have observed among the ancient Greeks, it seems hardly inferable that the solitary life had ever been entertained as a viable option. This is because the ancient Greeks had deduced that the likelihood of securing the good life would drastically, if not utterly, be lowered in a life lived in solitude. Even in the case where a handful of Greek philosophical schools are known to have upheld an anti-social or asocial outlook on life, none of these schools would actually come to idealize the solitary life. It is further within reason to surmise that the widely held presupposition that humans are social and political by nature had, in some measure, contributed to preventing the ancient Greeks in general from idealizing life in solitude.

1.5 Christianity

> *"The Christian life was part of a movement that encompasses all of history, from creation to the final judgement. God, the Father and Creator of all that is, has made a good world suited for human happiness, but humanity has sinned and rejected the good life that God first offered. As a result, human history, even the history of God's chosen people, is a record of rebellion and alienation from God"*[41]

[41] Lovin, 2012, p. 17.

Having developed his teachings both from within and against Judaism, Jesus as the founder of Christianity was, for all intents and purposes, nothing short of a revolutionary. It may be argued that, owing to Jesus and his core message of personal 'inner reformation', what markedly set Christianity apart from Judaism in terms of its essential qualities was the paramountcy the former had assigned to other-worldly attitudes and concerns.[42] This peculiar feature of Christian other-worldliness was highly accommodating, if not encouraging, to an array of ascetic impulses and behaviors which, on the whole, would ultimately become constitutive of Christian piety. It is partly in this sense that the ascetic ideal of solitary living in Christianity, as some have suggested, becomes more intelligible in the context of the authentically pious life rather than the good life per se. This claim is further supported by the idea that the good life from a Christian perspective is believed to be all but beyond reach particularly as a result of the epic fall of Adam and Eve, which had evidently placed all of humanity in a perpetual state of sin ever since.[43] Moreover, their refusal of the good life offered by God is said to have caused every being on earth, until the end of times, to inherit what came to be known in doctrinal terms as the 'original sin'. The Christian endeavor to live a pious life was mainly centered on adhering to the spirit of the biblical laws and modeling oneself after Jesus himself. Embracing Jesus as an exemplar meant having no worldly ambitions and likewise adopting a highly ascetically disciplined lifestyle. In this respect, the solitary life, which early on manifested in extreme forms of ascetic practices and eventually found its full expression in the burgeoning and wide-scale diffusion of monastic movements, would become the ideal choice of the Christian devout. This is not to mention the fact that living in isolation had also represented a safe haven for many early Christians since publicly professing one's Christian faith was considered to be a crime punishable under secular Roman law for roughly three centuries. Therefore, in what follows, I will lend weight to the assertion that the idealization of the solitary

[42] In a similar vein, Joseph Klausner (1926) tells us that, "Had there not been in Jesus' teaching something contrary to the "world-outlook" of Israel, there could never have arisen out of it a new teaching so irreconcilable with the spirit of Judaism: *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Though Jesus' teaching may not have been deliberately directed against contemporary Judaism, it certainly had within it the germs from which there could and must develop in course of time a non-Jewish and even an anti-Jewish teaching" (Klausner, 1926, p. 9; see also *ibid*, p. 237)

[43] My observation here that the authentically pious life serves as a relatively more accurate point of reference is partly informed by Robin W. Lovin's (2012) elucidation on the issue of the good life in Christianity. According to Lovin, "In due course – close to the end of time, as most of the first Christians believed – God sent Jesus Christ to restore creation and inaugurate the Reign of God. Now, a new people, called from every race and nation and guided by the Holy Spirit, lives in anticipation of the final judgement, after which those who persevere in the Christian life will live eternally with God" (Lovin, 2012, p. 17).

life in Christianity across varying historical and geographical contexts was subject to how the authentically pious life came to be envisioned by Christians for well over a millennia. It will also be made apparent that, similar to what we have observed in the case of Buddhism, the tension between solitude and society in the Christian context would be either nullified or subverted as a result of the radical separation between the sacred and the profane realms of human existence.

Solitude has played a most prominent role in the multifarious ascetic and monastic traditions of Christianity. Let us start by analyzing the significance of the solitary life in Christian asceticism before moving on to its monastic variant. In the context of the early Christians there were several reasons that encouraged the piety-minded to adopt a world-renouncing attitude, three of which include: (1) scriptural counsels – e.g. "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the yes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John, ii, 15-17; Phillips, 1963, p. 758); (2) the belief in the imminent arrival of the end of times which was to commence with Jesus' awaited return;[44] and (3) the kingdom of Satan and its association with the pagan Romans and their political dominion. All three factors – being scriptural, eschatological, and political, respectively – would play a dynamic role in spurring Christian ascetics to take on the solitary life. The political factor in particular is what interestingly accorded the early Christians with a type of spiritual guilt of impiety for living in a sinful world and for not leaving it. But what ultimately gave Christian asceticism its personal character was none other than the living example of Jesus. In fact, owing to his perceived divine nature, Christians over time had come to sanctify the person of Jesus and, as such, aspire to emulate his character, orientation, and actions.

Monasticism as an institution emerged approximately three centuries after the founding of Christianity. Its practice was typically carried out under specific vows and conditioned on a set of prescribed rules. The overall circumstances for the existence of monasticism in its strict sense was evidently wanting in the early stages of Christianity, especially given that neither an established church nor a significant following had existed at the time. Unlike some of their Jewish monastic

[44] The belief in the coming of the end of times, however, only served as a motivating factor for the first few generations, and with the advent of monasticism-proper, it had already lost its influence on Christians in general.

contemporaries who were living apart from mainstream society, the majority of the early Christians in fact had been living in a conventional social setting. What is more, since Christianity as an organized religion was legally prohibited from its early beginnings, monasticism existed more as an expression of one's religious devotion. That is to say, Christians who professed their faith were renunciants by default given their oppressed state under the Romans. Only when Christianity would later become established as a state religion do we find conversion taking place on a mass scale. But since many would end up converting for non-spiritual reasons, the piety-minded were under the impression that true Christianity was being undermined. A variety of monastic movements would therefore develop in reaction to this perceived compromise of authentic Christianity.

To briefly outline the significance of the solitary life and its tension with the social life in the context of the historical origins of Christian monasticism would, as alluded to already, trace us back to around the third century of the common era in Egypt. Some of the Christians at the time, including most famously St. Paul of Thebes (d. Circa 341)[45] and his student Anthony the Great (d. 356), began fleeing into the wilderness of the desert away from the inherent pressures of society. Paul's solitude in the desert which began when he decided to flee persecution lasted for a little over a century. Antony, a contemporary of Paul, is oft-recognized for having inspired others to adopt and dedicate themselves to monastic living; some (e.g. Martin Luther) have regarded Antony as the originator of monasticism, particularly as its first authentic practitioner in accordance with the Gospels. These early Christian ascetics who had lived as hermits moreover perceived the world in general and society in particular as spiritually challenging and, in some cases, even tormenting. A further impetus for one to withdraw from society and adopt an ascetical life was to participate in the suffering of Jesus. This included those who were either willingly or unwillingly experiencing various forms of suffering at the hands of the Romans at the time. In avoiding all forms of contact with the outside world, the desert-dwelling hermits aspired to create their own special world. Their goal was partly focused on undergoing a self-transformation, especially for the purpose of purifying the soul. It is interesting to note that many of these early Christian hermits not only renounced their social existence but also their religious affiliation with the Church. Some

[45] Paul of Thebes, according to some (e.g. Jerome), is said to have been the first among the Christian monks to have inhabited the desert for the specific purpose of undertaking solitude as a life practice.

hermits temporarily abandoned their solitary life out of concern for fellow Christians. They would engage with the people and write down rules for them to live by, which was their way of contributing to the pious well-being of society.

In the fourth century, as the monastic life began to gain more traction and normativity across both the Christian East and West, the emergence of new forms of solitary living would render the hermitic practice of absolute solitude less relevant over time. Some of the monastic communities from St. Pachomius (d. 348) onward adopted a cenobitic form of 'common life'. With St. Basil (330–379) we witness the emergence of anchorite monasticism, which is where an ascetic life was taken on with vows to live in a fixed location attached to a church. Another peculiar form of monasticism of the 'pillar monks' was developed in Syria by St. Simeon the Stylite (d. 459). These monks separated themselves from the people by dwelling on top of pillars, which in the case of Simeon is said to have lasted for up to forty years. Their physical separation from the world and their desire to not touch the ground on which the people roamed carried a metaphysical meaning: the world was tainted with evil and that holiness could only be maintained if physical contact was avoided altogether. Monasticism spreads to the West in France in the late fourth and early fifth century by virtue of John Cassian (360–435) whose monastic rule is later adopted by St. Benedict (d. 547) in Italy. Authors of some of these sixth-century monastic rule books, for instance, are noted for "condemn[ing] wandering ascetics, who operated outside the lines of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and were thus viewed as worthy of suspicion" (Davis, 2018, p. 6).

In the modern era, Protestants were becoming especially averse to some of the early forms of the Christian ideal as constructed by the Church in particular. According to the German academic and theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), the dominant sentiment among the two major Christian denominations with regard to monks as the followers of Christ in the fullest sense, has generally been as follows:

> "There is a widespread opinion—it is dominant in the Catholic churches and many Protestants share it nowadays—that, in the last resort and in the most important things which it enjoins, the Gospel is a strictly world-shunning and ascetic creed. Some people proclaim this piece of intelligence with sympathy and admiration; nay, they magnify it into the contention that the whole value and meaning of genuine Christianity, as of Buddhism, lies in its world-denying character. Others emphasise the world-shunning doctrines of

> the Gospel in order thereby to expose its incompatibility with modern ethical principles, and to prove its uselessness as a religion. The Catholic churches have found a curious way out of the difficulty and one which is, in reality, a product of despair. They recognise, as I have said, the world-denying character of the Gospel, and they teach, accordingly, that it is only in the form of monasticism—that is, in the "vita religiosa"—that true Christian life finds its expression. But they admit a "lower" kind of Christianity without asceticism, as "sufficient." We will say nothing about this strange concession now; the Catholic doctrine is that it is only monks who can follow Christ fully" (Harnack, 1908, pp. 85-96).

Harnack later draws out the foreign influences of Hellenistic philosophy on the early Christians with the intention of calling into question the basis on which the early Christian doctrines were founded. But as Harnack rightly points out, the reality remained that the idea of the pious life was what Christians at large had invariably saw as the exclusive purview of ascetics and monastics alike. And as far as these two religious types were concerned, the solitary life, whether as a hermit or member of a community of monks, was thought to be the ideal way of living the pious Christian life. This idea is also confirmed by Fred M. Donner, who writes that, even though "[n]ot all late antique Christians observed the ascetic ideal to this [extreme] degree,[46] of course, but the few holy men who did were widely revered as the true champions of Christian religiosity, and for this reason sometimes acquired profound influence not only with the unlettered masses, but also with those of power, wealth, and education" (Donner, 1998, p. 71).

As we have come to observe, the issue of what constituted the pious life in Christianity and why the solitary life and not the social one was idealized is discernible in light of both historical and doctrinal grounds. Since society was predominantly viewed as a place of great temptations, the earliest Christian monks in particular had desired to achieve a state of complete detachment from all forms of human contact, and are said to have thus taken to the deserts in search of a 'heavenly life on earth' (White, 1998, p. 78).

[46] That is to say, "extremes of bodily mortification and self-denial, rooted in the concept that all earthly desires were but snares that endangered the soul's eventual chances for salvation by making the individual less mindful of God. Sexual desire was strictly controlled or suppressed (in some cases, even by self-castration). Eating and sleeping were considered necessary evils, and were reduced to the minimum needed to sustain life; food was taken in small quantities chosen for its unsavory qualities, and sleep was given up in exchange for long vigils in prayer. Even normal social contact was abandoned in the solitary, dour pursuit of spiritual salvation; being a hermit also offered the advantage that one could almost completely forego clothing and shelter, those well-known lures to vanity and complacent comfort" (Donner, 1998, p. 70).

1.6 Comparative analysis

In the two Abrahamic faith traditions of Christianity and Judaism, solitude and eschatological apocalyptic attitudes have had strong correlations. Solitude in the form of isolation and as an act of world-renouncement was accommodated to a greater degree by the former, however. In the latter case, Moses is said to have returned to the earthly realm back to his people after experiencing the Divine. In the former case, we learn that Jesus' mission, which evidently remained unfulfilled, was rooted in a call for people to reject the world.

Christian monks like their Buddhist counterparts acted as spiritual patrons who were believed to have been imbued with certain powers that allowed them to help others in their mundane affairs. For instance, in Christianity we learn that St. Augustine upon hearing of the Christian monks of Egypt who were untrained in law and classics, professes that they had "stormed the gates of heaven" by their spiritual renunciation and thus became close to God. With all the knowledge he had possessed, St. Augustine, according to his own estimation, was unable to attain the status achieved by the not so well-educated monks. Likewise, since eschatology figured prominent in Christian spirituality, many among the faithful kept away from secular affairs in order to better prepare for the end of times and the world to come.

With Aristotle's view of the common good having exerted a considerable influence on a number of major philosophers and theologians of the Abrahamic faith tradition, we for instance, find the Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas upholding that the social life was to be preferred over the solitary one precisely because the former was more conducive to the good of the people.[47]

The historical and living tradition of Buddhism which, having operated more as a creed, has been characterized more fittingly by some as an ethico-philosophical[48]

[47] For a study on Aquinas' Aristotelian take on the common good, see Mary M. Keys (2006) *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the promise of the common good*.

[48] It must be noted that Buddhists, unlike the ancient Greeks and those who followed in their traditions, were not interested in philosophizing on reality per se since they "regarded the enquiry into reality, for the mere purpose of knowing more about it, as a waste of valuable time" (Conze, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, given its pragmatic approach, "Speculation on matters irrelevant to salvation is discouraged" in Buddhism (*ibid*, pp. 15-16).

system rather than a faith-based, organized religion. Ethical teachings in Buddhism were pragmatically viewed as a means to escape the interminable 'bad life' of this world, which is why we find in Buddhist thought the centrality of the notion of liberation from suffering. Meanwhile, ancient Greek philosophers were mainly interested in philosophizing on the good life, and despite their manifold perspectives on solitude, akin to Buddhism, they were not viewed in a pietistic and sanctified light as did other traditions. They were also neither an expression of one's religiosity nor a means of gaining a spiritual connection with the Divine as we find in other theistic traditions. The notion of solitude in Buddhism and the classical age of Greek antiquity was thus momentous in light of introspective meditation and philosophical contemplation, respectively. In Buddhism, there also exists no specified object of contemplation apart from one's mental processes and emotional states.

Since the Greeks of antiquity did not possess a religious doctrine, they did not believe in an all-powerful, unitary divine being who determined and sanctified the will of humanity in this life and in an afterlife. The Greek philosophical tradition was very much geared toward the here and now, in which, consequently, tensions of a this-worldly and other-worldly kind did not exist. Furthermore, since the Greeks saw society as a necessary condition of the human individual, solitude in general was momentous insofar that it provided one the opportunity to speculate and reflect on the world.

In Christianity as in Buddhism we come across a strict divide between two radically opposing realms of the religious and the secular. While the issue of life in solitude was a topic of concern in Christianity, we find no real controversy or debate in this respect neither in Buddhism or Judaism.

Asceticism, which was one of the more common reasons for engaging in solitary practices, was often perceived by those who undertook it as a source of power. Meanwhile, in other traditions, especially in Christianity and Buddhism, asceticism often served as a means for some higher end such as strengthening oneself spiritually. For the ancient Greek philosophers, however, asceticism was practiced predominantly for enhancing one's physical strength.

While beyond the scope of this chapter, the conceptual differences between solitude

in religious traditions and in modern psychoanalysis serves as an interesting comparison. The latter is designated as a 'state of being alone', 'the decisive role of early life experiences' and to explore 'the complex relation between the inner/private and the outer/social realm of human experience" which is seen as "the essence of solitude' (Galanaki, 2014, p. 71). Religious traditions, however, have approached the notion of solitude from rather different perspectives and for different ends.[49]

Part II: Islam as a new civilizational dynamic

1.7 Islam

> *"In assuming axiomatically that issues of power with all their ambiguities and complexities fall, too, under God's aegis, Muhammad [SAW] made it impossible from the start for Muslims to dismiss the earthly as the worldly, the social as the profane. It was part of his mission to reduce "worldly" and "profane" to null classes"*[50] *– Huston Smith*

Was there a new civilizational pattern and vision of the good life that unfolded with the advent of Islam? I will argue in the affirmative and establish the groundwork on why this was the case by indicating how the tension between solitary and social living in the context of Islam complicates the question of which one of the two was, in effect, idealized by Muslims. This is especially since, as shall be alluded to here and demonstrated further in ensuing chapters, the nature of the tension was characteristic of a dynamic interplay rather than an opposition or unification.[51] In addition, I will propose that the tension between solitary and social living was relatively more prominent in Islam and even took on a polemical tone unlike in its preceding civilizational traditions (esp. in reference to the ones we have observed in part one).

Let us begin by explaining what we mean by the nature of the tension between solitary and social living as being either oppositional, unified, or a dynamic interplay.

[49] For instance, the Muslim philosopher and mystic Ibn 'Arabī renders solitude (*khalwah*) as "the act of total abandonment in desire of the Divine Presence" (Ibn 'Arabi, 1989, p. 110).

[50] Smith, 2000, p. xii.

[51] The terms 'dynamic interplay', 'oppositional', and 'unified' are widely used in dialectical theory. My particular usage of these terms, however, slightly diverges from how they are applied in such theories that focus on the social and behavioral aspects of interpersonal relationships. A foremost study in this area, especially one that I have found to be particularly insightful for framing my own analysis, is Barbara M. Montgomery (1993) "Relationship maintenance versus relationship change: A Dialectical Dilemma" in *Journal of social and personal relationships*, (10), 205-223.

For our purposes, an example of a tension that is oppositional would be hermits living in absolute solitude, completely detached from society. The function here would be to *nullify* the tension. With a radical division between the hermit and the rest of society, the idea of *opposition*[52] therefore best defines this kind of dialectic in terms of a world-outlook. To illustrate a tension that is unified, we may refer to cenobitic monasticism where monks live in quarters separate from the wider community and yet still maintain some form of interdependent relationship with the rest of society (e.g. lay give alms to the monks who in return offer prayers). The function in this case would be to *subvert* the tension. This is because cenobitic monks are a type of career monastics who live away from society but are generally dependent on the people. And in this sense, the idea of *bipolarity* would be an apt description for this kind of dialectic as a world-outlook. Finally, to give an example of a tension that is in a dynamic interplay would be individuals who assume an activist role in society and, in the meantime, practice inner detachment from the world. The function here would be to *reconcile* the tension. In this case, one goes back and forth between the two modes of living, and the tension is therefore maintained instead of negated or dissolved as in the previous cases. (Note that when two components are synthesized, one of them tends to be the more dominant one, causing the other to fade into the background. However, in the case of a dynamic interplay, both components remain intact and no compromise is required between either of them). The idea of *contradiction*, which "refers to the dynamic interplay between unified opposites" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 4), is characteristic of this particular dialectic as a world-outlook.

It would appear that in Islam there has been more of a dynamic interplay when it comes to the tension between solitary and social living. (The reasons for this will be attested to in a more substantial way in later chapters through my case study analysis on the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*). Let us briefly illustrate its conceivability. As discussed already in part one, we observed that the idea of going *through* the world and establishing justice in relation to a cosmic moral order and the kingdom of heaven in the here and now, has defined the Jewish ideal for the greater part of its historical presence. Meanwhile, the idea of going *around* the world and

[52] For a discussion on the ideas of 'bipolarity', 'opposition', and 'contradiction' in social dialectical theory, see Irwin Altman (1981) "Dialectic conceptions in social psychology: An application to social penetration and privacy regulation" in *Advances in experimental social psychology*, (14), 107-160.

entering into the kingdom of heaven in the afterlife remained a characteristic feature of the Christian devout for centuries on end. As for the Muslim ideal, however, there is arguably more of a dynamic tension between the two ideas of going through and around the world. Muslims at large, since its early beginnings, could be found simultaneously working toward establishing a moral community in the here and now, securing salvation in the afterlife, and aspiring to transcend the world in order to intimately connect with God. In this respect, 'Alija 'Ali Izetbegovic points out that Islam

> "does not really idealize this world," rather it aims to establish a middle course between the spiritual idealism of Christianity ('bearers of internal progress') and the worldly, materialist bent of Judaism ('bearers of external progress') (Izetbegovic, 1994, pp. 187, 189, 194).

Furthermore, the material world in Christianity is perceived to be under the reins of Satan while "God is the lord of the individual world (people and souls) only" (*ibid*, p. 195). The perception of God in Islam, however, is significantly different: God categorically reigns over all domains – conceivable and unconceivable, this-worldly and other-worldly – and the material world is not understood to be inherently evil but rather inherently deceptive.[53] This last point is one of the reasons Muslims have often taken up solitude as a way of fleeing worldliness. The ideal human journey according to the good life in Islam, nevertheless, is to be taken both *through and around* the world. In the former case, this is why, for instance, the concept of *jihād* (lit: struggle; viz. struggle of the sword, self, and pen) gained centrality to countervail the notions of escape and avoidance. In the latter case, there is the concept of *dhikr* (lit: remembrance; esp. in terms of 'recollecting God') which was paramount in countervailing heedlessness of God and of one's true abode in the afterlife. The Muslim ideal, as I have described it, on a large scale creates the impression of what Charles Le Gai Eaton (1985) calls a "monastery-society;" the relevant passage, which deserves to be quoted at some length, is as follows:

> "If monasticism is defined as a "withdrawal for God"' says Schuon, 'and if its [i.e. Islam's] universal and inter-religious character is recognized on the grounds that the thirst for the supernatural is in the nature of normal man, how can this definition be applied in the case of spiritual men who are

[53] 'Deception' or 'diversion' per the Quran is rendered in Arabic as *ghurūr* and is specially used in correspondence with either the 'inferior material world' (*al-ḥāyāh al-dunyā*) or with the 'Deceiver', i.e. Satan (*Shayṭān*); see Quran, 3:185; 31:33; 35:5; 57:20.

> Muslims and do not withdraw from society?…To that the answer must be that one of the *raisons d'être* of Islam is precisely the possibility of a "monastery-society", if the expression be allowable: that is to say that Islam aims to carry the contemplative life into the very framework as a whole; it succeeds in realizing within that framework conditions of structure and of behaviour that permit of contemplative isolation in the very midst of the activities of the world. This is the crux of the matter. One of the things that Christians and occidentals in general seldom understand is this mighty effort, this *jihād*, waged to prevent any element of earthly life from escaping and taking on a separate existence of its own, or flying off, as though gripped by centrifugal force, into the empty space which we call the secular or profane realm. The Muslim who sits quietly in the mosque facing the *qiblah* and invoking his Lord has not left the world to go its own way; he is not only a contemplative, he is also a warrior, and the world is his prisoner of war. From the corner of his eye he watches to see that it does not evade him" (Eaton, 1985, pp. 173-174).

Now, with regard to what merits singling out Islam from other civilizational traditions, especially in the context of our investigation, requires some qualification. In part one of the present chapter, I looked at two monotheistic and two non-monotheistic traditions. Islam presents an interesting case for several reasons, partly because, on the one hand, it comes into contact with all four traditions analyzed above. And on the other, as Eisenstadt (1986) notes, Islam introduces

> "a rather different type of breakthrough from the ones discussed above [i.e. axial-age civilizations], because it did not originate within any of these civilizations, but rather through the encounter of tribal units in Arab [*sic*], with inter-civilizational dynamics that have been taking place in this period in the Near and Middle East" (Eisenstadt, 1986, p. 475).

Islam also perceives itself as heir to Judaism and Christianity in particular and in many instances projects its message and values as a middle way between the two. This, however, does not necessarily imply that Islam took certain elements from each tradition and created a synthesis, but rather to suggest that by coming into contact with other traditions had inevitably shaped Islam in crucial ways. To give a relevant example, from the time of Islam's inception we learn that one of the main reasons why Muslims were against solitude as an ascetic practice was precisely because it was negatively associated with Christian monasticism (*rahbāniyyah*). This becomes all the more important since Christianity, whose emergence preceded Islam by nearly a half a millennium, conceivably had the most impact on Muslim pious perceptions during its heyday.

What ultimately owes to Islam emerging as a civilization in its own right was, in the first instance, "the formation and triumph of a new world view" (Cook, 1986, p. 477), and only in the second instance may we attribute it to other factors of cultural and material sorts.

Shifting our focus to the polemical side of things, I ask: why did certain ideas and practices related to solitary living become a topic of controversy in Islam unlike in other traditions? Muslims had developed a sophisticated normative legal system within the first few centuries of its emergence – a phenomenon that was, as it seems, unprecedented in civilizations prior to it – in a fully developed city environment. This system happened to also incorporate notions of piety and the contours of salvational activity which, from a societal-oriented legalist perspective, were to be carried out wholly within the social arena. This is arguably a major reason why, at a relatively early stage in Islamic history, Muslim legal scholars, being independent from any political authority, were able to voice their reservations and criticisms against any pious or moral claim that challenged or contravened Islamic legal norms. In this context, there was no real prospect for the solitary life as a form of pious living to have become a normative practice in Muslim societies. As for how this played out and came to be will be the focus of chapter two.

Outside influence would also play a role in Muslim polemical attitudes toward individuals or groups from within who were believed to have deviated from normative forms of religious piety. So, for instance, on the grounds of distinguishing Islam from its direct predecessors through the principle known as *mukhālafah* or 'contrariety' (see Mazuz, 2014, pp. 25-26), Muslims are known to have expressly condemned the slightest of aberration in behavior or spiritual practice that discernibly resembled those of the Christians; as did a strictly law-centered religious piety, which was generally perceived to be characteristic of the Jews, elicit similar opposition. The negative sentiment against Jews as being relatively stricter in their legal interpretations is traceable to early source works written by the nascent Muslims of Medina, for instance:

> "Islamic sources, starting with the Qur'ān, present Islam as a lenient and forgiving religion, especially in comparison to Jewish laws. These sources

accused the Jewish sages of being overly strict in their halakhic decisions" (*ibid*, p. 23).

This, however, then begs the question of what tangible evidence is there within the Islamic tradition that specifically points to the polemical nature of solitude and life-practices associated with it? Now, despite the painstaking efforts on the part of Muslims to ensure the veracity underlying Ḥadīth scholarship, we nevertheless find a plethora of sayings that are quite often passed off as *ḥadīth*s. For our purposes, the purported *ḥadīth*, 'There is no monasticism in Islam' (*Lā rahbāniyyah fī al-Islām*),[54] is one such example that is known to have crept into the popular imagination of Muslims and came to be widely upheld as a principle of action.[55] Furthermore, the said dictum suggests that monasticism, whether as a spiritual institution or impulse, had become a subject of contention among Muslims at the time of its origination. This is highly plausible given that some of the early Muslims are, as it happens, noted in the prophetic traditions for displaying an array of monastic-like tendencies, including aspirations of taking vows of celibacy, voluntary poverty, or living an ascetical solitary life. It also comes as no surprise that such inclinations were later met with contempt by societal-oriented Muslims of a legalist (*faqīh*) or traditionist (*muḥaddith*) persuasion as many of them were by all means unreservedly vocal in condemning religious deviance.

[54] Based on the *takhrīj* (extraction) of this particular saying, we find no evidence of its authenticity in the Ḥadīth literature (see 'Ajlūnī, 2001, p. 463). For more on this matter, see chapter two under section 2.3.1.

[55] My point here is partially to underline that this saying needs to be understood in its rightful context, that is, not as a prophetic tradition but as a polemical statement. In this regard, modern scholarship comes as no exception given that many studies which have used this dictum either as a basis in their analyses or to drive their point of argument, have uncritically taken this alleged *ḥadīth* to be authentic. For an example of such appropriation, see Fazlur Rahman (1979) *Islam* (p. 134).

CHAPTER II: *KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN* BETWEEN SOLITUDE AND ITS DETRACTORS IN ISLAM: A LITERARY APPRAISAL

"Whoever wants his religion to be sound and his body and heart to be relieved should isolate himself from people. This is a desolate time and wise is he who chooses seclusion!"[56] *— Junayd al-Baghdādī*

"He has established himself upon a mountain
So he has no Work to do.
A man should be in the market-place
While still working with true Reality"[57] *— Sahl al-Tustarī*[58]

"Beware of retirement for it is in connexion with Satan; and cleave to companionship, for therein is the satisfaction of the Merciful God"[59] *— Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Nūrī*

"[I]f you insist on mixing with people and exposing yourself to desires while wishing to rectify your heart, then you have indeed sought the impossible" — Ibn al-Jawzī[60]

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a conceptual history of solitude in Islam through a literary survey. It aims to pinpoint how solitude as a typological category emerged and evolved over time. Owing to the nature of the present inquiry, it should be noted that no consideration will be given to historical context or chronology. The main focus will be a strict evaluation of how, why, and on whose behalf solitude in Islam became: (1) a domain of pious and spiritual activity; (2) a point of controversy and criticism; and (3) an internal practice of highly mystical sorts. This three-fold analysis is informed by three major attitudes that characterized how Muslims oriented themselves toward the world, and these are 'world-renouncing', 'world-embracing', and 'world-transcending'.

As for my general assessment, I use dialectical reasoning as a theoretical lens for understanding why the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs took two semantically contradictory concepts of 'solitude', of which some Muslims expressed sympathetic and assenting

[56] Quoted in *al-risālah al-qushayriyyah* (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 124).
[57] Quoted in *The way of the Sufis* (Shah, 1969, p. 226).
[58] Another related saying attributed to Tustarī is the following: "Whoever condemns stirring oneself [to earn a livelihood] condemns the Prophet's [SAW] custom; and whoever condemns trust in God [to provide for him] condemns faith" (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 182) (insertions by translator).
[59] Quoted in *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (*The uncovering of the veil*) (al-Hujwīrī, 1911, p. 190).
[60] Ibn al-Jawzī, 2018, p. 129; cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, 1997, p. 86.

views, and 'society', of which other Muslims privileged in opposition to solitude, and developed the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* or 'solitude within society'. In explicating the concepts of *khalwah* and *khalwat dar anjuman*, I focus on analyzing seven core conceptual features: original meaning, related words, fundamentals, foundations, conditions, theoretical considerations, and criticisms. As alluded to above, the chapter's restricted purview presents certain limitations and these include: no strict historical basis; individual personalities do not come through fully; no real feeling of the concepts in the minds of its practitioners; restricted analysis based on a dogmatic presentation; and my own assessment and interpretation is kept to a minimum. These set of limitations will be addressed in chapters three and four.

2.2 Solitude in Islam

The initial analysis takes into consideration the core conceptual features of solitude in Islam (2.2.1). The remaining two sections (2.2.1 and 2.2.2) are then dedicated to a textual analysis on solitude by drawing on primary source texts of the Quran and Ḥadīth, followed by source works from the two main devotional traditions in Islamic spirituality of *zuhd* (renunciation) and *taṣawwuf* (mysticism). A synchronic approach is applied throughout the chapter, entailing an analysis of how the concept of solitude was conceived on the basis of specific texts which were written in a particular era.

2.2.1 Conceptual features of solitude

What do we mean by 'solitude' in the context of Islam? Solitude is defined as "a state of being alone" (Barnhart & Steinmetz, 2010, p. 1032), while cognate terms, such as seclusion, refer to the act of withdrawing from company or shutting oneself off from others (*ibid*, p. 977). When used in the context of an opposition to the term 'society', the terms 'solitude' and 'seclusion' have also been defined as "an entire absence from *all* society" (Whately & Whately, 1852, p. 162).[61] In Islamic source works there are two particular Arabic terms that stand out as the best approximation for 'solitude' and 'seclusion', and these are *khalwah* and *'uzlah*, respectively. According to one famous Arabic lexicon, *khalwah* is 'an inner dialogue with God,

[61] As noted in the introduction under 'usage of terms', I assign paramountcy to 'solitude' over other related terms because it serves the purpose of an all-encompassing term, and since I am further interested in a term most appropriate with regard to its opposition to the term 'society', 'solitude' and only then 'seclusion' seems to fit best.

where there is neither human nor angel', which is a Sufi-based definition; while *khalwah al-ṣaḥīḥ a h* is a 'man shutting the door with his spouse whereby no impediment [remains] to marital intercourse', which is a legal-based definition in reference to marriage and its consummation (al-Jurjānī, 2004, p. 89) (translation mine). Other words related to *khalwah* in Arabic include *'uzlah* (seclusion), *waḥdah* (alone), *infirād* (isolation), *inqiṭā'* (cutting off), *nusuk* (reclusion), and *taḥannuth* (withdrawal).[62]

2.2.2 Solitude in the Quran

When the Quran (as well as the Ḥadīth) are critical of the austerities practiced by a group of monks – austerities which include celibacy, castration, and solitude – the reference is, more often than not, made with respect to Christian monks. Similarly, the Ḥadīth narrations in particular mention monasticism (*rahbāniyyah*) and how it is in fact to be "practiced" in Islam. With these two points in mind, I would like to underscore a more general point: when controversial matters in Islam are being dealt with, and especially when a solution is being sought, the reformulation is often made against a particular reference point. In our case, the issue of solitude in Islam is commonly held to be an issue rooted in Christian monasticism. Moreover, on the level of religious practices and beliefs, Islam, if viewed as a continuation of the Abrahamic faith traditions, does not entirely break ties with its counterpart religious traditions of Christianity and Judaism.[63] What Islam does do, however, is it redefines what it means to live in the world, and how one is to develop a relationship with God and humanity. While the institution of monasticism was not adopted by the early Muslim community, we do find some of its elements tacit in Muslim pietistic sensibilities even as early as the era of the Prophet (SAW).[64] With that said, in Islam solitude in its monastic form in particular was neither merely rejected nor was it

[62] While the precise meaning of *taḥannuth* has been the topic of much debate, the term is said to have been generally associated with acts of good deeds as a part of some ritual practice while in a state of physical withdrawal; see M.J. Kister (1968) ""al-Taḥannuth": An inquiry into the meaning of a term," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, (31) 2, 223-236. University of London.

[63] Perceiving Islam as a continuation of the Abrahamic traditions should not be misconstrued as having been a potential yet failed sect of Judaism or Christianity – an argument Montgomery Watt (1961) alludes to in his *Muhammad: Prophet and statesman*, namely, that if the Jews of Medina had reached an understanding with Muhammad, the former may "have become partners in the Arab empire and Islam a sect of Jewry" (Watt, 1961, p. 191). For a three-fold refutation of Watt's argument, see Shelomo Dov Goitein's (2010) *Studies of Islamic history and institutions*, p. 34.

[64] Two of the earliest groups that stood out in terms of their pious impulses were the *Ahl al-Ṣuffah* and the *Mu'tazilah*; see chapter three for more on these two.

accepted in its entirety, rather it was redefined to fit an Islamic framework. In this way, solitude in Islam is to be perceived not as a continuation but a kind of rupture in the general context of the Abrahamic traditions.

There are a number of passages that make mention of solitude in the Quran. The Quran unlike the Bible, for instance, is less concerned with minute details when it comes to historical events. In this respect, Muslims see the Quran more as a source of reflection and as a book of signs (*āyāt*) in which warnings and lessons are found. With that said, when the Quran retells stories from the past, there is always a lesson to be learned. And, as far as Muslims are concerned, there is virtually no detail in the Quran that is mentioned in vain. Thus, there are several questions to keep in mind when it comes to the issue of solitude in the Quran, such as: (1) does the Quran present a consistent portrait or view on solitude? (2) What are the reasons for mentioning such stories in relation to solitude? And, (3) how were these passages understood and interpreted by both the early and later Muslims?

Personalities mentioned in the Quran in connection to solitude include Abraham, Moses, the People of the Cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*), Mary mother of Jesus, and prophets of God in general. Listed below are Quranic passages that make mention of solitude (*khalwah*) or synonymous terms such as seclusion (*'uzlah*), which are followed with explanations supported by various commentary works including those that are based on Ḥadīth narrations (*naqlī*), reason (*'aqlī*), and allegory (*ishārī*).

1. Abraham: *"I shall withdraw from you and that unto which ye pray beside Allah, and I shall pray unto my Lord. It may be that, in prayer unto my Lord, I shall not be unblest. So when he withdrew from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We gave him Ishaq and Ya'qub, and made each of them a prophet"* (Quran, 19:48-49). Qushayrī in his *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* interprets Abraham's disassociation (*i'tazala*) in terms of his despair (*ay'as*) regarding his peoples' idolatrous ways, after which God grants him two sons to cultivate and preserve his legacy through a line of prophets (al-Qushayrī, 2007, vol. 2, p. 243).

2. Moses: *"And when We did appoint for Moses forty nights (of solitude), and then ye chose the calf, when he had gone from you, and were wrong-doers"* (Quran, 2:51). Moses, in his return from his solitude, finds his people having abandoned their

worship of God and instead took the calf as their object of worship. Thus, in one respect, the people were not prepared to be left without their leader-Prophet, Moses, who had temporarily secluded from them. In the context of Moses return from "his struggle against Pharaoh's folk and destroying them," 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335) in his *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* interprets Moses' forty nights of solitude as follows: "he will devote himself exclusively to Us so that the natural coverings that had veiled his heart from the nature of light would be lifted during the forty [days] in which his body was being created out of the fetal form and while he was veiled as a result of this formation from [his] primordial nature" (al-Kāshānī, n.d., p. 38).

Moses: *"And saying: Be not proud against Allah. Lo! I bring you a clear warrant. And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest ye stone me to death. And if ye put no faith in me, then let me go"* (Quran, 44:19-21). Here we are told of Moses' confrontation with the Pharaoh and of the latter's disbelief, which was followed by Moses' fleeing of Egypt with the Israelites.

3. People of the Cave: *"We narrate unto thee their story with truth. Lo! they were young men who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance. And We made firm their hearts when they stood forth and said: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We cry unto no Allah beside Him, for then should we utter an enormity. These, our people, have chosen (other) gods beside Him though they bring no clear warrant (vouchsafed) to them. And who doth greater wrong than he who inventeth a lie concerning Allah? And when ye withdraw from them and that which they worship except Allah, then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will spread for you of His mercy and will prepare for you a pillow in your plight"* (Quran, 18:13-16). Qushayrī writes that, "withdrawal (*al-'uzlah*) from [all that is] other than God (*'an ghayri Allāh*) is necessary to [form a] connection (*al-wuṣlah*) with God. In fact, [forming a] connection with God cannot be obtained except after withdrawal from [all that is] other than God [is carried out];" in light of their withdrawal into the cave, Qushayrī then writes that, "it is said that…if he be sincere in his return to God…and does not seek help from anyone other than God…[then] God will be enough for him in all his affairs…" (al-Qushayrī, 2007, vol. 2, p. 211). One of the more allegorical interpretations of this particular passage is offered through an Akbarian lens by Kāshānī: "*And when you withdraw from them*, that is, [when] you keep yourselves apart from your souls and their faculties by means of disengagement, *and from that*

which they worship except God, in the way of their wishes and vain desires, *then take refuge in the Cave*, in the body, in order to deploy the corporeal instruments for the seeking of perfection by means of forms of knowledge and [righteous] deeds and be forsaken therein, broken and tamed, as if dead, by avoiding ego-centric movements, bestial whims and predatorial assaults. In other words, die a voluntary death: *Your Lord will reveal for you something of His mercy*, a true life through knowledge and gnosis, *and prepare for you in your affair some comfort'*, some perfection which can be benefited from, by the manifestation of qualities of excellence and the rising of the lights of self- disclosures, so that you might take pleasure in the witnessings and enjoy perfections…And he [the Prophet], peace be upon him, said of Abū Bakr, may God be satisfied with him, 'Whoever wants to behold a dead person walking upon the face of the earth, let him behold Abū Bakr': in other words, one who is dead to himself, walking by means of God. Or [it means] when you withdraw from your people and their objects of worship that are other than God in the way of their differing demands, disparate goals, myriad vain desires and adopted idols, then take refuge in the Caves of your bodies and refrain from curious movements and from going forth in the footsteps of passionate desires; but cleave to acts of spiritual discipline and your Lord will reveal from His mercy an extra perfection, a strengthening and assistance by means of resources from the angelic realm and holy reinforcements, and He will grant you victory over them and prepare for you a religion and a way from which you can benefit as well as an acceptance so that creatures will find guidance through you to salvation" (al-Kāshānī, n.d., p. 439).

4. Mary: *"And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth; and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary where she was, he found that she had food. He said: O Mary! Whence cometh unto thee this (food)? She answered: It is from Allah. Allah giveth without stint to whom He will"* (Quran, 3:37). Sahl al-Tustarī interprets this as follows: God "took her into His special care, away from the shackles of the lower self and the world. And He made her grow in goodness, through righteous action, accompanied by the remembrance of God, Exalted is He, while all her bodily members were [engaged] in the service of God, and her heart was full of the knowledge of Him, Mighty and Majestic is He" (al-Tustarī, 2011, p. 44). Qushayrī, however, in his *Laṭā'if* interprets this passage in light of divine blessings (*karāmāt*), and writes that such blessings of the 'friends of God' (*awliyā'*) "do not necessarily persist. It is

possible that God will make something appear in them indefinitely or He may not… because of the possibility that that which exists today may not be as it was yesterday —this is not something that is incumbent upon God [to continue this provision]" (al-Qushayrī, 2017, vol. 1, p. 279). According to Kāshānī, the provisions that were given to Mary in her solitude may have been "spiritual provision in the way of gnoses, [spiritual] realities, knowledge and wisdoms that were being effused upon her from that which is with God. Since to be designated specifically by [divine] withness (*'indiyya*) is proof that these [provisions] were provisions directly from God (*laduniyya*)" (al-Kāshānī, n.d., p. 125).

Mary: *"And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, and had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our Spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man"* (Quran, 19:16-17). Mary receives God's divine blessings while alone and away from the people.

2.2.3 Solitude in Ḥadīth literature

Muslims are known to have turned to solitude or seclusion in anticipation that the final hour was approaching. The *ḥadīth*s in particular make frequent mention of the increase in social and political discord (*fitnah*) especially in the context of the end of times. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī substantiates this view by arguing that the time during which the Prophet (SAW) lived was marked by *jihād* and that, as such, undertaking seclusion would be granted in the event that the end of times was believed to be near (see al-'Asqalānī, 1987, vol. 11, p. 340). Ibn Ḥajar cites Khaṭṭābī's *Kitāb al-'uzlah* and elaborates on the two terms of *'uzlah* (seclusion) and *ikhtilāṭ* (mixing or socializing), where the latter pertains to any sort of gathering that takes place in compliance with matters of religion, whereas the former applies to one who if able to sustain their own livelihood is then allowed to seclude for the sake of preserving their religion, and yet must still attend congregational prayers, exchange greetings of peace (*salām*), and maintain the rights of Muslims (*ḥuqūq al-Muslimīn*) (*ibid*). Therefore, a Muslim, Khaṭṭābī continues, must abstain from excessively keeping company with people as this causes both one's mind to be unnecessarily preoccupied and one's time to be wasted; thus the body and heart will find repose by imposing restrictions on the mind in particular, and time in general to that which is necessary

(*ibid*).

The Prophet (SAW) is said to have loved being in solitude during the times when he was receiving revelations from God. According to ‘Āisha,

> “The beginning of the prophecy of the Messenger of God, when God wished to make him His agent and the instrument of His mercy towards creatures, (was manifested) by veracious dreams; every dream which he saw in his sleep was as clear as the dawn. This made him love solitude; nothing was more pleasant to him than to be alone.”[65]

Many Ḥadīth works are also known to mention solitude in a positive light: ‘Seclusion yields repose from bad company’ (al-‘Asqalānī, 1987, vol. 11, p. 338). An Arab Bedouin asks the Prophet (SAW): ‘O Messenger of God, who is the best of humankind?’ to which the Prophet (SAW) responds, ‘a man who struggles with himself and his wealth, and a man who lives in a mountain path amid the mountain paths worshipping his Master [i.e. God], and keeping the people from his evil’ (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 1615). In another narration, the Prophet (SAW) says: ‘There shall come a time upon the people when a Muslim’s best wealth will be sheep with which he will take to the mountain tops and places of rainfall, fleeing with his religion from anarchy (*fitnah*)’ (*ibid*).

2.2.4 Solitude in renunciant (*zuhd*) literature

There are a number of works that are on the whole dedicated to renunciant solitude in Islam. Below, these works shall be listed in chronological order and will be supplemented with a brief description of each. Important features and key points of each text will be therefore be underlined solely in reference to solitude as a mode of renunciation.

For the early Muslim renunciants, we find that the house is what they often depicted as a hermitage (*awsām*) rather than the specially designated cell or religious sanctuary, which was more typical of a Christian monastery. Solitude in Muslim renunciant literature is often mentioned in the context of either secluding from public life by remaining in the privacy of one’s home, or abstaining from human contact in

[65] T. Fahd (1995) *The encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 8, p. 96; also see Fahd’s *Divination* and other sources he lists at the end of the entry.

dedication to an isolated life in the mountains or desert. An individualistic and self-regarding sentiment is likewise predominant among early Muslim renunciants. This becomes evident in the rationale of a renunciant in their indifference of others and justification for undertaking solitude, which is essentially grounded in the idea that every human individual is said to be responsible for purifying themselves and that salvation in the hereafter depends squarely on the individual and their deeds alone.

1. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (b. 83/702; d. 148/765), an elusive albeit central figure in early Islam whose ideas and legacy have been appropriated by both Sunnī and Shī'ite Muslims, praises in his work on religious devotion entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-sharī'ah* the practice of retreat (*'uzlah*) in both spirit and body. This particular work, which prefigures the emergence of Sufism-proper in its doctrinal and practical sense, contains spiritual advice that is in the main rooted in conventional *zuhd*-piety. This last point can be discerned from the chapter on retreat where he stresses embracing difficulties and abstinence and dispensing with everything that one "has no immediate need for" (al-Ṣādiq, 1989, p. 68). He concludes by adding that, "There is no prophet nor regent (*wasi*) who has not chosen retreat in his lifetime, either at his beginning or at his end" (*ibid*).

2. The earliest extant work to bear in its title 'solitude' (*khalwah*) was written by Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (b. 165/782; d. 243/857) entitled *Kitāb al-khalwah wa al-tanaqqul fī al-'ibādah wa darajāt al-'ābidīn*. This particular work keys into the thought of Muḥāsibī as well as his era which coincides with that of the 'Abbāsids.[66] Muḥāsibī throughout his *Kitāb al-khalwah* discusses a number of core issues including attaining certainty in God and the importance of knowing and overcoming the inherent flaws of the ego-self (*'uyūb al-nafs*). He likewise laments over the state of affairs of his time and that of the people, and therefore advises entering into seclusion and eschewing from mixing and associating with the people (*i'tazal nafsahu wa nafara 'an al-'āmmah bi'l-mukhālaṭah wa al-ṣuḥbah*) specifically on the grounds that there is a preponderance of temptation and admiration (*ghalabah al-hawā wa i'jāb*) and because the good has been hemmed in by evil (*al-sharr fīhi qad*

[66] In his monograph on the life and works of Muḥāsibī, Gavin Picken (2011) writes that the *Kitāb al-khalwah*, "as with *Ādāb al-Nufūs* before it, is representative of much of al-Muḥāsibī's teachings in his other works, in particular *al-Ri'āya* and *al-Naṣā'iḥ*. Nevertheless, this work [i.e. *Kitāb al-khalwah*], as with *Ādāb al-Nufūs* is of equal importance, as it not only summarises his teaching in a concise manner but also, to some degree at least, reflects the period in which he lived" (Picken, 2011, p. 84).

aḥāṭa bi'l-khayr) (al-Muḥāsibī, 1955, p. 52).

3. In his *al-'Uzlah wa al-infirād*, Ibn Abī Dunyā (b. 208/823; d. 281/894) presents evidence in support of solitude and its practice based on the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), his close companions, and those of later generations. Many of these sayings extol in different ways unsociable behavior on the account that one may preserve their religion and be free from undesirable traits such as hypocrisy (*riyā'*) (Dunyā, 1997, p. 66). 'Solitude' and words synonymous to it are used in various contexts; some of these are general while others are more specific in their usage. To illustrate, secluding is sometimes used in the sense of simply excusing oneself from a gathering, as in the case of one of Abū Ḥanīfah's (d. 150/767) students Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī who is said to have withdrawn (*i'tazala*) from a study circle (*ḥalaqah*) because the gathering had no bearing on matters of the afterlife (*laysa majlisukum dhālika min amr al-ākhirah fī shay'in*) (*ibid*, p. 68).

4. The *al-'Uzlah* of Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998) takes on a slightly more apologetic tone from the very outset. In addressing those who deny seclusion, the author throughout the work attempts to justify its practice on the basis of the Quran, Ḥadīth, and Āthār (sayings of the Companions) (see al-Khaṭṭābī, 1990, pp. 61ff.).

5. In *Khalwah al-'ākifīn*, which is an abridged text of Abū Khalaf al-Ṭabarī's (d. Circa 470/1077) *Salwah al-'ārifīn wa uns al-mushtāqīn*,[67] the compiler Yūsuf b. Fattūḥ b. Dā'ūd writes that solitude is an attribute of the people who seek purity (*al-khalwah hiya ṣifah ahl al-ṣafwah*), and that if God fills the heart of His slave with His love, and keeps to the remembrance of God, and is accustomed in his dialogue with God in secret, and is busied by God [away] from others, then he becomes intimate with [God in] unity and is gratified by solitude, [and] so [may it be] beatitude for him, again [may it be] beatitude for him (*wa idhā 'amara Allāh ta'ālā qalba 'abdihi bi-ḥubbihi wa anasa bi-dhikrihi ulifa munājātihi bi-sirrihi wa shughila bihi 'an ghayrihi fa-huwa musta'nisun bi'l-waḥdah mughtabiṭun bi'l-khalwah fa-ṭūbāhu thumma ṭūbāh*) (Dā'ūd, 1339, fol. 54v). (It is interesting to note the contrary meanings of *musta'nisu* (from the root word *u n s* meaning 'sociableness') and *waḥdah* (or *waḥsha* meaning 'loneliness' or 'solitariness'), which are here used in conjunction).

[67] See section below for Ṭabarī's *Salwah al-'ārifīn*. Also, see Böwering & Orfali, 2013, p. 19.

6. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī (b. 510/1116; d. 597/1200), the famous Ḥanbalite scholar and historian from Baghdad, in his extensive work *Ṣayd al-khāṭir* makes much mention of the benefits of solitude. His general advice on solitude is more along the lines of maintaining a low social profile and minimizing mixing with the people. He also tends to associate the marketplace with worldliness and refers to social mixing as an activity that inevitably taints one’s heart and actions (see Ibn al-Jawzī, 1997, p. 86).

2.2.5 Solitude in mystical (*taṣawwuf*) literature

Sufi sources can be broadly classified into two main categories: (1) biographical compilations (*ṭabaqāt*) which is to include hagiography (*manāqib*);[68] and (2) manuals or itineraries (*rasā’il*; sing. *risālah*). There are a handful of extant Sufi manuals that were written during the formative period whose content are primarily based on the thought and practices of the early pious Muslims, particularly those who were of an ascetical and/or mystical bent. Common to all such manuals include discussions on: (1) the word origin of Sufism; (2) the conformity of Sufism with ‘orthodox’ Islam; (3) the various stations and states of the Sufis; and (4) technical Sufi terms. Moreover, according to the Sufis, God imparts knowledge to the Sufi through His grace, and he or she receives this knowledge of a special kind in the form of mystical experiences including *kashf* (‘self-disclosure’ or ‘unveiling’), *mushāhadah* (‘contemplative witnessing’), and *dhawq* (‘tasting’). Two major terms or categories in relation to the spiritual journey that the Sufi embarks on are: ‘station’ (*maqām*; pl. *maqāmāt*) and ‘state’ (*ḥāl*; pl. *aḥwāl*).

The tension encountered by Sufis at large could be defined in one way as being between separation (*faṣl*) and attainment (*waṣl*). And, furthermore, insofar that separation from God entails the *presence* of oneself, attainment of God essentially

[68] While biographical works are by and large based on fact, those of hagiographical works are more so based on embellishments. The former presents a more or less unidealized representation of the lives of Sufi masters, and like other *ṭabaqāt* collections, the *ṭabaqāt* genre dedicated to Sufi luminaries are structured in chronological order offering a brief account of the individual figure in question as well as a description of the general social setting and ethos of their respective communities; the latter, however, in one respect, tries to convey an idealized framework of which the preceptor was drawing on in order to morally cultivate and spiritually embolden his disciples, and in this way, the genre of *manāqib* have more of a practical relevance in that they allow us to envisage how the ideal human model was being portrayed.

entails the *absence* of oneself.

1. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Bukhārī al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990) in his *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* presents an analogy between solitude on the one hand, and recollection (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*mushāhadah*) on the other. In the third part of the *Ta'arruf*, which is dedicated to the various stations (*maqāmāt*) of the Sufis, Kalābādhī begins his forty-seventh chapter (*bāb*) on the Sufis' doctrine of recollection (*qawluhum fī al-dhikr*) by discussing "the true form of recollection (*ḥaqīqah al-dhikr*)" and says that it is "in forgetting (*tansā*) all but the One recollected (*al-madhkūr*);" and he lets his readers know that this is based on the Quranic prescription, *wa adhkur rabbaka idhā nasīt* (18:24),[69] i.e. "when thou hast forgotten what is not God (*mā dūna Allāh*), then thou hast remembered God (*fa-qad dhakarat Allāh*)" (Kalābādhī, 1994, p. 74; cf. Kalābādhī, 1978, p. 95). Kalābādhī then continues by citing a narration of the Prophet (SAW): "The solitary ones (*al-mufarridūn*) have the precedence." They asked: "Who are the solitary ones, O Messenger of God?" He answered: "Men and women who recollect [God] much." The "solitary" is he who has none other with him" (*ibid*) (insertion mine). Kalābādhī – whose views and interpretations, it should be noted, are very much aligned with that of the Baghdādī Sufi tradition – explains that recollection, which is an attribute (*ṣifah*) of the one who recollects God, is to be carried out not by the tongue but by the heart because human attributes are ultimately an impediment between oneself and God. The objective of recollection, therefore, is its internalization, and this final stage is what Kalābādhī refers to as the station of contemplation (*mushāhadah*),[70] viz. being in the contemplation of God and His attributes such that one's own attributes are no longer present. The solitude, therefore, is the one who is in a state of self-oblivion. Kalābādhī also cites a saying of Sahl al-Tustarī which defines piety in relation to contemplation and solitude: "Piety (*al-taqwā*) consists of contemplating the states (*mushāhadah al-aḥwāl*) on the footing of isolation (*'alā qadam al-infirād*)" (Kalābādhī, 1994, p. 69; cf. Kalābādhī, 1978, p. 90). (Kalābādhī is only concerned with inner states and stations, and thus he does not dwell on outward practices per se,

[69] In both the printed Arabic text and English translation (by A.J. Arberry), the *āyah* number in question is mistakingly specified as 23 although it should be 24.

[70] Kalābādhī writes that, "every state has a beginning and an end: and between these two are the various states (*aḥwal al-mutafāwitah*). Every station has its own science (*'ilm*), and every state its own allusion (*ishārah*)" (Kalābādhī, 1994, p. 59; cf. Kalābādhī, 1978, p. 76); in this respect, the perfection of the recollection of God is the station of contemplation (Kalābādhī, 1994, p. 68; cf. Kalābādhī, 1978, p. 88).

such as in spiritual exercises; he essentially describes the fruits of the Sufi path. His main goal is to present the core doctrine of the Sufis without going into great detail).

2. In another fourth/tenth-century Sufi manual, Abū Naṣr ʻAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā ʻAlī al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī's (d. 378/988) explains the notion of solitude in his *Kitāb al-lumaʻ fī al-taṣawwuf*. He provides an elucidation of Junayd's remark on *khalwah*: "…" "Others retire from the world and dwell in caves, fancying that solitude will deliver them from their passions and cause them to share in the mystical experiences of the saints, but the fact is that hunger and solitude, if self-imposed and not the result of an overpowering spiritual influence, are positively harmful. The author recalls instances known to him of young men who reduced themselves to such a state of weakness that they had to be nursed for several days before they could perform the obligatory prayers. Others castrate themselves in the hope of escaping from the lust of the flesh. This is useless and even injurious, inasmuch as lust arises from within and is incurable by any external remedy. Others imagine that they show sincere trust in God (*tawakkul*) when they roam through deserts and wildernesses without provision for the journey, but real *tawakkul* demands previous self-discipline and mortification" (Sarrāj, 1914, p. 112).

3. In his widely-acclaimed *Risālah fī ʻilm al-taṣawwuf*, Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (b. 986; d. 1074) interprets seclusion as follows: "When a man chooses seclusion he must be sure that he practices it in order to protect other people from his evil, not in order to be safe from their evil. The former comes from his thinking little of himself, while the latter comes from seeing himself to be better than others. A man who thinks little of himself is humble, whereas a man who considers himself to be more worthy than others is vain" (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 122). Qushayrī also narrates a number of sayings of Abū ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) on the issue of *khalwah*: "The hardship of seclusion is easier to bear than the enticement of [human] company,"[71] in spite of this, elsewhere he advises that, "Whoever wants his religion to be sound and his body and heart to be relieved should isolate himself from people. This is a desolate time and wise is he who chooses seclusion!"[72] and yet in another saying, which is seemingly contradictory to the first, he says, "Only the strong are capable of withdrawing themselves from people. For the likes of us living in a

[71] *Mukābadah al-ʻuzlah aysara min madārāti al-khalṭah* (al-Qushayrī, 2001, p. 140).

[72] *Man arāda an yaslama lahu dīnuhu wa yastarīḥu badanuhu wa qalbuhu, fa yaʻtazilu al-nās fa inna hādhā zamān waḥshah, wa al-āqil man ikhtāra fīhi al-waḥdah* (al-Qushayrī, 2001, p. 140).

community is more beneficial, because some of us imitate others [in good works]"[73] (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 124). Qushayrī is a good example of a writer who presents various perspectives on Sufism so as to create a framework of the Sufi tradition that is both diverse and well-defined.

4. Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī b. ʻUthmān al-Jullābī al-Ghaznawī al-Hujwīrī's (d. Circa 1073-1077) in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb* describes two types of seclusion (*ʻuzlah*), namely, turning away from the people (*iʻtrāḍ az khalq*) and dissociating from them (*inqiṭāʻ az īshān*). The latter type which Hujwīrī interprets as a kind of spiritual solitude is explained further by him through the example of ʻUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who is said to have "lived among the people as their Commander and Caliph. His words show clearly that although spiritualists may outwardly mix with mankind, their hearts always cling to God and return to Him in all circumstances. They regard any intercourse they may have with men as an affliction sent by God; and that intercourse does not divert them from God since the world never becomes pure in the eyes of those whom God loves" (al-Hujwīrī, 1911, pp. 72-73). Hujwīrī adds that, "When a person is severed from mankind in spirit, he knows nothing of created beings and no thought thereof can take possession of his mind. Such a person, although he is living among the people, is isolated from them, and his spirit dwells apart from them" (*ibid*, p. 72). Hujwīrī's general narrative stands out when compared to his near contemporaries, both past and present, by intently projecting the origins of Sufism to the Companions of the Prophet (SAW) and showcasing them as the earliest paradigmatic Muslims of a "Sufi" persuasion.

5. In *Salwah al-ʻārifīn wa uns al-mushtāqīn*, an early Sufi manual which was written in 459/1067[74] by Abū Khalaf al-Ṭabarī (d. Circa 470/1077) who was a fellow Nishapuran of Qushayrī, the author dedicates a chapter to solitude (*khalwah*) and seclusion (*ʻuzlah*) and writes that seclusion is a sign of the arrival (*al-wuṣlah*) of the seeker (*murīd*) – i.e. the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of seclusion; moreover, seclusion essentially marks the initial state (*ḥāl*) of the seeker, and solitude is its end where one achieves (*taḥaqqaqa*) intimacy (*uns*) with their Lord (al-Ṭabarī, 2013, p. 88). This particular text is a good example of a work that has a resounding Baghdādī-Sufi slant, and moreover has often been overlooked partly in light of what Böwering and

[73] *al-infirād lā yaqwā ʻalayhi illā al-aqwiyā', wa al-amthālunā: al-ijtimāʻu awfaru wa anfaʻu, bi ʻamalin baʻḍihim ʻalā ruʼyati baʻḍ* (al-Qushayrī, 2001, p. 140).

[74] Date taken from Böwering & Orfali, 2013, p. 24.

Orfali (2013) point out in terms of the "insights and ideas" presented by Ṭabarī in the *Salwah* "are commonplace and traditional," and "as a collector of Sufi sayings and anecdotes [was] fitting the scenario of a Sufi tradition that had been embraced by Ash'arī theologians and Shāfi'ī jurisconsults" (Böwering & Orfali, 2013, p. 26).

6. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (b. 539/1145; d. 632/1234) '*Awārif al-ma'ārif* discusses in a number of chapters the various forms of solitude, focusing particularly on their origins, etiquettes and objectives. Suhrawardī, whose era coincides with the newly developing Sufi *ṭarīqah*s, represents one of the major figures to expressly articulate a preference for life in society over that of solitary life. In his '*Awārif* he, moreover, makes a notable distinction between the Sufi and the renunciant based on the former's preference for living in society and the latter's adoption of solitude as a way of inhibiting evil impulses and worldliness in general (Knysh, 2000, p. 315). He, nonetheless, represents one of the earliest Sufi authors to delineate solitude and spiritual retreat as a formal Sufi practice "beyond its ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions [as we find] in the works of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī and Ghazālī" (Ohlander, 2008, p. 221). With that said, based on his mystical regimen, solitude and withdrawal from society becomes a fundamental practice and in particular the "two disciplines [of *muḥāsabah* ('scrupulous examination') and *murāqabah* ('vigilant awareness') which Suhrawardī emphasizes] are not properly cultivated in the company of others and thus require, in the first place, actual physical withdrawal from society (*khalwa*) and in the second, a certain inward solitude in which the aspirant maintains a continual focus on God in those instances where he finds himself in the midst of social gatherings (*'uzla*)" (Ohlander, 2008, p. 220).

7. Of the variant titles known to exist of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) monograph on solitude, there is the *Risālah al-anwār fīmā yumnaḥu ṣāḥib al-khalwah min al-asrār*, a work which can be described as a relatively short tract that delineates the nature of the spiritual journey (*kayfiyyah al-sulūk*) to God – particularly with respect to arriving at His presence and returning to the people while maintaining contact with Him – and highlights the conditions of entering into solitude, its benefits alongside the dangers of its practice.

Ibn 'Arabī writes that this world is a place of obligation (*taklīf*), trial (*ibtilā'*), and works (*a'māl*); that one's journey in this world only comes to a halt in the afterlife,

that is, either in paradise or in hell; and that every intelligent person (*ʻāqil*) should know that at the root of this journey lay difficulties (*mashaqqah*) and intense hardships in living (*shaẓaf bi-shiddah al-ʻaysh*) (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 7r). Here, Ibn ʻArabī underscores that the world is neither a place of ease nor of relaxation, but that on the contrary it is full of tribulation, and therefore it is only those who recognize this fact of life on earth are the ones who take to the journey toward God. He further goes on to say that it would be preferable to involve one's self in outward labor and inward knowledge of God because this would increase one's spiritual presence (*rūḥāniyyah*) in goodness (*ḥusn*) and in beauty (*jamāl*); and ultimately that the human subtle substance (*al-laṭīfah al-insāniyyah*) and the bodies (*al-ajsām*) will be brought to life again in the form of its knowledge and its actions, respectively, which will either be good (*ḥusn*) or ugly (*qubḥ*) (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 8v).

Ibn ʻArabī then writes that if one has discerned all that has been mentioned above, and that if one wishes to enter into the presence of God without any intermediary, and seeks intimacy with Him, then there shall be no other supreme master in one's heart, wherefore seclusion from the people and preference for solitude becomes unavoidable (*fa-lā budda laka min ʻuzlah ʻan al-nās wa īthār al-khalwah*) (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 9r). Moreover, the degree of one's distance from the people has a bearing on one's nearness to God, both outwardly and inwardly (*fa-inna-hu ʻalā qadr buʻdika min al-khalq yakūna qurbaka min al-Ḥaqq ẓāhiran wa bāṭinan*) (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 9r). Ibn ʻArabī argues that one should not enter into solitude until they know where they stand in terms of distinguishing their own strength from the inherent power of delusion; solitude cannot be entered into if delusion reigns, unless, however, one puts themselves in the hands of a discerning and knowledgeable shaykh; and that prior to solitude it is necessary to undergo spiritual discipline (*al-riyāḍah*) – which corresponds to the refinement of character – and to abandon thoughtlessness, and to also be able to bear suffering (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 10r). Ibn ʻArabī warns that in the event that one secludes from the people they should not open their door to anyone who comes to visit because it is only those who desire leadership and dignity that do so and are thus driven away from God's 'door'; he continues to underscore the dangers of falling prey to the ego-self (*al-nafs*), for it is because of its deception that most people in the world are in utter ruination (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 10v). Finally, before going on to explain in the remaining part of the *Risālah* the stages and states of which a seeker is to be acquainted with while

journeying to God, we find Ibn ʻArabī stressing moderation particularly when it comes to eating habits, as well as maintaining an overall balanced temperament (*iʻtidāl al-mizāj*); in the contrary case, Ibn ʻArabī argues that imaginations (*khayālāt*) and extensive absent-mindedness (*hadhayān ṭawīl*) would consequently ensue (Ibn ʻArabī, fol. 10v).

8. Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh al-Iskandarī (or al-Sakandarī) al-Shādhīlī (d. Cario, 709/1309), author of the *Kitāb al-ḥikam*, writes that, "Your desire for isolation (*tajrīd*), even though God has put you in the world to gain a living (*fī al-asbāb*), is a hidden passion. And your desire to gain a living in the world, even though God has put you in isolation, is a comedown from a lofty aspiration" (Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh, 1978, p. 47). Likewise, in his *Tāj al-ʻArūs*, Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh discusses ways of purifying one's heart through solitude and isolation, such that "one who is sincere in his isolation, will find God's complimentary gifts bounteously bestowed…Thus, one who occupies his heart with God and fortifies it against the assaults of undisciplined passions is better than one who simply engages in much prayer and fasting" (Jackson, 2012, p. 107). Ibn ʻAṭāʼ here essentially underscores the far greater importance of inward spiritual engagement in relation to mere outward ritual practices. With that said, it is important to note that the works of Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh were meant not "only to those individuals who had withdrawn from society to live a life of reclusive meditation, nor to those who lived in the world but were contemplatives; instead, he addressed both" (Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh, 1978, p. 33). Likewise, Ibn ʻAṭāʼ Allāh is said to have seen in his time "armies of ascetics and other wandering groups of devotees moving through the big cities under the leadership of gaunt-looking chiefs;" the context of his works, therefore, should be considered thusly, that is, as a response to misguided imitators on the whole (*ibid*).

9. In his *al-Uṣūl al-ʻashara*, Abū al-Jannāb Aḥmad b. ʻUmar (b. 540/1145-46; d. 618/1221), widely known as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, mentions in one of his ten principles the practice of ritual seclusion as a "means to withdraw by choice from interacting with people, by isolating oneself and cutting one's ties, just as will occur at death. This excludes being at the service of the shaykh who has reached attainment and acts as preceptor to him [the wayfarer]" (Zargar, 2013, p. 127). Moreover, "The essence of seclusion is confining the senses through private retreat (*al-khalwa*) from unrestrained conduct in the sensory realm, for indeed every canker (*āfa*), every

sedition (*fitna*), and every calamity that afflicted the spirit and gave potency to the self, fostering the self's attributes, came in through the dormer window of the senses. By means of the senses, the self led the spirit to the Lowest of the Low (95:5) and, through these senses, the self fettered the spirit and took mastery over it. Hence, through private retreat and isolating the senses, severed is the self's support from the lower life (*al-dunyā*), from Satan, and from the assistance of whim and desire, just as a doctor in treating the patient first prescribes safeguarding the patient from that which harms him, taking into consideration the causes of his sickness. Through this, support for the ailment that comes from corrupt substances ends and the substances become purified thereby. It has been said, after all, that "abstention is foremost for every medicine." Thereupon the doctor will treat the patient with a purgative that eliminates corrupt substances from him and strengthens the natural faculties and the instinctual heat, so that by suppressing the nature [in its support of the corrupt substances] sickness withdraws from him and soundness is attracted. Here [in this prescribed spiritual path] the purgative that follows abstention is perpetual remembrance" (*ibid*).

10. In one of the central texts of the Kubrawiyyah, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī mentions the need for ritual seclusion in his *Mirṣād al-'ibād min al-mabda'a ilā al-ma'ād* based on the story of Moses in the Quran who undertook forty-days of retreat (Quran, 2:51) as well as on the prophetic saying, "Whoever worships God sincerely for forty nights, the springs of wisdom shall well up from his heart to this tongue" (Quoted in Rāzī, 1982, p. 279). Subsequently, Rāzī underscores "that the foundation of wayfaring on the path of religion and of attaining the stations of certainty is seclusion, withdrawal, and isolation from men. All the prophets and saints devoted themselves to seclusion at the beginning of their state, and persisted in it until they reached the goal (*ibid*). He further adds that prior to having received revelation from God, the prophet Muḥammad would seclude to Mount Ḥirā which, according to varying narrations, lasted up to a week, or two weeks, or a month. As for the conditions and customs of the forty-day ritual seclusion, the author says that there a total of eight: (1) residing alone in a dark cell; (2) being in a state of constant ritual purity; (3) repeating the declaration of God's oneness (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*); (4) negating stray thoughts (*khawāṭir*); (5) observing intermittent-fasting daily; (6) being in a state of constant silence; (7) employing the technique of joining his heart with that of his shaykh's; and (8) abandoning all objection, be it to God or his shaykh

(*ibid*, pp. 280-283).

11. The Kubrawī shyakh ʻAlā al-Dawlah Simnānī (b. 659/1261; d. 736/1336), who is known for advocating classical Sufi ideas particularly those of Junayd and for stressing the sober return (*baqā'*) as the highest of stations, writes in his *al-Wārid al-shārid* that in undertaking continual solitude (*al-khalwah al-dā'imah*) one must adhere to certain conditions among which include being in a cell that does not contain any windows so as to prevent sunlight from entering and whose capacity is only for a single individual to be able to pray in it. He then says that no one can attain the station of 'perfection of Islam' – in reference to the saying of the Prophet (SAW) that 'the perfection of one's Islam is the abandoning of what does not concern him" (*min ḥusni al-Islām al-mar'i tarkuhu mā lā ya'nīhī*) – except in solitude (*wa lā yaṣilu aḥadun ilā maqām ḥusn al-Islām illā fī al-khalwah*) (Simnānī, 2018, p. 162).

12. In ʻAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī's (d. 832/1408) commentary of Ibn ʻArabī's *Risālah al-anwār* entitled *Isfār risālah al-anwār*, he mentions that the condition of 'ascending' to God as the Prophet (SAW) did in his *isrā' wa mi'rāj* ('the night journey and ascension') is the perfection of one's inner and outer.

13. In Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Asad Bukhārī's *Maslak al-'ārifīn*,[75] the earliest extant work on the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah dating back to the early or mid fourteenth century,[76] we find a section on the conditions of solitude (*sharā'iṭ-i chilla*) where it begins by citing the Quranic passage on the Prophet Moses (AS) who spent forty nights in solitude (Bukhārī, n.d., fol. 44v). The *Maslak* then goes on to list the conditions of solitude as follows: a pious shaykh must prescribe the act of going into solitude and thus cannot be self-imposed; must fast and eat little during the breaking of the fast; to abstain from talking of worldly matters by maintaining silence; to be aware of one's state in the innermost recess of the heart; to be constantly busy with recollecting God (*dhikr*); to eliminate stray thoughts (*khawāṭir*) of a worldly kind

[75] Although it is unclear precisely when Bukhārī's *Maslak* was authored, scholars of late have dated it to the early to mid fourteenth century (see DeWeese, 2011a, p. 11) or to the mid to late fourteenth century (see Paul, 2012, p. 138).

[76] See Jürgen Paul's (1998b) "*Maslak al-'ārifīn*. Ein dokument zur frühen geschichte der Ḫwāğagān-Naqšbandīya" (p. 174); cf. DeWeese's (1996) "The Mashā'ikh-i Turk and the Khojagān: Rethinking The Links Between The Yasavī And Naqshbandī Sufi Traditions" (p. 187n16); DeWeese's (2011a) "Succession protocols and the early Khwajagani schism in the *Maslak al-'ārifīn*" (pp. 1-2, 11n22).

from entering into the heart; and to sleep little (*ibid*, fols. 47r-46r). While mention in many other works – including this one – of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah is made with respect to the controversy over differences in those who preferred the vocal *dhikr* over its silent form, this particular work is the only one of its kind that refers to solitude in conventional Sufi terms as seen in the works mentioned so far in the present section. The *Maslak*, therefore, serves as evidence that some of the early Khwājagān prior to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband had indeed incorporated the forty-day solitary retreat into their teachings and training methods.[77]

14. Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī's (b. 336/948; d. 430/1038) *Ḥilyah al-awliyā' wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'* is one of the first works that attempts to project – however ostensible – the Sufi tradition back to the earliest generation of Muslims including the first four caliphs and the founders of the four major legal schools of thought.[78] Among the examples Abū Nu'aym cites in his *Ḥilyah* on the virtues of solitude include the advice of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) who in a letter that he had written to 'Abbād b. 'Abbād laments about the dismal state of affairs of his time including the lack of knowledge (*'ilm*), patience (*ṣabr*), and fostering of the good (*a'wān 'alā al-khayr*), together with corruption among the people (*fasād min al-nās*) and grief in the world (*kadar min al-dunyā*), advising ultimately to be obscure in this time of obscurity (*wa 'alayka bi'l-khamūl fa-in hādhā zaman khamūl*) and to undertake seclusion and to minimize mixing with the people (*wa 'alayka bi'l-'uzlah wa qillah mukhālaṭah al-nās*) (Iṣfahānī, 1996, vol. 6, p. 376).

15. In his *Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat*, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) maintains that "solitude is better than a bad companion, but a good companion is better than solitude, as is found in the Traditions" (al-Ghazzali, 2008, vol. 1, p. 365). Ghazālī continues to assert that only those scholars who are learned in the religious sciences are allowed to engage in the act of withdrawing, for the withdrawal of the

[77] For a concise assessment on the issue of solitude in the early Khwājagān movement until the era of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, see Jürgen Paul's (1998a) *Doctrine and organization: The Khwājagān/Naqshbandīya in the first generation after Bahā'uddīn* (pp. 30-34). Paul does especially well to point out the positive evaluation regarding solitude by some of the early Khwājagān prior to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband.

[78] This idea of Abū Nu'aym attempting to legitimize the Sufi tradition has nonetheless raised some doubts. Christopher Melchert astutely argues that what in fact distinguished Abū Nu'aym was not his Sufi background but his expertise as a Ḥadīth scholar, and further points out in this regard that "we should beware of projecting our familiar distinctions (as between Sufis and non-Sufis) onto Abū Nu'aym, perhaps before those distinctions had become so clear as they patently had by ibn al-Ǧawzī's day" (Melchert, 2012).

common people is not suitable given that the ultimate end of, for instance, a sick person who flees from a physician and appeals to self-treatment would be calamitous.

16. In a short tract entitled *Risāle-i Hazret-i Azīzān*, ʻAlī ʻAzīzān Rāmītanī (d. 721/1321) offers a brief explanation of the ten foundational principles of the Sufi path. The third principle, *khalwat* and *ʻuzlat* (solitude and seclusion), is described by Rāmītanī as a method of preventing one's self from looking at, engaging in, and hearing what is forbidden by the religious law and harmful to the self (Rāmītanī, 2021, pp. 40-41). It is also a way of detaining the *nafs* which is said to be the most dangerous of enemies (*ibid*, p. 41). After Bukhārī's *Maslak*, this text represents another early Khwājagānī text that refers to the conventional *khalwah* in a positive light.

2.3 Detractors of solitude in Islam

> *"In more ordinary life, apart from isolated, homogeneous groups like the Bedouin or from dynamic new movements like Muhammad's, the ideal human image is rarely so sharply focused. To be sure, every form of piety in the great religious traditions necessarily presents in more or less generalized terms an ideal human image for its devotees-the scrupulous servant of the law among the Shariʻah-minded, the self-transcending lover of God among the Sufis, for instance"*[79]

The idea of solitude provoked controversy among the early Muslims. Detractors of solitude initially expressed particular concern over its association with pious and salvational activity. Solitudes undermined religious and political authority, as perceived by its detractors at least, foremost among whom were the Muslim jurists (*fuqahāʼ*). Having wielded considerable influence over the people with their religious authority and social prestige (see Lapidus, 2014, p. 151), Muslim jurists as early as the second/eighth century developed a comprehensive legal system, the Shariah, that ultimately became a standard model for the ideal Muslim society.

The Shariah served as an all-encompassing framework of ethical conduct. It not only reinforced politics and economics but also postulated that pious activity was to be carried out within the social domain. Consequently, the Shariah also informed how

[79] Hodgson, 1974, vol. 2, pp. 154-155.

Muslims understood and sought salvation. In this vein, Karamustafa observes that,

> "Political and economic affirmation of the world, however, had to be legitimized in religious terms. Here the most impressive achievement of Muslims who viewed human society as the true arena of salvational activity was the development of a formidable legal apparatus, the sharī'ah, designed to facilitate salvation by the regulation of social life within a soteriological normative framework" (Karamustafa, 1994, pp. 26-27).

Muslims who were generally engaged in scholarly endeavors are known to have had their fair share of solitude as is well attested.[80] A cursory reading of many of the biographical accounts and personal histories of scholars would reveal the penchant that Muslims of the past had for solitude.

A major point of contention, however, that we find being raised with respect to solitude was its association with pious or salvational activity, especially when it came to practices being carried out in what was perceived as illegitimate by its detractors. Society, as far as the Muslim jurists were concerned, ultimately thrives in conditions that are stable. The jurists therefore strived to provide a legal and ethical framework by which people could comport themselves properly, that is, in outward conformity with the Shariah. Some of the early jurists moreover took issue with the Sufis conceptualizing a dichotomy between the outward and the inward, the latter of which the Sufis championed as their "jurisdiction." The Sufis also postulated that both spheres were complementary rather than opposed to one another. However, those Muslims who embraced a type of legal-minded piety failed to see any need to compartmentalize the Shariah in the first place.

2.3.1 Polemical works on solitude

This alleged *ḥadīth*, as suggested in part two of the previous chapter, may have originated in reaction to Muslims displaying certain monastic-like tendencies including celibacy, bodily mortification, and ascetical solitude. The saying, 'There is no monasticism in Islam' (*Lā rahbāniyyah fī al-Islām*) is arguably one of the most

[80] There are countless examples in chronicles and biographical works of scholars who have secluded from public life, while some even abandoned society altogether. Examples of the latter include the renowned scholar of Ḥadīth, Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), who toward the end of his life abandoned his teaching career and lived on an island in Egypt, eventually passing away in solitude (see Brockelmann, 1996, vol. 2, p. 155).

well-known polemical statements leveled against monastic-like spirituality in the Muslim tradition. When we scrutinize its *takhrīj* (extraction) – viz. a genre within Ḥadīth that rigorously tracks, evaluates, and clarifies the status of the *sanad* or the channels of transmission of *ḥadīth* as well as sayings generally attributed to the Prophet (SAW) – we find, for instance, according to 'Ajlūnī's *Kashf al-Khafā'*, that the *ḥadīth* on the prohibition of monasticism is not found in its verbatim in the Ḥadīth literature. In spite of this, according to Ibn Ḥajr, there is a tradition reported by Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, which states that, 'Surely, for us Allāh has substituted monasticism with the true and tolerant religion (i.e. Islam)' (*Inna Allāh abdalnā bi'l-rahbāniyyah al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*) ('Ajlūnī, 2001, p. 463) (translation mine).[81] According to this, the encapsulating phrase *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* is therefore presented as an alternative to monasticism.[82]

Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī in his *al-Ri'āyah li-ḥuqūq Allāh* dedicates a chapter on the topic of seclusion and fleeing from the people and informs his readers of a sect – without attributing any specific labels – overcome by estrangement from the people and solitude (*wa firqah qad ghalabah 'alayhā al-istīḥāsh min al-nās wa al-khalwah*) and, nonetheless, their fleeing, he argues, is a sham (*wa hiya ma'a dhālik tanṣanna'u bi-firārihā*) and that they derive great pleasure to be known for this (*wa tuḥibbu an tashhara bihi*) (al-Muḥāsibī, n.d., p. 376). In spite of advocating solitude in his *Kitāb al-khalwah* (see above), Muḥāsibī explains that this particular group of people displayed arrogance over the common folk and likewise aroused admiration with their deeds (*ma'a takabbura 'alā al-'āmmah wa 'ajjaba bi-a'mālihā*), and had been blinded from increasing in misdeeds (*'umā 'alayhā akthara dhunūbihā*) as they deemed themselves intimate with God, isolated from creation (*idh 'addat anfusahā annahā anīsah bi-Allāh 'azza wa jalla mustawḥishah min khalqih*) (*ibid*).

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), who had been a most stern critic of outlandish practices, was critical of solitariness. In his *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, for instance, it is said that he "speaks bitterly of ascetics (presumably Sufis) who prefer to pray in seclusion

[81] Hamza Yusuf (2005) in his "Generous tolerance in Islam and its effects on the life a Muslim" in *Season*, translates *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* as 'the gentle religion' or 'the gentle Abrahamic one'.

[82] We find the expression *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* in a *ḥadīth* recorded in al-Bukhārī's *al-Jām'i al-Ṣaḥīḥ*: 'the most beloved *al-dīn* to Allāh is *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*' (al-Suyūṭī, 1998, pp. 201-202). According to al-Suyūṭī's commentary, *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*, which is interrelated to *al-dīn* or the lifeway of Islam, is defined by tolerance (*samḥ*) and ease (*sahl*), and the evidence for this is the saying: 'the best *dīn* for you is that which is easiest' (*khayru dīnukum aysaruhu*) (al-Suyūṭī, 1998, p. 202).

(Katz, 2013, p. 129). Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350), who in following the footsteps of his teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah, likewise expresses much criticism against the specious undertakings of the Sufis, which included the practice of solitude. Jawziyyah in his *Madārij al-sālkīn*, which is an extensive commentary of ‘Abdullāh al-Harawī Anṣārī’s (d. 481/1089) *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, writes the following:

> “Purification of the souls (*tazkiyat al-nufūs*) is more severe and more difficult than treating the body; so whoever purified his soul by training (*riyāḍah*) and disciplining (*mujāhada*) [it] and spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) in a manner that was not brought by the Messengers then he is like a sick person who attempts to treat himself using his own opinion. And how does his opinion compare to that of a genuine physician? The Messengers are the physicians of the heart and, as such, there is no way to purify them or reform them except [by adopting] their method, putting yourself in their hands, with absolute compliance and submission to them” (Quoted in Picken, 2011, p. 156).

The implication here is that no amount of solitude will help one achieve self-purification since, for Jawziyyah, this can only be actualized by strictly adhering to the prophetic way.

2.3.2 Societal-oriented legalist piety

Various forms of societal-oriented legalist piety are known to have emerged throughout the history of Islam. The most extreme case appears with the rise of the Khārijites. Then there was the more moderate one’s such as the Ḥadīth folk, otherwise known as the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*.

The ulema in their role as legal-jurists (*fuqahā’*; sing. *faqīh*) were mainly concerned with defining the religious, ethical, and social guidelines by which Muslims were expected to conform. And while the ulema in general were adamant about Muslims keeping to their societal commitments, they were not as forceful in their demands as were other fringe elements found in Muslim societies. “The *‘ulamā’*,” Abdul Latif Tibawi (1963) points out, “exercise some sort of remote control to prevent public disrespect of the faith, but they seldom use “sanctions”” (Tibawi, 1963, p. 302).

The Khārijites were more exacting compared to the more mainstream ulema. They serve as a good example of a group that held radical views when it came to

practicing Islam in the public space. Hodgson notes that the Khārijites "were intensely concerned with Shari'î questions, but insisted, above all, on effectively righteous public order" (Hodgson, 1977, vol. 1, p. 371).

The Ḥadīth folk "were not given to weeping but to a sober sense of responsibility for a world at their feet. Their piety served as focus for a broad Sharî'ah-minded programme of social order looking back to the homogeneity of the primitive Muslim community. This piety, however, was more than community consciousness or a broadly-based legalism. Their concern with the detail of revealed law had a dimension of highly personal and immediate devotion, as emotional and imaginative in its own way…" (Hodgson, 1977, vol. 1, p. 387).

In general, certain modes or expressions of piety were easily deemed questionable by legal-oriented Muslims. So, for instance, we are told that "Rûmî does not, indeed, recommend sin as such; but sin is not so bad in itself as the separation from God it results in" (Hodgson, 1977, vol. 2, p. 250). This mystical-oriented pious sentiment would sternly be opposed by Muslims of an overriding legalist bent.

2.3.3 World-embracing attitudes

In displaying a diverse range of attitudes toward the world, Muslims in general are known to have taken a rather positive stance when it came to social living. The idea that human-beings by their very nature are social creatures was thus a very familiar one for many Muslims. Increasingly, throughout the ages we find Muslim thinkers advancing peculiar ideas in favor of cultivating the world. Such sentiments appear especially in works on *adab*, a literary genre that deals with cultivating 'discipline of the externals of living' (Hodgson, 1977), or more broadly on matters related to etiquette in personal, spiritual, and social affairs.

Famously known for his proficiency as an ethicist and exegete, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 422/1031) provides us with one of the more fascinating examples of one who adopted a world-embracing attitude. In his *Kitāb al-dharī'ah ilā makārim al-Sharī'ah*, he writes that

> "every species has a purpose that relates to his function…Man has three

> functions. The first is to prosper in the earth (*'imārat al-'arḍ*)…The second is to worship God…The third is his vicegerency…[which] is the imitation of God in accordance with man's ability to rule…" (al-Iṣfahānī, 2006, pp. 471-472).

What is interesting to note here is that Iṣfahānī gives priority – at least in the context of one's function on earth – to cultivating the world over worshipping God. Moreover, Iṣfahānī was a proponent of moderation and, therefore, rejected extreme forms of asceticism.

The Shāfi'ite jurist and political theorist al-Māwardī (972–1058) is another interesting case. In his *Kitāb adab al-dunyā wa al-dīn*, he stresses that humans are social beings by necessity, and moreover that interdependence is a natural outcome of being human since

> "man is unable to endure not having what he needs, and that he is unable to bear the lack of what he is incapable of attaining;" and, "Consequently, since man has a greater need of assistance than all animals, his inability is more obvious. Furthermore, need means dependence and dependence means incapacity" (al-Māwardī, 1995, p. 132).

Māwardī also grounds his thought on reason, writing that "reason is man's guide to the discovering of the causes of his needs…" (*ibid*). He makes a case for the necessity of humans to discover the world in terms of its regularities and irregularities and to understand the conditions on which the cultivation and destruction of the world comes about. After reminding his readers that one must "limit worldly desires to what is necessary, and whatever goes beyond that necessity should not be sought," Māwardī continues to make a case along similar lines (*ibid*, p. 134).

2.4 *Khalwat dar anjuman* in Islam

An alternative concept(ualization) of the more conventional notion of *khalwah* in the Islamic tradition is what is generally known as *khalwah al-ma'nā*, or inner spiritual solitude.[83] Among the various forms of *khalwah al-ma'nā*, there is what the

[83] Inasmuch as *khalwah al-ma'nā* is restricted to an inward journey, while *khalwah* in a conventional sense is associated with an outward practice of (1) secluding from people for a given period of time, and (2) disciplining – in some cases, even mortifying – the ego-self through specific training

Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs have referred to as *khalwat dar anjuman*. What immediately stands out in terms of the difference between the two is that while both *khalwah al-ma'nā* and *khalwat dar anjuman* connote 'being in solitude with God', the latter adds the qualifying constraint '*dar anjuman*' or 'within society'. We may also observe a dialectical relation inherently present in the idea of *khalwat dar anjuman*, that is, between the individual and God on the one hand, and the individual and society on the other. This dialectical relation, I contend, is fundamental to understanding the concept and its implications.

There are three very peculiar, outward practices that were ascribed to the Sufis in their path to attaining proximity to God: *dhikr* (recollection of God), *samā'* (musical audition), and *khalwah* (solitude). In this regard, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs are interestingly one of the only Sufi groups that either abstained or refashioned all three pathways commonly associated with spiritual ascent. The first and last of the three mentioned practices are of particular interest, whereas the second had little to no bearing on the (original) Naqshbandī path. The early Khwājagān shaykhs of Bukhara – who later became known as the Naqshbandiyyah – turned *khalwah* into an inward, contemplative precept, and at its core lay the silent practice of *dhikr*. Although there are cases where some of the local Naqshbandī sub-currents are known to have given way to physical *khalwah* and the vocal *dhikr*, the ultimate aim was nevertheless their internalization, which arguably represents the end of spiritual, self-disciplinary methods that other Sufi currents employed. Thus the difference between the two variations lies more in their form and methods rather than in their (higher) objectives.

My primary concern in this third section will be to cast light on *khalwat dar anjuman* by first broadly looking at how the concept was defined and interpreted in both early and later sources (2.3.1). Thereafter, I attempt to furnish a more holistic perspective by conducting a textual analysis on the early and later works of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah, and also by analyzing *khalwat dar anjuman* in relation to other concepts analogous to it (2.3.2).

It is of note to mention that apart from some issues of historicity regarding the early Khwājagān, including the apparent gaps in their spiritual lineage, the ideas to which they have espoused are nonetheless ascertainable from a textual standpoint.

methods, the two terms, in essence, however, share similar objectives.

Finally, it should be mentioned that although a number of studies have alluded to the overall significance of *khalwat dar anjuman* (esp. works written by Hamid Algar, Jürgen Paul, Necdet Tosun, Itzchak Weismann, and Annemarie Schimmel) none – as far as I can tell – have analyzed the concept in any critical way, nor have probed into its conceptual features and various implications from a spatio-temporal perspective.

2.4.1 Conceptual features of *khalwat dar anjuman*

A conceptual analysis of *khalwat dar anjuman* will be carried out in what follows by focusing on some of its core features including: original meaning, related words, fundamentals, foundations, conditions, context, and theoretical considerations.

The original meaning of *khalwat dar anjuman* is derived from the Quranic passage, 'Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah […],'[84] which is mentioned in practically all of the texts written by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs when referring to *khalwat dar anjuman*. While the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* is underpinned by the notion of *khalwah al-ma'nā*, the two ideas, although indeed similar, are in no way the same, and it would therefore be a mistake to conflate them, that is, as tempting as it may be.[85]

There are many terms related to *khalwat dar anjuman*, among which we may include the following: (1) *ghaybah* or 'absence', a state in which one is absorbed by divine manifestations and is rendered unaware of the material world and of oneself; does not see the state of people or that of oneself; (2) *murāqabah* or 'contemplation', a state of being in constant awareness of God, which is said to be 'one of the greatest forms of worship and one of the most perfect forms of obedience; for this reason, the spiritual elite among the Companions (*khawāṣ al-Ṣaḥābah*), may God be pleased with them, were constantly preoccupied with *murāqabah* and with heightened reflection (*ṭūl al-fikrah* (Ghumūqī, 1902, p. 91); (3) *dhikr* or 'recollection'; what is *dhikr* asks a shaykh, and his disciple replies, "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*," and the shaykh

[84] Quran, 24:37.

[85] Alexander Knysh (2000), for instance, writes, "Physical retreat is only a means to an end, the goal being the "seclusion in spirit'' (*khalwat al-ma'nā*). This state implies being with God spiritually in disregard of the trappings and allure of the outside world. The same idea is expressed in the famous Naqshbandi maxim *khalwah dar anjuman* ("solitude in the crowd'')" (Knysh, 2000, p. 317).

says that this is an expression [of *dhikr*] adding that *dhikr* is to know that you do not (*la taqdiru*) (or that you will never (*la taqdira*)) possess the capacity to truly know Him (*ta'rifahu*)" (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 236); (4) *ṣarafa al-qalb* or 'relinquishment or isolation of the heart', 'relinquish (or isolate) your hearts (*asrifu qulubakum*) from everything that will not remain with you in your grave (*manzil*)' (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 238); (5) *kawn ma'a Allāh* or 'being with God'; 'The true-reality of Sufism (*haqiqah al-tasawwuf*) is being with God (*al-kawn ma'a Allah*); As two students debate whether *dhikr* or reciting the Quran is superior, their shaykh interjects saying, it is 'Being with God [that] is more important than all [else] (*afḍal min al-kul*);' whoever is present (*hāḍir*) with God then in that moment they are in the Garden, and whoever is heedless (*ghāfil*) of God then in that moment they are in the Fire' (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 238); and (6) *iḥtirāz al-ghaflah* (guarding against heedlessness): Abū Yazīd al-Būrānī: "Just as it is obligatory for the lay (*'ammah*) to avoid sin, likewise is it necessary for the spiritual elect (*khawass*) to guard against heedlessness; [and] just as the lay reproach sin, likewise are the spiritual elect to reprove heedlessness" (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 241).

Although all of the above terms mentioned in relation to *khalwat dar anjuman* vary in their specific meaning, they all nonetheless share a basic idea of overcoming forgetfulness of God and being absorbed in proximity to Him.

The fundamentals of *khalwat dar anjuman* is intelligible in light of the key concept that reinforces it, which is none other than *dhikr*. As for the foundation or religious basis of *khalwat dar anjuman* in Islam, we may refer to the idea of *iḥsān*, a core religious tenet and pillar of faith which, according to the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, is described by the Prophet (SAW) as follows: '*Iḥsān* is that you worship God as if He were in front of you, for even if you do not see Him, He most certainly sees you' (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 23; cf. al-'Asqalānī, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 146-147). This correlation between *khalwat dar anjuman* and *iḥsān* is also alluded to in works written by Naqshbandī shaykhs.[86]

At the most basic level, the prerequisite of *khalwat dar anjuman* is for a Sufi adept to begin by directing his or her will toward God. Once this is established, then that

[86] See Khālid al-Shahrazūrī's *Risālah fī al-ḥaqq al-rābiṭah* (Khālid, n.d., p. 26). For a more recent example, see the introduction in Muhammad Emin Er (2008) *The soul of Islam* (p. 21). Atlanta, GA: Shifa Publishing.

person is rightfully called a *murīd* (lit: one who intends) or an 'aspirant on the mystical path', who is now considered to be in a position to embark on the inward journey to realizing *khalwat dar anjuman*. And while the task here has been to take *khalwat dar anjuman* as a single concept, we may also mention that the word *anjuman* or 'society' has three related words which reflect the conditions under which it must be practiced: *ijtimā '* (community), *ṣuḥbah* (companionship), and *mukhālaṭah* (mixing).

As far as historical context is concerned, *khalwat dar anjuman* may partly be attributed to the Malāmatī tradition, an indigenous mode of piety that had prevailed all throughout Khurasan and Transoxania for several centuries since around the third/ninth century. At the heart of the Malāmatī ethic is an overly cautious attitude of concealing one's religious piety, a sentiment that is at once key and intrinsic to *khalwat dar anjuman*. *Khalwat dar anjuman* therefore develops along the lines of not only a religious ethic but also a social one. Moreover, *khalwat dar anjuman* may likewise be interpreted as an ideal. That is to say, more specifically, a *religious* ideal of inward and outward perfection.

We must finally draw attention to the ontological assumptions underlying *khalwat dar anjuman*. The concept in question assumes that society is a part of reality and that it also, in essence, has value. All the same, society and individuals are two separate and distinct components of reality. And in this sense, both society and the individual are accommodated and the two must be maintained. The concept moreover implies that solitude can in fact be practiced, albeit within society, as an internalized form of solitude. It therefore does not dismiss the practice of solitude but rather restricts it to a process that occurs exclusively internally.

Let us conclude this section by breaking down the entire set of eleven principles of the *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah* in terms of the emphasis, practice, method, objective, and assumption of each.

A Conceptual Anatomy of the *Kalimāt al-Qudsiyyah*

Kalimāt-i qudsiyyah					
Precept (ethico-mystical)	Emphasis on (activity)	Practice (what?)	Method (how?)	Objective (why?)	Assumption (inference)
Hūsh dar dam	breath (*nafas*)	being in the present, not in the past or future	persistent attentiveness in breath	prevent heedlessness (*gaflah*) of God in every breath taken	every breath is like the last
Naẓar bar qadam	watching (*naẓar*)	avoiding perturbation by not allowing the eyes to wander	keeping the gaze constantly on the footsteps	remain connected to one's inner-being	failure of focusing on an object or perhaps even a specific activity leaves the mind vulnerable to distractions
Safar dar waṭan	journeying (*sayr*)	traveling to find a spiritual guide; relinquishing (*hajr* or *hijrān*) the soul through an internal migration (*hijrah*)	combining outward and inward act of seeking (*salaka*) God by moving toward Him	purge base qualities and acquire good and angelic characteristics	remaining a resident (*muqīm*) is more conducive to the spiritual path; the locus of goodness is within
Khalwat dar anjuman	inner-solitude (*khalwah al-ma'nā*)	striving to be absorbed in the recollection of God and His divine presence within a social setting	intensely contemplating God at all times	achieve proximity to God; become unaffected by the crowd and noise such that everything turns into a form of remembrance of God	spirituality is attainable within society, which is ultimately where God becomes meaningful
Yād kard	remembrance (*dhikr*); affectionate attachment (*maḥabbah*); veneration (*ta'ẓīm*)	awakening the heart's consciousness of God	restraining the breath, focusing the heart on remembrance, resisting activity of the lips and tongue	render the declaration of God's Oneness (*kalimah al-tawḥīd*) a necessary quality of the heart	the heart as the locus of perception and reason will forget and fail to know God if it does not recollect Him
Bāz gasht	returning (*rujū'*; *tawbah*); assiduity and conscientiousness (*ijtihād*)	persevering to dispel any and every thought other than God	reciting with the heart's 'tongue': "You are my goal and it is Your pleasure I desire" (*Anta maqṣūdī wa riḍāka maṭlūbī*) until its reality is engrained	obtain sincerity and being in a state where the heart thinks only God; cultivate patience	any inclination or stray thought (*khaṭīr*) other than God in the heart creates a barrier to sincerity (*ṣidq*)
Nigāh dāsht	observation (*murāqabah*); preservation (*muḥāfazah*)	observing all thoughts in the mind	freeing the mind from all thoughts (*khawāṭir*) other than God everyday for an hour or two until dawn	preserve returning to God; no stray thought is to penetrate the heart from sunrise to sunset	the mind and heart is susceptible to the penetration of stray thoughts unless they are scrutinized
Yād dāsht	recollection; divine presence (*ḥuḍūr*); mystical tasting (*dhawq*)	dissociating thoughts from the imagination; returning from absence (*ghaybah*) back into the world	persistently keeping God in the mind; concentrating on one's state	inculcate (*rusūkh*) returning to God; attain constant presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of God in the mind, marking the final stage on the spiritual path– the station (*maqām*) of the *walī*	awakening the heart, dispelling and observing stray thoughts culminates in the presence of God
Wuqūf-i zamānī	time (*waqt*); self-introspection (*muḥāsabah al-nafs*)	being aware of how time is spent; distinguishing between good and bad actions	stopping every so often to remember God; taking account of every act and decision made at the end of the day	arrive at the realization that God sees everything at all times; know whether gratitude (*shukr*) or repentance (*istighfār*) is required	time is of the essence and should not be wasted; the Sufi is to be "the son of time," viz. always in the present moment
Wuqūf-i 'adadī	quantity ('*adad*)	performing litanies in the heart	complying with a specified number	avoid distractions during litanies	specifying quantity is crucial, especially for novices
Wuqūf-i qalbī	consciousness (*wa'ī*); orientation (*tawajjuh*)	enabling the heart's consciousness of God	orienting the mind to the heart; knowing the meaning of the litany being performed	ensure God's presence in the heart	the heart is where all activities, good or bad, occur; presence of God in the heart requires conscious awareness

2.4.2 *Khalwat dar anjuman* in the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī literature

Khalwat dar anjuman is a highly abstract and ostensibly self-contradicting concept that found its expression in the Perso-Islamic urban milieu of Transoxania during the mid to late sixth/twelfth century. It specifically refers to a peculiar attitude with respect to the world where the Sufi adopts a mental posture of detached involvement. In practical terms, the seeker is meant to be at once in constant recollection of God and actively engaged in worldly affairs. This, in theory, is intended to reach a state of mystical immersion where one's perception is transformed in a way that sees only God to truly exist and matter.

A concise treatment of *khalwat dar anjuman* will be now be presented based on texts that were primarily culled from both early and late works, and were written either in Persian or Arabic. The list of texts below is not meant to be exhaustive but rather one that is representative of the variant ways in which *khalwat dar anjuman* was articulated by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs.

1. One of the earliest references to *khalwat dar anjuman* appears in a text entitled *Maqāmāt-i Yūsuf Hamadānī*.[87] As the title suggests, the *Maqāmāt* is a biographical work on Yūsuf al-Hamadānī (d. 535/1140) which is said to have been written after 600/1204 by his disciple and successor 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī (d. 575/1179 or 617/1220).[88] The Persian work introduces *khalwat dar anjuman* in passing by quoting Hamadānī as follows: *hūsh dar dam dārīd wa naẓar dar qadam dārīd wa safar dar waṭan wa khalwat dar anjuman dārīd* (Ghujduwānī, 1953, pp. 90-91), 'He

[87] This particular text was published under the title *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibiyyah* by Sa'īd Nafīsī (1953) in *Farhang-i Īrān Zamīn* (pp. 70-101). See its Turkish translation in Hamadānī's (2016) *Hayat nedir* (N. Tosun, Trans.), pp. 47-64. Also, for a concise survey on Ghujduwānī's works, see Tosun, 2015, pp. 53-54. In spite of some controversy over the source's authenticity, if we were in fact to regard the *Maqāmāt* as a genuine source of the Khwājagān, then it would appear that these four precepts originated with Hamadānī; one, nonetheless, does not get the impression of a formulated precept from this text; instead, the reader is presented with a general form of (spiritual) advice inserted between other, more general advice.

[88] Wilfred Madelung makes a fairly convincing case regarding the *Maqāmāt-i Yūsuf Hamadānī* as being an outright forgery by drawing attention to its discrepancies and overall incompatibility with other sources on Yūsuf al-Hamadānī (see Madelung, 1988, pp. 50-51). (I deal with this particular issue alongside the points that Madelung and others have raised in more detail in the coming chapters). Be that as it may, I am compelled to mention the *Maqāmāt* here because it is a work that arguably retains – however slightly – its historical value considering that there may have very well been two figures by the name of Yūsuf al-Hamadānī whose identities perchance were confounded with one another. Necdet Tosun weighs in on this issue by adding to the aforesaid possibility that an uninformed disciple may have posthumously supplemented details concerning the life of Hamadānī to the *Maqāmāt* with some misgivings (see Tosun, 2015, pp. 45-46).

[i.e. Hamadānī] would say with every breath respire with awareness, and he would say watch your footsteps, and he would say journey in the homeland and be with God in solitude in the midst of society' (translation mine).[89] The *Maqāmāt* evidently does not refer to these four principles in any strict sense, and likewise does not provide any further elaboration as to what is meant by them.

2. The *Rutbah al-ḥayāt* is a short tract attributed to Yūsuf al-Hamadānī and is also considered to be one of the earliest known works of the nascent Khwājagānī movement. In the *Rutbah*, Hamadānī establishes a correlation between, on the one hand, *īmān* and *Islām*, and, on the other hand, being entirely with God in a passage that reads: 'If a person takes to the path of *īmān*, then their submission and Islamic faith will be truthful because a *mu'min* is a trustworthy being. And a trustworthy being is one who is not with their own self nor with the people, [but] one who is entirely with God Most High. In order for one to be with God, they must commit themselves to religious directives and [its] prohibitions' (Hamadānī, 1983, pp. 36-37; cf. Hamadānī, 2016, p. 87) (translation mine). Hamadānī thus sees the Shariah, which he interprets in one respect to be a composite of *īmān* (inward) and *Islām* (outward), as a prerequisite for one to be God-centered and trustworthy; what follows is that one cannot be thoroughly trusted if the locus of one's self is the ego (i.e. one who is self-centered).

3. Another important and early text is a treatise by Ghujduwānī entitled *Waṣāyā*,[90] a spiritual testament containing succinct directives to the author's disciple and second successor, Awliyā' Kabīr, in which Ghujduwānī stresses, among other things, mastering knowledge (*al-'ilm*), decorum (*al-adab*),[91] and piety (*al-taqwā*); following

[89] For its Turkish translation by Necdet Tosun, see Hamadānī's (2016) "Makāmāt-ı Yūsuf Hamadānī" in *Hayat nedir* (p. 58).

[90] Its three known alternative titles are *Wasiyatnāme*, *Ādāb al-ṭarīqah*, and *Ḥaqāiq al-īmān wa daqāiq al-'irfān*. Among the works that the *Waṣāyā* is known to have been inserted into are Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. As'ad al-Bukhārī's *Maslak al-'ārifīn* and Faḍlullāh b. Rūzbihān Iṣfaḥānī Khunjī's (d. 927/1521) *Sharḥ al-wiṣāya* (see Tosun, 2015). As'ad al-Bukhārī is said to have written his *Maslak* around the mid to late eighth/fourteenth century (see Paul, 2012, p. 138; cf. Tosun, 2015, p. 56); he was the first successor of Sulaymān Garmīnī who in turn was the direct successor of Ghujduwānī and affiliate of Awliyā Kabīr from whom he received his *ijāzah*, or authority to transmit and teach. As Jürgen Paul points out, Bukhārī's *Maslak*, which was written prior to Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt*, only discusses four of the eight sacred precepts attributed to Ghujduwānī, which are: *yād kard* (recollection), *yād dasht* (remembrance), *bāz gasht* (return) and *nigāh dāsht* (watchfulness) – these essentially represent the foundational tenets of *dhikr* and likewise refer "to special states on the mystical path and [are] much more theoretical than the second group" of four precepts (Paul, 2012, pp. 139, 157n10).

[91] *Adab* generally refers to personal refinement especially in spiritual and social affairs. In Sufi terminology, however, *adab* corresponds to proper conduct on the path to God for which each

in the footsteps of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf*), attaching oneself to the prophetic way and the Muslim congregation (*al-jamā'ah*), learning Islamic jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) and the traditions of the Prophet (*al-ḥadīth*); keeping away from ignorant Sufis, refraining from calling or leading the prayer, avoiding altogether fame, the affairs of the people, and that which is fatal to the heart such as excessive laughter (Ghujduwānī, n.d., fols. 1a-3b). As one who prioritizes on the one hand upholding to Islamic ideals and on the other hand safeguarding oneself from anything that may cause or provoke (spiritual) affliction (*āfah*; pl. *āfāt*), Ghujduwānī's understanding of *khalwat dar anjuman* could best be summed up in his concluding remarks where he exhorts social incognito and self-effacement: 'do not adorn your outward, for adornment of the outward (*tazyīn al-ẓāhir*) is indicative of indigence of the inward (*kharāb al-bāṭin*); do not quarrel with the people…do not be deluded by the world or by those who are worldly, and that your heart be constantly grieving, that your body be suffering, and that your eyes be weeping; and let your actions be sincere…your clothing be ragged (*khalaqan*), your companion be a true seeker, your principal asset be your poverty, your house be your place of worship (*masjid*), and your intimacy be with God' (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 55) (translation mine).

4. As with the *Maqāmāt*, in Muḥammad b. Niẓām al-Khwārizmī al-Arzangī's ninth/fifteenth-century text entitled *Sharḥ risālah 'Azīzān* (also known as *Manāqib Khwāja 'Alī 'Azīzān Rāmītanī*) we come across a commentary on the same four precepts – *hosh dar dam*, *naẓar bar qadam*, *safar dar waṭan*, *khalwat dar anjuman* – out of the original eight formulated by Ghujduwānī. The *Sharḥ* is primarily dedicated to the sayings of 'Alī 'Azīzān Rāmītanī (d. 721/1321), and here we also find Bahā' al-Dīn's saying, *dil bā yār wa tan ba bāzār*, "the heart with God and the body at the marketplace," which is a variation of *khalwat dar anjuman* (DeWeese, 1999, p. 507). Rāmītanī also expresses contempt for those who outwardly display their piety. For instance, in a critical fashion, Rāmītanī refers to the excesses of certain communities such as the Qalandars, and the sway held by pretentious charlatans who desire "to be known for maintaining a *khānqāh* or handing out bread, and even performing the *dhikr* in order to "obtain something from the people", whether money, clothing, food, or the like" (*ibid*, p. 503). For Rāmītanī, such extremities are to be avoided especially considering that the Shariah is to be given priority over the *ṭarīqah*, and he therefore "unequivocally rejects the possibility that one can belong to the *ahl-i ṭarīqah* without

station and state is said to have its own *adab*.

being among the *ahl-i sharī'a*: one who claims such a status is in fact not of the *ahl-i ṭarīqah*, but simply a "highwayman on the path" (*rāh-zan-i ṭarīqah*), to be likened to a person who performs *namāz* without having completed his ablutions" (*ibid*, p. 507).

5. 'Alī 'Azīzān Rāmītanī who in spite of being an illiterate[92] is credited with a modest treatise entitled *Risālah maḥbūb al-'ārifīn*, which consists of advice to his students emphasizing ten conditions of which they must adhere to in the Sufi path. Rāmītanī stresses in the *Risālah* that *dhikr* is not to be restricted to litanies exalting and praising God, but that *dhikr* in fact also includes being scrupulous and upright in one's work as well as at the marketplace; he takes this further and says that "this dhikr is the most accepted of all kinds because it is rooted in the heart and in good intention, whereas the other kinds of dhikr are linked to the tongue; and it is well-known that the dhikr of the heart is nobler than the dhikr of the tongue" (Quoted in Paul, 1998a, p. 24). Rāmītanī also draws on the Quranic passage, *ilayhi yaṣ'adu al-kalim al-ṭayyib wa yarfa'uh*,[93] and by virtue of this passage he writes that the 'wings' of *dhikr* must have two 'flaps' in order to 'ascend', and these are *ḥuḍūr* (lit: presence; viz. presence in the Divine) and *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) (Tosun, 2015, p. 62). He further highlights the notion of true *dhikr* where 'the true man', reflects Rāmītanī, "is one whose heart never for an instance turns away from the remembrance of God (a principle that became the centerpiece of Naqshbandī practice);" and, moreover, that the highest form of *dhikr* is that of *dhikr-i khāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ* – the other lower forms are *dhikr-i 'ām* of the common folk and *dhikr-i khāṣṣ* of the traditional Sufi community at large (DeWeese, 1999, p. 503). Rāmītanī's understanding of an internalized form of remembrance of God – e.g. his preference for the '*dhikr* of the heart' alongside his characterization of it as the highest form of *dhikr* – is essentially another way of stressing *khalwat dar anjuman*.

6. Muḥammad Pārsā's *Tuḥfah al-sālikīn* is the first work to systematically elaborate on Ghujduwānī's eight principles – referred to in Persian as the *kalimāt-i qudsiyyah* or the 'sacred precepts' – and these are: (1) *hūsh dar dam* (awareness in breathing); (2) *naẓar bar qadam* (watching the footsteps); (3) *safar dar waṭan* (journeying in the homeland); (4) *khalwat dar anjuman* (solitude within society); (5) *yād kard* (recollection); (6) *bāz gasht* (return); (7) *nigāh dasht* (watchfulness); and (8) *yād*

[92] More examples on illiterate Sufi shaykhs, together with their role and significance in the Sufi tradition, will be given in chapters to come.

[93] Quran, 35:10.

dasht (remembrance); Pārsā refers to the first four precepts in particular as the basic elements (*arkān*) and foundation (*asās*) of *dhikr* (Pārsā, 1970, pp. 119-120). *Khalwat dar anjuman*, Pārsā writes, means that one should be in solitude among the people, outwardly appearing to be with them, meanwhile inwardly they are with God (*ibid*, p. 120).

7. The *Rashaḥāt ʻayn al-ḥayāt* of Fakhr al-Dīn ʻAlī Ṣafī b. Ḥusayn Wāʻiẓ al-Kāshifī (d. 939/1533) is another work that provides brief descriptions of the *kalimāt-i qudsiyyah* and relates detailed information on the lives of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī shaykhs. Penned in 909/1504, the *Rashaḥāt* represents one of the most central texts of the Naqshbandiyyah[94] and serves as an important and reliable source on the history and culture of pre-sixteenth-century Naqshbandīs.[95] The *Rashaḥāt*, which chronologically comes after Pārsā's *Tuḥfah*, is another early work in which the original eight *kalimāt-i qudsiyyah* alongside the three added principles by Bahā' al-Dīn are discussed (see al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 55ff.).

In elaborating on *khalwat dar anjuman*, the *Rashaḥāt*, as with the *Anīs* (see below), repeats the exchange between Bahā' al-Dīn and Malik Ḥusayn without, however, mentioning the latter by name. Apart from the absence of the inquirer's identity, the exchange in terms of content is not so detailed: 'He asked al-Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshband, sanctified be his secret, on what is your *ṭarīqah* premised? And he replies with this expression, namely, solitude within society (*khalwat dar anjuman*), and its meaning [is]: [being in] solitude in the open, externally with the people and internally with the [ultimate] Truth [i.e. God] glory and exalted is He'[96] (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 59) (translation mine). The *Rashaḥāt* continues by relating a saying in prose, 'your heart with our Originator and with the external in the periphery, and upholders of the spiritual path in this world have but a few [aggregate] of exemplars';[97] is followed by a passage from the Quran which, according to the author, serves as

[94] The centrality of the *Rashaḥāt* is especially evident in light of the fact that this text was first to fully construct a *silsilah* of the Naqshbandiyyah which eventually became the established *silsilah* commonly referred to as 'the golden chain' (*al-silsilah al-dhahab*); in other words, there is no source prior to Kāshifī's work to substantiate an all-inclusive *silsilah* (see Paul, 2012, p. 140).

[95] See N. Tosun (2008). Reşehāt. In *Diyanet Islam ansiklopedisi* (vol. 35, pp. 8-9); cf. H. Beveridge (1916). The Rashahat-i-'Ainal-Hayat (Tricklings from the Fountain of Life). In *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (pp. 59-75).

[96] *Sa-ala al-Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshband, qaddasa sirrahu, bi-anna binā'an ṭarīqakum ʻalā ayyi shay'in? Fa-qāla fī jawābihi hādhihi al-ʻibārah yaʻnī khalwat dar anjuman wa maʻnāhu: al-khalwah fī al-jalwah fī al-ẓāhir maʻa al-khalq wa fī al-bāṭin maʻa al-ḥaqq subḥānahu wa taʻālā*.

[97] *Bi-qalbi-ka ṣāḥibanā wa jāniba bi-ẓāhiri, wa dhā al-sayr fī al-dunyā qalīl al-naẓā'ir* (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 59).

indicative proof for the station (*maqām*) of *khalwat dar anjuman*, 'Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh […]'[98] (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 59). Bahā' al-Dīn also said, 'The heart's presence with God is far more achievable amidst the people than in solitude. This is the only way that an inward attachment [with God] can be acquired in our path' (al-Ṣafī, 2014, p. 68). 'Our path is premised on companionship (*ṣuḥbah*), for indeed there is *shuhrah* (renown or notoriety) in solitude. And in *shuhrah* there is *āfah* (ruin or evil). And all the good resides in society, and society resides in companionship. And the realization of this state is subject to the effectiveness of companionship' (*ibid*).

8. In *Anīs al-ṭālibīn wa 'uddah al-sālikīn*,[99] which is our main source on the spiritual career of Bahā' al-Dīn (Algar, 2013, p. 89), the compiler Ṣalāḥ b. Mubārak al-Bukhārī[100] in one section relates Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband's exchange with Malik Ḥusayn, which although may lend the impression of an apocryphal narrative[101] is for our purposes of particular importance nonetheless. Malik Ḥusayn, who was the ruler of Herat at the time, is depicted as one who solicits Bahā' al-Dīn for his views regarding four peculiar customs of which the Sufis are typically known to have adopted, namely, the vocal *dhikr*, *samā'*, *khalwah*, and inherited succession; the sources record Bahā' al-Dīn responding in the negative to all four (al-Bukhārī, 2015, p. 72). Malik Ḥusayn is said to have continued in his line of questioning: 'then what sort of thing is your way (*ṭarīqah*)?' to which Bahā' al-Dīn responds, ''Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī, the leader of this way (*ṭarīqah*), had prescribed *khalwat dar anjuman*' (*ibid*, p. 73). 'How is *khalwat dar anjuman* realized?' asks Malik Ḥusayn, and Bahā' al-Dīn responds, 'It is granted to someone such that, by outwardly being

[98] Quran, 24:37.

[99] According to Jürgen Paul, the *Anīs* is said to have been written before 831/1427-28 (Manz, p. 76n103).

[100] A recent paper – to which I was only able to access its abstract – on a comparison between two versions of the *Anīs al-ṭālibīn* suggests that the author of the *Anīs* was in fact Muḥammad Pārsā al-Bukhārī, a well-known disciple of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, and not Ṣalāḥ b. Mubārak al-Bukhārī whose identity hitherto remains obscure (see d'Hubert & Papas (Eds.), 2017, Jāmī's statement on the authorship of the *Anīs al-Tālibīn*, in *Jāmī's and the intellectual history of the Muslim world: The trans-regional reception of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī's works*, c. 9th/15th—14th/20th). In this regard, Bashir (2018) questions the "analytical significance of regarding Pārsā as the author. Ultimately, the [two redacted] texts are quite different and indicate multiple verbal portraits of Naqshband irrespective of who created them. The textual diversity seems more consequential than purported authorship" (Bashir, 2018, p. 87n26) (insertion mine).

[101] I, however, do not entirely discount the actual occurrence of such an exchange between these two figures, particularly in light of the fact that charismatic leaders and rulers throughout Islamdom were generally known to have had some form of ties and, moreover, there were also a number of both Muslim as well as non-Muslim rulers who during this era were known to have patronized Sufi hospices and received advice and counsel from saintly figures in both personal and public related affairs.

with the people in their social dealings while inwardly they are constantly engaged with God Most High, one's engagement with the people does not prevail over one's recollection (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*fikr*) of God Most High' (*ibid*).

9. In *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, the last of the major compilations of hagiography, the erudite Naqshbandī poet and scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 897/1492) offers one of the more lengthier treatments – at least relative to other personalities – of Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshband and 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār. In the section dedicated to Bahā' al-Dīn, we find the following emphatic statement: *Banā ṭarīqa-i shomā bar chīst? Farmūdand, khalwat dar anjuman: ba-ẓāhir bā khalq wa ba-bāṭin bā Ḥaqq subḥānahu wa ta'ālā* (Jāmī, 1478, fol. 256v).

10. Jāmī's *Sarrishta-yi ṭarīq-i Khwājagān*, a short Persian manual on the fundamental practices of the Naqshbandiyyah, is prefaced with a quatrain that encapsulates the purpose and the very core of the Naqshbandī way:

> "Lay hold, O Brother, of the rope of good fortune
> and spend not this precious life in pure loss!
> At all times, in all places, with all people, in all deeds
> keep the eye of the heart inwardly turned to the Friend"
> (Quoted in Algar, 2013, p. 91; cf. Jāmī, 1965, p. 12).

The last two lines of the stanza are a direct reference to the concept and practice of *khalwat dar anjuman*. Jāmī throughout the work concisely elaborates on various practices including three foundational elements regarding the technique of the silent *dhikr*, contemplation (*murāqabah*), and the spiritual bond (*rābiṭah*). This is followed by a brief explanation of the Naqshbandī precepts. Here he quotes in Persian Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshband's response to the question, 'What is your way (*ṭarīqah*) premised on?' to which he writes, '*khalwat dar anjuman*, to be outwardly with the people, inwardly with the Truth [i.e. God] Most High' (Jāmī, 1965, p. 17).

11. 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490) writes in his *Vālidiyya*, which is a text delineating how one may acquire gnosis (*ma'rifah*) of God, that the attainment of God is easy (*vusūl ḥaqq āsānast*) although constancy in it is difficult (*va līkin thabāt bar an mushkil ast*) (Ahrâr, 2018, p. 43; cf. *ibid*, pp. 62-63). Notwithstanding an intimate attachment (*muḥabbah*) with God ultimately depends on God's grace,

according to Aḥrār, there are nonetheless conditions and stages one must go through for such an attachment with God to reveal itself, and its most fundamental means is to cleanse the heart from all but God, and this can be achieved by recollecting God's name internally until one's heart feels no pleasure in anything but God (*ibid*, p. 36). At this point, contends Aḥrār, 'one's mundane affairs (*ishtighāli-i ẓāhir*) will not be a hindrance to their spiritual devotion (*'alāqa-i ma'navī*) since on the inward they are in contemplative witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and in dialogue with God (*munājāt*) while on the outward they are with the people, and this signifies the seeker's attainment (*bulūgh-i sālik*);' which is in line with the following couplet Aḥrār ascribes to Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah (d. 184/801), 'truly, in my inner-heart (*fuād*) I have made you [the object of my] conversation, and I have granted permission (*abaḥtu*) to those who wish to sit with my body, and my body is intimate (*muānis*) for the one who sits with it, although the Beloved of my heart (*ḥabīb qalbī*) is my inner-heart's intimate friend (*fī al-fuād anīsī*)';[102] he then follows this with another couplet, which is oft-attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, 'be acquainted on the inside, be estranged from the outside, a fine path as this one is but rare in the world' (*ibid*, pp. 37, 73) (translation mine). On the one hand, Aḥrār makes a correlation between attaining love of God in one's heart and separating from all that is other than God, where both are said to have an inverse effect such that the degree of separation determines the degree of love. However, on the other hand, Aḥrār points out a further condition, namely that one is to observe proper comportment (*adab*) before the people and that a spiritual bond (*rābiṭah*) is likewise to be maintained with the people (*ibid*, p. 43). In this light, Aḥrār underscores that in the event that one finds themselves in commune (*ṣuḥbah*) with this community (i.e. the Naqshbandiyyah) – whether it be even for a moment (*laḥẓa*) – then their inner-self (*bāṭin*) will be entirely removed from everything and that their being will be wholly directed (*mutawajjih*) toward God (*ibid*, p. 42).

12. In Aḥmad Kāsānī's (b. Fergana, 866/1461-2; d. Samarkand, 949/1542-3) *Ādāb al-sālikīn*, Hamadānī is said to have counseled Ghujduwānī thusly: 'close two doors and open two doors: close the doors of shaykhdom and open the doors of service, close the doors of solitude and open the doors of companionship,' *dō dar rā band va*

[102] A similar couplet attributed to Rābi'ah reads: "I set up house for You in my heart, As a Friend that I could talk with; I gave my body to someone else, Who wanted to embrace it; This body, all in all, is good enough for embracing—But the Friend who lives in my house, Is the lover of my Heart" (Upton, 1988, p. 22).

dō dar rā gashāi, dar shaykhī[103] *rā band va dar khidmat rā gashāi dar khalvat rā band va dar sohbat rā gashāi* (Gardner, 2006, pp. 369, 380; cf. Tosun, 2015, p. 48). The latter portion of Hamadānī's counsel, namely on *khalwah* and *ṣuḥbah*, has several implications which require elaboration. One basic point of contention is whether the practice of *khalwah* is being rejected here or if *ṣuḥbah* is simply being preferred.

13. Muḥammad b. Burhān al-Dīn Qāḍī al-Samarqandī's (d. 921/1515) *Silsilah al-'ārifīn wa tadhkirah al-ṣiddīqīn* retells with some variation the spiritual counsel mentioned in Kāsānī's *Ādāb*, although here it is ascribed to Ghujduwānī: 'close the doors of solitude and open the doors of companionship, close the doors of shaykhdom and open the doors of service,' *khalvat rā band va dar ṣuḥbat rā gashāi, dar shaykhī rā band va dar yārī rā gashāi* (Samarqandī, 2009, p. 135). Samarqandī also draws attention to the importance of remaining within the Muslim congregation (*ibid*, p. 179).

14. Aḥmad al-Sirhindī (b. Sirhind, 971/1564; d. Sirhind, 1034/1624) offers a relatively more detailed explanation of *khalwat dar anjuman*. In the two hundred and twenty-first letter of his famous *Maktūbāt*, after expounding on the superiority of the Sufi path, Sirhindī singles out ten features peculiar to the Naqshbandīs, and among the two include *safar dar waṭan* and *khalwat dar anjuman*. He writes that *khalwat dar anjuman* 'means to be as if one were alone while in the company of others. [It] is achieved through [the practice of] *safar dar waṭan*…' (Sirhindī, 2007, p. 271). Later, in the two hundred and ninety-fifth letter, Sirhindī expands further on the precepts of *naẓar bar qadam*, *hūsh dar dam*, *safar dar waṭan*, and *khalwat dar anjuman*. In regard to *khalwat dar anjuman*, he writes that, 'When the [inward] journey called *safar dar waṭan* is reached, this journeying (*sayr*) is [then] carried out in the midst of everyone. The disarray of the external [world at this stage] has no way to enter [one's inner-being]. However, it is [still] necessary to occlude the roads, doors, and windows from entrance. There should be no distinction between the one who speaks and the one who listens, and there should be no space for anyone in the heart. These will be [a source of] strength at the outset [of mystical journeying]. It is necessary to

[103] In two variations of Kāsānī's *Ādāb al-sālikīn*, based on Victoria R. Gardner's (2006) transcription of the Persian, the words '*shabnam*' (p. 369) and '*sabkh*' (p. 380) were, as it seems, incorrectly transcribed in what should read '*shaykhī*' (see al-Samarqandī, 2009, p. 135; cf. Tosun, 2015, p. 48).

exert oneself. But, when one is on the path [toward God] and reaches the end, it [i.e. *khalwat dar anjuman*] comes into being by itself. It will not require exertion [anymore]. While he is among everyone, his heart pulls itself together…It is often the case that a person cannot save his outward-being from disarray. Because there are rights to be fulfilled and duties that need to be carried out. In order to do these things, it is necessary and [even] good for a person's outward-being to disperse among the creation. However, it is never good for the inward (*bāṭin*), that is, the heart and the soul to disperse among the creation. The inward is only for God. This means that three-fourths of every human individual is for God. The entirety of the inward and half of the outward. The second half of the outward is reserved for fulfilling the rights of creation. Since fulfilling these rights is obeying the commands of God, this half of the outward is also for God's sake. Everything will return to Him. So serve Him!' (Sirhindī, 2007, p. 474) (translation mine).

15. Tāj al-Dīn b. Zakariyyā al-Sunbuhlī al-'Uthmānī al-Hindī al-Naqshbandī (d. Mecca, 1050/1640), who through his disciples and works is known for having introduced the Naqshbandiyyah to the Arab lands of Mecca and Yemen in particular,[104] authored a short treatise on the customs and rituals of the Naqshbandiyyah entitled *Risālah fī sunan al-ṭā'ifah al-Naqshbandiyyah*. In the *Risālah*, Tāj al-Dīn mentions 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī's eight principles – *yād kard*, *bāz gasht*, *nigāh dāsht*, *yād dāsht*, *hūsh dar dam*, *safar dar waṭan*, *naẓar bar qadam*, *khalwat dar anjuman* – alongside Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband's three added ones – *wuqūf qalbī*, *wuqūf zamānī*, *wuqūf 'adadī* (Tāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī, 1788, fol. 5v), and writes that the objective of *dhikr*, according to Bahā' al-Dīn, is for the heart to be in a state of constant presence with God, and that *dhikr* is moreover characterized as love (*maḥabbah*) and veneration (*ta'ẓīm*) because it expels forgetfulness (*ibid*, fol. 6r). He goes on to define *khalwat dar anjuman* – in what is discernibly an Arabic translation from the original Persian – as follows: 'the seeker is to be with the people on the outward, with God on the inward; the hand at work and

[104] Two of the most major hagiographical works of the Naqshbandiyyah – Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt* and Ṣāfī's *Rashaḥāt* – were translated by Tāj al-Dīn from Persian into Arabic. Tāj al-Dīn also initiated a number of local Arabs into the Naqshbandiyyah and two in particular played pivotal roles. One was a well-known scholar in Mecca at the time, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm (d. 1033/1624) who, better known as Ibn 'Allān, had become his deputy (*khalīfah*) in Mecca (Tosun, 2015, p. 207). Another was a scholar in Yemen, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Bāqī b. al-Zayn al-Mizjājī (d. 1074/1663-4) who apart from his influence among the Arabs had also initiated people from Indonesia into the Naqshbandiyyah (Copty, 2003, p. 326). Likewise, the Naqshbandiyyah had gained a level of repute in the Ḥaramayn by way of three scholars through whom Tāj al-Dīn had affiliated with the *ṭarīqah* (see *ibid*, p. 328).

the heart with God' (*ibid*, fol. 6v). Tāj al-Dīn underscores the importance of time and that the best way to conserve it is through: *dhikr* (recollection of God),[105] *murāqabah* (introspection), *ṣalwah* (prayer), and *tilāwah* (recitation of the Quran) (*ibid*, fol. 8r). He advises that one ought to pray in congregation; and also not to eat alone, that is, to the best of one's abilities (*lā ya'kul waḥdahu bi-qadr al-imkān*) (*ibid*, fol. 9r). A Sufi, according to Tāj al-Dīn, is one who is immersed in God both day and night (*ibid*, fol. 9v) and that 'the recollection of the heart (*dhikr al-qalbī*) is to be present with God, and that [being] present with the people is [to be] equal in relation to it [i.e. one's presence with God], that is to say, to combine this and the recollection of God' – the context of his explanation, it should be noted, is in his delineation of the stages of *fanā'* (*ibid*, fol. 10r). The outward etiquettes (*al-ādāb al-ẓāhirah*) are founded on complying with the directives and prohibitions put forth by the Shariah, whereas the etiquettes of the inward (*ādāb al-bāṭin*) are to safeguard the heart from being in the presence of all but God, and to follow the etiquette of the Prophet (SAW) and the pious predecessors (*ibid*, fol. 12r).

16. The mid seventeenth-century biographical work *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn* cites only four of Ghujduwānī's eight principles, and these are *hūsh dar dam*, *naẓar dar qadam*, *safar dar waṭan*, *khalwat dar anjuman* (Tāj al-Dīn Jūybārī, 1821, fol. 18v).[106] The *Maṭlab* then later repeats the lines found in Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt*, although its compiler, Muḥammad Ṭālib b. Tāj al-Dīn Jūybārī, interestingly leaves out the phrase *khalwat dar anjuman*. The line in question reads as follows: *Banā ṭarīqa-i shomā bar chīst? Farmūdand ka ba-ẓāhir bā khalq wa ba-bāṭin bā Ḥaqq subḥānahu wa ta'ālā* (*ibid*, fol. 24r).

17. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nāblusī (d. 1143/1731), who is one of the earliest, if not the first, to offer an Arabic commentary on the Naqshbandiyyah doctrine, penned a commentary of a work by Tāj al-Dīn b. Zakariyyā entitled *Miftāḥ al-ma'iyyah sharḥ risālah ṭarīqah al-sādah al-Naqshbandiyyah*. Nāblusī elaborates on Tāj al-Dīn's definition – '*khalwat dar anjuman* means that it be incumbent for the seeker to be outwardly with the people [and] inwardly with God'[107] – and writes that 'what is meant by that it be incumbent for the seeker in the path (*ṭarīq*) of God to be

[105] Tāj al-Dīn later in the work specifically refers to the silent recollection of God (*al-dhikr al-khafī*).

[106] The four principles mentioned here follows the pattern of *Maqāmāt-i Yūsuf Hamadānī* (see Ghujduwānī, 1953, pp. 90-91).

[107] *khalwat dar anjuman ya'nī inna yanbaghī li-sālik an yakūna ẓāhiran ma'a al-khalq bāṭinan ma'a al-Ḥaqq*.

outwardly is that it be in accordance to the outward with the people, indistinguishable in their speech, food, drink, social intercourse (*mujālasah*), and in all permissible actions and sayings in which no sin is committed by its teller, and in all pious deeds (*ṭā'āt*) without distinction in their dress and so forth; and to be inwardly, that is, in accordance to the inward, and in reality to be with God immersed in witnessing Him, and in his inward or outward not be set in motion save by God, and likewise not to dwell save by God, and not to speak save by and with God' (Nāblusī, 1852, fol. 44r).

18. In Khālid al-Shahrazūrī's (1776–1827) biography entitled *al-ḥadīqah al-nadiyyah fī ādāb al-ṭarīqah al-Naqshbandiyyah wa al-bahjah al-Khālidiyyah*, its author Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Baghdādī (d. 1239/1823) writes in his introductory remarks that the very foundation of the Naqshbandī way is built on the principle of *khalwah fī jalwah* (i.e. *khalwat dar anjuman*), at both the beginning and at the end of one's mystical journey: 'They seclude with their heart and sit with them [i.e. the people] with their body' (Sulaymān, 1981, pp. 14-15). Along these lines, he also writes, 'Their solitude is in their [mystical] unveiling, and every assembly is a Sufi convent (*zāwiyah*), [physically] present in the gathering and [yet] their heart is [spiritually] present with their Lord, and it is the same when alone' (*ibid*, p. 14).

19. In Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. Muṣṭafā al-Khānī's (d. 1279/1862) *al-bahjah al-saniyyah fī ādāb al-ṭarīqah al-'aliyyah al-Khālidiyyah al-Naqshbandiyyah*, the author writes that *khalwat dar anjuman* is a term used by the Sufis to describe their *sayr wa sulūk* where the seeker (*sālik*) on the path is present with God (*ḥāḍiran ma'a al-Ḥaqq*) and yet absent from creation (*ghā'iban 'an al-khalq*) while in the midst of the people; for Khānī, therefore, the meaning of *khalwat dar anjuman* is what he refers to as *murāqabah* (introspection), and moreover that it is tantamount to being immersed in the recollection of God such that one does not hear even a sound while in the midst of a busy marketplace owing to their occupation in His recollection (al-Khānī, 2003, pp. 83-84). Consequently, one neither pursues the company of the people nor is negatively impacted by social dealings (*ibid*, p. 84). Khānī goes on to describe two kinds of solitude (*khalwah*), namely, outward and inward; the latter, he points out, is exclusive to the Naqshbandiyyah because they do not withdraw from the people and instead uphold inner solitude and companionship, and this is essentially in compliance with the prophetic way since the Prophet (SAW) himself

preferred society (*jam'iyyah*) over solitude (*ibid*). He then quotes the following saying: 'the believer who mixes with the people and is patient in their afflictions is better than a believer who does not mix with the people'' (*ibid*).

20. In *Mānāqıb-ı shams al-shumūs dar ḥaqq-ı ḥaḍrat-i Mawlānā Khālid al-'arūs*, an Ottoman-Turkish hagiography on Khālid al-Shahrazūrī by Ḥasan Shukrī, the work begins by elaborating on four of the *ṭarīqah*'s doctrinal principles and mentions among them *khalwat dar anjuman* as follows: 'every person witnesses from the apparent multitude the mystery of unity, [and thus] for [the purposes of] *irshād* the subtle expression *khalwat dar anjuman*' which is essentially 'the result of *tarikat*, *marifet*, and *hakikat'* (Shukrī, 1884, p. 3).

21. In his short tract *Risālah fī al-ḥaqq al-rābiṭah* Khālid al-Shahrazūrī tells us that he wrote this particular work because of two major reasons, 'the first being to show how the [Naqshbandī-Khālidī] *ṭarīqah* is the path that takes one to God and His pleasure, to follow the Sunnah…to turn oneself to God alone, away from worldly distractions, nay, from everything but God…to acquire the habit of God's presence as expressed in the noble *ḥadīth* with regard to *iḥsān* which is to worship God as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you; and to be in solitude in the open (*al-khalwah fī al-jalwah*)' (Khālid, n.d., p. 26).

22. Ra'ūf Aḥmad of the Mujaddidī current, a lineal descendent of Aḥmad Sirhindī, writes in a collected work of talks given by his teacher Abdullāh Dehlavī (d. 1240/1824) called *Durr al-ma'ārif* ("Pearls of the spiritually learned") that *khalwat dar anjuman* is comprised of five elements, all of which are said to contain the same meaning: *ḥuḍūr*, *tawajjuh*, *āgāh*, *yād-i dāsht*, and *shuhūd* (Aḥmad, n.d., p. 22).

23. In Ibrāhim Hakkı Erzurūmī's (b. Erzurum, 1115/1703; d. 1194/1780) voluminous work entitled *Mārifetnāme*, he dedicates a section (*faṣl*) to the Naqshbandī path. Although it is not certain whether Ibrāhim Hakkı belonged to the Naqshbandiyyah (Çağrıcı, 2000), he nevertheless praises their methods and holds them in high esteem as is evident in this particular work of his. Hakkı sums up the Naqshbandī path with what he sees as twelve underlying precepts,[108] and moreover suggests that among

[108] "All of the principles of this path," according to Ibrāhim Hakkı, "are gathered under these twelve precepts: effacing your own existence (*nefy-i vücūd*), generously giving away what is in your possession (*bezl-i mevcūd*), abandoning the superficial (*terk-i sūret*), strictly fulfilling religious

them *khalwat dar anjuman* is its most encompassing. He writes, "disciples (*murīdler*) of the Naqshbandī way occasionally weep owing to their attachment [with God]; in appearance they are among the people and serve them, albeit inwardly they know and find only God. They conceal themselves from the multitude, yet their spiritual heart pursues the path of oneness (*vahdet*). In this way they commit their corporeal body to the people and their spiritual heart to God. They move on this path toward God in secret. They are estranged from the outside, acquainted [with God] on the inside. Their corporeal body with others, their spiritual heart with God…the hand at work, the spiritual heart with God, the feet on the move, the spiritual heart in recollection [of God], the corporeal body asleep, the spiritual heart awake with God… [The twelve precepts are an explanation of 'solitude within society' (*halvet der encümen*)]" (*ibid*, p. 913) (translation mine). Hakkı later writes that, "through one's inherent capacity and through the grace of God, these states and stations, these degrees and perfections may be attained in a year, perhaps in forty days, or ten, or in one day, or in one hour, or perhaps even in a single moment. They reach God according to their *tawajjuh* (direction or orientation) and as long as they are truthful… by constant recollection of the name of this Essence, i.e. by saying 'Allah Allah Allah', the one who recollects will be filled with [God's] presence, and from Him they shall find strength (*kudret*). They are possessors of the sensible world (*mülk*) and the divine realm (*melekūt*). They get everything that they hope for" (*ibid*, pp. 918-919) (translation mine).

2.5 Conclusion

The first set of texts gleaned from Islamic renunciant literature has shown that Muslims had appropriated solitude not only as a world-rejecting practice but also as a counter-culture in Islamicate cities since the Early Middle period. Some of the Muslim renunciants were also seen to have expressed views that shunned life in society on the pretext of *zuhd*-piety – a common religious ethic that Muslims in general widely embraced. Textual evidence based on Muslim detractors of solitude, as we saw in the cases of Iṣfahānī and Māwardī, for instance, served to illustrate

directives (*azimetle amel*) respiring consciously with every breath (*hūş der dem*), watching your footsteps (*nazar ber kadem*), traveling in the homeland (*sefer der vatan*), being outwardly with the people and inwardly with God (*halvet der encümen*), avoiding religious innovations, adhering to the prophetic Sunnah, constantly keeping God in one's mind, being in the remembrance of God without cessation (*zikr-i müdām*), and directing one's self entirely to God (*tawajjuh*). It is with this method that the path of attainment (*vusūl*) is reached" (Hakkı, 1999, p. 912) (translation mine).

arguments made against anti-social sentiments, to only then champion life in society while underlining the importance and necessity of human interdependency.

From the written texts during the Khwājagānī era, it seems that As‘ad al-Bukhārī’s *Maslak al-‘ārifīn* and Rāmītanī’s *Risālah* present us with the only major literary evidence that expresses *khalwah* as a spiritual exercise of ritual seclusion in a positive light. Otherwise, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*’s entire corpus of sources reveals, above all, an impressive continuity in their emphasis on *khalwat dar anjuman* from the time of its first written account.

Achieving the state of *khalwat dar anjuman*, as indicated by some of the works, requires rigorous training and a certain level of mastery such that “being in seclusion and being in the marketplace do not make any difference any longer” (Paul, 1998a, p. 32). The texts also tell us that *khalwat dar anjuman* was understood to be an alternative to the more conventional *khalwah* as a vehicle of spiritual discipline. According to Jürgen Paul, however, “since it is emphasized that this [i.e. *khalwat dar anjuman*] is not a state the beginner can achieve, it can be assumed that the techniques of seclusion are included in his spiritual training” (*ibid*). Paul corroborates his claim that physical solitude was part of one’s spiritual training – at least, prior to Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband – by referencing ‘Alī ‘Azīzān Rāmītanī who had viewed physical solitude in a positive light (*ibid*). As mentioned earlier regarding As‘ad al-Bukhārī’s *Maslak* as one of the earliest texts on the Khwājagān, we find a section dedicated to the conditions of physical solitude for which the author asserts the necessity of the seeker on the spiritual path to undertake *khalwah* as part of their training. Be that as it may, even if Paul is correct, and in consideration of Bukhārī’s delineation of physical solitude in the *Maslak*, solitude on the whole as a spiritual exercise was nonetheless never incorporated into the principles and practices of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah main line. The nascent Khwājagānī current had rivaled for legitimation after Ghujduwānī, and it was under the aegis of Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband that saw the consolidation of the local Khwājagānī communities as well as a revival of the original path of the *Ṭarīqa-yi Khwājagān* which was later to bear his name as the Naqshbandiyyah.[109] On this note, as we shall see in chapters four and

[109] To this assessment we owe Devin DeWeese, who has more specifically shown Bahā’ al-Dīn’s reintegration of the two rival Khwājagānī communities – both of whom had traced their lineage to two of Ghujduwānī’s disciples, namely, Awliyā’ Kabīr and ‘Ārif Rīvgarī – for which he had efficaciously combined “the practice observed by one group with the succession claimed by the other” (DeWeese, 2011a, p. 2; cf. Nizami, 1997, vol. 2, p. 168).

five, it was *khalwat dar anjuman* that indeed became one of the most defining principles of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah.

The authorship of the *Maqāmāt*, which is attributed to Hamadānī's student and fourth successor 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī, on the whole, does not explicate on all of the concepts it refers to, including *khalwat dar anjuman*. This may be supported by the fact that the early Khwājagān did not adhere to any strict set of rules, especially in consideration of its adherents who were more so guided by the informal counsel and advice of the shaykhs (see Paul, 2012, p. 140). A further assumption that we may make is that some level of familiarity among its constituency had already existed with regard to the concepts being employed; this can be substantiated by judging solely from the text and also by evidencing the historical origins of Sufism in Transoxania which had already made its way into the region in and around the early third/ninth and late fourth/tenth century.

Ideas and concepts in the early Khwājagānī texts were expressed not in a doctrinal sense but rather in a way that was more internalizing. The *ṭarīqah*'s precepts in early texts are only mentioned briefly and their meanings are not fully expounded on. However, reading too much into the texts could be misleading nonetheless. It should further be noted that because the texts do not reveal much with regard to the precepts in themselves is not to say that they did not have a central bearing on the early Khwājagān. What may, however, be surmised is that the precepts did not require elaborate explanations. The precepts begin to take on a more visibly central role as the movement began to develop and expand its reach, and eventually becoming one of the more dominant Sufi movements throughout Islamdom. From Bahā' al-Dīn onward, more could be said with regard to the precepts, which is also where we are presented with more information on the lives and deeds of the saintly figures and leaders.

All in all, according to our sources, *khalwat dar anjuman* as a formulated precept appears to have originated with Ghujduwānī, founder of the Khwājagān way and precursor to the Naqshbandiyyah. In the three texts of *Maqāmāt*, *Manāqib*, and *Rashaḥāt*, the same four precepts – *hosh dar dam*, *naẓar bar qadam*, *safar dar waṭan*, and *khalwat dar anjuman* – are mentioned while the remaining four – *yād kard*, *yād dāsht*, *bāz gasht*, and *nigāh dāsht* – were first, extensively treated in

Bukhārī' s *Maslak al-'ārifīn*, a work that was written after the *Maqāmāt* and *Manāqib*, yet prior to the *Rashaḥāt*.[110] The first set of precepts outline rules that are to be adhered to throughout one's daily life (Tosun, 2015, p. 335). The latter four precepts underlie the foundational principles in one's *dhikr* (recollection of God) and *wird* (devotional litany), and they furthermore correspond "to special states on the mystical path" which, in comparison to the the first four precepts, are said to be more theoretical (Paul, 2012, p. 157).

If we were to therefore summarize the transitional phases of how Muslims expressed solitude from a literary standpoint, it may be described as follows: solitude as an ascetic principle, to solitude as a spiritual exercise, and finally solitude to an inner-contemplative mode of living within society. In renunciant literature, a more general usage of solitude is therefore used, while in mystical texts we find a narrower definition of solitude which was more technical and offered a specialized treatment of its practice.

[110] It is worth noting that although only the first set of four of Ghujduwānī's eight precepts are treated in the *Maqāmāt* and *Manāqib*, and the second set in the *Maslak* (Paul, 2012, p. 139), we still find allusive references in the *Maslak* to precepts of the first set, such as *safar dar waṭan* (see Tosun, 2015, p. 336).

CHAPTER III: THE IDEA OF *KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN*: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

> *"This interpersonal and social role of Sufism was explained and guided by a body of teachings that went beyond the bare analysis of inward states to an analysis of the role of the mystic in the world. And these teachings, in turn, reinforced the Sufi role and gave it a degree of that legitimation so necessary for durability"*[111]

This chapter explores *khalwat dar anjuman* through a discursive approach by employing two modes of inquiry: ideational and socio-historical.[112] The primary objective will be to contextualize the emergence of *khalwat dar anjuman* as an alternative orientation for mystical attainment by: (1) tracing the development of ideas analogous to *khalwat dar anjuman* in specific texts; while (2) situating its ideational variants within competing modalities of Islamic life;[113] and (3) examining spatio-temporally the communication of ideas within the wider discourse. By going beyond a conceptual and dogmatic assessment, here I attempt to understand why the idea of *khalwat dar anjuman* enjoyed widespread appeal across Muslim societies. As for my approach in navigating the historical narrative, I adopt a diachronic perspective, placing therefore the idea of 'being in solitude with God while living within society' – i.e. *khalwat dar anjuman* – at the center of my inquiry. Unlike in the previous chapter, no strict distinction is maintained in the present chapter between the label and the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman*.

Throughout history, ideas are often generated in the event that one responds and critiques previous systems of thought, for which a new system of thought, whether intended or unintended, is consequently framed. Ideas also tend to undergo changes across various contexts, and these changes often occur in both their substantive and functional meaning, where the latter is not always as obvious. For our purposes, in

[111] Hodgson, 1974, vol. 2, p. 222. What Hodgson is alluding to here, in part, is the social relevance that the Sufi *ṭarīqah*s had historically sought to attain.

[112] Although historical (or observable) factors may provide the necessary *conditions* for some events to occur, it fails to holistically *explain* why certain things happen. Therefore, I take the position that ideas, particularly religious ones in our case, hold a transformative force in history, and this necessarily rejects the notion of historicism.

[113] My approach to historical processes will be from a horizontal stratum where elements of the past are "received less as an irresistible agent than as a set of cultural resources to be continued, adapted or abandoned at will" (Green, 2012, p. 17).

order to identify and elucidate the continuities and changes of the idea of *khalwat dar anjuman*, I will focus on observing its functional significance while giving special attention to its role in dealing with the tension between solitude and society. In this way, I attempt to follow in general the principles and practices that defined the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah, and in particular the development of the idea of 'being in solitude with God while living within society'. I begin with the genesis of Islam in the early seventh century until (and not including) the modern age of the late eighteenth century. My main reason for not taking into account the modern age in this chapter is because of the fact that the rise of the West and its (imperialist) penetration of Islamdom shifted in a dramatic fashion the core dynamics throughout Islamicate societies, and on that account, this particular era arguably merits a separate inquiry for which I undertake in chapter five.

Finally, it is to be noted that this chapter takes but a glimpse at different contexts and, therefore, does not pretend to be exhaustive in any way. While my analysis in chapter two was strictly based on a conceptual framework, in this chapter I draw on a historical and discursive framework to focus on key moments that contributed to a shift in perceptions from an emphasis on 'solitude' to 'solitude within society'. I argue that the transition from an accentuation on the ascetical practice of 'solitude' as a world-renouncing ethic, to the mystical practice of 'solitude within society' as a world-transcending ideal, fundamentally owes to a gradual shift in both ontological and existential perceptions that unfolded over time as well as in space.

Part I: Precursors of *khalwat dar anjuman* in Islam: From its genesis throughout the Earlier Middle Period

3.2 Early Islamic spirituality

The iniquitous environment of Mecca, we are told, had began taking a heavy toll on Muḥammad's (SAW) conscience prior to his career as the prophet of Islam. As a result of this, in the passing of time, Muḥammad (SAW) occasionally found himself retreating into a nearby cave known as Ḥirā'. It was here in solitude that he eventually witnessed his first revelation from God through the angel Gabriel, marking not only the beginning of his prophethood but also the end of his prolonged solitary retreats. From this moment onward, Muḥammad (SAW) would no longer

flee his surroundings nor teach others to commit to such practices. And this is ultimately the reason why, as one author observes, "the ascetic life as a withdrawal from society was not encouraged in early Islam," especially since "Muhammad [SAW], whose life is considered a model for Muslims, lived fully within society, married, had children, fought in battles, and set up a government" (Sells, 1996, p. 20).

In the first century of Islam, Muslim renunciants (*zuhhād*, sing. *zāhid*) were on the whole very much involved in society,[114] and yet their peculiar mode of piety at the time was characteristically exteriorizing. Muslims at the time progressively exhibited world-rejecting attitudes, which was their way of responding to world-embracing ones. 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn, one of the earliest pre-hijrah Meccans to accept Islam, is a prime example of those among the early companions of the Prophet (SAW) who displays an array of peculiar inclinations, particularly in his search for going beyond conventional piety by way of self-imposing specific ritual acts of devotion which were neither prescribed nor practiced by the Prophet (SAW). 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn is also said to have been among the three men[115] who, after inquiring about the religious rites held by the Prophet (SAW), had felt themselves to be wanting in their devotion to God; each of the men thereby are said to have taken an oath, as one vowed to pray throughout the entire night for as long as he lived, while another pledged to continuously fast all throughout the year, and the other swore he would abstain from women and adopt a life of celibacy (see al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 1292).[116] Another of the early Muslims that we find exhibiting world-rejecting attitudes was 'Uthmān b. Abī al-'Āṣ who is quoted to have said: "If it were not for the Friday prayer and the congregation (*jamā'ah*), I would have built a [place of] dwelling on top of my home and would not have come out from it until I entered my grave" (Ḥanbal, 1983, p.

[114] For a succinct, well-thought out discussion on the notion of *zuhd* and early Muslim renunciant piety, see Kinberg, 1985.

[115] The other two men alongside 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn are said to have been 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Abū 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. 'Āṣ (d. 43/664) (see al-'Asqalānī, 1987, vol. 9, p. 6). In another narration, a group of men are reported to have gathered at the house of 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn pledging vows akin to those of the three group of men mentioned above, to which is added abstinence from sleeping on bedding and eating meat (see *ibid*). 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn is also mentioned to have abstained from drinking wine prior to his conversion to Islam. We find similar proclivities during the pre-Islamic period which some have interpreted as "an ascetic strain in the Semitic temperament" of men like 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn (Watt, 1956, p. 299).

[116] As a response to their austere vows, the narration continues with the Prophet (SAW) reminding the three men that he himself – in spite of being more awe-inspired by, and obedient to God – engages in all that they seek to abstain from, and with that, the Prophet (SAW) in admonishment concludes: 'Whosoever abjures from my way, is not from me' (*fa-man raghiba 'an sunnatī fa-laysa minnī*) (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 1292) (translation mine).

190) (translation and insertion mine).

An alternative attitude of world-transcending sorts began to emerge in the second/eighth century, most prominently in Basra. The Basran Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah al-Qaysiyyah (d. 184/801), to whom is attributed the saying, "With my body I am in society, yet with my soul I am with my Friend, [God] the Truth,"[117] is a prime example as one who exhibits a "tension between world-affirmation and world-transcendence (not rejection)" (Sells, 1996, p. 20) in her absolute love for God and only Him. Similarly, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. Basra, 110/728) emphasized an awe-inspiring mode of fearing God known as *khawf*, and took Hellfire[118] as his mental object especially as a way of deterring from worldly attachment.

In the early third/ninth century, we begin to sense a more discerning distinction between world-rejecting and world-transcending attitudes. And when we especially look at how Muslims privileged certain forms of salvational activity over others, the said distinction becomes all the more clear. For instance, the Egyptian mystic Dhū al-Nūn's view on solitary life is encapsulated in his saying: "Someone who hides from mankind in retreat is not like one who hides from mankind in God" (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 124). Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) – the Quranic exegetic who is known for his abstinence and life of seclusion which lasted nearly two decades (see Karamustafa, 2007, pp. 38-43) – echoing the thought of his spiritual progenitor Dhū al-Nūn conveys his take on solitary life: "He has established himself upon a mountain. So he has no Work to do. A man should be in the market-place. While still working with true Reality."[119]

If we were to cast a bird's-eye view at the first two centuries of Islam, the tensions Muslims exhibited with respect to their general attitudes may be categorized into three kinds: ontological, existential, and societal. The ontological tension was between this-world and the other-world, the former was perceived by Muslims as an obstruction to the latter in terms of salvation in the afterlife. The existential tension was rooted in the notions of *khawf* ('reverential fear of God') and *rajā'* ('hope in

[117] Several variants of this saying which are commonly attributed to Rābiʿah can be found in many Sufi literary works.

[118] On the notion of Hell in early Muslim thought during the first three centuries of Islam, see Christopher Melchert's (2016) "Locating Hell in early renunciant literature." In C. Lange (Ed.), *Locating Hell in Islamic traditions* (pp. 103-123).

[119] Quoted in Shah, 1969, p. 226.

God'). Lastly, the societal tension rested on the idea that society was permeated with corruption and temptation, which rendered it difficult for the piety-minded Muslim to carry out his or her earthly existence among the people. Under these circumstances, the tension experienced by Muslims had led some to adopt austere practices including denial of earning a livelihood, bodily mortification, vows of celibacy, and fleeing from their social environment. Over time, however, Muslims particularly of a mystical bent confronted these tensions and came up with solutions in what may be termed the Sufi synthesis. As a by-product, however, this so-called synthesis was accompanied with a new set of tensions that the Sufis would introduce through their mystical vision of the world.

3.3 Newly emerging Islamic mystical strands and formalized visions

Mystical strands in the mid third/ninth century began to establish a modest, albeit evident foothold throughout Islamicate societies. Muslims of a mystical bent during the first two centuries of Islam's advent are generally known to have resided in remote areas such as in the mountain or desert regions. Around the early to mid third century of the Hegira, a cohort of Muslim mystics who self-identified as 'Sufis' had (paradoxically) began to flourish in the 'Abbāsid caliphal center and iconic cosmopolitan city of Baghdad where "men in the city not only wrote books telling others how to behave, but also achieved enough prominence in the eyes of their contemporaries and successors to have their books discussed and preserved" (Green, 2012, p. 15). It is precisely in this epoch that we increasingly find Muslims articulating ideas analogous to *khalwat dar anjuman* across various regions of Islamdom. Whereas in the previous century the predominant mode of Muslim piety was exteriorizing, here we are introduced with its interiorizing counterpart together with the Muslims' search for detachment from the world which, ultimately, unfolded "into a search for the other world within the inner self" (Karamustafa, 2007, p. 2).[120]

An arising issue among the early mystics and renunciants alike during this epoch was whether abandoning society altogether was a viable option, and if not, then to what extent was one to detach themselves from society (*ibid*). A group of Sufis led by Abū

[120] The 'inward turn', writes Karamustafa, is what "manifested itself especially in new discourses on spiritual states, stages of spiritual development, closeness to God, and love; it also led to a clear emphasis on 'knowledge of the interior' (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) acquired through ardent examination and training of the human soul" (Karamustafa, 2007, p. 2).

al-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 298/910)[121] began espousing to a mystical doctrine of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*),[122] stressing the importance of its intimate realization and lived-experience. (It should be noted that this particular doctrine of Junayd's, which would become the most central core of Sufi theory and praxis, was essentially meant to complement rather than supplant its verbal profession and rational assertion).[123] In this vein, Junayd, who defines *tawḥīd* as "the separation of the Eternal from that which has originated in time," (*ifrād al-Qadīm 'an al-muḥādith*)[124] describes those who have truly affirmed God's oneness as follows: "They [*al-muwaḥḥidūn*, or the monotheists] are [or exist] but without being [of their own], and they depart [in the state of *fanā'*] without [actual] departing,"[125] (*Kānū bilā kawn wa bānū bilā bawn*).[126] Other Sufis of Baghdad contemporaneous with Junayd were also evidently in favor of living within the social realm: "Beware of retirement ['*uzlah*]," relates Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), "for it is in connexion with Satan; and cleave to companionship [*ṣuḥbah*], for therein is the satisfaction of the Merciful God" (al-Hujwīrī, 1911, p. 190).

Junayd, who may be characterized as the archetypical Sufi, certainly holds a most prominent and influential place in regard to the linguistic and theoretical basis of all ensuing mystical thought; therefore, more needs to be said about him and, especially for our purposes, his arrival at the idea that the mystical life (or journey) is to be carried out within (or even at the heart of) society and not in solitude (nor in the fringes of society).

[121] For an excellent monograph on Junayd, supplemented with a translation of his treatises, see A.H. Abdel-Kader's (1962) *The life, personality and writings of al-Junayd: A study of a ninth century mystics with an edition and translation of his writings*. For a concise list of Junayd's works along with a short appraisal of his doctrine, see Louis Massignon's (1997) *Essay on the origins of the technical language of Islamic mysticism* (pp. 206-209).

[122] Junayd's contributory role in Islamic intellectual history in general and Sufism in particular is especially owed to his systematic treatment of key Sufi ideas and concepts. His doctrine of *tawḥīd* alongside his principles formed the all-important theoretical and doctrinal foundation of all subsequent Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. On his doctrine, see M.A.H. Ansari's (1983) "The doctrine of One Actor: Junayd's view of *tawḥīd*," in *The Muslim world* (pp. 33-56).

[123] One of the earliest mystical interpretations of *tawḥīd* which resembles that of Junayd's was offered by Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyyah (see Sells, 1996, p. 21).

[124] A literal translation would be, "to isolate eternity from origination" (Quoted in Zaehner, 1969, p. 153).

[125] See Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-luma'*. The source of translation which I have slightly modified here is from Affifi, 1939, p. 138n2.

[126] Sarrāj further expounds on this to mean, "Indeed the monotheists are [or exist] physically in things [or in the world] as if they are not [existing], and they depart from things [or the world] as if they are not [actually] departing; because their being in things [or in the world] are with their corporeal form and their departure from things [or the world] are with their heart," (*Anna al-muwaḥḥidīn yakūnūn fī al-ashyā' ka-annahum lā yakūnūn, wa yabīnūn `an al-ashyā' ka-annahum lā yabīnūn; lianna kawnahum fī al-ashyā' bi-ashkhāṣihim wa bawnahum 'an al-ashyā' bi-asrārihim*) (Sarrāj, 1960, p. 432).

There are two pivotal moments that arguably shaped the personality of Junayd and recalibrated his perspective on living in the midst of the people. The first moment revolves around the lessons he learns from one of his teachers, Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 242/857). Junayd in one of his encounters with Muḥāsibī responds to the latter's invitation to go out for a walk with the following rhetorical question: "Will you drag me forth from my life of retirement, in which I feel secure, out on to the highroads with their risks, and distractions for the senses?" and on another occasion Junayd says, "My delight is in solitude, but you expose me to the rough and tumble of society," and to which Muḥāsibī replies, "How often will you say to me: 'My delight is in solitude?' Though half of mankind were to draw near to me, I should not find any delight in their company, and though the other half were to keep away from me, I should not feel lonely because of their distance from me!" (Quoted in Abdel-Kader, 1962, p. 19; cf. al-Iṣfahānī, 1996, vol. 10, p. 256).[127] The second moment being his encounter with the Khurasanian mystic Abū Ḥafṣ, whom Junayd hosted alongside his associates in Baghdad for a whole year. Junayd is said to have learned of, and moreover developed an appreciation for, a kind of spirituality uncommon among the Sufis in Baghdad at the time. As a wealthy merchant, Abū Ḥafṣ is said to have "liked luxury and accepted physical comforts without their, in any way, interfering with his mystical meditations;" Abdel-Kader remarks that, "It may well be that al-Junayd either accepted anew or became confirmed in his view that what mattered for him primarily was the ṣūfī conception and the ṣūfī experience and that the high level of ṣūfīsm in Khorasān impressed him profoundly" (Abdel-Kader, 1962, pp. 30-31).[128]

[127] Hārith al-Muḥāsibī who was another one of Junayd's teachers is said to have "had the greatest difficulty in getting him [i.e. the young Junayd] to go out at all" (Zaehner, 1969, p. 137n2). Over time, Junayd began mixing with the people as he, just as Muḥāsibī, saw no harm or evil in doing so as long as one's inner-being was spiritually fortified. However, Sarī al-Saqaṭī, another teacher of Junayd whose influence over him was far more pressing as is evident in his thought and works, remarked in a somewhat disparaging way regarding Junayd's mingling with the common folk (i.e. non-Sufis) (Abdel-Kader, 1962, p. 19). Therefore, the contrasting approaches of his two teachers of Muḥāsibī and Saqaṭī indeed had an impact on Junayd as the former suppressed his givenness to solitude while the latter reinforced his mystical thought. All in all, as noted by Zaehner, "Junayd, shy and retiring though he was, squarely faced the fact that even the mystic has to live in this world, and though, in ecstasy, the soul may transcend the senses and time, it nevertheless has to return to both" (Zaehner, 1969, p. 149).

[128] As noted by Fritz Meier, "Abū Ḥafṣ al-Naysābūrī (alias al-Ḥaddād, d. circa 880), whose importance for Khurāsān Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī compared to that of Junayd's for Baghdad, on one occasion came to Baghdad with his disciples. Junayd said to him: 'You have imposed the discipline (*adab*) of sultans on your students' (i.e. drilled them the way sultans drill their soldiers). Abū Ḥafṣ replied: 'Good discipline outwardly is the best sign of good discipline inwardly'" (Meier, 1999, p. 204).

Written accounts about the Malāmatī way emerge in eras subsequent to Abū Ḥafṣ, however. Authors like ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (b. Nishapur, 325/937; d. Nishapur, 412/1021), who himself was of a strong Malāmatī persuasion, are said to have endeavored to render Sufi teachings more accessible to a wider audience (see Biagi, 2013). In his *Risālat al-Malāmatiyyah*, for instance, Sulamī makes a distinction between the simple *ṣūfī* and the more elect *malāmatī*, for which the former, we are told, is mainly concerned with trusting in God (*tawakkul*) and renouncing the inherent subjection of acquisition (*inkār al-kasb*), while the latter is the one "who conceals his progress in the spiritual life. He aspires to free himself from the world and its passions whilst living in the world" (Trimingham, 1971, p. 265). We also find Sulamī in his *Jawāmiʻ ādāb al-ṣūfīyya* drawing a distinction between *adab al-ẓāhir* and *adab al-bāṭin*. The latter term is also referred to as *adab al-sirr*; the terms here essentially represent two dimensions of human propriety; the former being internal whereas the latter external – in which both "the mystic, and man in general, should be constantly striving toward attaining total harmony between his exterior conduct and his intimate attitude to God" (Biagi, 2013, p. xxxvi).

Nearing the middle of the fourth/tenth century, however, the fall of Baghdad to the Shīʻite Buyyids in 945 caused the center of Sunnī religious learning to shift to regions beyond Baghdad, in particular to Nishapur, the northeastern provincial capital of Khurasan. The migration of the Baghdad Sufis to Khurasan resulted in a somewhat obscure fusion of the two regional mystical trends.[129]

The Nishapuran Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073) in his *Risālah* uses the phrase, *Kāin bāin* (al-Qushayrī, 2001, p. 138), or "One who is here and not here" (al-Qushayri, 2007, p. 123), and continues to elucidate this as, "meaning that he [i.e. *al-ʻārif*, or the gnostic] is [outwardly] with creatures, while in his heart[130] he is

[129] During this era, Nishapur from the tenth to the twelfth century also became a major trade center by which closer contacts between various movements were created; this ultimately led to a consolidation of traditions with the more dominant Sufi tradition overshadowing and eventually displacing its Khurasanian 'indigenous alternatives' (see Green, 2012, p. 49). Theory suggests that the two primary reasons for the supersession of the Sufis was due to institutional and discursive factors (see *ibid*, pp. 49ff.). Nevertheless, all the diverse groups under discussion shared common practices and methods, and in spite of their disagreements, what was of greater import "was rather the mutual intelligibility of the various methods on offer, an intelligibility that enabled productive discussions and interactions between members – and perhaps more importantly between the "swing voters" of potential members – of the different movements…Despite the vast distance between Iraq and many of the cities of Khurasan…[shared] communication tools enabled the learned from these very different regions to share ideas vicariously through writing" (*ibid*) (insertion mine).

[130] 'Heart' here is a translation of the Arabic word *sirr* (lit: secret), which alludes to a form of inner

separate from them"[131] (*ibid*).[132] Likewise, the Ghaznavid Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī b. ʻUthmān al-Jullābī al-Ghaznawī al-Hujwīrī (d. Circa 1073-1077)[133] underscores in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb* the importance of outwardly being with the people while inwardly being with God. Central principles of the indigenous Khurasanian *Ahl al-Malāmah*, or 'The People of Blame', emphasized the eschewal of fame and living as members of the laity.[134] The famed Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʻĪsā b. Surūshān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874 or 264/877-878), who prefigured the *Malāmatī* path of blame, is said to have ascribed, according to Sulamī's *Uṣūl al-Malāmiyyah*, the greatest sign of *maʻrifah* ('divine gnosis'; or direct knowledge of God) with the one who goes about their business in the midst of society as a layperson would, all while their heart resides in the sacred realm.

Although Junayd postulated that a Sufi was to live within society – rendering thus the impossibility of becoming a monk (*rāhib*) (Ansari, 1983, p. 40) – he also included among his principles of the Sufi ideal the practice of seclusion from society. The goal of the Sufi who engaged in intermittent solitude was to ultimately return back to society as an active member. In this way, withdrawing from the world for Sufis was not an overarching concern as was arriving at a realization and discernment of its true worth, while striving for inner-detachment from everything other than God. Sufis assigned no inherent value to the world. God was to be their ultimate object of concern. With that said, notwithstanding the important social and political roles they assumed throughout Islamdom, Sufis at large were still susceptible to leaving society on temporary spiritual retreats.

Broadly assessing the three centuries that mark what has commonly been referred to as the formative period of Sufism, we find, in similar measure to centuries prior, a new set of tensions that arise and continue to persist. Inasmuch as the Sufis presented in a positive light a new modality of life within the social realm, while also curtailing

consciousness.

131 *Yaʻnī kāin maʻa al-khalq bāin ʻanhum bi al-sirr* (al-Qushayrī, 2001, p. 138).

132 Another version reads: "Be [as one who is] here and not here, that is, be [as one who is] with the Truth [i.e. God] and [as one who is] not here with creation [i.e. the people]," (*Kun kāin bāin, yaʻnī kun kāin maʻa al-Ḥaqq wa bāin maʻa khalq*).

133 Date cited in Karamustafa, 2007, vol. 1, p. 260.

134 Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad b. ʻUmāra Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Qaṣṣār (d. 271/884) who is famously known as one of the first Nishapur Malamatī's, as well as an adherent of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), is recorded to have said in the *Malāmatiyyah Epistle* to ʻAbdullāh al-Ḥajjām that, "It is better for you to be known as `Abdullāh *al-Ḥajjā m* (the bath-attendant, cupper) than as ʻAbdullāh the Mystic (*al-ʻĀrif*), or as ʻAbdullāh the Ascetic (*al-Zāhid*)" (Sviri, 1999, vol. 1, p. 604).

the tensions of which were inherent in *zuhd*-piety, the individualist tendency of mystical attainment was still at large. The ontological tension characteristic of Sufism was between God and 'all that is not God' (*mā siwā Allāh*), and, as Karamustafa observes, "Sufism, which demonstrated its this-worldly credentials by appropriating and naturalizing asceticism, was still subject to the antisocial pull of the option of other-worldly contemplation" (Karamustafa, 1994, p. 31). The existential tension was seeking *ma'rifah*, on the one hand, and *dhawqī* ('fruitional') experiences and ecstatic states, on the other; while the societal tension was confronting the challenges of social forces which acted as an impediment on the mystical path toward God. Having exercised considerable influence over competing mystical trends, the Sufi tradition of Baghdad over the centuries had gradually absorbed other indigenous spiritual traditions throughout Islamdom. In Transoxania, however, the Khwājagān mediated the Sufi tendency of secluding from society and the legalist stress on conforming to normative ethical standards; thus maintaining certain features of Sufism – especially the individualistic tendencies of seeking nearness to God – while disallowing both permanent and intermittent withdrawal from society.

3.4 Conclusion

This section has briefly considered two competing attitudes of renunciant and mystical sorts in the first five centuries of Islam. These two piously oriented Muslim attitudes would coexist rather than merge. This idea of coexistence becomes more apparent in later centuries as Islamic renunciation continued to retain its religious relevance and social presence as a separate tradition, even as Islamic mysticism increased in its prominence and prestige across Muslim societies.

With mystical strands in Baghdad on the rise since the third/ninth century, renunciant attitudes were still nonetheless prevalent. The sixth/twelfth-century Ḥanbalite from Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzī provides us with a representative example of a renunciant-oriented Muslim who during this particular era experienced the kind of tensions alluded to in this chapter. In this vein, Ibn al-Jawzī writes about an internal tension he experienced in his *Ṣayd al-khāṭir* as follows: "I still struggle with my *'self'* as to whether I should continue preaching at assemblies where I see sinners repenting as well as ascetics, or should I seclude myself from people and dedicate all my time to

worshipping Allāh and live an asceticism [*sic*] lifestyle" (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2018, p. 132).[135]

Part II: *Khalwat dar anjuman* as an ethico-mystical precept in Islam: The Later Middle Period

While, in the Earlier Middle Period, the characteristic features of Muslim renunciants and mystics was not a distinction we easily find, at least in any pronounced way, this changes in the seventh/thirteenth century. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) is a prime example during this period who, on the one hand, upholds that solitude in Islam retains a distinctive feature when compared to its analogs in other religious traditions such as Christianity and Hinduism;[136] and, on the other hand, makes a distinction between Muslim renunciants and mystics such that, according to Suhrawardī, the former out of spiritual weakness adopts the solitary life so as to fend off worldly temptations, whereas the latter privileges the communal life because they are not seduced by the world and its superficiality.[137]

The integral role played by Junayd and the full impact of his ideas become evermore evident during the Later Middle Period where the mystical tradition begins to broaden its appeal and the Sufi *ṭarīqah*s emerge as the bastions of religious life.[138] Junayd's set of advice on the spiritual path which widely became known as *al-sharā'iṭ al-thamān* ('the eight rules') served as the centerpiece of Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. His rules were brought to light by two of the ages foremost Sufi figures, Najm al-Dīn

[135] Contrary to the English translation given here, the original Arabic text that I consulted literally renders, '…renunciation, cutting off ties with the people, and [engaging in matters of] the hereafter in isolation' (…*al-zuhd wa al-inqiṭā' 'an al-khalq wa al-infirād bi'l-ākhirah*) (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1997, p. 88).

[136] Erik S. Ohlander (2008) notes that, "Already a well-established discipline, the practice of *khalwa*—also referred to as *arab'īniyya* ('forty- [day retreat]; Per. *chilla*, fr. *chihil* 'forty')—became one of the most distinctive features of *ṭarīqah*-based Sufism in the period following the rise of the Sufi brotherhoods" (Ohlander, 2008, p. 220n78).

[137] The distinction between the two, however, is not entirely apparent as Suhrawardī wants his readers to believe, especially since renunciants too preferred communal life over solitary life. Suhrawardī, who was indeed an important figure that stood at the crossroads when Sufi *ṭarīqah*s began to crystallize, essentially attempts to delineate a linear progression from renunciant to mystic as he clearly privileges the latter at the expense of the former.

[138] Marshall G.S. Hodgson (1974) observes how in the prior century, leading to the thirteenth century, "Then men like Ghazâlî (d. 1111), who combined a mastery of the teachings of the 'ulama' scholars on Sharî'ah and kalâm with a respect for the independent wisdom of the Ṣûfî mystics, helped to make Ṣûfism acceptable to the 'ulamâ' themselves. By the twelfth century it was a recognized part of religious life and even of religious 'ilm knowledge. Thus gradually Ṣûfism, from being one form of piety among others, and by no means the most accepted one either officially or popularly, came to dominate religious life not only within the Jamâ'î-Sunnî fold, but to a lesser extent even among Shî'îs" (Hodgson, 1974, vol. 2, p. 203).

Kubrā (d. 618/1221) and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), both of whom, as the eponymous founders of the Kubrawiyyah and Suhrawardiyyah *ṭarīqah*s, utilized these rules as a framework for their respective devotional and mystical programs.[139]

We may also draw attention to the changes that were taking place at the social level in particular during the Later Middle Period. As Muslims expanded their territorial reach in all directions throughout the known world, we begin to find a set of newly developing "religious institutions that emphasized social solidarity and mutual support" (Bulliet, 1994a, p. 471), whereby a number of important structural changes came to fruition over time. Previously loosely organized movements would gradually become more established and turn into formal institutions including the madrasah educational system, the *futuwwah* associations, and the Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. These social organizations are generally known to have served societies well in promoting and creating both solidarity and stability (see *ibid*). An integral social role played by the Sufi *ṭarīqah*s in particular lied in its proselytizing efforts.

It is of further note, as Bulliet points out, that "urbanization [had] left an indelible mark on the evolving religion [of Islam]. The development of Islamic law, theology, and ethics, though prefigured by community practices of the prophet's [*sic*] time, reflects primarily the urban milieu of the 10th and 11th centuries" (*ibid*, p. 470). Additionally, the learned men of the ulema scholarly class, whose emergence and eventual flourishing was largely by virtue of the urban cities in which, by the Later Middle period, the majority of Muslims were increasingly living, are known to have wielded a wide range of authority in matters of religion, morality, and law. Moreover, the scholarly activities of the ulema which having been independent from state control would further legitimatize them as leaders of the Muslim community. When in the previous centuries there were greater divisions existing among various socio-religious movements, these divisions in the Later Middle period had become somewhat blurred over time. Scholars increasingly identified as Sufis to the extent that – as we shall see below – the ulema of Transoxania were, almost without exception, Sufis themselves.

[139] Having supplemented two rules to Junayd's eight, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's ten rules thus became widely known as *al-uṣūl al-'asharah*.

3.5 Crystallization of Sufi *ṭarīqah*s: The Transoxanian Khwājagān

The repertoire of Sufi doctrines had developed significantly by the mid sixth/eleventh century. Muslims of a mystical bent who in tapping into the existing spiritual tapestry developed in centuries prior by the early Sufis are known to have come together in a more organized fashion by this time to achieve a purpose that they shared with their comystical predecessors. These Muslim mystics in various regions throughout Islamdom took the body of ideas and practices which was essentially at their disposal and began cultivating them in different ways. A particular group of such Muslim mystics were the Bukharan Khwājagān shaykhs. Emerging in the region of Transoxania, the Khwājagān are known to have crystallized during the mid sixth/eleventh century into an identifiable Sufi cohort under the auspices of the Persian-speaking scholar-Sufi Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, and became established it in a more formal way later under his successor, ʻAbd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī.

Assigning an exact date to the emergence of Sufism in Transoxania is not as clear-cut as one might expect. The initial presence of Sufis in Transoxania, however, can roughly be traced back to either the third/ninth or fourth/tenth century. Notwithstanding, it was the invasion of Transoxania on behalf of the Mongols during the seventh/thirteenth century that brought about a number of (structural) changes. This crucially made way for the Sufis who, in the aftermath of the invasion, played a significant role throughout major Islamicate regions, particularly in the religious, social, and political spheres (see DeWeese, 2018, p. 37). (Noteworthy here is the causal relation between these two historical moments). It was around this time that the foundations of the Naqshbandiyyah-proper – alongside a number of other Sufi *ṭarīqah*s throughout Islamdom – were laid.

We know that sentiments in preference for society over solitude was common throughout Central Asia during the early period. However, it was only later under the Naqshbandīs that we find a pronounced response to solitude. Again, their stance against solitude was not intended toward the practice itself, but essentially against its negative implications which included the attention it drew, the issue of it being a defining feature of the Sufi path, people in important positions in society were required to temporarily leave their positions, which ultimately created a sense of disruption in society and enticed people to abandon their obligations. This was,

moreover, a crucial and rather shrewd move by the Naqshbandīs as it discouraged – in some cases even disallowed – people to abandon their worldly obligations, arguably creating more stability all around and a peculiar work ethic in areas of social, economic, and political dealings.

3.5.1 Religio-intellectual context of Transoxania

The origins of *khalwat dar anjuman* as a concept interestingly coincides with the development of a major distinction between two realms of knowledge (or inquiry) of *'ilm al-bāṭin* ('science of the inward') and *'ilm al-ẓāhir* ('science of the outward'). In this way, *'ilm al-bāṭin* had reached its apotheosis relatively late in comparison to the other foundational disciplines in Islam.[140]

Political turmoil throughout the greater region of Transoxania was most rampant leading up to and beyond the twelfth century, notwithstanding we witness during this epoch many moments of cultural, religious, and intellectual fluorescence. The religio-intellectual context during the nascency of the Khwājagānī movement in Transoxania was especially vibrant. Its vibrance was owed to a number of factors including, most majorly, the synthesis between the intellectual and institutional

[140] Bernd Radtke (1988) provides an excellent overview of the notion of *bāṭin* from its beginnings in the late first/seventh century in Basrah and its shift to the development of *'ilm al-bāṭin* until the fourth/tenth century. Here is a quote of some length by Radtke which is well-deserved: "*bāṭen*, as understood by the early Basran mystics, is man's inner self, the complex of emotions which stir his soul (cf. Ebn Taymiya's definitions). Study of the human soul and inner self was pursued in Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's circle, particularly by his mystic pupils. A major role in this development appears to have been played by his pupil 'Abd-al-Wāḥed b. Zayd. The basis for *'elm al-bāṭen*, as thus defined, was found in a *ḥadīṯ qodsī* (saying of God Himself)…Basran *'elm al-bāṭen* consists of knowledge of ways to train the soul and is a psychic discipline attainable by anybody through his own mental effort—not, like Kufan *'elm al-bāṭen*, a body of knowledge conferred by afflatus on a chosen individual. The mystic *'elm al-bāṭen* is expounded in fully developed form in the writings of Ḥāreṯ Moḥāsebī (3rd/9th century). In the east, Ḥakīm Termeḏī (d. ca. 300/910) built this concept of *'elm al-bāṭen* into his theosophical system. Heresiographers such as Ka'bī branded the Sufis of the 3rd/9th century simply as *aṣḥāb al-bāṭen*. In the Sufi manuals written in the 4th/10th century by Kalābāḏī, Sarrāj, and Abū Ṭāleb Makkī, *'elm al-bāṭen* is an essential component of the orthodox Sufism which these authors propound. In addition to the concept of *'elm al-bāṭen* as knowledge of means to train the soul, a second concept now entered Sufi thinking, namely the interpretability of the Koran and the Sunna from within. It was held that understanding of the inner self enables the mystic to understand the inner meaning of God's book and law. This method of interpretation from within was often described as *estenbāṭ* (inference). The biggest collection of such exegesis from the early medieval period is the *Ḥaqā'eq al-tafsīr* of Solamī (d. 412/1021). From the 4th/10th century onward, a different tendency, already discernible among some of the earlier Sufis, becomes more and more prominent. *'elm al-bāṭen* is no longer held to be attainable through human effort but is assumed (as by the Shi'ites) to be God-given knowledge…The most serious criticism, voiced above all by the Hanbalites Ebn al-Jawzī and Ebn Taymīya, concerned the claim of many Sufis to possession of an *'elm al-bāṭen* of the second category, which in the view of the critics meant possession of a "private revelation"" (Radtke, 1988).

aspects of Sufism.

The Islamization of Sufi communities in Transoxania had also reached its fruition by the eighth/fourteenth century. Pseudo-Sufis and fraudulent shaykhs had quite a visible presence around this time period, whereby eccentric Sufi practices and ideas alike would gradually find their way into the public domain (see DeWeese, 1999, pp. 509-511). This is also confirmed in early Khwājagānī sources which record Yūsuf al-Hamadānī along with his close affiliates expressing their contempt for eccentric displays of piety by Sufis of both the current and past milieu.

It may be of note to mention that the eccentric Karrāmiyyah, who being widespread and influential in both regions of Khurasan and Transoxania, had prompted the emergence of the Malāmatīs in Khurasan under the Nishapuran Ḥamdūn al-Qaṣṣār (d. 271/884).[141] Even though no conclusive evidence in the case of the Khwājagān in Transoxania exists to substantiate that their movement materialized as a result of the Karrāmīs, the Khwājagān had nevertheless expressed a great deal of contempt for both the Karrāmīs in particular and for those who adopted similar sentiments and displayed their piety in a pretentious manner.

As for the religious identity that was embraced by the Khwājagān, this could broadly be characterized as being Shariah-minded with a strong Sunni orthodoxy at its core (as adherents to the legal school of Ḥanafism and theological school of Maturīdism).

The era coinciding with Yūsuf al-Hamadānī was also marked by moments of revival (*tajdīd*). Muslims at the time were being confronted with new obstacles such as the rise of the Bāṭiniyyah and other non-orthodox and schismatic movements. New ways of re-expressing the prophetic tradition emerged as a result. And, in this way, *khalwat dar anjuman* was not new per se, but a different way of expressing the prophetic way in terms that were more in line with the time. Specifically, during this epoch we find philosophy and mystical expression gaining new ground and as such requiring a response in the language of the time. In this sense, we can perceive both Hamadānī and Ghujduwānī as a product of their own respective times.[142]

[141] See Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*.

[142] Along these lines, one author points out that, "Pre-modern revivalism was primarily a response from within Islam to the internal socio-moral decline of the community…In contrast to later Islamic modernism, pre-modern revivalism simply sought to restore and implement an existing ideal, not to reformulate or reconstruct new Islamic responses to modern change" (Quoted in

Early Khwājagānī shaykhs in the fifth/eleventh century, such as Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, were recognized scholars trained in the religious sciences of *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *hadīth*. It was uncommon during this era, in consideration of the nascency of Sufism as a systematic field of knowledge, that those outside of the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* would become Sufis throughout Islamdom. It is likewise important to make note of the fact that from the fourth/tenth century to the sixth/twelfth century two of the earliest schools of law to endure the test of time, the Hanafī and Shāfi'ī schools, had a growing antagonism rooted in their respective differences in interpretation and methodology (see Bulliet, 1972, p. 28 ff.). There are therefore intimations of a different strand of Sufism developing in Central Asia where Ḥanafites, who were known for their rationalistic bent in jurisprudential and theological issues, had dominated.

Drawing attention to Ghujduwānī's intellectual environment in Bukhara, we find that considerable sway was held by the Transoxanian Ḥanafite jurists.[143] The Bukharan Ḥanafites were strong exponents of *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'*, or 'Jamā'ī-Sunnism' (Hodgson, 1977), whose notorious rivals were the partisans of 'Alī known as the *Ahl al-bayt*, or more simply the Shī'ites. The madrasah establishment likewise had a strong footing in Bukhara.[144] In consideration of the religious sensibilities of the people combined with the salient and altogether Shariah-mindedness of the jurists, one could anticipate the practicability for Ghujduwānī and the early Khwājagān to have been inclined toward marrying – rather than self-containing – the exoteric and esoteric sciences while, at the same time, bringing the former to the fore.

It may also be of importance to note that after the Khwājagānī *ṭarīqah* became

Lizzio, 2006, pp. 38-39).

[143] From the third/ninth century, a great number of Muslim jurists were residing in Bukhara, and according to his *The history of Bukhara*, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Narshakhī (d. 348/959), the earliest known historian of Transoxania, writes that Bukharan scholars were so profuse at the time that in order to "mention all the learned men of Bukhara it would require volumes" (al-Narshakhī, 1954, p. 6).

[144] Madrasahs began to flourish throughout the Muslim world during the fifth/eleventh century in particular, whose proliferation is said to have been prompted by the success of the famously instituted madrasahs in Baghdad owing to the efforts of the eminent Seljuk vizier Abū 'Alī Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Isḥāq al-Ṭūsī (d. 485/1092) better known as Niẓām al-Mulk (see Hillenbrand, 1986, p. 1127). Nonetheless, prior to the Nizamiyyah madrasahs, scholars have asserted that the Transoxanian madrasahs had a more "fully developed style of architecture and academic system," and moreover, that there were "as many as 33 *madrasah*s in the East [i.e. in both Khurasan and Transoxania] before the appearance of the first *madrasah* in Baghdad" (Bosworth & Asimov, 2000, p. 38).

formally established under Ghujduwānī, we do not find any of the shaykhs or disciples from Hamadānī onward traveling for educational purposes in particular to other regions of Islamdom. This could be owed to various reasons including the fact that Bukhara had gradually become rival to many other major centers of education throughout Islamdom.

3.5.2 Socio-cultural context of Transoxania

In analyzing *khalwat dar anjuman* from a socio-historical perspective, we may consider, in general, the altogether rigorous and systematic synthesis that Muslims during the era of circa the sixth/twelfth century were advancing between discursive learning and experiential ways of knowing. Also, more specifically, we may look at how the Naqshbandiyyah were responding to criticisms leveled against them by the ulema, which ultimately resulted in them dispensing with certain ideas, practices, and customs once widely embraced by all Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. By following the development of the idea of *khalwat dar anjuman* from a socio-historical context, I attempt to show, in one respect, how the ideas and attitudes of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah could be seen as a configuration of those that predated them, and meanwhile, in another respect, how contemporary polemics played a key role in shaping their ideas and attitudes.

Before probing the social and cultural setting in which *khalwat dar anjuman* emerged, it must be mentioned that the Islamicate regions of Transoxania and Khurasan were comprised of peoples of different ethnicities who shared not only Islam as their common religion but also Persian as their (high-)culture. Furthermore, as one author notes, "Khorasan was one of the centers of cultural and political development of the sedentary people in Central Asia and of the interaction between Persian and indigenous Central Asian cultures" (Abazov, 2008, n.p.).

The early Khwājagān and its Naqshbandī successors were primarily situated in urban centers. The urban environment and the practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* were mutually accommodating. Merchants who as one of the main driving forces of major cities throughout Islamdom were especially attracted to the idea of *khalwat dar anjuman* as it suited their lifestyle and, all the more, registered in their minds. One was neither required nor expected to take time off from their mundane affairs in

order to enter into solitude; on the contrary, every moment was to be lived in a state of (inner) solitude. Irrespective of whether one was working in a busy market or in a remote field, *khalwat dar anjuman* entailed transcending the mundane and coming to realize God's presence. Anyone whose vocation placed them at a distance from society or city-life, such as a farmer, the notion of 'solitude [with God] within society' would have applied to them in, for instance, the time spent working in the fields.[145]

Sufi *ṭarīqah*s during Bahā' al-Dīn's era had began proliferating all throughout Islamdom, and the *ṭarīqah*s in general enjoyed special appeal to major segments of society. And while other regional rival *ṭarīqah*s such as the Khalwatiyyah, which was founded by 'Umar al-Khalwatī (d. Circa 800/1397), had attracted, in the main, lower-class Muslim converts in Khurasan, leaders of the Naqshbandiyyah by this time during the eighth/fourteenth century hailed mainly from the ulema. Meanwhile, affiliates of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* in general consisted of merchants and learned men primarily from the middle-class and some even from the ruling-class elites.[146]

3.5.3 Political context of Transoxania

With the deterioration of political power held by the caliphate[147] in the fourth/tenth century, there was a corresponding inverse effect with Sufi movements in general when they began to take on an increasingly socio-political role. This was a time in which the Naqshbandīs were gradually securing an extensive peripheral and central presence throughout Islamdom. The proto-Naqshbandīs were initially wary of mixing in political affairs and interacting with (heathen) rulers who had taken over their lands. The fall of the caliphate marked the fall of its capital in Baghdad in the year 945, being a significant moment in the history of Islam where political legitimacy had changed dramatically. Particularly a century later in the fifth/eleventh

[145] Ideas and practices in the urban setting were known to have had a more lasting impact on Islamicate civilization. As Christopher Melchert (2002) reminds us, the influence of the desert life of the early tribal Arabs when it came to shaping the culture of classical Islam was relatively insignificant in comparison to the urban setting which had played a much more dominant role, and this especially holds true for urban societies in which the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah were found all across Khurasan and Transoxania (see Melchert, 2002, p. 429).

[146] See O'Kane, 1982, vol. 1, p. 189.

[147] The caliphate was a political entity that had represented up until the fourth/tenth century the officialdom of the socio-political order; historically-speaking it had likewise professed the legitimacy of its authority on the basis that they were maintainers of the socio-political system first founded by the Prophet (SAW) (Ernst, 1997, p. 125).

century, the nomadic Turks who as newcomers in their newly founded, dominant position over Muslims throughout Transoxania and Khurasan had "quickly adapted to the new situation, taking on both the court culture and the Muslim faith. They soon became patrons of religion by establishing two parallel kinds of institutions to demonstrate their legitimacy: academics for training Muslim scholars, and residential hospices for Sufi devotees" (Ernst, 1997, p. 126). It was under these conditions and transitional moments that allowed for Sufism and its ethos to permeate Islamicate societies.

In Transoxania, we come across an early pre-modern example where an indigenous Muslim population would occasionally find itself under the political authority of non-Muslim, pagan rulers. The Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah operated under many ruling dynasties, from the Karakhanids (1124–1218) in Transoxania down to the Ottomans (1299–1923) in Anatolia. Yet, given our strict concern with the political context of Transoxania, we will focus solely on the first three centuries during which the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah were confined to the said region from the twelfth century until the era of ʻUbaydullāh Aḥrār in the fifteenth century.

Despite the early Khwājagān shaykhs and its Naqshbandī successors persistently cautioning against mingling with those in power, we nonetheless find the majority of them maintaining in varying ways close relations with ruling figures. With their charisma and spiritual clout, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī shaykhs were rather persistent in appropriating their authorial capacity to influence rulers and, in turn, political outcomes.

The political environment throughout Transoxania impacted in a considerable way the activities of individuals, groups, and institutions in particular. This last point is especially evident during the eras of ʻAbd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī and Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband; the former being positioned with the Karakhanids (1124–1218) and the Chaghatay dynasty (1225–1340), and the latter coinciding with Timurid rule (1370–1507) in Transoxania.

Many of the early Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs, from ʻAbd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī (d. 1179 or 1220) until the coming of ʻUbaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 893/1490), were in some way affiliated with men wielding significant political power. Ghujduwānī is said to

have acted as the shaykh of Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Ṣadr, who was the then regent of Bukhara during the mid twelfth century; likewise we find Ghujduwānī’s successors including ‘Alī ‘Azīzān Rāmītanī (d. 721/1321) who had established close relations with the regent of Khwarazm, and Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389) who prior to his shaykhdom served the sultan of Transoxania, Ghazan Khan Khalīl, and subsequent to his ascension as Sufi shaykh met with rulers among whom most noteworthy was his famous encounter with Malik Ḥusayn (Tosun, 2015, pp. 396-397).

The codified tribal laws of the Mongols, known as the Great *Yāsa* of Chingiz Khan,[148] was not entirely in consonance with the Shariah as it conflicted with some of its directives and ultimately caused the Muslims various forms of hardship under the Chaghatays, a khanate founded in the early seventh/thirteenth century by the second son of Chingiz (or Genghis) Khan (d. 1227), Chaghatay Khan (d. 639/1241), which lasted for nearly a century after his death. As a leading authority and champion of the *Yāsa*, Chaghatay Khan was unwavering in his exercise of the law and was known to have severely punished transgressions committed against the *Yāsa*, which evidently forbid common Muslim practices such as cutting the throat of an animal in the act of slaughter and the usage of running water for ritual ablution; consequently, “The cruel punishment which Čaghatay visited upon any such transgressions made his name hated among the Muslims” (Barthold & Boyle, 1991, p. 2).

A major issue Sufis in particular had faced was “the extent to which they should cooperate, or collaborate, with state authorities” (Potter, 1994, p. 80), and also whether involvement in politics would delegitimize their (spiritual) authority. The Sufis in their relations with rulers acted as mediators “especially between political adversaries and between tribal leaders and state authorities. The intervention of prominent Sufis to save a city when it was under attack seems to have ample precedent” (*ibid*, p. 92). As for the Naqshbandīs, they addressed the issue of political involvement in several ways.

Politics had ultimately played an integral role in Transoxania in general and in the

[148] For a well-researched work on the *Yāsa* and a scholarly exposition on some key misconceptions associated with it, see Ayalon David’s (1971) “The Great *Yāsa* of Chingiz Khan” in *Studia Islamica*, (33), pp. 97-140.

context of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah in particular. During the era of Yūsuf al-Hamadānī we find the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar supporting both scholars and sufis, who began to cooperate and come to terms, against the Bāṭiniyyah propaganda which was seen as both a military and scholarly threat owing to the spread and infiltration of their doctrines in parts of the (dominant Sunni) Muslim world. It would thus be misleading to down play or even sideline the role of politics as it was clearly intermeshed with the development and eventual popularization of *ṭarīqah*s.

3.5.4 Transoxanian spirituality

The Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah had formalized *khalwat dar anjuman* as one of their defining precepts, however, the idea itself was certainly not unique to them. In one respect, *khalwat dar anjuman* had arguably resonated with the people of Transoxania as their notion of spirituality was already given to the idea of preferring the active social life over a life of solitude. In this vein, current scholarship has shown that these precepts "should be regarded as a general statement characteristic of Central Asian Sufism of his [i.e. Ghujduwānī's] day, rather than as a defined doctrine" (Weismann, 2007, p. 20).

Khalwat dar anjuman as an expression of Transoxanian spirituality is especially evident in Turko-Persian advice-literature. One of the earliest and prime examples in this respect is the Turko-Islamic mirror-for-princes entitled *Kutadgu bilig* by Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib (1020–1070). Ḥājib's *Kutadgu* provides us with a penetrating glimpse of Transoxanian spirituality during the eleventh century. Reflecting the religio-spiritual sentiments that were predominant in the region at the time, the *Kutadgu* like many other mirror-for-princes served as a source of guidance for rulers in both their mundane and transmundane affairs. It addressed, in particular, concerns over how a ruler was to live a fulfilling and ethical life. In conveying their pious concerns to ruling figures, writers within the Turko-Persian literary tradition were insistent on stressing that rulers ought to prefer the social life to the solitary one. Interestingly, as Carter V. Findley points out, "The larger purpose of the *Kutadgu Bilig*, which is to champion the life in society over that of solitude, affirms a major theme of Irano-Islamic political thought" (Findley, 2005, p. 76).

Another Sufi *ṭarīqah* who, like the Naqshbandiyyah, traced its roots back to the

Khwājagān shaykh Yūsuf al-Hamadānī was the Yasawiyyah *ṭarīqah* founded by Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1162). The Yasawiyyah flourished among both the Turkic peoples and the Mongols to whom they introduced Islam (Knysh, 2000, p. 271). Unlike its counterpart *ṭarīqah* of the Naqshbandiyyah, the Yasawiyyah was known for engaging in mystical auditions and ecstasy-inducing rituals (*ibid*).

3.5.5 The Khwājagān shaykhs

In Islam, the idea of 'being in solitude with God while living within society' is something that we find articulated in a wide range of sources encompassing an overarching concern with some form inner spirituality and also embracing a core understanding of reality that was divided into the external (*al-ẓāhir*) and the internal (*al-bāṭin*).[149] Its most clearest of articulations can be found in early Islamic monographs that deal with specific modes of spirituality. However, it was among the Khwājagān shaykhs who were first to formulate the above-mentioned idea into a well-structured set of life-orienting principles. The Khwājagān were a conglomerate of Sufi communities[150] that emerged in Transoxania during the twelfth century as a prefigure to the Naqshbandiyyah-proper. Putting historicity and the questionable historical value of some early works aside for the time being,[151] *khalwat dar anjuman*, as we observed in the previous chapter based on textual evidence, had originated with Yūsuf al-Hamadānī and was only later formulated by his disciple and successor 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī. The issue of Khwājagānī origins is less of a concern than what actually defined their ideas and attitudes. With that said, one major issue that poses a number of challenges regarding the early history of the Khwājagān is the historicity of a Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, a figure on whom our sources do not present a coherent picture.[152] The first stock of narrative sources containing

[149] This most fundamental, dual conception of reality – whose precise historical juncture although uncertain is said to have materialized circa the third/ninth century (Karamustafa, 2007) – had served as the ontological underpinnings of the Islamic sciences. For a detailed elaboration on '*ilm al-bāṭin* in contradistinction to *'ilm al-ẓāhir*, see Radtke, 2005, p. 492ff.

[150] The degree at which the early Sufi *ṭarīqah*s were operating hierarchically and institutionally was relatively minimal and small-scale. Local communities were more predominant during these early stages and were relatively less homogenous and more competitive than later generations (Paul, 2012, p. 140; cf. Madelung, 1987-1988, p. 499).

[151] See chapter four for a discussion on these two issues.

[152] Wilfred Madelung, who was first to draw attention to this issue in any critical way at least, advanced the thesis that Yūsuf al-Hamadānī was, on the one hand, altogether fabricated as a Ḥanafite, and on the other hand, as the founder of Transoxanian Sufism in general and the leader and first initiatic link of the Khwājagān in particular; this, according to Madelung, was both a way of responding to the Shāfi'ism that for so long dominated the Sufi tradition, and also a way of forging a figure of their own that would connect them directly to the Prophet (SAW) through Abu

the figure of a Yūsuf al-Hamadānī are those found in biographical compilations, and these are often taken to be more authentic and reliable compared to the second stock of sources which are based on single-standing biographical accounts on Hamadānī.

The early Khwājagān reveal a certain set of sentiments that carry on to later periods, but they also take on a number of changes over the centuries, especially from its eponym onward. These changes include the Khwājagān steadily transforming from being a regional group into an intercontinental movement. Similarly, its leadership likewise transitioned from charisma-based to *silsilah*-based. Other techniques which were formerly known although not predominant, such as *rābiṭah* and *khalwah* – the former nevertheless went hand in hand with *khalwat dar anjuman* – were later adopted by some of the local sub-branches.

3.6 Conclusion

By the sixth/twelfth century, solitude had become a standard Sufi practice that was intended for disciplinary and training purposes. Many of the nascent Sufi *ṭarīqah*s incorporated solitude – or some form of ritual seclusion, at least – into their principles for seekers of the Sufi path. The tradition of devising ethico-mystical precepts can be taken as far back as the third/ninth century to Junayd of Baghdad.

While other Sufi *ṭarīqah*s displayed their efforts to infuse Sufi ideals into the wider spectrum of society, the inherent mystical pull that took one away from society had still loomed large. In this respect, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs exemplified an impressive and most effective reconciliation with their formulation of the ethico-mystical precept of *khalwat dar anjuman*.

The idea of *khalwat dar anjuman* indeed predates the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah, however, in ages prior the said concept had not been used as a defining feature of their adherents and spiritual path, nor as something that constituted their objective at the very outset of seeking mystical attainment.

Bakr (RA). Researchers in general, nonetheless, have not readily conceded to a wholesale acceptance of Madelung's argument; be that as it may, his overall contentions which point to the inconsistencies existing in the ensemble of biographical accounts on Yūsuf al-Hamadānī have been acknowledged to a large extent (see Le Gall, 2005, p. 128; DeWeese, 1996, p. 189).

CHAPTER IV: THE PRACTICE OF *KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN*: NEGOTIATING MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MUNDANE PURSUITS

4.1 Introduction

In a rather instructive dialogue between the sultan of the Ottoman state (r. 1301–1922), Mehmed II, and his teacher and spiritual guide Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥamzah, otherwise known as Akşemseddin,[153] the esteemed sultan one day is said to have appealed earnestly to his shaykh revealing an overwhelming desire to enter into solitude (*khalwah*). Against the sultan's wishes the shaykh in return advised him to stay active reminding him further of his spiritual duty to rule justly as was befitting of a sultan.[154] In another telling episode, a Moghul ruler of the Yarkand Khanate (r. 1514–1680) had taken up the life of an ascetic and when, after having repented for his wine-drinking, he began to devote himself to solitude in accordance with the Yasawī Sufi tradition; he was nearly divested of his position as Khan. Upon this a Naqshbandī shaykh by the name of Muḥammad Yūsuf – the great-grandson of the renowned 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār – convinced the Khan that he retain his position pointing out that sovereignty is in fact "the closest walks [with God], but kings have abused its rights. A king is able, with one word, to give a higher reward than can a darvish (however intent upon his purpose) during the whole of a long life" (Dughlat, 1895, p. 371).[155] Throughout the course of history, Muslims have addressed such

[153] Akşemseddin (1390–1459) was especially critical of quasi-shaykhs. And instead of securing a comfortable life and taking a position under his disciple-now-ruler, he decided to leave Istanbul for Göynük and continued to teach and guide people to Islam while he earned a living practicing medicine and working as a miller. Meanwhile from Göynük Akşemseddin maintained the shaykh-murid bond with Mehmed II and one day sent the sultan a letter reminding him of his duty and responsibility as a leader to rectify (*iṣlāḥ*) the people, adding that he is unlike them and that their state and condition depends on him; in this respect, he likened the sultan to the soul and the people the body, for whatever comes forth from the body its handiwork is said to be the soul (Taşköprüzāde, 1852, pp. 240-246).

[154] This incident, we are told, occurred after Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople. In Taşköprüzāde's (1495–1561) *Shaqā'iq* we find Akşemseddin's response in full as follows: 'My Sultan! There is delight in the solitude of the shaykhs. If, perchance, you were to enter into solitude [then] your position as Sultan will have no value in your eyes. If you were to be initiated into [the path of] Sufism, the delight that you would derive from it will cause you to abandon the affairs of the state and that of the people. Justice thereby will cease to exist. For you to be managing the affairs of the people in an orderly manner [and] ensuring justice and security in the state is more important than entering the *ṭarīqah*. My Sultan! If the state and the people fall into the hands of the inept, you would be opposing God's command. For He [i.e. God] commands that custodianship be given to the adept. For you to be concerned with matters of the Muslim community [and] to ensure justice in the world is more important than entering the *ṭarīqah*. And the objective of entering the *ṭarīqah* is to ensure justice' (Quoted in N. Bardakçı's "Akşemseddin'in tasavvuf ve devlet anlayışı," pp. 152-153) (translation mine).

[155] Muḥammad Yūsuf thereafter is said to have counseled the Khan further by showing him the

dilemmas in their efforts to integrate piety and politics, and even sovereigns such as those in the forgoing examples were confronted with conflicting inclinations. The Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs are a prime example of those who took upon the task of advising against solitude, especially as a remedy for this-worldly and other-worldly tensions, by introducing the concept and practice of *khalwat dar anjuman*. In this way, our focus here will revolve strictly around the practical aspects of *khalwat dar anjuman*.

In this chapter I ask two interrelated questions with respect to the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs: (1) what did they do with the ideas that they espoused? and (2) how did these ideas manifest in their actual behavior and interactions with others? My approach in answering these two questions will be through a critical analysis of the practical significance of *khalwat dar anjuman* based on the lives, careers, and personalities of the pre-modern Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs. I particularly focus on how the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs negotiated mystical attainment as an other-worldly aspect of human affairs, religious obligations and social responsibilities as its this-worldly aspect. In this respect, I intend to demonstrate how the tension between these two courses of action were dealt with in a reconciliatory way – as opposed to by way of resolution, which would entail an appeal to only one course of action – by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs whose "complex regimen," as one author concludes, "combined devotional sobriety and *sharī'a*-abidance along with the shunning of common Sufi practices" for which the "Naqshbandīs cast as ostentatious or inferior, a call for adepts to engage in their Sufi discipline while leading lives fully immersed in society, a claim to superior mystical journeying, and a vision of an *irshādī* Sufism in which shaykhs were intimate guides of individual mystical seekers along a path of spiritual transformation" (Le Gall, 2005, p. 180).

But before tackling the question of how the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs put *khalwat dar anjuman* into practice, it should be noted that *khalwat dar anjuman* is not to be confused with a rite such as the conventional Sufi ritual seclusion. In this respect, *khalwat dar anjuman*, as understood by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah, "does not mean a special exercise of contemplative seclusion, but rather a state of personal

following advice that his father, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, had written for him: "The most important conditions, for a seeker of union with God, are: little food, few words, and few associates;" and it was to this account that the Khan "resolved to pursue the road of justice and good deeds" (Dughlat, 1895, p. 372).

nearness with God the practitioner enjoys" (Paul, 1998a, p. 32). With that said, unlike other Sufi *ṭarīqah*s, the mystical regimen of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah is focused virtually wholly on the inner (*bāṭin*) aspects of journeying toward God. Moreover, this strict emphasis on the inward journey has had various implications, especially at the practical level.

Part I: The practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* through the lives, personalities, and careers of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs in the pre-modern era

The earliest of the Bukharan shaykhs of Transoxania emerged during the mid to late sixth/twelfth century and were known as the Khwājagān, or Hācegān (sing. Khwāja, or Hāce). Persian for scholar, erudite, or learned person, 'Khwājagān' referred to an honorary title chiefly conferred to the cohort of Persian-speaking shaykhs of Khurasan and Transoxania.[156] These two regions had played a majorly contributing role in the intellectual and cultural development of Islam. In this context, it was in the sedentary environment of Transoxania, which was permeated by Turko-Persian culture on the one hand and Islamic religious ideals on the other, that *khalwat dar anjuman* was first expressed by the scholar-Sufi Yūsuf al-Hamadānī;[157] and by all accounts, it was with Hamadānī that the epithet 'Khwāja' was first associated and he is likewise the one who is recognized as having laid the ideational seeds of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah. According to literary evidence, however, during the time of Hamadānī there seems to be no indication of a discretely organized movement, and despite the attempts that were being made in later sources to trace the founder to Hamadānī, the early Khwājagānī movement in fact emerged as an identifiable tradition around the teachings of 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī.

It is crucial to point out that the early Khwājagān adopted a conformist stance on several different levels. They exemplified their conformity with the already established social structure, the regional customs and indigenous ethical codes, as well as the sensibilities of the scholarly class. In this way, we may observe more specifically how they came to align their *ṭarīqah against* the Shamanism of the

[156] As one author writes, "Khorasan was one of the centers of cultural and political development of the sedentary people in Central Asia and of the interaction between Persian and indigenous Central Asian cultures" (Abazov, 2008, n.p.).

[157] Existing sources pose some challenges with regard to the identity of Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, and on the whole, the sources reveal a number of discrepancies between two conflicting accounts of a figure that goes by his name. For a discussion on this issue, see the sections below.

Mongols, reprehensible innovations (*bid'ah*) in religion, and the Shi'ites – the archenemy of the Sunnīs; and, moreover, *with* the orthodoxy of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the legalism of the Ḥanafī ulema.

Owing to their conformism, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī cohort were also strategically vested in areas of knowledge and human life. Having affirmed orthodox theological doctrines together with their strict observance of scriptural and prophetic injunctions, the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs were crucially positioned, on the one hand, as part of the wider Jamā'ī Sunnī community of believers and, on the other hand, as spiritual heirs of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). Their main aspiration in this respect was to exemplify outward religious obedience and inward spiritual perfection. The only added, albeit fundamental condition was that their religio-spiritual undertakings were to take place entirely within the social arena and through active participation in mundane affairs. The matter of how this was to be realized in practice will be scrutinized below through the lives, personalities, and careers of select Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs.

4.2 Paradigmatic figures of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah

Although there are scores of adherents of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, here I limit myself to only five whom I believe to be paradigmatic. I begin with a general framework of each figure in question by providing relevant background information along with their core ideas. I then focus on their behavioral patterns and interactions with others to show how their ideas essentially manifested in their actions. And, finally, I examine how they confronted tensions and dealt with various contradictions throughout their life by drawing on a number of different examples.

There are several important reasons why I chose to focus on five particular individuals. In spite of the ambiguity of his historical person, I begin with Yūsuf al-Hamadānī because of his pivotal role in bringing the Khurasanian social ethics and its mystical tradition to Transoxania. 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī is the one who established Hamadānī's teachings by neatly organizing his ideas into a well-defined doctrine. Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband both reaffirmed the core ideas of his two (aforementioned) predecessors and innovated three of his own principles to the *ṭarīqah* that eventually came to bear his name. 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār played a myriad of

key roles including effectively mobilizing the *ṭarīqah* and forging strategic relations with rulers. Finally, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was exceptional all-around as a prolific writer, social critic, and intellectual. The contribution of these individuals to the discussion occurs not only due to their status as forerunners of the *ṭarīqah* but also based on their idiosyncrasies in both character and ideas, and likewise because of the very different images life practices evoke.

4.2.1 Yūsuf al-Hamadānī

Yūsuf al-Hamadānī as a liminal figure of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah is at once crucial and obscure. He is crucial in the sense that our understanding of the early Khwājagān hinges on both his ideas and status as the spiritual founder and earliest precursor of the Naqshbandiyyah. This fact is important in that we may take Hamadānī as a standard by which later Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs can be compared. At the same time, he is obscure in that our sources present two diverging accounts of his life in general. (With that said, my aim here is not to "deconstruct" either the underpinnings of the Naqshbandiyyah as is supported by their *silsilah* or 'spiritual chain', or the credibility of Yūsuf al-Hamadānī as a historical figure. As for what undeniably renders consideration of Hamadānī especially important, that is, as alluded to above, the mere fact that the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah lay claim to his legacy and have kept to his teachings). Hamadānī's religious and intellectual stature is well-attested in a wide range of sources. Based on chronicles and biographical works Hamadānī emerges as a traditionally trained Sunni scholar well-versed in both classical disciplines and Islamic learning. Meanwhile, other works on poetry and hagiography bear out Hamadānī's affinity with the Sufi tradition. All in all, apart from his general background, brief statements, and close associates, these sources on the whole do little to inform us about the actual person of Hamadānī and the views he ascribed to. Therefore, I will give special attention to works that were authored by Hamadānī's close associates as well as himself.

Details of Hamadānī's general background and character are mentioned in various compilations.[158] The biographical sources refer to him as Abū Yaʻqūb Yūsuf b.

[158] Most notable among these sources is Samʻānī's *Kitāb al-ansāb*. Other compilations that mention Hamadānī, which in part seem to draw on Samʻānī's work, include: *al-Muntaẓam* (vol. 9, p. 171; vol. 10, pp. 94-95); *al-Lubāb* (vol. 1, p. 186); *Mir'āt al-zamān* (vol. 8, p. 109); Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʻyān* (vol. 7, pp. 78-81); Dhahabī's *Kitāb alʻibar* (1985a, vol. 2, pp. 448-449); *Duwal al-Islām* (vol. 52, p. 55); al-Yāfiʻī's *Mir'āt al-jinān* (1997, vol. 3, p. 202); *Ṭabaqāt al-isnawī* (vol.

Ayyūb b. Yūsuf b. Ḥusayn b. Wahara al-Hamadānī (or al-Hamadhānī) al-Būzanajirdī[159] (b. Buzanajird, 440 or 441[160]/1049; d. Bamiyan (or Bamyin), 535/1140), a leader who served as a 'proof for the Muslims' (*ḥujjah 'alā al-Muslimīn*), one who acted on his knowledge with ethical scrupulousness (*wara'*), and was a 'possessor of (mystical) states and stations' (*ṣāḥib al-aḥwāl wa maqāmāt*) (al-Sam'ānī, 1980, vol. 2, p. 330). Others have further described him as a *zāhid* and a shaykh of the Sufis. All in all, Hamadānī evidently enjoyed a wide repute and lived a life that was in fact full of (ostensible) contradictions.

Among many things, Hamadānī possessed a craft, studied formally at a madrasah, taught privately and preached publicly, took part in war,[161] and, in the meanwhile, engaged in highly mystical practices. He also disliked focusing on building for this world, yet he did not criticize those who did. He was also involved in economic activities, notwithstanding he is said to have given away his wealth to the needy. We are also told that he never begged in his life and yet had complete trust in God for his sustenance.

Hamadānī traveled to many different regions during the span of his life and career. At the age of seventeen he left for Baghdad, where a good part of his early years was spent studying at the Niẓāmiyyah madrasah (al-Khānī, 2011, p. 433). There he excelled in *munāẓarah* (dialectics); studied Shafi'ī *fiqh* with Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083) (al-Dhahabī, 1985b, vol. 20, p. 67); learned *ḥadīth* from several teachers including the famous Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī; and became intimately acquainted with *taṣawwuf*, the Islamic mystical tradition, through Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadhī (d. 477/1084). Hamadānī's subsequent travels, however, became more numerous especially throughout regions of Khurasan and Transoxania. These continued for the purpose of learning where he studied by and large *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* in the cities of Isfahan, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khwarazm (Jāmī, 2005, p. 521; cf. al-Khānī, 2011, p. 433). In terms of practice, however, it was Fārmadhī – who also notably

2, p. 531); *al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah* (vol. 12, p. 218); *al-Mulakhkhaṣ al-tārīkh al-Islām* (ق , p. 21); *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah* (vol. 5, p. 268); al-Sha'rānī's *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (2005, vol. 1, pp. 241-242); *Shadharāt al-dhahab* (vol. 4, p. 110); *Hadiyyah al-'ārifīn* (vol. 2, p. 552); and *Jāmi' kirāmāt al-awliyā'* (vol. 2, pp. 289-291) (see footnote in al-Dhahabī, 1985b, vol. 20, p. 66).

[159] The sobriquet 'al-Būzanajirdī' is mentioned in Sam'ānī's *Kitāb al-ansāb* (1980, vol. 2, pp. 330-331).

[160] As noted in al-Sam'ānī, 1980, vol. 2, p. 331.

[161] Generally, war in the context of Islam was never seen as a contradiction, especially given that outward struggle in the form of physical *jihād* was stipulated as an act of religious duty.

served as the teacher of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) – among his many teachers that presumably had one of the greatest influences on Hamadānī. This claim becomes more plausible as we scrutinize the later part of Hamadānī's life and learn of his decision to abandon his scholarly engagements for the sake of concentrating his energies on more personal matters (al-Dhahabī, 1985a, vol. 2, p. 448).

Hamadānī's life and behavior strongly correlated with his mystical practices, among which included, in particular, *khalwat dar anjuman*. Of the many implications of *khalwat dar anjuman* lies the idea that one's spiritual progress was to go unnoticed, which correspondingly meant that there was no place for outlandish practices and ecstatic-like behavior. Despite their conventionality at the time, Hamadānī chose not to take part in questionable practices such as the trance-inducing ritual of the mystical audition (*samā'*). He, moreover, adopted a sober approach based on the model character of the Prophet's (SAW) foremost companion, Abū Bakr (RA), as noted in the early Persian work entitled *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibiyyah*: 'this is the path of Abū Bakr, the truthful one' (*īn ravish ḥaḍrat Abā Bakr ṣiddīq ast*) (Ghujduwānī, 1953, p. 80). Moreover, his sober attitude in matters of mystical practice could be discerned based on how he abstained from giving into mystical visions and how he likewise criticized those who did.

To illustrate this last point, there are two particular instances where we find Hamadānī's sober attitude on full display, both of which concern his contemporary Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126). First, we come across an incident in which Aḥmad al-Ghazālī's ecstatic claim of the Prophet [SAW] feeding him a morsel of food is met with contempt by Hamadānī as follows: "These are imaginings on which the infants of the Path are nurtured" (Quoted in Rāzī, 1982, pp. 292-293). Second, Hamadānī is also known to have harshly criticized Aḥmad al-Ghazālī for defending the Devil – as did Ḥallāj a few centuries earlier – and had this to say about him: 'He (i.e. Aḥmad Ghazālī) has corrupted the way of *taṣawwuf*. I once heard him speak and his words were like fire. Yet its source was not divine but demonic' (Quoted in Tosun, 2015, p. 47) (translation mine). Hamadānī is also known to have expressed his contempt for Sufis who claimed to have experienced *kashf* (disclosure or unveiling) and used it for disciplining purposes; he argued that these for the most part are illusory practices (*ibid*, pp. 47-48). Hamadānī's stance toward intoxicant mystical practices ultimately echoes that of Junayd al-Baghdādī who too is known to have been critical toward the

likes of Ḥallāj during his time.

The avoidance of ritual seclusion (*khalwah*) is another, more obvious implication of *khalwat dar anjuman*. Hamadānī's spiritual conversion to the Sufi path led to his extensive dedication to *irshād*, or 'teaching and guiding the people', which lasted for more than sixty years until his death. He is known to have established an ad hoc (spiritual) council in Baghdad to preach to the people, after which he traveled to Merv and took up residence there for some time (al-Khānī, 2011, p. 433). His commitment to *irshād* was so intense that, besides the congregational Friday-prayer, Hamadānī barely left the lodge (*tekke*) he founded in Merv, which widely became known as the 'Dome of Khurasan'.[162] Many would frequent Hamadānī's lodge, including both lay Sufis as well as learned scholars, and among his most famous students was 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī (d. 1166), founder of the Qādiriyyah *ṭarīqah*. His lifelong *irshādī* efforts also stand in stark contrast with other fellow Muslims who having undergone similar types of conversion are generally known to have practiced some form of mendicancy at one point in their life. A most relevant and prime example in this respect would be Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī who vagabonded for nearly a decade after undergoing a spiritual crisis.

Hamadānī's choice of assuming the role of a scholar-Sufi shaykh could be explained on several grounds. In spite of having studied Shafi'ī *fiqh* in Baghdad, Hamadānī identified with the dominant Transoxanian school of Ḥanafī legal thought. Ḥanafite Sufis were quite the exception during Hamadānī's era, and this was significant given the circumstances at the time were such that, "Mystic visions simply did not sit well with people devoted to legalism, rationalism, and traditional forms of piety" (Bulliet, 1994b, p. 111). Hamadānī himself was also among those referred to as the 'partisans of dialectics and rational proofs' (*ahl al-munāẓarah wa al-dalīl*), and he is therefore said to have been unlike his contemporary countrymen, who were wholly given to fruitional experiences (*dhawq*), fervent love (*'ishq*), and intense spiritual desire (*hararet*).[163]

Works that outline Hamadānī's views and thought, although relatively limited, help

[162] Hamadānī's lodge is related as follows in Dawlat-Shāh's *Tadhkira*: *khānqāh ū rā az ta'ẓīm wa qadr ka'bah Khurāsān mī gaftah and*, 'Out of reverence, they call his *khānqāh* (dervish convent) "the Ka'ba of Khurāsān"' (see Mehmed Fuad Köprülü's *Early mystics in Turkish literature*, 2006, p. 74n18).

[163] For more details, see Tosun, 2016, p. 30.

inform us why he advocated certain ideas and practices and warned against others. Additionally, they also tell us a good deal about the general context of Hamadānī's milieu. To therefore understand Hamadānī's core ideas, I would like to draw attention to three particular works: *Maqāmāt-i Yūsuf Hamadānī*,[164] *Rutbah al-ḥayāt*, and *Risālah*.

In the *Maqāmāt*, Hamadānī describes the path of ascension to God (*sayr wa sulūk*) in light of two key and uncompromising components: *sulūk al-ẓāhir* (outward ascension) and *sulūk al-bāṭin* (inward ascension); the former demands a constant form of abidance to the directives and prohibitions of the Shariah, adherence to the standards highest of the religion, and abstention from pursuing the baleful demands of the ego-self; while the latter entails the endeavor to purify the heart and to efface both evil and impulsive attributes, which requires an unremitting struggle (*jihād*) and a strong determination (*'aẓīmah*) (Hamadānī, 2016, pp. 49-50). This last point is central to Hamadānī's thought in that he saw the path toward God as an 'unremitting struggle', which further implies that both inward and outward ascension toward God is a never-ending process and that the tension between engaging in and disengaging from the world always abides through *khalwat dar anjuman*. Moreover, Hamadānī is said to have feared a wretched end (*sū' al-khātimah*), that is to say, to die in a state of heedlessness of God. What is to be further noted concerning what has been said so far, Hamadānī describes *khalwat dar anjuman* as 'being with God in society' – notice three core elements: the self, God, and society – and his emphasis on being with *God* is crucial in that solitude here is not to be misconstrued for some form of solipsistic activity where the individual self is made to be the (sole) object of concern.

Hamadānī in his *Rutbah* makes an intriguing correlation between, on the one hand, creedal belief (*īmān*) and submission to God (*Islām*), and, on the other hand, being completely with God (*ba-jumlagī bā Ḥaqq*). The relevant passage reads:

> 'If a person takes to the path of *īmān*, then their submission and Islamic faith will be truthful because a faithful believer (*mu'min*) is a trustworthy being. And a trustworthy being is one who is not with their own self nor with the people, [but] one who is entirely with God Most High. In order for

[164] This work was published as *Risāla-yi ṣāḥibiyyah* and was written by 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī, Hamadānī's foremost disciple and the forerunner of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*. For more on Ghujduwānī, see sections below.

> one to be with God, they must [initially?] commit themselves to religious directives and prohibitions' (Hamadānī, 1983, pp. 36-37; cf. Hamadānī, 2016, p. 87) (translation mine).

Hamadānī thus sees the Shariah, which he interprets in one respect to be a composite of *īmān* (inward) and *Islām* (outward), as a prerequisite for one to be God-centered and trustworthy; what follows is that one who is self-centered cannot be trusted.

In a small tract entitled *Risālah*, Hamadānī discusses the reciprocal relationship between the universe (*kawn*) and the human person. The universe is said to be fundamentally dependent on humans as it was created to serve them. Likewise, humans are as dependent on the universe for their sustenance and flourishing. Hamadānī throughout the work underlines the point that humans are to adopt a moderately balanced approach with respect to everything in the universe. He writes that,

> 'the universe means to be together with other humans, to mix with the people. This is good and appropriate insofar that one does not go beyond what is beneficial. For when one goes beyond the modest amount of what is beneficial, this will cause the body to dissipate and the heart to set ablaze. One possesses the capacity to know the degree to which they should mix in society, obtain what is beneficial, and abandon what is pernicious' (Hamadānī, n.d., fol. 211a; cf. Hamadānī, 2016, p. 157) (translation mine).[165]

Revealingly, Hamadānī's posture in the *Risālah* is at once spiritually and practically constructive seeing that both humankind and the world of the here and now each, in Hamadānī's view, serve essentially as a counterbalance to the other.

Hamadānī's major contribution, particularly in light of his mystical practice, lies in his high regard and strict emphasis on both outward and inward aspects of religion. He, therefore, not only serves as a prime example as one who upheld a highly individualistic take on spiritual matters and meanwhile equally stressed and promoted social interaction and human welfare, but he also sets an all-important

[165] I should mention that what Hamadānī discusses in his *Risālah* corresponds to what modern philosophers, especially by the likes of Husserl and Heidegger, refer to in phenomenological discourse as 'intentionality', which is marked by a philosophical mode of inquiry that focuses on the subject and objects of an individual's lived experiences in terms of how one relates to things of the outside world. I owe Tahsin Görgün for pointing this out to me.

precedent for forthcoming aspirants including, as we shall see, his fourth and last successor ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī.

4.2.2 ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī

The chief architect and forerunner of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, as far as evidence and scholarly consensus suggest, was Khwāja ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī (d. 575/1179 or 617/1220).[166] It was Ghujduwānī’s ideas and principles that laid the foundation of what was to become the Naqshbandiyyah – a point that is often substantiated by referencing Ghujduwānī’s formulation of the *ṭarīqah*’s doctrinal principles known as the *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah*,[167] which includes among the original eight *khalwat dar anjuman*.

Among Ghujduwānī’s oft-ascribed principles the most consequential of them, particularly from a practical point of view, is by far *khalwat dar anjuman*. This point becomes more evident with the arrival of Ghujduwānī, who not only embedded the already existing ideas of the Khwājagān by organizing them into a doctrine, but he also ensured its far-reaching implications as a principle of action by establishing decisively the nature of one’s relationship with God and the people in general and by systematically regulating one’s *sayr wa sulūk* or ‘journeying in contemplation and action’ within the confines of social life.

The summation of Ghujduwānī’s ideas and proclivities are conveniently found in a spiritual testament of his entitled *Waṣāyā*. This particular treatise contains succinct

[166] Madelung holds that this “earlier date, 575/1179, was invented to accommodate his being the fourth *khalīf* of Yūsuf [al-Hamadānī]. The later date, 617/1220, is derived from the story in the *Maqāmāt-i ʻAbd al-Ḫāliq* and the date of the Mongol invasion in that year. Its reliability stands and falls with the reliability of the story, which has a legendary flavour. Yet it should be at least approximately correct since the *Maqāmāt-i ʻAbd al-Ḫāliq* was presumably composed soon after the death of al-Ġuǧduwānī” (Madelung, 1987-1988, p. 507); cf. Tosun, 2015, pp. 52-53. Itzchak Weismann likewise takes up the position of Madelung, adding that, “Through the constructed master the paradoxical intoxication of the Malamati tradition could be joined to the sobriety of the Junayd line within a more profoundly orthodox mystical synthesis. The legitimacy of the Khwajagan was then sealed by embedding the new synthesis in the native Hanafism of Transoxiana” (Weismann, 2007, p. 25).

[167] The *kalimāt al-qudsiyyah* or ‘sacred words’ are a culmination of the Sufi tradition, particularly in its contemplative practice and experience. Rules or principles were devised by early renunciants in the third/ninth century as a general guideline for seekers on the path to God. In the fifth/eleventh century, it was for “the first time that pedagogical directives were explicitly packaged by a training master as rules for communal living for his [Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr’s (d. 440/1049)] ‘resident’ disciples. Enumeration of such rules soon became a standard feature of works composed by Sufi authors [...]” (Karamustafa, 2007, p. 124).

directives that, although prescribed for his disciple and successor Awliyā' Kabīr, were evidently intended more generally for aspirants on their spiritual journey toward God. The *Waṣāyā* stresses particularly three core areas, respectively: mastering knowledge (*'ilm*), decorum (*al-adab*), and piety (*al-taqwā*). (Here, if sequence is taken as an indication of what is being prioritized, then the order in which Ghujduwānī delivers his counsel is telling). Ghujduwānī, for instance, first brings to the fore his sober attitude and conformist stance in religious matters when he underscores attaching oneself to the prophetic way and the Muslim congregation (*al-jamā'ah*), following in the footsteps of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf*), and learning Islamic jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) and the traditions of the Prophet (*al-ḥadīth*). He then indicates the importance of maintaining one's social existence in a properly balanced fashion by stressing good ethical comportment with other fellow beings and fulfilling the obligatory prayers collectively, and meanwhile ensuring that one refrains from calling or leading the prayer and does not aspire to anything of the like (Ghujduwānī, n.d., fols. 3b-4a; cf. al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 55). Finally, Ghujduwānī's take on piety is where we find him emphasizing alongside righteousness the idea of keeping one's spiritual being intact by not forgetting that one is always in the presence of God Almighty.

Toward the end of the *Waṣāyā* we find Ghujduwānī fleshing out the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* in practice. He stresses in his concluding remarks the idea of social incognito and safeguarding the state of one's inner being while in the midst of the people as follows:

> 'do not adorn your outward, for adornment of the outward (*tazyīn al-ẓāhir*) is indicative of indigence of the inward (*kharāb al-bāṭin*); do not quarrel with the people…do not be deluded by the world or by those who are worldly, and that your heart be constantly grieving, that your body be suffering, and that your eyes be weeping; and let your actions be sincere… your clothing be ragged (*khalaqan*), your companion be a true seeker, your principal asset be your poverty, your house be your place of worship (*masjid*), and your intimacy be with God' (*ibid*) (translation mine).

What is crucial for Ghujduwānī is not fleeing from the here and now but prudently avoiding anything that may cause or provoke (spiritual) affliction (*āfah*; pl. *āfāt*), and this for him is analogous to keeping away from ignorant Sufis while avoiding altogether fame, the affairs of the people, and that which is fatal to the heart such as

excessive laughter (al-Kāshifī, 2008, p. 55). Ghujduwānī, who reminds his readers at the very outset of the *Waṣāyā* that they should always remain intimate with God, interestingly, ends the treatise precisely on the same note.

The idea of secrecy or hiddenness, a fundamental dimension of *khalwat dar anjuman*, figured especially prominent in Ghujduwānī's practice. For instance, one of his biographers – who happens to dedicate very little space to Ghujduwānī, relatively-speaking at least – describes him as follows:

> 'He *concealed* his pure lifestyle. He learned the *silent dhikr* from Khiḍr during his early youth and continued its undertaking thereafter. Subsequent to his arrival in Bukhara, Khwāja 'Abd al-Khāliq [Ghujduwānī] continued to attend his [i.e. Yūsuf al-Hamadānī's] spiritual gatherings (*suḥbah*). He understood that they too engaged in the *dhikr of the heart*. After [the passing of] Khwāja Yūsuf [al-Hamadānī], he occupied himself with self-discipline (*riyāḍah*) yet [preferring to] *conceal* his spiritual states (*aḥwāl*)' (Jāmī, 2005, p. 523) (translation and emphasis mine).

We are also told that what initially drew Ghujduwānī to the mystical path was the following Qur'anic passage: '(O mankind!) Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. Lo! He loveth not aggressors' (Qur'an, 7:55). And while one day engaging in the study of exegesis (*tafsīr*) with his teacher 'Allāmah Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn, Ghujduwānī asked him about the aforesaid passage,

> 'What is the true-reality (*haqīqah*) behind this secret invocation (*du'ā'*) which is considered [to be a type of] *dhikr*? What is its way? If one were to perform *dhikr* and *du'ā'* by moving his or her organs without making any sound, then the people will see it. Still, if one were to undertake it in their heart, then this too the Devil will detect and catch on […]' (al-Khānī, 2011, p. 445) (translation mine).

Ṣadr al-Dīn goes on to tell Ghujduwānī that the answer he seeks to his query is in fact the purview of esoteric knowledge and that he, God-willing, shall be shown the way of acquiring its secrets. This is the moment Ghujduwānī is said to have encountered the renowned, albeit mysterious, saint Khiḍr, who taught him the silent *dhikr* along with the specified number of repetitions for each one.[168] While Ghujduwānī was initiated into the mystical path by, and at first found himself under

[168] This bears resemblance to one of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband's supplementary principles, namely *wuqūf al-'adadī* or 'awareness of quantity'.

the tutelage of Khiḍr, he would in fact later receive his formal instruction and spiritual upbringing from Hamadānī.

In line with the practices of Hamadānī, Ghujduwānī is also known to have dedicated himself to *irshād*. Having resided in Sham for some time there, Ghujduwānī came to establish a lodge where he taught both Sufi aspirants and people from the lay (al-Khānī, 2011, p. 447).

Ghujduwānī is also known to have privileged economic gain and correspondingly was expressly critical of beggary. At the end of a biographical work dedicated to Ghujduwānī and his successor Muḥammad ʻĀrif Riwgarī (d. 657/1259), we come across a rather intriguing question that is posed to the former as follows:

> ʻFrom where did you receive the wealth of both worlds, everlasting bliss and [God's] divine pleasure?" to which Ghujduwānī responds, "We work and we eat," adding, "[it is] with a pure conscience (*pāk ḍamīr*) that we work and eat the grief (*gham*) of our fellow Muslim believers, and eat from the lawful gain (*māl-i ḥalāl*) that we procure. If you wish to obtain wealth of such kind, [then] act upon this advice' (Maqāmāt, 1954, p. 18) (translation mine).

Similarly, elsewhere we learn that Ghujduwānī saw it "necessary to lift the burden from one's fellow creatures," stating further that, "this can only be done through lawful earning" (Kāshifī, 2001, p. 279).

4.2.3 Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband

Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband is most recognized as the founder of the Naqshbandiyyah-proper and reviver of his spiritual-master, Khwāja Ghujduwānī's (original) way. The legacy of Bahā' al-Dīn, however, also partly rests on the emphasis he placed on *khalwat dar anjuman*. It would be under his aegis that *khalwat dar anjuman* came to take on a decisive role within the main line of the Naqshbandiyyah and become a distinct marker of the *ṭarīqah*.[169] The centrality of *khalwat dar anjuman* among the early Khwājagān was therefore not altogether apparent, especially since sources in

[169] We know that some of Bahā' al-Dīn's Khwājagānī contemporaries were engaging in the practice of solitude as is evident in the example of a peculiar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Asad Bukhārī – whose spiritual lineage also extends back to ʻAbd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī – who relates in his *Maslak al-ʻārifīn* the ten conditions of entering into solitude (*khalwah*).

centuries prior are found to contain only either intimations to or brief remarks on the precept in question.

It goes without saying that *khalwat dar anjuman* as an ethico-mystical precept was introduced by the Persian-speaking shaykhs of Transoxania, yet it would be a mistake to conceive its practice strictly as a regional expression of Muslim piety. Evidence suggests that *khalwat dar anjuman* was a commonly held sentiment and practice throughout Islamdom for which, in our case, the era and life of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband serves as a good case in point. According to the *Rashaḥāt*, Bahā' al-Dīn on one of his pilgrimages finds himself astonished by the peculiar spiritual state of a man who was engulfed in contemplating God in the busy marketplace of Mecca as he all the while remained preoccupied with his mundane affairs (al-Kāshifī, 2001, p. 277). Bahā' al-Dīn's sentiment here corresponds to what he famously refers to in a proverbial fashion as, "The hand at work, the heart with God," *dast ba kār*, *dil ba yār*. (The anecdote on Bahā' al-Dīn's encounter in Mecca offers us a glimpse of how Muslims understood the world and how they envisioned themselves living in it). One's life journey, according to Bahā' al-Dīn, should be a constant reflection of one's ultimate end in this world, that is to say, to be in a state as one would be during the moment of death. He further expands on what he meant by this as follows: "…'Whatever deed you will be performing in your last breath, you must perform it at all times!' In other words, you must acknowledge and remember Allah always, as if you were remembering Him in your last breath!"" (al-Kāshifī, 2001, p. 66).

Bahā' al-Dīn's practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* is reflected in his insistence on a Malāmatī type of socialization. In this context, spiritual training was to be carried out in the public sphere rather than some remote location. Bahā' al-Dīn himself spent seven years carrying out various duties in service of the people where he, in particular, was put to task with removing harmful objects from the streets of Bukhara and treating injured and sick animals. Later, as he assumed the role of shaykh, he likewise instructed Sufi adepts to serve others while also wearing and eating what was in keeping with the people. In this regard, we find 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 802/1399), who after having newly graduated from the madrasah-college is instructed by Bahā' al-Dīn to sell apples while roaming barefoot in the marketplace of Bukhara. The purpose of this was to have 'Aṭṭār overcome the sensation of languor (*bi-kasri ru'ūnatahu*) or, it is said, perhaps for some other wisdom (al-

Kāshifī, 2008, p. 121). We find further evidence of Bahā' al-Dīn's adamance in practicing socialization in an incident with one of his critics who took issue with Bahā' al-Dīn's woolen garment and implicated him with ostentatiously displaying his piety for donning it. As a result, Bahā' al-Dīn gifted his outfit to a poor man who happened to be in their midst (Jāmī, 2005, p. 539). Bahā' al-Dīn, moreover, held in high-esteem the idea of *faqr* or 'poverty' – especially in its mystic sense of one who 'lives for the Lord alone' (Nizami, 1965, p. 757) – and adopted it as a life-practice, albeit in the privacy of his home. We, for instance, learn of one of his austere ascetic practices through 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, who tells us of how Bahā' al-Dīn would only have a rug and a straw mat to sit on at his place of residence during the winter and summer times, respectively (Mālikī, 2016, p. 77).

4.2.4 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār

'Ubaydullāh b. Maḥmūd Aḥrār (b. Tashkent, 806/1404; d. Samarkand, 895/1490), who was one of the most consequential figures of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs, displayed the epitome of contradictions and tensions throughout his life and career. Arguably unrivaled by his predecessors and successors in regard to his overall impact, Aḥrār penned works on highly mystical topics, acted as a religious leader, achieved remarkable economic success, served as a philanthropist, and, in the meantime, was deeply involved in politics, social affairs, and other institutional matters. In this way, despite Ghujduwānī's explicit warning per his *Waṣāyā* against engaging with political leaders (or anyone in a high position of power for that matter), Aḥrār would be first among his comystics to interpret the precept of *khalwat dar anjuman* in an overtly political manner, that is, in addition to its social and economic signification. And while indeed *khalwat dar anjuman*, as some have indicated, could be viewed as a legitimizing principle for Aḥrār's immersive involvement in worldly affairs, for Aḥrār, personally, *khalwat dar anjuman* was far more than a way of vindicating his actions, for it represented his firm conviction that it was the only true path where spiritual cultivation could actually be realized and ingrained.

A central question that emerges in regard to Aḥrār is: on what basis did he reimagine the essential role of a Naqshbandī Sufi shaykh as not only a spiritual leader but also a temporal one? The answer to this question resides in how Aḥrār himself gave

grounds to his line of thought and actions. From a broad historical perspective, Aḥrār justified his dual role based on the belief that times had simply changed. Politically and economically, this meant that pious Muslims needed to take charge and expand their sphere of influence and power. Direct involvement in political matters was thus essential. This was especially the case since rulers needed to be prevented from carrying out injustices and reminded that they ought to rule by the Shariah.

> 'If we [i.e. Aḥrār] were to have become a shaykh, then no other shaykh of these times would have found a disciple. But we have been given another duty, [namely] to protect the Muslims from the evil of oppression, and for this purpose we must keep company with kings and conquer their souls, and with this initiative the end objective of all Muslims will be achieved' (Samarqandī, 2009, p. 276) (translation mine).[170]

But then again, how are we to justify that one who involves themselves in worldly matters to such a degree would be able to maintain their piety? To address this issue arguably requires looking more closely at works penned by Aḥrār and those containing ideas that informed his own life-practices.

While Gross correctly observes that, "*Khalvat dar anjuman* legitimized the participation of Naqshbandīs in the political and economic spheres, and encouraged shaykhs to earn a living to support their livelihood and to provide for their disciples" (Gross, 2002, p. 16n46),[171] it is also important to remember that *khalwat dar anjuman* for Aḥrār also signified the decisive and most effective way of advancing on the path toward God. Acts carried out in seclusion involved no real challenge in Aḥrār's estimation. Spiritual practices in solitude may very well seem beneficial and lead to lofty mystical states, but, as far as Aḥrār was concerned, this should not be taken as a sign of actual spiritual development. In this way, Aḥrār would not only make a most emphatic claim that spirituality entailed intense social engagement, but would also personify this idea throughout his life and career.

In one of the biographical works on Aḥrār entitled *Silsilah al-'ārifīn wa tadhkirah*

[170] On this particular saying, for which the sources seem to present several variants, Gross comments that, "The narratives support the ideology of *khalvat dar anjuman*, although the attitude they represent, not surprisingly, resulted in criticism and opposition on the part of other competing shaykhs seeking to establish their own bases for legitimacy and success" (Gross, 2002, p. 17n49).

[171] Aḥrār, according to Gross, is also said to have taken "this principle [of *khalwat dar anjuman*] to the heart in his daily immersion in society and thus provided a model of behavior for his followers" (Gross, 2002, p. 16).

al-ṣiddīqīn, which was written by his disciple Muḥammad 'Qāḍī' b. Burhān al-Dīn Samarqandī, there are many instances where Aḥrār informs us of why he believed a life spent engaging in high-level worldly activities was more praiseworthy than one that wasn't. One example that stands out is a discussion over whether the Marwānid caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 717–720) or Uways al-Qaranī (d. 37/657) was more virtuous, and while two groups are each said to have presented their case by listing the virtues of both figures, at the end it is implied that the former is the more virtuous seeing that 'the tested is not equal to the untested' (Samarqandī, 2009, p. 154). From this perspective, even though Uways al-Qaranī is famously known for having been praised directly by the Prophet (SAW) himself without having seen him, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, who was considered to be the most revered caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, is suggested by Aḥrār to have been more virtuous given the piety that he displayed in spite of his status and authority.

Let us briefly analyze how some of the apparent contradictions in Aḥrār's life were dispelled by some of his close associates. Aḥrār is said to have had paradoxically "preached poverty and became wealthy" (Gross, 1988, p. 85). This particular contradiction, as also perceived by some of his detractors who had accused him of greed and amassing worldly possessions, could be addressed in several ways. To illustrate, the biographical works on Aḥrār, which highlighted both "the ideal model of behavior represented by Ahrar, and the ideal model of behavior expected of others, particularly rulers and disciples" (*ibid*, p. 90), portray Aḥrār as one who had mastered his ego-self and thus felt no inclination toward the worldly status and wealth he was given. Likewise, Aḥrār himself is quoted to have said: "Having worldly engagements has no contradiction with being mentally disengaged from worldly goods. It is possible that the whole world be in the possession of someone, and that he bears no desire for worldly goods. However, the vice versa may not be true. A beggar might have more true love for his hat than I have for all my worldly goods" (Quoted in Gross, 1988, p. 90).

An examination of Aḥrār's mystical thought provides us with clear indications of how and why he practiced *khalwat dar anjuman*. Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, the first major biographical work on the lives of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī shaykhs, dedicates a bulk of the final section to Aḥrār's general life and thought. "Spiritual progress" Aḥrār writes, "is achieved through work, whereas immersion

and annihilation require abstinence from work" (al-Kāshifī, 2001, p. 272). In the *Malfūẓāt*, which contains a plethora of sayings by Aḥrār, it writes that, 'Some people at home are in *ḥuḍūr* ('state of God's divine presence') and *āgāh* ('constant awareness of God') but not in the marketplace. For some it is the opposite. *Kamāl* ('spiritual perfection') is [achieved when] *ḥuḍūr* becomes a permanent quality such that nothing from [being] in solitude and in the multitude can take away one's *ḥuḍūr*' (Aḥrār, 2021, p. 58).

It is arguably in Aḥrār's *Fiqarāt* that we get a much better sense of his mystical thought (esp. on the doctrine of *tawḥīd*), which he delineates in the context of the Naqshbandī method of *sayr wa sulūk*. Aḥrār begins with the question, 'What is *tawḥīd*?', and writes that *tawḥīd* 'is the emancipation of the heart and the separation of its awareness from [everything] other than God', *takhlīṣ-i dil wa tajrīd-i ū az āgāhī ba ghayri ḥaqq subḥānah* (Aḥrār, n.d., p. 4). Aḥrār then elaborates on the idea of severing the heart from material and immaterial attachments, and says that this is not possible, at least in any absolute sense, even if one were to be given eternal life on earth (*ibid*, p. 6). Bliss (*sa'ādah*), Aḥrār explains, is achieved by safeguarding one's awareness by attributing existence to none other than God, and that being alone (*khalā*) and in the company of others (*malā*) must be indistinguishable (*ibid*, p. 7).

4.2.5 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī

'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (b. 817/1414; d. 897/1492) was a highly critical intellectual, a most celebrated poet of his time, and a leading Sufi-scholar in the region of Herat. His life practices on the whole reflect a dimension of *khalwat dar anjuman* that is at once unique and complex.

The sources by and large present an image of Jāmī that seem to be somewhat at odds with one another. Jāmī had not only played many roles and gone through a number of different stages throughout his life and career, but his relationships with his biographers varied as did the views of many of his enthusiasts concerning him: some stressed his background as an illustrious poet, some his intellectual brilliance, while others his religious piety as a Sufi. This is not at all surprising given that Jāmī penned works in an array of different fields including grammar, theology, mysticism, and poetry.

Having had many close encounters with various ruling figures, Jāmī was no stranger to politics and likewise possessed a certain level of consciousness in this regard. In his writings, Jāmī displays a peculiarly cautious and mindful attitude of both religious and political authorities. As a religious scholar, he ensured that his teachings and writings were in consonance with the Shariah, and being a member of the Timurid court, he was careful not to go against the interests of the ruling dynasty (Shadchehr, 2008, p. 81).

Despite Jāmī's elusive personality and the ambiguity that surrounds his career as a whole, we can nonetheless say with some confidence that his life was very much informed by Sufi doctrine in general and the Khwājagānī-Naqshbandī rendition of it in particular. The precept of *khalwat dar anjuman*, for instance, especially resonated with Jāmī as one whose life was spent mingling with the people and remaining in their midst, all the while being consumed with an overwhelming desire to seclude away from them. It is, therefore, with Jāmī that we encounter a peculiarity develop among the Naqshbandiyyah: a strong aversion to company and an intense longing for solitude. Jāmī, who was also a known social critic, may accordingly be characterized, to some extent, as Hamid Algar aptly puts it, a "misanthrope [who] needs to mingle with his fellows in order to nurture and confirm his disdain for them" (Algar, 2013, p. 108).

Owing to his repute, many are known to have sought out Jāmī by sending him various gifts and gold dinars in hopes of being graced with his elevated presence and unmatched erudition. Having initially evaded such alluring requests, including several attempts by the then Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, Jāmī, for all his resistance, eventually found himself acquiescing. Correspondingly, Jāmī also preferred playing more of a behind-the-scenes role, though an effective one. He, for instance, chose not to become a Sufi shaykh after the passing of his teacher, despite his qualifications to assume such a role. Moreover, he swayed the decisions of rulers on taxation policies to the benefit of the people through the famous poet and vizier of the Timurid sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī, who also happened to be Jāmī's disciple and a crucial benefactor of the Naqshbandiyyah (Shadchehr, 2008, pp. 75-76).

Unlike his contemporary Aḥrār, Jāmī does not reveal any real concern for worldly

matters; correspondingly, he also does not justify economic dealings or involvement in politics, be it in religious terms – as with Aḥrār – or otherwise.

Although Jāmī was resolute in avoiding fame and attention, he nonetheless lived and roamed in the great city-centers of his time. He could very well have lived in a small village somewhere in the outskirts, and yet he chose otherwise. Society for Jāmī was constricting and especially taxing on his consciousness. He even reminisces in his *Tuḥfah al-aḥrār* of a time when he felt overwhelmed with a pressing need to flee his surroundings and ended up wandering into the desolate desert (Jāmī, 2009, p. 88).

We may give grounds as to why Jāmī never found it in himself to abandon society altogether by referring to a short work he wrote on the essential practices of the Naqshbandīs entitled *Sarrishta-yi ṭarīq-i Khwājagān*. There he states that the way to practice *khalwat dar anjuman* par excellence, especially where one's inward state becomes veiled in the midst of society, is by teaching and learning (*ifādah wa istifādah*) (Jāmī, 1965, p. 17). In this light, the editor of Jāmī's *Sarrishta*, 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, mentions in the introduction how the Naqshbandīs turned Sufism and mystical wayfaring (*sulūk*) away from the realm of seclusion (*'uzlat*) and monasticism (*ruhbāniyyat*) toward that of society by appropriating their uses to cultivate (*tarbiyat*) and benefit (*manfa'at*) the people (Ḥabībī, 1965, p. 4).

Four Dimensions of *Khalwat dar Anjuman*

Khalwat dar Anjuman				
Category	Centered on	Objective	Method	Assumption
Society	social reality	maintain a social life	raising a family; being involved in some social activity	reality at the most basic level consists of individuals, groups, and communities
	social sentiment	enhance social relations	developing a social-conscience	humans are social beings
	active social engagement	resolve societal issues; serve the people	pursuing ways to contribute to society	social welfare depends not on rulers and governing bodies but on individuals
Politics	preserving order	uphold Islamic norms (i.e. the Shariah)	advising rulers; influencing decision-making	rulers are a reflection of the people; if the ruler and his affairs are in order, so shall society be
Religion	the self	overcome impediments (e.g. material possessions, status, family, society, temptations)	silent *dhikr*	humans possess agency to transform themselves
	God	actualize the presence of God	silent *dhikr*	God and society cannot be separated; God becomes meaningful in society
Economics	physical labor	alleviate economic burdens of disenfranchised and those seeking knowledge	possessing a craft or trade; laboring; running a business	subsistence rests not on the rulers but on the people as well as on institutions

Part II: The Khwājagān-Naqshbandite *dhikr* ('recollection of God') and the Ghazālian *riyāḍah al-nafs* ('disciplining of the ego-self'): A case study of two methods of mystical practice

Sufis have often used different terms and concepts to describe similar, or at times even selfsame, realities. But the specific formulation and technical meaning of these concepts cannot be ignored. In this regard, a comparison between the thought, practices, and methods described by Ghazālī and the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs reveal, on the one hand, similarities of which are hardly surprising given their shared cultural and spiritual heritage that is Persianate Sufism. (It may also be recalled that Ghazālī and Hamadānī had both studied under the Sufi-scholar Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadhī). On the other hand, they also indicate a key difference as shall be made plain below.

The aim here will be to briefly draw attention to the fundamental distinction between the Ghazālian *riyāḍah al-nafs* as a method that, in all important respects, revolves around the individual (i.e. the *nafs*), and the Khwājagān-Naqshbandite method of *dhikr* which is centered on God throughout the entire duration of one's spiritual journey and mystical ascent. Therefore the major implication is that the method of *riyāḍah al-nafs*, wherein God is taken as the ultimate objective, can theoretically take a lifetime to consummate. So, for instance, according to Ghazālī, "The first condition for a Sufi is to purge his heart entirely of all that is not God. The next key of the contemplative life consists in the humble prayers which escape from the fervent soul, and in the meditations on God in which the heart is swallowed up entirely. But in reality this is only the beginning of the Sufi life, the end of Sufism being total absorption in God" (Quoted in James, 2002, p. 313). Whereas with the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs – esp. its paradigmatic figures including Hamadānī, Ghujduwānī, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, Aḥrār, Jāmī, and Sirhindī – have preferred *dhikr* to *riyāḍah al-nafs* in which the former begins, continues, and ends with God. It will also be suggested that unlike Hamadānī – the earliest figure of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, at least from a historical context – Ghazālī was less given to *irshād* since he preferred to dedicate most of his efforts to writing about the mystical path than actually going out into the midst of the people and preaching to them.

It is worth pointing out that I am less interested in identifying the similarities

between Ghazālī and the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs than I am with their differences. This is mainly because some researchers of late such as Alexei A. Khismatulin (2015) have already done well in pointing out the correlations between, for instance, the terms used by Ghazālī in his early twelfth-century work *Kīmyā'* and those by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs in Kāshifī's early sixteenth-century work *Rashaḥāt*. Notwithstanding my reservations with regard to Khismatulin's textual analysis and his insinuated conclusion that the origins of the Khwājagānī-Naqshbandī principles were in some way influenced by Ghazālī's writings (esp. his *Kīmyā'*), the main focus here will be on the major differences in the actual methods employed by Ghazālī and the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs in light of their respective mystical practices.

4.4 The Khwājagān-Naqshbandite mystical practice

The Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs from its earliest beginnings have consistently stressed a core feature of Islamic mysticism: ensuring that at every instance of one's earthly existence nothing but God is to be present in one's innermost being. And while Sufi *ṭarīqah*s have developed distinct mystical practices, all of them have shared a common assumption that everything other than God acts as a barrier to realizing His true presence in one's spiritual being. Throughout their literature the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs have stressed time and again a fundamental concern of firmly ingraining the spiritual heart with the *dhikr* of God at the expense of an intense disciplining of the *nafs*, and this is precisely where the core methodological distinction with other mystical paths arguably lies. In the context of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs, it is also rather interesting to note that those who practiced physical *khalwah* in the conventional sense of ritual seclusion had likewise conceded to the method of *riyāḍah al-nafs*; meanwhile, those who exclusively upheld spiritual *khalwah* in the form of *khalwat dar anjuman* had also in fact denied *riyāḍah al-nafs*.[172] As for *khalwat dar anjuman*, which stipulates spiritual detachment from society, this was to be achieved by insisting on the practice of constant *dhikr*.

4.4.1 The practice of *dhikr*

The concept of *dhikr* holds a most central place in Islam. '*Dhikr*', according to al-

[172] Necdet Tosun does especially well in this regard to treat *dhikr* and *riyāḍah* as two distinct methods of spiritual cultivation as employed by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs; see Tosun, 2015, pp. 301-307, 332-334.

Ṭahānawī's renowned *Kashshāf*, 'is the opposite of forgetfulness (*nisyān*)'[173] (al-Ṭahānawī, 1996, vol. 1 p. 825). The emphasis on *dhikr* happens to be one of the major thrusts of the Quranic text – synonymously referred to in the Quran as 'the Remembrance' (*al-Dhikr*)[174] – and also a matter that is either alluded to or made explicit in sayings attributed to the Prophet (SAW) as well as in those by later Muslims throughout history. *Dhikr* has been described as a spiritual exercise that essentially constitutes "the keystone of practical religion" (Nicholson, 1966, p. 45); this particular dimension of *dhikr* represents the practice of recollection and invocation which can be either vocal or silent. *Dhikr* can also be constitutive of a mode or a state of being.[175] *Dhikr* moreover serves the purpose of counteracting *ghaflah* or 'heedlessness of God' for which Muslims deem as being a sin in itself; conversely, sinfulness is also said to be indicative of *ghaflah*. *Ghaflah* has two dimensions which are internal and external, that is to say, one could externally be in *dhikr* but internally in *ghaflah*.[176] True *dhikr* is therefore actualized internally and not externally, just as the latter serves to establish and ground the former.

What role did *dhikr* play in the mystical regimen developed by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyyah? *Dhikr* was preferred by many of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs over all other disciplinary techniques, which thus saw it take on a most central role in their mystical regimen as indicated in both early and later works. The *Sarrishta-yi ṭarīq-i Khwājagān* by Jāmī, which is one of the earliest tracts that concisely and exclusively deals with the methods and practices of the *ṭarīqah*, provides us with a good idea of the central importance of *dhikr* among its early adherents. For instance, we find Jāmī stressing the idea underlying *khalwat dar anjuman* in the second part of his prefatory quatrain, and then concludes the introduction on a similar note by emphasizing being in a state of 'lasting presence with God' (Jāmī, 1965, p. 12). After mentioning the four preconditions – *taṣḥīḥ-i 'aqīdah*, *a'māl-i ṣāliḥah*, *ittibā' sunan-i ma'thūrah*, and *ijtināb az maḥẓūrāt* – that an aspirant must fulfill before treading the mystical path, Jāmī then offers a description of moderate length on the three ways of attaining felicity (*dawlat*). The first is through the silent *dhikr*, which he sees as the core essence of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandite method, and this is to be performed by:

[173] *Dhikr huwa khilāf al-nisyān*.
[174] See Quran, 3:58; 15:6; 15:9; 25:18; 25:29; 36:11; 41:41; 43:5; 68:51.
[175] While *khalwat dar anjuman* incorporates both aspects, its ultimate aim is to inculcate the latter.
[176] *Ghaflah* is at once an underlying cause and product of the distractions, anxieties, and encumbrances an individual may experience throughout the course of one's life. A person's mental and spiritual state is likewise said to be negatively impacted by *ghaflah*.

> "repeating, with the presence of the heart, *la ilaha illa l-lah*, in such fashion that when making the negation (*la ilaha*) the wayfarer looks upon all created things as non-existent and transitory, and when making the affirmation (*illa l-lah*), he witnesses God as eternal and permanently subsistent. While engaged in this repetition, he should keep his tongue fixed to the roof of the mouth to ensure that the *dhikr* not be vocally uttered, and orient himself to his pineal heart (*dil-i sanawbari*; i.e., the anatomical heart), for it is connected to his 'true heart' (*dil-i haqiqi*; i.e., the non-material heart that is an organ of perception). He should inhale deeply and then make the *dhikr* with such force that its effect reaches the heart, without any of this being externally apparent, even to a person sitting immediately next to him. Every moment should be submerged in the *dhikr*, whatever be the situation in which the practitioner finds himself, and if occasionally some concern diverts him from the repetition, the eye of his heart should remain fixed on it. If he embarks on it before daybreak, its effect may last throughout the day, and if he engages in it at nightfall, its blessing will remain with him through the night. Assiduous practice of the repetition may result in disengagement from the self and a loss of normal consciousness (*bikhudi va bi-shu'uri*), these in turn leading to *jadhba* (a state of rapture)…The attainment of all this is much assisted by the repetition of the *dhikr* three, five, or seven times with each inhalation, a highly effective means of dispelling the stray thoughts that distract one from its purpose' (Quoted in Algar, 2013, pp. 91-92; cf. Jāmī, 1965, pp. 12-14).

What stands out in Jāmī's rather pithy explanation of *dhikr* is the stress he lays on ensuring its imperceptibility to not only others but also to one's self. The second method mentioned by Jāmī is *murāqabah*, which he describes as a technique in which the true meaning of Allāh's name is grasped and, subsequently, fixed in the heart by availing all of the perceptive faculties (see Jāmī, 1965, p. 14). The third and last method is *rābiṭah*, which is where the disciple maintains close company with his shaykh, that is both physical and spiritual, as a means of attaining the company of God. Jāmī, however, advises that the methods of *dhikr* and *murāqabah* be the main object of concern, especially since the effect of *rābiṭah* to bear out and leave a lasting impression on the disciple requires a Sufi shaykh of the highest caliber which, as far as Jāmī is concerned, is difficult to come by (see *ibid*, p. 15).

4.5 The Ghazālian mystical practice

Before assessing Ghazālī's method of choice that is *riyāḍah al-nafs*, we must keep in mind that his own spiritual journey, which had commenced not long after his suffering of an acute mental breakdown, lasted for a little over a decade as he

wandered in complete social incognito in various urban centers including its outskirts.

Ghazālī recounts his desire for solitude along with his determination to persevere and see his mission through as follows:

> "Reflecting on my situation, I found myself tied down by a multitude of bonds — temptations on every side. Considering my teaching, I found it was impure before God. I saw myself struggling with all my might to achieve glory and to spread my name…Then, feeling my own weakness, and having entirely given up my own will, I repaired to God like a man in distress who has no more resources. He answered, as he answers the wretch who invokes him. My heart no longer felt any difficulty in renouncing glory, wealth, and my children. So I quitted Bagdad, and reserving from my fortune only what was indispensable for my subsistence, I distributed the rest. I went to Syria, where I remained about two years, with no other occupation than living in retreat and solitude, conquering my desires, combating my passions, training myself to purify my soul, to make my character perfect, to prepare my heart for meditating on God — all according to the methods of the Sufis, as I had read of them" (Quoted in James, 2002, p. 312).

Ghazālī goes on to describe the intensification he felt to seclude, but admits of his failure to permanently do so:

> "This retreat only increased my desire to live in solitude, and to complete the purification of my heart and fit it for meditation. But the vicissitudes of the times, the affairs of the family, the need of subsistence, changed in some respects my primitive resolve, and interfered with my plans for a purely solitary life. I had never yet found myself completely in ecstasy, save in a few single hours; nevertheless, I kept the hope of attaining this state. Every time that the accidents led me astray, I sought to return; and in this situation I spent ten years. During this solitary state things were revealed to me which it is impossible either to describe or to point out. I recognized for certain that the Sufis are assuredly walking in the path of God. Both in their acts and in their inaction, whether internal or external, they are illumined by the light which proceeds from the prophetic source" (Quoted in James, 2002, p. 313).

Ghazālī's personal struggle and his experiences in general as cited above, however, represent an extreme case where his spiritual calling led him to the radical decision of physically abandoning the world. With that said, the method of *riyāḍah al-nafs* thus encompasses both a basic condition of a forty-day ritual seclusion as well as an inherent risk of engaging in spiritual retreat for an indefinite period of time.

4.5.1 The practice of *riyāḍah al-nafs*

The method of *riyāḍah al-nafs* is generally understood to be a technique intended to construct oneself anew. Ghazālī describes one of the objectives of *riyāḍah al-nafs* as a way of restoring the individual's *fiṭrah*, or innate disposition, which is said to be primordially good in all humans. And the best way to go about this, according to his *Iḥyā'*, is to start by striving toward inculcating good ethical character (*khuluq*), or what Ghazālī defines as "a firmly established condition [*hay'a*] of the soul, from which actions proceed easily without any need for thinking or forethought" (al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 17; cf. al-Ghazālī, 2011, vol. 5, p. 190). Moreover, when the four human faculties of rational (*al-'ilm*), irascible (*al-ghaḍab*), appetitive (*al-shahwiyyah*), and justice (*al-'adl*; viz. just balance between the three aforesaid faculties) reach a state of equilibrium and harmony in the individual, only then will the inward (*bāṭin*), that is, with regard to one's character, be beautiful (*ḥusn*) (see al-Ghazālī, 2011, vol. 5, p. 192).

In his *Kīmyā'*, Ghazālī discusses the method of *riyāḍah al-nafs* in terms of cultivating virtuous character and transforming oneself so as to obtain a good disposition. After suggesting that every human individual has the capacity to arrive at a good disposition, Ghazālī explains that this can be achieved by habitually engaging in pious deeds and counteracting any bad predilection with its opposite (see Ghazzali, 2008, vol. 2, p. 456). While some may naturally possess good character, which makes it easy for them to act virtuously and comply with the religious law, others must undergo a rigorous transformation by way of a thoroughgoing, and usually painful, process of performing pious deeds till they become second nature.

In this context, it is only at the very final stage of *riyāḍah al-nafs*, where one is believed to have attained self-effacement and acquired a perfect disposition, that the individual can now seek God.

4.6 Conclusion

The first part of the chapter demonstrated the practical implications of *khalwat dar anjuman* through the lives of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs in contrasting human

contexts including the personal, social, political, and economic. It was specifically observed how the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs handled other-worldly and this-worldly concerns, appropriated variegated responses to the challenges they faced, and overcame the tensions that they experienced. It was further observed that *khalwat dar anjuman* in practice required rigorous training and served a multifaceted purpose as both an ethico-mystical precept and a pedagogical tool.

In the second part of the chapter a brief comparative analysis was made between the two main methods employed by the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs and Ghazālī, namely, *dhikr* and *riyāḍah al-nafs*, respectively. It was pointed out that the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs more often than not dismissed the method of *riyāḍah al-nafs* and preferred *dhikr* instead as a more efficient and effective way of mystical ascent. Ghazālī may be regarded at once as an extreme case in point as one who vagabonded about the world in more than a decade-long spiritual retreat, and, more importantly, as a representative example of one who laid bear both the renunciant and mystical component of *riyāḍah al-nafs* in both his thought and practice.

CHAPTER V: *KHALWAT DAR ANJUMAN* IN THE AGE OF RENEWAL, REVIVALISM, AND RESISTANCE: THE MUSLIM CONFRONTATION WITH MODERN REALITIES

5.1 Introduction

The mystical tradition of Islam had a most pernicious influence on the Muslim masses, argues Isma'īl Fārūqī (1986), and for nearly six millennia from the mid thirteenth to the mid eighteenth century, "Under the Ṣūfī spell, the Muslim had become apolitical, asocial, amilitary, anethical, and hence nonproductive, unconcerned for the *ummah* (the world brotherhood under the moral law), an individualist, and, in the last resort, an egotist whose prime objective was to be saved himself, to be absorbed into the consuming majesty of the divine being. He was shaken neither by the misery, poverty, disease, and subjection of his own society nor by the lot of mankind in history" (Fārūqī, *The cultural atlas of the muslim world*, p. 304). Fārūqī's assessment of Muslim societies reflects a once widely adopted reductionist approach to Islam, by both modernist Muslims and Orientalists alike,[177] that has shown to be inadequate at best and diverting at its worst. In going beyond the narrow parochiality that pervades much of earlier and to a lesser degree today's scholarship, revisionist theories of late have done well to show that many of the Muslim resistant and anti-colonial movements across Islamdom were in fact led by none other than self-identified Sufis. However, with that said, I find myself agreeing with what Ahmad S. Dallal (2018) points out in regard to revisionists who, in spite of having put forward a convincing case against the notion of social and economic decline from the eighteenth century onward, have nevertheless fallen short in their laudable efforts by "posit[ing] a problematic dichotomy between the "unreal" ideas and the "real" material forces at work in society…a dichotomy [that therefore] seriously underestimates the role of Islamic discursive culture and ideology in society" (Dallal, 2018, p. 7).[178] Along these lines, I take up the position that in modern times, alongside social, economic, and political realities, ideas – esp. those rooted in religion and mysticism – continued to function as an important vehicle for

[177] As far as many of the early Orientalists were concerned, Sufism was all but an anomaly, especially since it did not align with their explanatory paradigm of Islam. Modernist Muslims who also adopted this idea tended to level the failings of Islamicate societies on Muslims who in large part were "enchanted" by Sufi ideas.

[178] The interpretation of ideas (esp. religious ones) as secondary to the "real" material forces that drive human individuals to take action has become a growing trend in the study of Islam and Sufism. For a good example of such works, see *Sufism and society: Arrangements of the mystical in the Muslim world, 1200–1800* (J.J. Curry & E.S. Ohlander (Eds.), 2012).

individuals to take action. As I shall try to show in the present chapter, the sort of ideas Fārūqī so sternly criticizes for having caused a supposed inertness among the Muslim masses had in fact spurred many of them to develop calculative responses to Western modernity and the challenges that were presented by its hegemony. The actions of Muslims in the modern age were moreover highly infused with purposeful intent, especially those that were emboldened by religious ideas and mystical principles including, most particularly for the purposes of this chapter, *khalwat dar anjuman*. And as we shall see, the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* not only crucially stipulated complete inward and outward devotion – an inherent and central tension that remained ever present in the lives of its practitioners – but also held together the contradicting engagements of the Naqshbandīs throughout the modern era.

This chapter partly aims to contextualize the Naqshbandīs' ethico-mystical regimen and practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* within (1) the wider tensional relations that Muslims in general were faced with in their encounter with modern realities, and (2) the consequent conflicting dilemmas they had to deal with at the religious, political, and societal level. In this way, *khalwat dar anjuman* which represents both a principle and a practice serves as a useful example for our purposes as it invites us to explore the interplay between ideas and actions and, moreover, it allows us to scrutinize the inner struggles and tensions that Muslims experienced in their everyday lives. Along these lines, I revisit the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* from the late seventeenth century to the mid twentieth century by focusing on the content of their scholarly output particularly in relation to their worldly endeavors.

The central argument that runs through the present chapter is that in the modern and post-modern age the precept of *khalwat dar anjuman* undergoes changes in its function and sees continuity in its meaning and practice. It begins to take on a whole new functional dimension for the Naqshbandīs from ambitious political action and militant organization, alongside socio-economic enterprises, to spirituality without religious rites and authority. Specifically, we see that political activism becomes a strong feature of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* mainly throughout Ottoman territories, whereas militant organization predominates in the Caucasus, while the affairs of the Naqshbandīs in modern-day Turkey take on a socio-economic dynamic, and, finally, different forms of spirituality emerge in regions of post-Soviet Central Asia. Apart

from this, we also witness changes in how the Naqshbandīs begin to interact with other *ṭarīqah*s. Although rivalries among *ṭarīqah*s persisted, some of the Ottoman Naqshbandīs in particular were synthesizing ideas and practices from different *ṭarīqah* lines, and in the meantime shaykhs began acquiring *ijāzah*s in multiple Sufi traditions – this last point seems to be unprecedented in centuries prior, at least as far as the Naqshbandīs are concerned.

In part one, I attempt to explicate the role played by *khalwat dar anjuman* in the Naqshbandīs' confrontation with modernity by drawing on three of its very own Muslim revivalists: Meḥmed Abū Sa'īd al-Khādimī (1701–1762), Shāmil al-Gimrawī al-Dāghistānī (1797–1871), and Aḥmad Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Gumushkhānawī (hereon in, Gümüşhānevī) (1813–1893). On the one hand, these individual personalities who represent the torchbearers of the Naqshbandī way are all known to have shared a common purpose in their commitment to the *ṭarīqah*'s ideals and principles. On the other hand, they offer unique case studies in light of the diverse challenges they faced together with the variegated responses they came up with in different regional and historical contexts.

The Ottoman Sufi-scholar Meḥmed Abū Sa'īd al-Khādimī serves as a good starting point for our purposes not only because did his life and career coincide with the era of reform and modernization in the Ottoman state, but also since he was arguably a key transitional figure of the pre-colonial Muslim world which had yet to come under the hegemonic influence and control of European powers. His ideas and approach to religious scholarship also prefigures much of the ensuing changes that take place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where a new course of action is undertaken by the Ottoman ulema. And despite the numerous wars that the Ottomans were engaging in throughout the eighteenth century, Khādimī's era was relatively stable, at least within the state's own confines. At the other end of the spectrum there were the Caucasian Naqshbandīs who, unlike their Ottoman counterparts, experienced very little stability throughout much of the eighteenth century in particular. This is a major reason why figures like Shāmil are primarily seen through the lens of their political activism. And despite the fact that Khādimī, Shāmil, and Gümüşhānevī lived very different lives under very different circumstances, what ultimately unites them all, especially for the purposes of this study, boils down to their perception of the world as shaped by their holistic view of Islam, which for

them on the whole was altogether rational, practical, spiritual, and mystical.

In part two, I look at how *khalwat dar anjuman* fared in the lives of the Naqshbandīs during the post-modern era by focusing on the Iskenderpasha community in modern-day Turkey. My analysis focuses on two key figures of this period, namely, Mehmed Zahid Kotku (1897–1980) and Mahmud Esad Coşan (1938–2001). In the subsequent section, I briefly discuss how *khalwat dar anjuman* takes on by far the most noticeable and significant change in modern-day Central Asia during the post-Soviet era.

Finally, I should note that my objective here is not to simply reduce everything that the Naqshbandīs did as being solely motivated by *khalwat dar anjuman* (or specific techniques that fostered its realization); rather, what I do contend is that the principle in question facilitated the Naqshbandīs to develop a positive relationship with the world and to simultaneously keep hold of their mystical practices in the thick of society while confronting modern realities. It would further be helpful to remind the reader that my intention is also not to suggest naively that the idea behind *khalwat dar anjuman*, namely 'inner solitude', was original in any way for the very idea in principle predates the Naqshbandīs. Instead, what I do argue is that there was something novel in how the Naqshbandīs utilized and applied *khalwat dar anjuman* in their lives and privileged it over other practices.

Part I: Muslim revivalist movements responding to modern realties: Case of the Naqshbandīs and *khalwat dar anjuman*

5.2 Naqshbandīs as revivalists from the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century

In this section, I explore the various challenges that the Naqshbandīs faced from the late seventeenth century down to the early twentieth century. My main focus will be to understand how the Naqshbandīs responded to the tensions they experienced in their worldly and other-worldly pursuits as they began to unfold and intensify throughout this epoch.

Throughout the seventeenth century, particularly in the Ottoman context, divisions between the two religious establishments of the madrasah and *tekke* (Sufi lodge)

became especially prominent. This happened against the backdrop of the puritanical Kadızadelis, who all throughout the first half of the seventeenth century were at the center of controversy and conflict. By the eighteenth century, the Ottoman ulema and Sufi mystics would undergo a process of convergence. That is to say, just as in Transoxania under the nascent Naqshbandīs during the fifteenth century where scholars and Sufis had become virtually indistinguishable, a similar development was underway in eighteenth-century Ottoman society.[179] Tensions intensified in this particular era between the ulema and Janissaries on the one hand, and the Ottoman state on the other; the latter initiated a number of institutional reforms (esp. military, diplomatic, and economic) at various intervals during the eighteenth century, which was met with a great deal of resistance by the former cohort.[180] At the turn of the nineteenth century, resistant movements across Muslim societies emerged in response to European colonial expansion. And by the twentieth century, Muslims living under secular rule (e.g. in former Ottoman-ruled territories) and atheistic-oriented regimes (esp. in the Soviet Union) underwent an existential threat of sorts as official government policies concerning religion were being exported and enforced across newly established nation states across the globe.

5.2.1 Meḥmed Abū Sa'īd al-Khādimī

The eighteenth-century Ottoman world that Meḥmed Abū Sa'īd al-Khādimī (1701–1762) – an Ottoman scholar, regional mufti, and Naqshbandī Sufi shaykh – was born into and inherited was entering into a new phase in its history. Among the pivotal events of this era include the Karlowitz treaty of 1699 which would prove to permanently alter the fate of the Ottoman state, ending its territorial expansion and military superiority while being forced, for the first time in its history, to negotiate and concede to the dictates of European powers.[181] This historic moment, however, ushered in a strengthening of bilateral diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the western Europeans (see Naff, 1977, p. 91) and in turn led to various forms of exchange and appropriation between the two, particularly in the realm of culture,

[179] On a discussion underlining the transformations of the eighteenth-century Ottoman ulema establishment, see Gibb & Bowen (1962) *Islamic society and the West* (vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 205); cf. Zilfi (1988) *Politics of piety* (pp. 39-40).

[180] See Thomas Naff's "Ottoman diplomatic relations with Europe in the eighteenth century: Patterns and trends," p. 90.

[181] Rifaat A. Abou-El-Haj's (1969) "The formal closure of the Ottoman frontier in Europe: 1699–1703," in *Journal of the American Oriental society* offers critical insights on the ensuing impact that the Karlowitz treaty would have on the trajectory of the Ottoman state (pp. 467-475).

technology, and education – an epoch dubbed by later historians as the *Lâle devri* or 'Tulip era' (1718–1730). Likewise, with the *devşirme* or 'child levy system' no longer in place by 1703 and against the backdrop of two major rebellions – both of which ended in the dethronement of an Ottoman sultan – the eighteenth century gave way to administrators and bureaucrats from within the Ottoman palace led by the chief harem eunuchs as well as among the various pasha, vizier, and ulema households vying among themselves in order to fill the power void.[182]

Antecedent to the central role played by pashas and viziers in Ottoman statecraft from the mid eighteenth century onward, it was members occupying the office of the Chief Harem Eunuch who for the first half of the eighteenth century acted as what Norman Itzkowtiz describes as 'prime movers of events' inside the sultanic palace.[183] Khādimī through his teacher Aḥmad Qāzābādī (d. 1163/1750), under whom he studied for eight years in Istanbul, was introduced to the time's most powerful harem eunuch Beshīr Agha[184] (d. 1746).[185] Khādimī also met with the then sultan Maḥmud I (r. 1730–1754), in whose presence he gave a private lesson on the Quran[186] and, at his request, delivered a public sermon at the Grand Hagia Sophia Mosque. Impressing the Sultan with his erudition while receiving delightful praise from Istanbulite scholars in attendance, Khādimī was thereafter offered an official position under the sultan's royal authority; although he (not unexpectedly) declined and preferred to return to his native town of Hadim. Since the *ilmiye* ('religious institution') at the sultanic center, which had underwent heightened bureaucratization

[182] As noted by Donald Quataert, following the 1703 uprising in what sources refer to as *Edirne vak'ası* ('Edirne incident'), "the sultan's powers and stature were so reduced that he was required to seek the advice of "interested parties" and heed their counsel. This set of events sealed the ascendancy of the vizier-pasha households and of their allies within the religious scholarly community, the ulema, and set the tone for eighteenth-century politics at the center" (Quataert, 2005, p. 43; see also Itzkowitz, 1977, p. 20).

[183] The leverage gained by the chief harem eunuchs in steering the decision-making from within the Ottoman palace coincided with the execution of the Ottoman Grand Mufti Seyyid Feyzullah Efendi (along with his son Nakībüleşraf Fethullah Efendi) in Edirne during the infamous uprising. See the comments by Norman Itzkowitz (1977) in his "Men and ideas in the eighteenth century Ottoman empire," in *Studies in eighteenth century Islamic history*, pp. 15-26.

[184] Beshīr Agha oversaw the fate of more than a handful of grand viziers installed into and deposed from their viziership of the state (see Itzkowitz, 1977, p. 20). For a good overview of his career and the importance of his legacy in Ottoman history, see Jane Hathaway (2005) *Beshir Agha: Chief eunuch of the Ottoman imperial harem*, esp. pp. 109-114.

[185] Another, albeit conflicting account has the acquaintance between Khādimī and Beshīr Agha taking place in Medina; see Ebül'ulā Mardin (1966) *Huzur dersleri* (vol. 2, pp. 772-774). Halil Ibrahim Şimşek (2016) points out some of the discrepancies in Khādimī's biography including this particular account (p. 43).

[186] Lessons of this kind are referred to as *huzur dersleri*, which take place exclusively in the presence of the sultan.

by this time, was already infiltrated by the city's elite households,[187] what had apparently and ultimately proved to be a far greater concern for Khādimī was bringing his own project into fruition, and this meant gaining the favor of Beshīr Agha. As a staunch patron of traditional Sunni Islam and a more than generous contributor to institutions that stood to preserve and enhance its time-honored legacy, it would eventually be under the auspices of Beshīr Agha that Khādimī was able to establish a library in Hadim, which in due course facilitated in turning the madrasah he founded with his father, Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. 1147/1734), into an educational complex and center for scholarship.[188]

Since worldly and other-worldly pursuits often intersected in the case of the Naqshbandīs,[189] Khādimī's tendencies to mingle with sultans and elite men must be seen against the background of his grand vision and strong commitment to reinvigorating an understanding and practice of Islam that cultivated both inward devotion and outward conformity. Intimations of his revivalist orientation can also partly be attributed to his affiliation with the Mujaddidī sub-branch of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*.

Like many of his Naqshbandī predecessors, Khādimī throughout his career reveals a deep concern for his legacy.[190] The legacy Khādimī was leaving behind was

[187] The *ilmiye* hierarchy in this particular era had become highly nepotistic; see E. Ekin Tuşalp Atiyas' chapter on "The sunna-minded trend" in Marinos Sariyannis' (2018) *A history of Ottoman political thought up to the early nineteenth century* (pp. 275-278).

[188] While Istanbul had long served as the primary locus and city of choice for education and scholarship throughout Ottoman history, Khādimī's ambitious efforts to attract Muslims from nearby provinces and provide them with an alternative space to secure a good education and scholarly career would prove (as Khādimī himself presumptively intended) to have a centrifugal effect of sorts. Along these lines, Yaşar Sarıkaya explains that, "The library's inventory suggests that Khādimī was building upon his father's legacy in order to establish a center for Islamic education and scholarship in the periphery of the Ottoman Empire. Students from Hadim, Konya, Antalya, Kayseri, and many towns of Anatolia, both large and small, could now study standard texts and classic compendiums of Islamic literature and teaching right there close to home. Hadim turned into a significant center for Islamic education, where far-reaching social networks of students and teachers were formed" (Sarıkaya, 2020, pp. 68-69).

[189] Given the proliferation of the Naqshbandīs, particularly by virtue of Aḥrār and his immediate successors, throughout both the peripheries and centers of Islamdom, the apparent conclusion would be to attribute this happening to their missionary zeal. However, as Dina Le Gall points out, "goals such as pilgrimage, study, and propagating the tariqa were often intertwined. One could have been sent off or embarked on a long trip with a view to propagating a new Sufi creed and devotional regimen, while at the same time seeking to perform the pilgrimage, or meet distinguished scholars, or resolve issues related to personal circumstances or to competition over a master's succession" (Le Gall, 2005, p. 22).

[190] This is probably best encapsulated in a famous couplet oft-ascribed to Khādimī: *Kâmil odur ki koya her yerde bir eser* / *Eseri olmayanın yerinden yeller eser* (Quoted in Şimşek, 2016, p. 59). This, however, seems to be a slight modification of a near identical one by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, which has "*Insan*" (or human) rather than "*Kâmil*" (or perfected [human]); it reads as follows:

essentially intertwined with his progeny, spiritual lineage, and noble prophetic bloodline. As Yaşar Sarıkaya puts it, "Belonging to the lineage of the prophet Muḥammad bestows upon its bearer authenticity, respect, and prestige in every Islamic tradition, including in Sufism" (Sarıkaya, 2020, pp. 63-64). And although, as Sarıkaya notes, being of noble pedigree granted Khādimī special privileges both socially and legally, this also entailed living up to certain standards and expectations, which presumably must have also been taxing on his conscious. Khādimī ensured the legacy of his progeny through the madrasah he had founded with his father where the majority of its professorship was occupied by his sons and their offspring.[191] His son, Muḥammad Sa'īd in time even became the *qāḍī* (chief judge) of the Ḥaramayn, being the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina (Sarıkaya, 2013, p. 165). And as for his spiritual lineage, which through his father traces back to Aḥmad al-Sirhindī (1564–1624), it was Khādimī's disciples and his own sons that served as important transmitters of both the Mujaddidī-Naqshbandī and later the Khālidī-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*s (an offshoot of the Mujaddidīs) throughout Ottoman Anatolia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[192]

Khādimī had also received copious manuscripts in the form of endowments for his library in Hadim; among his donors included a high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrat and ambassador, Shehdī 'Uthmān Efendī (d. 1770), who also later became an appointed treasurer (*defterdār*) in Istanbul.[193] But Khādimī was no bibliophile – rather, as evidence suggests, he was a devoted educator. And one would not have to look too far to corroborate his dedication in this regard as one of his most famous works being the *Majāmi' al-ḥaqā'iq*[194] – a text that is said to have significantly contributed to Islamic legal theory in ensuing eras, particularly in terms of the influence it had on

Insan odur ki her yerde bıraka bir eser / *Eseri olmayanın yerinde yeller eser* (see Recai Şenol (2013) *Geçmişten günümüze özdeyişler* (p. 212).

[191] For a list of the professors who taught at the madrasah, see Numan Hadimoğlu (1983) *Hadim ve Hadimliler bibliyografyası* (p. 120).

[192] Muḥammad Kudsī Efendī (d. 1268/1852), whose teacher was a student of Khādimī and he himself is said to have studied under one of Khādimī's sons, was one of the key transmitters of the Khālidī-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* in Anatolia during the nineteenth century (see Sarıkaya, 2013, p. 160).

[193] On Shehdī 'Uthmān Efendī, see Uğur Demir's entry on him in *Türkiye diyanet vakfı Islām ansiklopedisi* (vol. 38, pp. 427-428). See also Yaşar Sarıkaya's (2020) *The Khādimīs of Konya: The rise of a scholarly family from the Ottoman periphery* (p. 68).

[194] Khādimī's *Majāmi' al-ḥaqā'iq* is said to be among the first treatises on legal maxims (*al-qawā'id al-fiqhiyyah*) where "the study of maxims is established as a separate discipline in Islamic jurisprudence;" this era in particular has thereby been viewed as representing the culminating 'stage of maturity' amid the historical development of legal maxims; see Luqman Zakariyah's (2015) *Legal maxims in Islamic criminal law: Theory and applications* (p. 32).

the form and content of the renowned Ottoman civil code known as the *Mecelle-i ahkām-i adliye*[195] – was in fact written in the form of a textbook, and, in particular, the concluding section covering legal maxims "was done for educational purposes… so that his students could memorize the principles on which the Ḥanafī school is based, which is also why he arranged the maxims alphabetically" (Kızılkaya, 2021, p. 172).

Turning our attention to Khādimī's wide-ranging scholarship will, I would argue, serve to most clearly cast light upon his (above-mentioned) threefold legacy. Known for having penned more than seventy works that cover a variety of topics in areas including ethics, legal theory, rhetoric, scriptural exegesis, logic, *ḥadīth*, and mysticism,[196] Khādimī was nothing short of a prolific writer. Scholars during Khādimī's era of the eighteenth century were driven to author books and educate students in hopes of instilling renewed confidence in the classical system of Islamic learning and scholarship. Khādimī's intellectual output likewise admits a certain degree of reformism, but one that is firmly grounded in traditional scholarship. For instance, although he continues writing along classical Ḥanafī lines, he goes against convention in his *Majāmi'* by referring to custom (*'urf*) as a form of evidence (*dalīl*) that does not require substantiating by other forms of evidence.[197] Another novelty among the *Mecelle*'s legal maxim, "With the change of time it cannot be denied that the laws are changed" (Grigsby, 1895, p. 6), *ezmānın tegayyürü ile ahkāmın tegayyürü inkār olunamaz* (Paşa, 1883, p. 28), which can be found in other *fiqh* literature, originates with Khādimī (see Okur, 2010, p. 90). It was also through their writings that scholars sought to address the pressing issues of the time. The state of affairs during the eighteenth century – esp. the political realm with the Ottomans losing wars and suffering territorial contraction – had already reached concerning levels as signs of discontent was on the rise across the Ottoman state and society. It was therefore scholars like Khādimī who during this transitional period were looking

[195] See Osman Öztürk's (1973) *Osmanlı hukuk tarihinde Mecelle* (p. 118), a seminal work (originally written as the author's doctoral thesis) that highlights Khādimī's influence on the *Mecelle*; cf. Kâşif Hamdi Okur's (2010) *Osmanlılarda fıkıh usûlü çalışmaları (Hâdimî örneği)*.

[196] A list of Khādimī's works can be found in Yakup Koçyiğit's *Hâdimî'nin el-Berîka'da izlediği Hadis metodolojisi ve Hadis ilmindeki yeri* (Master's thesis), pp. 25-29; cf. Mehmet Aydın's *Ebû Sâid Muhammed el-Hâdimî'nin hayatı, eserleri ve tasavvufî görüşleri* (Master's thesis), pp. 29ff.

[197] Hence we find in the *Mecelle* articles such as no. 36 which reads, "Custom is law. i.e. A judicial decision is based on custom and usage, whether general or particular;" no. 41 "Custom then has force, when it is common or prevails for the most part;" no. 42 "The predominant custom is considered, not the particular one;" and no. 43 "That which is known by custom is considered has the same force as a private agreement" (Grigsby, 1895, pp. 5-6; cf. Paşa, 1883, p. 28). On this issue, also refer to Okur, 2010, pp. 129ff.

to the past in order to develop new ways of understanding the present.[198] And therefore, as we shall see, this is one of the main reasons why Khādimī pens his commentary on Birgivī's (d. 981/1573) *al-Ṭarīqah al-Muḥamadiyyah* as his way of dispelling confusion and doubt.[199]

Khādimī's extensive and detailed commentary entitled *al-Barīqah sharḥ al-ṭarīqah* serves as a good starting point, not least because Birgivī's thought and original text had an immediate and lasting impact on the trajectory of socio-religious ethics throughout Ottoman society. A commentary (*sharḥ*) in the Islamic literary tradition typically served the purpose of elucidating on a basic text (*matn*). It, moreover, played the "subordinate role of informing a student's comprehension of the principal focus of instruction, which was the *matn*" (Messick, 1996, p. 30). Khādimī's *Barīqah*, however, seems to betray this basic feature of a commentary given that he attempts not to simply render the original text clearer, but to repurpose it with a more sympathetic view of post-classical Sufism. With that said, the content of Birgivī's *Ṭarīqah* is not necessarily controversial to Sufism as a whole, although certain passages could easily be misappropriated by those already critical of its doctrines and practices for the purpose of bolstering their own agenda. Granted that the Kadızadelis during their heyday "were a minority within the class of religious scholars" (El-Rouayheb, 2008, p. 198), their ideas nevertheless seem to have left an indelible mark on Ottoman scholarship, and moreover continued to exert some level of influence on popular imagination long after the movement's demise. And at the end of it all, there was perhaps no better way for Khādimī to respond to the criticisms and misgivings of the Kadızadelis – including those who continued sharing their views even after the Kadızadelis were silenced from public discourse – than by explicating a work (i.e. Birgivī's *Ṭarīqah*) that served as their very handbook and source of inspiration.

Birgivī directs the thrust of his *Ṭarīqah* to the idea of maintaining a balanced disposition and demeanor, which is key to inculcating both virtue and piety in one's everyday life (see Ivanyi, 2020, p. 256). While staying true to this idea (in form at

[198] It was in fact this new *theoretical* outlook which many of the eighteenth-century Ottoman scholars and intellectuals fostered that would later pave the way for the *practical* solutions being formulated in modern reforms such as the *Nizam-ı cedid* or 'New order' (1789–1807); see İhsan Fazlıoğlu's (2009) "Osmanlı entelektüel hayatının genel hatları."

[199] Khādimī had authored the *Barīqah*, as noted by Murat Şimşek (2021), in an attempt to solve the crisis that the Kadızadelis provoked in the previous century. See his "Hâdimî'nin Mecelle'ye küllî kâideler ve Osmanlı'da soyut hukuka geçiş çabalaır" in *Uluslararası Mecelle sempozyumu* (pp. 239-240).

least), Khādimī makes it quite clear that achieving such a balance is to be found in bringing the ways of inward and outward cultivation into harmony. For instance, in the chapter on *bid'ah* (reprehensible innovation), after agreeing with and expanding on Birgivī's critical remarks on some of the heretical beliefs (including borderline ones) upheld by certain esotericists (*aṣḥāb al-'ilm al-bāṭin*)[200] of his time, Khādimī comments that Birgivī's intention was not to altogether reject the path of the Sufis because it, Khādimī notes, is the way of the 'friends of God' (*awliyā' Allāh*); and that the perfection of the human-being (*kamāl al-insān*) rests on combining the outward and the inward, wherefore the latter resembles the objective of the essence (of perfection) and the former its condition (Khādimī, 1900, vol. 1, p. 135). At one point, Khādimī expands on Birgivī's criticism of esoteric knowledge as follows: 'some Sufis claim that the mystical experiences they undergo through vision and inspiration are to be regarded as authoritative and as definitive sources preferable to the certainties contained within the Quran; these experiences are in fact not from the ways of knowledge (*asbāb al-'ilm*) in terms of their absoluteness or desirability over definitive knowledge…the unveiling of knowledge, although possible, must correspond to the canonical law of Islam' (*ibid,* pp. 134-135).

In Khādimī's *Risālah al-naṣāyiḥ wa al-waṣāyā* is where we begin to get a better sense of his perspective on Islamic ethics. In this particular work, which falls under the genre of advice-literature, Khādimī shows persistence in conveying the idea that inward and outward piety are inseparable. He writes that at the beginning of one's spiritual journey there is the act of *tawbah*, or turning to God with the intention of seeking His favor and forgiveness. *Tawbah* for Khādimī is a religious duty that befalls every Muslim; he describes this as an 'individual obligation' using the legal term *farḍ al-'ayn*.[201] However, before engaging in this devotional act, Khādimī stresses that one must first make sure that the rights of the people (*ḥuqūq al-'ibād*) have been fulfilled. In another instance, after delineating the advice of the Prophet which begins with the state of God-consciousness (*taqwā*), Khādimī concludes with his own exhortation: 'next to every stone and tree [i.e. *at all times*] be God-conscious (*bi'l-ittiqāh*) and turn to God (*tawbah*) after *every* committed sin' (al-Khādimī, 1886, p. 128) (emphases and insertion mine). Khādimī later repeats the advice of the Prophet and underscores consistency in them. In this slightly modified version of the

[200] Khādimī prefixes this with *ma'shar al-Ṣūfiyyah* ('a group of Sufis').

[201] For more details on Khādimī's understanding of *tawbah*, see Mehmet Aydın's (2006) Master's thesis "Ebû Sâid Muhammed el-Hâdimî'nin hayatı, eserleri ve tasavvufî görüşleri," pp. 55-57.

previous list of advice, which this time we are told the Prophet had given to Mu'ādh, the Prophet's counsel here begins with the notion of *taqwā* but with the qualifier *fī al-sirr wa al-'alāniyyah* ('in secret and [in] the open') added (al-Khādimī, 1886, p. 129). He then writes that, 'It is said that good deeds are conditioned by two things: to be truthful (or sincere) with God and to [observe] the truth with the people', *wa qīla al-khayrāt munḥaṣirah fī amrayn: al-ṣidq ma'a al-Ḥaqq wa al-ḥaqq ma'a al-khalq* (*ibid,* p. 129). This process of countervailing inward and outward devotion with one another is in fact consistently employed by Khādimī throughout his testamentary work.

What further stands out in the *Risālah* is Khādimī's emphasis on *ṣuḥbah* ('social intercourse'), *niyah* ('intention'), and *waqt* ('time'). We find Khādimī privileging the principle of *ṣuḥbah* as he stresses the importance of 'sitting and socially interacting with scholars', and also insinuates the superiority of 'being in correspondence [with people of knowledge and wisdom] over preoccupation with devotional litanies and supererogatory prayers' (Khādimī, 1886, p. 130). Elsewhere he writes that 'there is more good in the intention of a Believer than in his actions', *niyah al-Mu'min khayrun min 'amalih* (*ibid*, p. 126). This statement could be interpreted as an implicit criticism of defenders of a purely legal-minded understanding of Islam. He follows this with 'be the son of time, that is, cherish your time!' (*kun ibn al-waqt ya'nī ḥāfiẓ waqtak*) (*ibid*). Khādimī later relates that his father once imparted advice to him in a dream, which ends with his father telling him: '[now] get up and do not waste your time!' Time-wasting is generally construed by the Naqshbandīs as a contemptible act tantamount to committing a sin. This is mainly because time itself is considered to have rights, and it would be a violation of its rights if it was not being put to good use. Many Naqshbandīs like Khādimī have stressed the importance and value of time a great deal throughout the literature. What is more, according to Khādimī, initiation into the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* requires not only turning to God in repentance for all the sins he or she has committed in the past, but also feeling a deep sense of regret for every single moment squandered in life (see Aydın, 2006, p. 56). This is an interesting form of 'spiritual mourning', one that is often reserved for those intense reflection on past sins.[202] Singling out time-wasting after mentioning sin is also particularly revealing of Khādimī's strong views against idleness and likewise of his

[202] See Milad Milani's (2021) *The nature of Sufism: An ontological reading of the mystical in Islam*, p. 27.

implicit call for others to lead a more active life.

On this note, it would seem appropriate to turn our attention to another important figure of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, namely Shāmil al-Gimrawī al-Dāghistānī (1797–1871), for he is especially known for wasting no time amidst his dedication to leading a highly activist life. But insofar that Khādimī's life and writings bear testimony to his persistence in bridging the two extremes of esotericism and exotericism neatly aligns with the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, in Shāmil's case this becomes slightly more complicated for a variety of reasons. This is not least because of all the grandeur invoked by Shāmil's far-reaching repute that has produced images of him that are on the whole astoundingly contradictory.

5.2.2 Shāmil al-Gimrawī al-Dāghistānī

An analysis of Shāmil's life and career offers us one of the more unique case studies. As a temporal leader, Shāmil was faced with both local opposition, being the dissent from his own people, and the even weightier task of coming to grips with a mighty empire. Immediately prior to acting in any political or military capacity, however, Shāmil had committed several years of his life to rigorous training on the Naqshbandī mystical path under the watchful eye of the renowned Sufi shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī Ghumūqī (1788–1869). Having ultimately embraced these two very different and ostensibly opposing realities toward the later part of his life presented Shāmil with a double challenge. It demanded that he not only be completely absorbed in the here and now, but that he also actively strove to transcend his ego-self and occupy his inner-being with none other than God alone. So, to understand how the Naqshbandī Sufi tradition and its ethico-mystical precepts, including, most especially, *khalwat dar anjuman*, allowed Shāmil to adopt a posture that was outwardly political and militant and yet inwardly spiritual and mystical, would ultimately require a reconciliatory approach to his highly perplexing identity. In a corresponding manner, this task also involves untangling the multiplicity of interpretations revolving around his views, personality, ambitions, pursuits, and objectives.[203] But before offering my perspective on Shāmil, there are a number of

[203] For instance, Rebecca Gould (2012) in her entry on "Imam Shamil" in *Russia's people of empire* points out that, "The images Shamil's memory has produced express distinct and often conflicting cultural and political priorities. There are many Shamils: the Shamil of the Daghestanis, the Shamil of the Chechens, the Shamil of poets and of war chroniclers. There is a Shamil viewed through the lens of the Tsar, and another generated by popular memory. There is a Shamil who

points that need to be addressed on what analysts and researchers have had to say with regard to Shāmil, together with the challenges and issues that emerge from these studies. This will then allow me to clarify where I stand on many of the issues that have been raised throughout the literature, and likewise better situate my own analysis on Shāmil.

Apart from the relatively few indigenous sources currently at our disposal, the vast majority of early written accounts on the history of the Caucasus and its people were furnished by outside observers. What we find among the early foreign historiography on the Caucasus is a peculiar representation of Sufism, one that was essentially disconnected from its historical process (i.e. it was believed that Sufism in the Caucasus developed in isolation from the outside world and had little or nothing to do with its true meaning and practice) and had a rather tenuous religious significance (e.g the idea that Sufism as an expression of personal piety had no relevance in the Caucasus since its organizational and ideological aspects were presumably exploited in order to serve as a vehicle of armed resistance).[204] These assumptions are partly reflected in the Russian historiographers' construction of "muridism" which was their way of describing the mobilization, militarization, and "fanaticism" that had spread far and wide across the Caucasus, especially during its peak in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Then there is the issue of overhistoricizing the significance of Sufism in the Caucasus. A consequence of this has seen some studies presenting certain claims in ways that at times end up bordering on religious relativism. To illustrate, we may refer to Alexander Knysh's parenthetical remarks where he speculates that: "Naqshbandī Sufism was incidental to the resistant movement in the Caucasus (its

sternly gazes on a gambling house in modern-day Gunib (fig. 10), and a Shamil whose exploits Modest Mussorgsky set to music in a *Marsh Shamilia* (1859) set to a Georgian text.11 Most recently, Shamil the philosopher has engaged in a debate with the fourth-century church historian Socrates Scholasticus about the meaning of prayer. To the Soviet authorities, who published the appropriately titled *Shamil: A Supporter of Sultanate Turkey and of the English Colonizers* (1953), Shamil was a counterrevolutionary bandit and spy for foreign powers. Each Shamil contradicts the one that came before" (p. 122).

[204] Austin Lee Jersild (1995) alludes to this when he writes, "This religious history [of Islamic renewal], however, is precisely what was absent in the Russian representations of Shamil…These different versions of the mountaineers were explicitly divorced from the history of Sufi Islam in the North Caucasus…More recently, Soviet scholars tended to ignore not only Sufism but also the character of Shamil himself, and instead attempted to determine the structural changes in mountaineer society that precipitated the colonial war;" see his "Who was Shamil?: Russian colonial rule and Sufi Islam in the North Caucasus, 1859–1917, in *Central Asian survey*, (14), 2, 206-207.

role could have been played by any other religious movement, such as the virulently anti-Sufi Wahhābiyya or the "pacifistic" Qādiriyya order, which indeed supplanted the Naqshbandiyya of Chechnya as a vehicle of Chechen resistance)"[205] (Knysh, 2002b, p. 95).[206] Arguments of this kind have been part of recent deconstructionist efforts against theories proposing that Shāmil's resistant movement had been permeated and undergirded by the blind fanatical "muridism," or what others have alternatively attributed to Naqshbandī Sufism (esp. in its ideology and organization). So, for instance, the argumentative posture adopted by Knysh poses the risk of making claims – such as in the one quoted above – that seem just as extreme in its relativism as the ones he tries to refute for their essentialism.

A divergence of opinion has always existed among Naqshbandī Sufi shaykhs at large as well as, in the more specific and rarer cases, between a shaykh and his disciple (or successor). In the case of Shāmil and his shaykh, Ghumūqī, their differing views on certain matters of mostly a political significance have lately been presented in terms of a conflict, especially one that allegedly stands to adequately disprove the integrity of Shāmil's understanding and practice of Sufism. However, by viewing such conflicts not as static occurrences but as dynamic processes alternatively invites us to analyze the situation as one where Shāmil could be seen as utilizing his own agency to negotiate and reconcile his differences with Ghumūqī in order to more effectively respond to the threat posed by Russian colonial forces on their temporal and religious liberties. This becomes plausible, as we shall see, in light of the ongoing relationship between Shāmil and Ghumūqī where accommodation appears to be the rule and confrontation the exception. But it was not just agency that served as the sole determinant factor. By the same token, it was also the practical considerations of past Naqshbandī actors and the doctrinal arrangements of the *ṭarīqah* that together had, in some measure, informed, shaped, and moderated Shāmil's own actions and decision-making. In this way, while beyond the scope of our discussion, Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, which attempts to delicately balance the agency-structure dialectic, could also provide possible insights into how we may see Shāmil as being a maker of his own actions as well as one who was being influenced by the dominant

[205] Relative to other initiatic Sufi *ṭarīqah*s (including the Qādiriyya), it was far less complicated for adherents of the Naqshbandī path to reconcile their religious and spiritual concerns with worldly pursuits. Likewise, the "anti-Sufi Wahhābiyya" makes for a really bad comparison for reasons I do not wish to get into.

[206] Knysh makes similar claims throughout many of his other works as well. See, for instance, his *Sufism: A new history of Islamic mysticism* (Knysh, 2017, pp. 192ff).

religious and socio-cultural structure which, leading up to the time of Shāmil, were both intertwined with the Sufi tradition.[207]

Meanwhile, studies over the past two decades have increasingly challenged the presupposition that the martial *jihād* carried out by Shāmil was inherently linked with Naqshbandī Sufism.[208] These studies have attempted to lay bare the hidden assumptions and political agendas of colonial authorities and observers, and have also tried to demonstrate how more recent scholarship (by first-wave revisionists including Moshe Gammer and Anna Zelkina) end up in similar pitfalls, arguing that the very form of their interpretations resemble in large measure those of the past. With that said, second-wave revisionists[209] (such as Michael Kemper and Alexander Knysh) appear at times to be overambitious in their critiques – which they level against both past portrayals of Sufis as anti-colonial conspirers who were highly prone to militancy, and the relatively more recent idea that the doctrinal teachings of the Mujaddidī-Khālidī offshoot had served as the main ideological and organizational vehicle of anti-colonial resistance – by making the most of Naqshbandīs who either held quietist views during Shāmil's era or became collaborationists in ensuing periods. A corollary of many of these revisionist critiques (esp. second-wave ones) is that they seem to leave us with no more than a worldly persona of Shāmil, one that fundamentally reduces him to a 'military genius', a 'powerful personality', and so forth (see Knysh, 2002a, p. 164).

Aside from what has been mentioned so far, there are other issues revolving around Shāmil that complicate the matter further. (I should note that I do not intend on dwelling on these issues in any great detail, but believe they are worth mentioning because of how they may appear to diminish or cast doubt on Shāmil's background as a Sufi). Some of the contentions that have been raised by researchers of late are as

[207] Sufism's roots in Dagestan can be traced as far back to the eighth century. And by the eleventh century, the Dagestanī city of Derbent "was already a major Islamic center. On the northern frontier of the Muslim empire, it had effectively become a Sufi *Rabat*" (Kisriev & Ware, 2006, p. 495).

[208] A foremost critic in this regard is Michael Kemper; for instance, see his "Khālidiyya networks in Daghestan and the question of *jihād*" (Kemper, 2002, pp. 41-71). Alexander Knysh has also written about this issue in his "Sufism as an explanatory paradigm: The Issue of the motivations of Sufi resistance movements in western and Russian scholarship" (Knysh, 2002a, pp. 139-173).

[209] There seems to be a lack of critical engagement with the counterpoints made by (what I refer to as) second-wave revisionists seeing that studies across various disciplines have not only readily embraced many of their ideas but also disregarded other perspectives. See, for instance, David Motadel's (2014) *Islam and the European empires* (pp. 198-199); Arthur F. Buehler's (2016) *Recognizing Sufism* (pp. 130-132).

follows:

1. the uncertainty of whether Shāmil served as a guiding-shaykh, or if he simply possessed the credentials of one, or if he himself was just a Sufi aspirant;[210]
2. while many leading Naqshbandī figures are conventionally known to have authored works on topics dealing with Sufi ethics, discipline, principles, doctrines, and so forth, Shāmil has no extant works of this nature;[211]
3. although Shāmil along with his followers and close associates were nominally referred to as "*shaykh*" and "*murīd*s" respectively, we find no evidence in written sources of them having adhered to any type of spiritual discipline or mystical regimen;[212] and
4. Naqshbandī Sufism fulfilled a significant albeit non-essential function in Shāmil's resistant movement; if anything, replacing it with any other religious movement would have been no different.

The fourth contention is of particular importance seeing that the vast majority of historiography, in both past and present, have all in fact diverged from one another in their attempt to explain the telos or motivating force underlying Shāmil's anti-colonial resistance. On the one hand, as already mentioned, there is the claim that the ideological and organizational mainspring of Shāmil's resistant movement is to be found squarely within what Soviet observers have referred to as "muridism," or within what revisionist scholarship has more specifically attributed to the Mujaddidī-Khālidī variant of the Naqshbandī Sufi tradition. And on the other hand, Shāmil's background as a Naqshbandī Sufi is relegated to the level of being irrelevant or "incidental" (Knysh, 2002b, p. 95). Granted that the first explanation is partly based on inconclusive evidence, and that moreover, according to Knysh, one cannot incontrovertibly assert that the Khālidī-Naqshbandī teachings served as the 'principal vehicle of resistance' (see Knysh, 2002a, p. 167). The second, which Knysh himself

[210] In a similar fashion, Michael Kemper expresses his doubts regarding Ghāzī Muḥammad's shaykhdom as follows: "it is unclear whether this was simply an act of oral initiation (in the sense of *talqīn*) or confirmed by a document of authorization to spread the *ṭarīqa* (*ijāza*) (Kemper, 2002, p. 43).

[211] Shāmil was also well-versed in other Islamic disciplines. But even then, he is not known to have written any works on, for instance, Islamic law, as Knysh points out (Knysh, 2002a, p. 164).

[212] According to Iandarov, Shāmil's *murīd*s were not "active practicing members of the Naqshbandi brotherhood" (Knysh, 2002a, p. 156). Knysh, who seems to concur with Iandarov as he himself later bring up this very same issue, writes "If Shamil's levies were described as his *murīds*, does this really imply that they were fully-fledged practicing members of the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa*, who were subject to the complex process of Sufi initiation and world-renouncing exercises?" (Knysh, 2002a, pp. 167-168).

upholds, is also problematic. Knysh begins by qualifying what he wants to say as follows: "It seems more accurate to see it [i.e. Sufism] as an important part of the very complex mix of circumstances and factors that provoked and sustained the movements discussed in the study;" and then goes on to state that he

> "would go as far as argue that Naqshbandī Sufism was incidental to the resistant movement in the Caucasus (its role could have been played by any other religious movement, such as the virulently anti-Sufi Wahhābiyya or the "pacifistic" Qādiriyya order, which indeed supplanted the Naqshbandiyya of Chechnya as a vehicle of Chechen resistance)"[213] (Knysh, 2002b, p. 95).

Knysh's parenthetical remarks, where he basically denies that the Naqshbandīs were exceptional in any way and that the role of the movement could have easily been played by the likes of the Qādirīs or Wahhābīs, is misleading. While I do not ascribe to the idea that "Sufism served as the *main* institutional vehicle and ideological foundation of the movement" (*ibid*) (emphasis mine), I take issue with the notion that Naqshbandī Sufism was immaterial to the movement in question. Instead, an alternative reading would be to view the movement as taking a very specific course *because* Shāmil was a Naqshbandī who lived up to the ideals and principles of the *ṭarīqah*; in any other case, it is possible to infer that Shāmil would have likely failed to attract followers, gain legitimacy,[214] and unite the people toward a common goal in upholding the Shariah. This is not least because the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, as Alexandre Bennigsen puts it,

> "embodies what we might think of as doctrinal liberalism, in that it excludes fanaticism and radicalism. It is for this reason that the Naqshbandiya has been successful in superimposing itself on other brotherhoods, absorbing them without insisting on their elimination" (Bennigsen, 1985, p. 9).

So, although the resistant movement in the Caucasus could have theoretically been led by any religious movement other than the Naqshbandiyyah, their reception would

[213] Relative to other initiatic Sufi *ṭarīqah*s (including the Qādiriyya), it was far less complicated for adherents of the Naqshbandī path to reconcile their religious and spiritual concerns with worldly pursuits. Likewise, the "anti-Sufi Wahhābiyya" makes for a really bad comparison for reasons I do not wish to get into.

[214] As noted by Moshe Gammer (1994), "A central part of Shamil's *sharī* legitimacy was the support given to him by the *'ulamā'*…Such a continuing and wholehearted support by the *'ulamā'* (with the one exception of Sulaymān Efendī) could only have been the result of their full identification with the *imām*'s views and their trust and belief in him. Such feelings cannot result from coercion. Rather, they were due to Shamil's observance of the *sharī'a*, his spotless way of life and the fact that he himself was an *'ālim* and a *ṣūfī shaykh*" (Gammer, 1994, p. 238).

not have conceivably been the same for several reasons, including those that have already been loosely set out and (it is hoped) will be made more apparent after giving careful consideration of the evidence at hand.

For our purposes, we may divide Shāmil's life into three major phases: (1) his educational upbringing during his early childhood and adolescence, which was a time Shāmil spent in devotion to cultivating both his physical and mental capacities; (2) the enhancement of his spiritual intelligence, a task he set out to accomplish as an adult which was aimed at harnessing and complementing his acquired abilities through mystical contemplation on the Naqshbandī path; and (3) his professional career as the head of state and leader of a resistant movement against imperialist Russian forces. It is worth noting that in the context of the third phase of his life, which might almost seem counterintuitive with respect to the two previous ones, it is unclear whether Shāmil's intentions and former preparations were ever really set on becoming a political and military leader. For this reason and many others, it therefore seems problematic to simply reduce Shāmil's person to his role as a temporal leader, not least because it does little justice to such a diverse and complex figure.

While relatively short-lived compared to his other undertakings, the second phase of Shāmil's life was by no means insignificant, as it saw him spend several years engaging with the mystical doctrines and practices of the Naqshbandī Sufi tradition. A matter that is often overlooked in this regard is Shāmil's choice not to immediately join the war effort led by Ghāzī Muḥammad. We are told that Shāmil at the time instead continued pursuing his calling on the mystical path under the tutelage of his Sufi shaykh Ghumūqī (see Blanch, 1960, p. 55; cf. Gammer, 1994, p. 69). This is rather telling not least because Shāmil's reassessment of his own priorities and his decision to eventually take up arms seems to have been more of a matter of obligation than one of personal choice: "Although Shamyl was convinced of his mission, of Allah's divine promptings, he was not, by nature personally ambitious. He did not seek power or aggrandizement except as a means to an end—the execution of Allah's will" (Blanch, 1960, p. 112). This point is further confirmed in Shāmil's disinclined spirit and pensive mood which he often displayed in the event that he had to leave "to survey his domains, lead his troops, or preach the Tarikat," the Georgian princesses who were held as "captives [by Shāmil] observed that he often seemed reluctant to leave; he would sigh and look around with an air of regret.

Then, shaking off his melancholy, he would vault into the saddle and setting his horse at the gates, thunder out at a gallop" (*ibid*, p. 353).

It goes without saying that Shāmil was no ordinary Naqshbandī.[215] As alluded to earlier, his overt political engagements has led researchers to cast doubt on Shāmil's credentials as a Sufi mystic. Not to mention his penchant for militancy, which not only exacerbates the said doubt for some, but also purportedly represents a clear perversion of the very essence of what Sufism stands for and teaches. A common criticism made in this regard – many of whom could be found citing in a proverbial fashion – is as follows: "the precepts of classical Sufism disallow participation in armed struggle, no matter how noble the cause."[216] A cursory reading of any major classical Sufi text (e.g. treatise, *tafsīr*, compendium) would quite easily refute the idea that Sufis were against taking up arms.[217] Likewise would a brief historical survey of Muslim societies with a Sufi presence serve to falsify any such claims.[218]

Shāmil was also not your typical militant and political leader. So, for instance, he does not always fare well when compared to his Sufi contemporaries such as Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Sanūsī (1787–1859) and Aḥmad al-Tijānī (1737–1815) – to use Knysh's comparative examples – both of whom had also led resistant movements against colonial aggressors. While it is true that Shāmil's "brief and business-like messages to his followers say practically nothing about his spiritual state or ascetic concerns" (Knysh, 2002a, p. 164), a faithful glance at his life as a whole would surely tell us a great deal more about Shāmil than what his letters may not necessarily reveal.

To the casual observer, Shāmil may have appeared to be, as Knysh puts it, "completely absorbed in the minute affairs of his state and in the incessant hostilities against the Russian army" (*ibid*), and yet, evidence, including certain indications of his ascetic impulse, suggest that he was never really consumed by his worldly

[215] Some have maintained that despite having been referred to as a "shaykh," Shāmil was not a Sufi master, at least in any official capacity, as evidence (or a lack thereof) suggests he was never granted an *ijāzah*, or the authority to teach and guide disciples on the mystical path.

[216] This is a view upheld by Andarbek Dudaevich Iandarov (1975) in his *Sufizm* (see Knysh, 2002a, p. 156; cf. Gammer, 1994, p. 315n16).

[217] For an excellent study on the Sufi understanding of armed struggle, see Harry S. Neale's (2017) *Jihad in premodern Sufi writings* which more than adequately demonstrates the positive reception of martial *jihād* in classical and post-classical Sufi literature.

[218] See Harry S. Neale's (2022) forthcoming book on *Sufi warrior saints: Stories of Sufi jihad from Muslim hagiography*.

engagements. Firstly, Shāmil was given to a non-indulgent lifestyle. There was nothing extravagant about his place of dwelling, and he strongly disliked any form of lavish adornment (see Blanch, 1960, pp. 341, 352). As one author describes, he "eats little, drinks only water, sleeps a few hours, and spends his hours of relaxation in reading the Koran and in prayer" (Wraxall, 1854, p. 60). Elsewhere, the same author writes: "Schamyl lives very modestly and soberly; he eats little, and only sleeps a few hours, and on many occasions, when in a trance, not at all" (*ibid*, p. 83). Shāmil's world-renouncing attitude was further evident in his penchant for self-discipline and physical suffering. We find Shāmil and Ghāzī Muḥammad on one occasion bidding that they be publicly lashed for having indulged in tasting wine presumably some time in the distant past (see Blanch, 1960, p. 55). Shāmil's aversion to the world could therefore be described as having been "psychologically felt, not physically dramatized by withdrawal from it" (Waines, 2005, p. 136). Shāmil is thus quoted to have said, "for all the treasures of the world are transitory, while eternal life is promised us" (Wraxall, 1854, p. 61). Similarly, in his testament, Shāmil writes: "I do not send you on a painful mission while remaining myself behind. Life, beginning with my own, is the cheapest commodity in the fulfilment of the tasks ahead of us" (Mahomedov, 2002, p. 242). He was also quite bookish, which had served to reinforce his disinterest in worldly pleasures even when they were readily available to him. This is one of the reasons why a great deal of honor and deference was shown for him by many a person including his Russian adversaries. As noted by one author, this was owing to his "perfect self-control, an immoveable calmness of aspect in moments of the utmost peril, and a rigid temperance in his mode of life, which seldom fails to ensure respect to those who have the means of indulgence within their reach" (Moser, 1856, p. 149).

As for the nature of Shāmil's austerity, this was at once personal and religious. Lesley Blanch hints at this duality when she writes: "The Caucasian people are by nature austere; besides Shamyl had long practised a monkish detachment from the world and the flesh" (Blanch, 1960, p. 117). Shāmil's personal austerity was informed by the longstanding customs and practices of the North Caucasus where possessing certain ascetic-like qualities were highly revered and especially desirable among men.[219] His religious austerity has its roots in Islam's renunciant (*zuhd*) and

[219] In her book *The sabres of paradise: Conquest and vengeance in the Caucasus*, Lesley Blanch (1960) offers us one of the more interesting accounts of Shāmil and the young Caucasian mountaineers. After describing their physical strength and beauty in detail, at the end of her

mystical (*taṣawwuf*) traditions. While the latter tradition did indeed absorb many elements of the former, both traditions nonetheless continued to be adopted by the learned Muslim scholars as two distinct modes of piety and ways of ethical living.[220] And unlike in renunciant piety where austerity played a central role, austerity in Islamic mysticism, while important, was perceived to be secondary to other higher objectives such as self-effacement and gnostic unveiling.

All things considered, the image and practical life of Shāmil echoed in many ways that of the Prophet Muḥammad.[221] His various personal, religious, social, economic, and political commitments often saw Shāmil having to engage in a balancing act of sorts. This is best illustrated when considering what a typical day for Shāmil actually looked like:

> "In general, he rose at dawn, to pray. At seven, he drank tea, and ate a little white bread, this meal being brought him by Shouanete. From then, until one o'clock, he worked, received his Naibs, and went over reports from his provinces or battlefields. His mid-day meal, always brought him by Shouanete and Zaïdate, was simple: a pilaff, and some raisins, or a little goat's cheese. The rest of the day was spent in meditation and prayer, or in theological discussions with the Mollah Jamul u'din. Sometimes Indris or Shah Abbas read the foreign journals to him, and most days, the children were brought to see him at dusk. At nine, he ate a frugal supper alone. At eleven, he went to bed, choosing, in strict rotation, a week at a time, his different wives. But after seven nights with one or the other, he always devoted twenty-four hours to solitary purifying prayers. On Friday, his whole day was spent in the mosque" (Blanch, 1960, p. 352).

It would appear that based on his daily routines, Shāmil dedicated a considerable amount of time to more personal and religious matters. This seems to be at odds with

description, she writes: "They trained themselves to run great distances, swiftly, at a level speed, without panting, by carrying a bullet, or a pebble, in their mouths. Their lives were a mixture of personal austerity and heroic excess" (Blanch, 1960, p. 49). Blanch elsewhere describes Shāmil as follows: "he was a noble, and though austerity was the first tenet of his faith, he never abandoned the fastidious standards of his caste" (Blanch, 1960, p. 52).

[220] That is to say that Sufism did not simply supplant the Islamic renunciant tradition as some researchers have suggested. Megan H. Reid (2017) does exceptionally well in demonstrating how these two traditions in fact thrived in parallel to one another from the twelfth century onward. She, for instance, maintains that although "asceticism may have been crucial to the Sufi path, but it was also crucial to the culture of Islamic law; ascetical attitudes and practices were seen as appropriate for the keepers of divine law" (Reid, 2017, p. 7).

[221] There are many moments where we find Shāmil expressly imitating the Prophet Muḥammad. Take the following decree issued by Shāmil as one such example: "When you defeat the unbelievers, do not kill old people, women and children. Do not burn cornfields, do not cut trees, do not slaughter animals (unless you need them to eat), do not cheat when you are in a mutual truce and do not violate a peace you concluded" (Mahomedov, 2002, p. 242).

the kind of worldly image that some have presented of Shāmil by drawing attention to his military operations and statecraft ambitions. Shāmil himself, however, could be found describing his mission, especially when it came to enforcing the Shariah, in quasi-prophetic terms, viewing it ultimately as one of fulfilling a divine purpose (see Zelkina, 2000, p. 177). In this regard, let us now take a closer look at one such source that mainly covers Shāmil's political and military career.

The sole surviving indigenous written account on Shāmil is a chronicle entitled *Bāriqah al-suyūf al-Dāghistāniyyah fī ba'ḍi al-ghazawāt al-Shāmiliyyah*.[222] As the title suggests, this work was originally written in Arabic and was penned firsthand by one of Shāmil's close confidants, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qarākhī (d. 1882). The *Bāriqah* offers us a fair amount of insight into certain aspects of Shāmil's early and mostly later life. Yet, unlike a typical biographical account, the bulk of the work covers the military campaigns that Shāmil had engaged in throughout his twenty-five-year career. The importance of the work could further be said to lie in the fact that it gives voice to an indigenous people who have had most of their history written for them by their Russian colonizers or other outside observers.

According to the author of the *Bāriqah*, the book was said to have been written with the following purpose in mind: "To admonish those who reflect on things carefully, we have recorded some of those events and holy battles as lessons for future generations and models for the perceptive" (al-Qarākhī, 2004, p. 10; cf. al-Qarākhī, 1946, p. 9). Therefore, apart from being just an account of historical facts, the book could also be considered as part of the genre of hagiography. Shāmil emerges not only as a just leader, but also a pious one worthy of both praise and emulation. Having wielded immense power and prestige, Shāmil's prowess as a temporal leader in particular – one of his more palpable traits throughout the work – tended to cast an enormous shadow on his accomplishments in other areas. He, for instance, exhibited the competence of both a religious scholar and a Sufi shaykh. However, as alluded to already, there is reasonable doubt as to whether he was either of the two in any official capacity. Although his mastery of various Islamic disciplines[223] and spiritual

[222] A partial translation of the *Bāriqah* is available in English by Ernest Tucker and Thomas Sanders; see al-Qarākhī (2004) "The shining of Daghestani swords in certain campaigns of Shamil (selected passages) in *Russian–Muslim confrontation in the Caucasus: Alternative visions of the conflict between Imam Shamil and the Russians, 1830–1859* (pp. 9-66).

[223] An early source relates Shāmil's educational upbringing as follows: "He [i.e. Shāmil] has had the great advantage over the other chieftains of the Caucasus, of being educated with every care by

training under leading Naqshbandī shaykhs is not something that should go unnoticed.[224] An encounter between Shāmil and the then Ottoman Grand Mufti serves as a clear attestation to Shāmil's proficiency in religious scholarship. The *Bāriqah* mentions that the Grand Mufti initially had reservations regarding Shāmil's knowledge, but that his doubts were immediately dispelled upon assessing his command in religious matters.[225] And while the issue of his competence as a Sufi shaykh persists, what nonetheless remains significant is Shāmil's spiritual upbringing by Ghumūqī as well as the ever close relationship he maintains with him throughout the entire duration of his imamate.

As one of Dagestan's leading Naqshbandī Sufi shaykhs at the time, Ghumūqī is known to have expressed his disagreements with Shāmil on certain issues, including the latter's decision to take military action against the threat posed on their temporal and religious liberties by the Russian encroachment. And while some studies have tended to overemphasize this issue, the apparent nature of Shāmil's dissent from Ghumūqī over the course of his imamate was mainly, if not exclusively, rooted in political considerations.[226] As far as their take on Sufism is concerned, there is no reason to believe, as some have implied, that Shāmil understood or practiced a kind of Sufism different from what Ghumūqī had taught him. Since there are no works at our disposal that were written by Shāmil, including any that delineate his Sufi thought, it would therefore be instructive for us to take a closer look at a Sufi treatise penned by Ghumūqī himself. This will provide us with some level of insight into what actually informed Shāmil's own understanding and practice of Naqshbandī Sufism.

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one of the most learned and eloquent men of his country, the well-known Moullah Tshelel-Eddin, nephew and disciple of the great warrior prophet Mansour-bey, to whose instructions he is indebted for the proficiency he has acquired in the language, history, literature, and philosophy of the Arabs, as well as the extraordinary eloquence he is said to display, both as a warrior chieftain, and as a skilful propounder of religion" (Spencer, 1855, p. 353).

[224] As one author comments regarding Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qarākhī's *Bāriqah* that it "covered Shamil's whole career by focusing on episodes that revealed how Shamil embodied the Naqshbandi Sufi ideal of the leader. al-Qarakhi showed him as a man mystically in touch with God but also very faithful to the letter of Islamic law" (Tucker & Sanders, 2005, p. 7).

[225] The conversation between Shāmil and the Ottoman Grand Mufti is recorded in the *Bāriqah* as follows: *Wa kāna hunālika shaykh al-Islām ay muftī al-imām wa kāna yuhābih min jihah al-'ilm fa-mtaḥanahu fa-lam yajiduhu kamā yukhāfah* (al-Qarākhī, 1946, p. 250); "The *shaykh al-Islam* or mufti of the [great] imam was there and was skeptical of [Shamil's] level of [religious] knowledge. He examined him and did not find him [deficient] as he had feared" (Tucker & Sanders, 2005, p. 61).

[226] While Knysh (2017) notes that Ghumūqī "warned his disciples [Ghāzī Muḥammad and Shāmil] against pursuing it [i.e. martial *jihād*] for both religious and military reasons" (p. 198), we are left with no indication of what the "religious reasons" Ghumūqī was purported to have given were.

It is often the case that Ghumūqī along with his al-*Ādāb al-marḍiyyah fī al-ṭarīqah al-Naqshbandiyyah* are simply seen as a mere extension of the Khālidī-Naqshbandī Sufi tradition. We, therefore, scarcely find a more critical understanding of both the person and the text being spared throughout the literature, that is, on their own terms without resorting to vague generalizations.[227] Like many of his predecessors, Ghumūqī does not simply appropriate everything from the Naqshbandī corpus. Instead, he chooses to highlight aspects of Naqshbandī *adab* ('etiquette' or 'ethical code') that he deems important and central to his own mission as a guiding-shaykh. The idea that Ghumūqī's *Ādāb* is atypical of Naqshbandī works in general is also confirmed by Devin DeWeese (1988) who observes that,

> "indeed the Arabic text [i.e. Ghumūqī's *Ādāb*] itself, while hardly the most thorough or representative expression of Naqshbandī thought, may deserve republication as a 19th-century summary of the doctrinal and practical principles which underlay the political and military movement in the North Caucasus led most notably by the illustrious Imām Shāmil" (DeWeese, 1988, p. 294).

In this vein, Anna Zelkina (2000) does well to point out one such aspect of Ghumūqī's understanding of doctrinal Sufism that did not altogether align with the Khālidī-Naqshbandī tradition:

> "Despite Sheikh Khalid's insistence on instructing all *murids* of his sub-order to practise *rabita* by linking with his own image, this doctrine had apparently been abandoned by the North Caucasian Naqshbandis, who restored *rabita* directly with one's immediate sheikh. They did, however, accept the validity of *rabita* practised through the spirituality (*ruhaniyya*) of a deceased sheikh, especially that of Baha al-Din al-Naqshband himself" (Zelkina, 2000, p. 113).

As for our purpose in drawing attention to the *Ādāb*, this is partly hinted by DeWeese when he states that Ghumūqī's "treatise may provide insight into the specific features of the Naqshbandī vision which inspired the movement termed *muridizm* by its Russian opponents" (DeWeese, 1998, p. 295).

[227] We find Knysh, for instance, dismissively stating that "The contents of this treatise [i.e. Ghumūqī's *Ādāb*] is quite typical of contemporary Naqshbandi literature and reveals no interest in either *jihād* or political activism in general" (Knysh, 2002a, p. 164). As for his latter point, it seems rather disingenuous to expect to find any concern over politics or martial *jihād* to be expressed in a work dedicated to Sufi *adab* being a genre that specifically deals with mystical decorum.

Ghumūqī's *Ādāb* consists of an introduction followed by eleven chapters and a conclusion. At the outset, he writes that

> 'the best of actions and the most noble of states is conformance to the prophetic way at all times; and [achieving] this conformity is not possible other than with mystical journeying (*sulūk*) on the Sufi path, [and, by extension, following one] of the Sufi pathways (*ṭarā'iq*; sing. *ṭarīqah*) of servitude that connect to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) by means of the Companions to the Sufi shaykhs' (Ghumūqī, 1902, pp. 1-2) (translation mine).

Ghumūqī then elaborates on why the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* is exceptional, stating that its foundation is securely established on the way of the Companions; it is also free from reprehensible innovations (*bid'ah*) such as: the loud *dhikr*, mystical audition (*samā'*), ecstatic dancing (*raqṣ*), spiritual trance (*wajd*), mystical fervor (*tawājid*) and so forth (see *ibid*, p. 2).

Ghumūqī, as a Dagestanī scholar and Sufi shaykh, offers a very concise take on Naqshbandī Sufi etiquette. As pointed out by Zelkina, Ghumūqī concentrates on what he sees as four essential features of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*: *tawbah*, *dhikr*, *rābiṭah*, and *ṣuḥbah* (see Zelkina, 2000, pp. 111-115). Ghumūqī prefaces his discussion on *tawbah* by bringing the reader's attention to the necessity of having sound and sufficient knowledge in matters of creed (*'aqīdah*) and practical jurisprudence (*fiqh*). He goes on to state: 'apart from the [two] disciplinary sciences mentioned, verily then there is purifying the ego-self (*nafs*) and cleansing the spiritual heart. For prior to this there is a great need to liberate the ego-self from the prison of natural instincts and to polish the mirror of the heart from the hindering veils for the purpose of: penetrating His supreme presence, discerning the true realities of things, and comprehending the intricacies of the disciplinary sciences. Then [there is] purging one's heart, removing from [it] pride, anger, envy, and so forth' (Ghumūqī, 1902, pp. 5-6). He ends his discussion on *tawbah* as follows: 'know that verily you will not arrive at God except with it [i.e. *tawbah*]. For the object of mystical wayfaring is arriving at the King of kings [i.e. God], and it will not be achieved except with it [i.e. *tawbah*]' (*ibid*, p. 33).

There are many other points Ghumūqī makes in the *Ādāb* that stand out. He, for

instance, underscores the idea of *ḥuqūq al-ādamiyyīn* or 'the rights of human-beings' throughout the text, particularly as a condition that the Sufi disciple must fulfill in one's mystical journey (see *ibid*, p. 28). Ghumūqī also repeatedly makes strong assertions regarding the necessity of adhering to a Sufi *ṭarīqah* – something that we do not typically find explicitly stated in Naqshbandī works. According to him, it is not possible to purify the self from animal properties (*al-ṣifāt al-ḥayawāniyyah*) except with treading the mystical path [as a part] of a Sufi *ṭarīqah*, which is the path of refining ethical character traits (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*) and knowing the condemnable character traits (*al-akhlāq al-dhamīmah*); and the treatment of its eradication is to know the praiseworthy character traits (*al-akhlāq al-ḥamīdah*) and the path of [having] pure intent with one another (*ṭarīqah ittiṣāf*)' (*ibid,* p. 34).

After dealing with the issue of *tawbah*, Ghumūqī goes on to discuss the essentiality of purifying the ego-self and, more specifically, treating condemnable character traits which, according to him, pose as grievous obstructions on the mystical path. He singles out eleven such traits: enmity (*ḥiqd*), envy (*ḥasad*), anger (*ghaḍab*), self-admiration (*'ujub*), arrogance (*kibr*), avarice (*bukhl*), covetousness (*ṭama'*), eager desire (*ḥirṣ*), idleness (*baṭālah*), cowardice (*jubn*), and love of the world (*ḥubb al-dunyā*) (*ibid,* pp. 34-38). While many of the vices mentioned here by Ghumūqī are a commonplace in Sufi literature, emphasis on the vice of cowardice, however, is more conventionally found in works in the genre of ḥadīth[228] or those of Islamic ethics such as virtue-ethics and chivalric-ethics (*futuwwah*). This could be understood in light of the fact that Sufis are more concerned with elaborating on matters related to the "greater" *jihād*, by which they mean the spiritual struggle to overcome the enemy from within the inner self. Meanwhile, the vice of cowardice (along with the virtue of courage) is associated with what Sufis see as the "lesser" *jihād* that is the physical or military struggle against the enemy on the battlefield.

Cowardice is a sign of weakness, physically and spiritually, and the way to treat it, Ghumūqī writes, 'is to recognize: [firstly,] that this may provoke condemnation (*sabab al-madhammah*) and contemptibleness (*ḥaqārah*) among all people; that verily the appointed time of death is decreed, wherefore [over]cautiousness is of no use; and that courageousness (*shajā'ah*) is a distinguishing mark and one of the

[228] See, for instance, chapters dedicated to *jihād* in major ḥadīth collections such as *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* where the vice of cowardice is specifically mentioned in the section *bāb al-shajā'ah fī al-ḥarb wa al-jubn* (al-Bukhārī, pp. 698ff.).

superior qualities' (Ghumūqī, 1902, p. 38). The next and last condemnable character trait Ghumūqī mentions is 'love of the world', which is closely connected with that of cowardice. Because it is the coward who owing to his or her love of the world – implying also a hatred for death[229] – refrains from taking action when a pressing need demands it.

Praiseworthy character traits boil down to temperance (*'iffah*), Ghumūqī notes, after which he then briefly describes eleven such traits: tenderness (*wudd*), joy (*bishr*), sound thinking (*salāmah al-ṣadr*), munificence (*sakhā'*), courageousness (*shajā'ah*), forbearance (*ṣabr*), resoluteness (*himmah*), fidelity (*wafā'*), concealment of secret[s] (*katmān al-sirr*), contentment (*qanā'ah*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) (*ibid*, pp. 38-42). We, however, learn in subsequent discussions that the main object of concern for Ghumūqī is none other than *dhikr*.

Ghumūqī tells us that 'verily *dhikr* is cultivating in one's heart and tongue the name worthy of recollection (i.e. God); it is a matter that is necessary and obligatory (*farḍ*) at all times…[*dhikr*] is the sword of the disciple (*sayf al-murīd*), the fortress of those who recollect God (*ḥuṣn al-dhākirīn*), and the unfolding of intimacy with God (*manshūr al-wilāyah*)' (*ibid*, p. 49). 'Ultimately', Ghumūqī concludes, '[*dhikr*] is one of the most direct ways for mystical attainment (*wuṣūl*) and one of the most superior acts for mystical receptivity (*qabūl* or *qubūl*)' (*ibid*). But Ghumūqī once again is apt to caution that *dhikr* alone is not enough to be among the men of distinction (*mablagh al-rijāl*) and nor will it result in realizing the presence of God, for this can only be achieved under the instruction (*talqīn*) of a perfected Sufi shaykh (*al-shaykh al-kāmil*) qualified to impart the *adhkār* (sing. *dhikr*) properly to the disciple (*ibid*, pp. 52-54). Another point Ghumūqī makes, which we do not find in many Naqshbandī works, is that he stresses that the intended purpose is not to be in a distinct space, [whether] in the heavens or on earth, with God's presence as one might suspect, for verily God does not encompass space as He is highly exalted (*ibid*, p. 55).

Ghumūqī then proceeds to discuss the matter of *rābiṭa h* before he continues to

[229] This is substantiated in the Quran and Hadith. For evidence of the former there is in Surah al-Tawbah the following passage: "O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that when you are asked to march forth in the Cause of Allah, (i.e., Jihad), you cling heavily to the earth? Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter?" (Quran, 9:38-39).

further elaborate on the etiquette of *dhikr*. As alluded to earlier, his take on *rābiṭah* reveals a divergence from the way his spiritual predecessor shaykh Khālid understood and utilized its practice. Contrary to Khālid who saw it imperative that *rābiṭah* be applied throughout one's mystical journey while also insisting that it be effectuated exclusively through his spiritual essence, Ghumūqī instead upholds that *rābiṭah*, while a most valuable technique, is not necessary if a seeker is able to reach the 'station of witnessing' (*maqām al-shuhūd*) God without it (*ibid*, p. 62). With that said, however, Ghumūqī clearly sees *rābiṭah* as one of the essential ways to mystical attainment. He explains that every mystical undertaking in some measure requires *rābiṭah* and that there is nothing more beneficial than it, that is, in this particular stage. And therefore, this is the very reason why, according to Ghumūqī, some have designated the Naqshbandiyyah as the '*ṭarīqah* of *rābiṭah*' (*ibid*, p. 58).

Ghumūqī's subsequent discussions on *murāqabah*, *ṣuḥbah*, and *khalwah* is especially pertinent to the topic at hand as this is where he underscores the importance of keeping close social ties and remaining in the midst of the people while advancing on the mystical path. He writes that once *dhikr* is ingrained in the heart and permeates the organs, this leads to what Ghumūqī describes as the awakening of *murāqabah* or 'constant awareness' of God (*ibid*, p. 91). At this stage, 'the heart becomes receptive to the unveiling of true-reality, an unerring discernment (*firāsah*) ensues, mystical unveiling abides, and one becomes a Sufi aspirant (*mutaṣawwif*)[230] in the apparent and invisible realm (*mulk wa malakūt*) and intimate in the presence of [God in] the divine realm (*jabarūt*)…' (*ibid*, pp. 90-91). He then continues to say, '*murāqabah* is one of the greatest forms of worship and one of the most perfect forms of obedience; for this reason, the spiritual elite among the Companions (*khawāṣ al-Ṣaḥābah*), may God be pleased with them, were constantly preoccupied with *murāqabah* and with heightened reflection (*ṭūl al-fikrah*); and [as] it is mentioned in the Hadith: *an hour of reflection is better than a year of worship*' (*ibid*, p. 91). Ghumūqī then points out that 'the manner in which *murāqabah* is to be carried out requires cleanliness of the body and garments (*ṭāhir al-badan wa al-thiyāb*),[231] and presence of the inner-heart (*al-qalb al-fuād*) in the public space (*makān ẓāhir*) where bustling sounds do not influence the person' (*ibid*, p. 92). Ghumūqī, however, is quick to remind the reader

[230] As noted by Arthur F. Buehler, *mutaṣawwif* best corresponds to a 'Sufi aspirant' since "it reminded everyone that a person was still on the path" (Buehler, 2016, p. 5).

[231] Ghumūqī later also mentions that a disciple is to maintain bodily cleanliness while in *ṣuḥbah* with his shaykh as this will serve to increase the spiritual flow (*al-ifāḍah*) and make it more abundant (see Ghumūqī, 1902, p. 110).

that in order to undertake *murāqabah* one must 'prefer mixing with the people, perform supererogatory acts of devotion (*nawāfil*), recite the Quran, recollect God with the tongue, and continue with devotional litanies, because if the seeker has reached this level, then it is possible for him to draw [even] nearer to [God] with all of his actions, and to know the way to profuse mystical immersion (*istifāḍah*) in one of the most splendid of states (*aḥsan al-aḥwāl*)' (*ibid*, p. 93).

The practice of *ṣuḥbah* ('companionship'; or an intimate discussion on spiritual matters) between a disciple(s) and a Sufi shaykh is one of the more crucial aspects of Naqshbandī *adab* alongside *rābiṭa h* and *murāqabah*. This is because all it takes, Ghumūqī stresses, is 'a single session of *ṣuḥbah* for a disciple to reach the level of perfection and to have the radiance of God's splendor and beauty be unveiled for him…' (*ibid*, p. 105). He goes as far as to state that 'self-disciplinary practices (*riyāḍāt*) other than *ṣuḥbah* with shaykhs and maintaining close ties with perfected shaykhs will confer on one nothing but doubt and deception (*waswasah wa jarbazah*)' (*ibid*). In fact 'what the seeker finds in a single moment in *ṣuḥbah* with a perfected shaykh', Ghumūqī continues to emphasize, 'he will not find by studying a thousand books and [spending] a thousand years in self-disciplinary practices because a perfected shaykh could transform the disciple in a single session of *ṣuḥbah* and have him reach the level of witnessing God (*mushāhadah*), which is not possible through any other way than by *ṣuḥbah*' (*ibid*, pp. 103-104). Ghumūqī then ties this to the concept of *maḥabbah* or 'affectionate attachment' with the shaykh, which he says is one of the most significant principles of the *ṭarīqah*. He says, 'Verily a disciple does not draw near to the shaykh expect for his *maḥabbah* for him, and sufficient *maḥabbah* with the shaykh [is what] brings about mystical attainment of God' (*ibid*, p. 116).

Ghumūqī concludes his *Ādāb* with a discussion on the foundational principles (*uṣūl*) of the Naqshbandiyyah and the necessity of keeping firm to them. Everything that has been mentioned in the previous chapters Ghumūqī encapsulates in these very principles. (What immediately stands out in this particular chapter is that Ghumūqī does not refer to any of the Naqshbandī principles in their original Persian – which, however, I shall provide – as seen in virtually all other works). He begins with the principle of *hūsh dar dam*: 'guarding against heedlessness in every breath one inhales and exhales; this is for the heart to be present with God in all of the breaths

[one takes]' (*ibid*, p. 117). Followed by the principles of *naẓar bar qadam* and *safar dar waṭan*. The former specifying that the physical eye is not to wander its gaze in any direction but one's own feet, for even a glance at others' speechless indignation (*wujūm al-aghyār*) will have an adverse effect on the heart; the latter is the inner spiritual journey from the world of creation (*'ālam al-khalq*) to the presence of God (*janāb al-Ḥaqq*) (*ibid*, pp. 118-119). Then there is the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*: 'the heart of the seeker is to be present with God and absent from creation with one's physical being among the people, viz. *al-murāqah*' (*ibid*, pp. 119-120). He then writes, 'solitude has two types: one is solitude of the outward and the other solitude of the inward'. Inner solitude is the true [form of] solitude and this is peculiar to the Naqshbandiyyah because its masters do not withdraw by means of outward solitude (*lā yakhtalūn bi'l-khalwah al-ẓāhir*), on the contrary, their solitude in regard to the internal is with the collective people (*khalwatuhum min ḥaythu al-bāṭin 'inda jam'iyyah al-nās*) (*ibid*, p. 120). Ghumūqī continues to elaborate on the remaining principles of *yād kard*, *bāz gasht*, *nigāh dasht*, *yād dasht*, *wuqūf-i zamānī*, *wuqūf-i 'adadī*, and *wuqūf-i qalbī* (*ibid*, pp. 121-124).

Ghumūqī's work demonstrates the importance he lays on: (1) remaining active in society (2) while abiding by the highest ethical standards in one's mystical journey (3) toward refining both outward behavior and inward disposition. It, moreover, represents a concise and cautiously written account of Naqshbandī *adab*. While, overall, Ghumūqī keeps to convention throughout the work, at times he reveals his own priorities in terms of what he deems is and is not worth discussing. Also, interestingly, apart from the concluding section, where he provides his own spiritual lineage (*ansāb*), no mention is made of other Naqshbandī shaykhs except for the *ṭarīqah*'s eponymous founder, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband: 'we are followers of the leader of the *ṭarīqah* and spiritual succor of the viceroy (*ghawth al-khalīfah*), Khwāja Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī Muḥammad al-Uwaysī al-Bukhārī' (*ibid*, p. 47); and also, 'Khwāja Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī said that our way is *al-ṣuḥbah* and the good is [to be found] in the collective (*al-khayr fī al-jam'iyyah*)' (*ibid*, p. 106).

In its theoretical and practical capacity, the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* was flexible and accommodating to personalities like Shāmil. He could (1) be a Sufi without having to consume himself in mystical pursuits, or be held responsible for the spiritual progress of his *murīd*s; and (2) act as the head of state and a lawgiver without demanding that

he adhere to a crude and radical Wahhābist doctrine – to use Knysh's example – which may have deterred his people, especially owing to their nature which, as Michael A. Reynolds describes, was given to "pugnacity" and, meanwhile, their "ethics, norms, and social organization rendered them allergic to central control" (Reynolds, 2004, p. 5).[232] The question of what was it that made them and others receptive to Shāmil's call to unite and decide to implement the Shariah, although partially addressed in the context of his ability to reconcile his worldly and other-worldly concerns, requires further scrutiny.[233]

Shāmil's sensibilities and his general mindset certainly seems to fit the mold of a traditionalist scholar who, broadly-speaking, embraced the rational, legal, political, and mystical traditions of Islam. As for the Naqshbandī Sufi tradition, not only did teachings such as *khalwat dar anjuman*, which stipulated being in contemplative solitude with God while remaining active in society, serve *not* to inhibit Shāmil to actively engage in armed resistance, but they also discouraged him to live in seclusion in pursuit of his own spiritual transformation and well-being. The said precept also disallowed him to remain a quietist, which was the stance he had initially taken before he rose to power, in the face of a discerning threat against their political and religious liberties.

In sum, the tension between withdrawing from the world and being involved in it is a recurring theme in Shāmil's life and career. Every moment that we find Shāmil disengaging into the transmundane, he always ends up having to return back to the mundane due to his worldly commitments. The former is especially evident in the case that he does not join the war effort initially. And after his mundane affairs were in order, Shāmil could be seen in a consistent manner returning back to his other-worldly engagements.[234]

[232] The Caucasus consisted of radically fragmented village-states whose inhabitants are historically known to have resisted all forms of foreign intervention. In large part, this was enabled by their terrestrial environment, which was not easily penetrable for outsiders to establish control and influence over the region. Another corollary was the disunity among the village-states. One of the first attempts at uniting the Caucasus was carried out by Shaykh Manṣūr (1734–1794), who was partially successful in this respect. Shāmil is therefore often credited for bringing Manṣūr's unfulfilled legacy into full view.

[233] Edmund Spencer (1855) in his *Turkey, Russian, the Black Sea, and Circassia* has this to say in regard to Shāmil: "he has succeeded in attracting to his standard thousands of deserters from the Russian army, and he now sees himself surrounded by a life-guard, the Murids (Murtosigats), who, like Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides, are at once soldiers and religious enthusiasts" (Spencer, 1855, p. 354).

[234] For instance, after attending a funeral procession, Shāmil is said to have "rode back to his headquarters for the period of meditation, prayer and fasting in the Mosque" (Blanch, 1960, p.

5.2.3 Aḥmad Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Gümüşhānevī

With his unrelenting commitment to the revival (*iḥyā*) of Islam, outspoken resistance to westernization (read Europeanization), and highly mystical engagements, the Ottoman scholar and Naqshbandī shaykh Aḥmad Ḍiyā' al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafā Gümüşhānevī would find himself time and again standing at the crossroads between entangled pursuits. Gümüşhānevī's persistent endeavor to tend to both his worldly and other-worldly affairs, while remaining active in the thick of society, is where his practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* becomes especially meaningful. In this way, two dimensions of his life warrant special consideration. The first being the outward and inward struggles he experiences in his spiritual journey toward God and knowledge. The second being the implications of his temporal journey through his various exploits across the world and his life in Istanbul – the greater part of which was spent in the very heart of the caliphal city where he administered his affairs in a *tekke* situated right opposite the *Bāb-ı Āli*, viz. the Ottoman civil-bureaucratic headquarters otherwise known as 'the Sublime Porte'.[235]

Our main source on Gümüşhānevī is a biographical work entitled *Hadiyyah al-'ārifīn fī manāqib quṭb al-'ārifīn mawlānā Aḥmad Ḍiyā' al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafā al-Gumushkhānawī*.[236] Written in Ottoman-Turkish and in the form of an epic by Muṣṭafā Fevzī b. Nu'mān (1871–1924) – one of his closest disciples who served and studied under him for fifteen years (Eken, 2021, p. 7) – the *Hadiyyah* delivers an intimate account of not only Gümüşhānevī's upbringing and career but also his general frame of mind toward people, religion, and the world. We are told that Gümüşhānevī had possessed a deep passion for knowledge from an early age. His father, however, would have him take up a craft and engage in trade and commerce in the city of Trabzon. Out of deference to him, Gümüşhānevī complied with his father's wishes for some time. His thirst for knowledge was nevertheless far too

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[235] The appellation 'Sublime Porte' corresponded to a physical gateway, although its usage gradually turned into a metonym for the Ottoman government; see C.V. Findley (1980) *Bureaucratic reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, p. 5. On the significance of the Porte and how it came to serve as a new balance of power and thereby displace the sultanic palace, see C.V. Findley (2008) "The Tanzimat" in R. Kasaba, (Ed.), *The Cambridge history of Turkey: Turkey in the modern world*, vol. 4, pp. 13ff.

[236] The work is also alternatively known in Ottoman-Turkish simply as *Menākıb-ı Ziyāiyye* (see Eken, 2021, p. 8).

pressing, and he thus remained unconvinced that this was the path he was destined to take. In the meantime, his biographer notes that from a young age he even denied himself any recreational activities, and instead would use all of his free time to secretly study under local scholars (Fevzī, 1895, p. 17). It was at the tender age of eighteen, on the request of his father, that Gümüşhānevī embarked on a journey to the caliphal capital of Istanbul with his uncle. The intended purpose of his trip was said to be for business, but Gümüşhānevī had other plans in mind, or so it seemed. Despite his father's wishes and pleas for him not to abandon his side, Gümüşhānevī confesses of his inability to pass up the opportunity to study in the city's acclaimed madrasahs (*ibid*, pp. 18, 20). As his biographer recounts the moment Gümüşhānevī had decided to stay in Istanbul to pursue knowledge, his elation at witnessing the city's spiritual and intellectual splendor is described as follows:

> 'while looking to the heavens I found [what I was looking for] on earth, I have come to the center of knowledge and was filled with joy. It is unimaginable that I shall leave this regal city, now I shall stay here and complete my *sayr wa sulūk* (path of 'contemplation and action'). Forgive me my righteous uncle, do not be offended O my noble one…[tell my father] to extend his blessings and not to reprimand me, [and that] he now pray for me' (*ibid*, p. 20).

Thus, Gümüşhānevī would leave behind his family and life back in Trabzon,[237] and with no money he affirmed that only God was his helper (*mu'īn*); he was a stranger with no confidants or friends, it was only God, it is said, that was his intimate friend (*anīs*); there was no one to support him, but God alone is sufficient, he said (*ibid*, p. 21).

Gümüşhānevī studied at Bāyezid Madrasah and later at Mahmudpaşa Madrasah where he mastered countless disciplines including *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, *ḥadīth*, *'lim al-akhbār*, *'ilm al-badī'*, *manṭiq*, *'ilm al-ma'ānī*, *kalām*, *ḥikmah*, *'ilm al-bayān*, *hayat*, and *qawāfī* (Fevzī, 1895, p. 27; cf. Gümüşhānevī, n.d., pp. 1v-11r). He would start teaching at the former institution in Bāyezid, gaining a considerable following over a relatively short period of time (Gündüz, 2020, p. 35). It was in 1844 after becoming a fully accredited scholar that he turned his attention to the Sufi path and pledged his spiritual allegiance to the Khālidī shaykh Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Arwādī (d.

[237] Literally it reads, 'he migrated [away] from *māsivā* ('everything but God)' (Fevzī, 1895, p. 21).

1275/1858) (see Fevzī, 1895, pp. 26-27).[238] Over time he became intimately acquainted with the Islamic mystical tradition, and in 1848, at the age of thirty-five, was granted an *ijāzah* to act as a Sufi master (*ibid*, p. 32).

While Naqshbandī texts, with very little exception, have traditionally expressed a consistent and clear position on solitude as strictly an inner-contemplative mystical technique, Gümüşhānevī is known to have deviated from this idea by embracing the classical Sufi understanding and practice of solitude as a spiritual exercise undertaken in intermittent retreat. He had in fact innovated a highly systematized operation where Sufi aspirants would take an oath and keep to a set of rules before ritually secluding themselves in a cell located in the confines of his *tekke*. Gümüşhānevī's departure from the traditional Naqshbandī practice of solitude, however, could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, he had received an *ijāzah* in multiple Sufi paths such as the 'Qādirī, Suhrawardī, Chishtī, and Kubrawī' *ṭarīqah*s (Fevzī, 1895, p. 32),[239] which appears to be a common trend among Naqshbandīs of the Mujaddidī sub-branch. Secondly, although in principle he was a Naqshbandī shaykh, he is nonetheless said to have considered himself a Shādhilī in spirit (*mashraban*) (see Gündüz, 2020, p. 62-68). These two peculiar aspects of Gümüşhānevī's background does not seem to have much precedent in the Naqshbandī tradition as a whole – at least as far as I have been able to ascertain – and explains to some extent why he chose to implement solitude in this way. As for his systematic approach in keeping records of everything including details about those who entered into solitude, this is primarily attributable to the nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms which had a centralizing and bureaucratizing effect on how Sufi *ṭarīqah*s were expected to operate. With that said, his systematic approach to solitude along with the establishment of his *tekke* (as we shall see below) do not seem to be essential elements in the context of Gümüşhānevī's life as he spent the majority of it in devotion to his two-fold mission of regenerating Muslim societies and resisting the encroachment of westernization.

Gümüşhānevī's comprehensive knowledge in various Sufi traditions is also reflected in some of his writings, particularly his encyclopedic work entitled *Jāmi' al-uṣūl fī*

[238] Arwādī had held the position of a mufti in Tripoli and was Khālid al-Baghdādī's immediate disciple as well as his last successor (see Gündüz, 2020, p. 55).

[239] According to Irfan Gündüz, Gümüşhānevī was granted an *ijāzah* to the degree of *khalīfah al-tāmmah* (see Gündüz, 2020, p. 50).

al-awliyā', which is dedicated to a comprehensive overview on the methodologies used in various Sufi pathways. Having thus written the *Jāmi'* from a general Sufi framework, Gümüşhānevī naturally does not confine his approach to the doctrinal teachings of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* – his major Sufi affiliation. A good example of this would be his discussion on solitude and seclusion. He, for instance, writes that solitude is necessary in order to attain gnostic knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and spiritual bliss (*sa'ādah*) (Gümüşhānevī, 1997 p. 182). He then goes on to briefly explain the twenty-five conditions of solitude and concludes with the following observation:

> 'One should know that the Sufi path is founded on eight fundamentals: fasting (*ṣawm*), solitude (*khalwah*), constant ritual purity (*dawām al-wuḍū'*), beneficence (*iḥsān*), spiritual bond (*rābiṭah*), abandonment of complaining over the world (*tark al-i'tirāḍ 'alā al-dunyā*), recollection of God in the heart (*al-dhikr fī al-qalb*), and silence of the tongue (*al-ṣamt li-lisān*)' (*ibid*, p. 187).

Later he writes, 'One should know that both seclusion and solitude are beneficial (*ma'rūf*) and are demanded (*maṭlūb*) by the religious law of Islam (*shar'an*) (*ibid*, p. 193). He gives the example of the Prophet Abraham who is quoted in the Quran as follows:

> 'I shall withdraw from you and that unto which ye pray beside Allah, and I shall pray unto my Lord. It may be that, in prayer unto my Lord, I shall not be unblest. So, when he had withdrawn from them and that which they were worshipping beside Allah, We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a prophet' (Quran, 19:48-49).

He follows this with a quote attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad: 'the most beloved of people to God are those who flee with their religion (*al-farrārūn bi-dīnihim*), and God will resurrect them on the Day of Judgment with Jesus the son of Mary' (Gümüşhānevī, 1997 p. 193; cf. Gümüşhānevī, 2019, p. 41). According to Sufis, 'solitude is a quality of the spiritual elite (*ṣifah ahl al-ṣafwah*) and seclusion is one of the indications of close attachment (*al-wuṣlah*) [with God]…and at the height of solitude is its realization of intimacy [with God]' (*ibid*). Moreover, 'the seclusion of the spiritual elite is the separation from fleshly attributes to angelic attributes. [In this way,] Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq said: wear what the people wear and eat what they eat, and separate [yourself from them] with your inner secret' (*ibid*, p. 194). This notion of 'the seclusion of the spiritual elite', which draws attention to its internalization as a

state of being, is suggestive of the Naqshbandī idea of *khalwat dar anjuman*.

Gümüşhānevī's practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* seems to have ironically reinforced his exemplary status as a learned, charismatic, and world-renouncing public figure. His renunciant lifestyle in particular was especially prominent:

> 'He would give his wealth away to people in need'; he avoided eating an assorted meal; in fact, he preferred to feed others for the sake of God (Fevzī, 1895, p. 50). He typically ate bread with molasses (*ibid*) and made sure to start and end his meals with salt (Şevki, 2013, p. 225). Even when weak and sick, never would he stretch out his legs (Fevzī, 1895, p. 51) (translation mine).

Additionally, many were left with a power impression of Gümüşhānevī as one whose state of being is said to have been constantly immersed in the presence of God. His biographer, Muṣṭafā Fevzī tells us that, 'His [spiritual] essence was always free from worldly affairs' (Fevzī, 1895, p. 34). Moreover, he also elicited admiration for possessing an unpretentious demeanor. For instance, we are told that he made it a habit not to divulge his own inner state to others: 'He would not convey to anyone his state [of being], his [spiritual] essence was engrossed with the love of God' (Fevzī, 1895, p. 50). Likewise, 'His [corporeal] body was enveloped with the recollection of God, such that his organs would tremble with His recollection' (*ibid*). We are also told elsewhere that 'his worldly pursuits and human affairs would never interfere with his constant preoccupation with *ḥuḍūr*, *murāqabah*, and *tarbiyah* of his disciples' (Şevki, 2013, p. 225) (translation mine).

Throughout his Sufi treatise *Rūḥ al-'ārifīn*, which is on the stations and states of the mystical path, Gümüşhānevī continuously stresses the importance of maintaining a strong and constant attachment with God. In point of fact, his lens of analysis is centered exclusively on the principle of *maḥabbah*. He begins by drawing a distinction between *maḥabbah* and the notion of *ḥubb*: 'One should know that the Muslim community (*al-ummah*) is in agreement that love for God (*al-ḥubb li-Allāh*) is a religious obligation (*farḍ*)' and 'the Prophet has made it a condition of creedal belief (*īmān*)' (Gümüşhānevī, 1858, p. 3). Meanwhile, *maḥabbah* involves more than just love for God, for it entails also an intimate attachment with Him where, according to Gümüşhānevī,

> ‘Only God in truth is deserving of *maḥabbah*; so whoever loves another without linking it to God, we call this [love] ill-informed and flawed in [regard to] divine gnosis (*ma‘rifah Allāh*)…[additionally,] whoever loves someone other than their Lord is [said to be] preoccupied with their ego-self and carnal desires and has forgotten their Lord’ (*ibid*, p. 8) (translation mine).

He specifies two ways of strengthening one’s *maḥabbah*. The first way is by removing the love of this world from the heart, which can be done by ‘treading the path of renunciation (*zuhd*), forbearance (*ṣabr*), complying with the religious law (*al-inqiyād al-shar‘*), [and putting oneself] under the reins of fear and hope (*bi-zimām al-khawf wa al-rajā’*’ (*ibid*, pp. 18-19). The second way is by ‘strengthening divine gnosis in its scale and appropriation over the heart, and this comes after purging the heart from all worldly distractions and attachments (*taṭhīr al-qalb min jamī‘ shawāghil al-dunyā wa ‘alāyiqihā*) and adorning it with good deeds’ (*ibid*, p. 19). The thrust of what Gümüşhānevī has to say on this particular topic is encapsulated in the following explanation: ‘*Maḥabbah* is subservient to *ma‘rifah* by necessity. Attaining *ma‘rifah* comes after the severance of worldly distractions, constant and sincere reflection, earnestness in pursuit, and continuous perception of God, His attributes, His invisible realm, and His creation’ (*ibid*). Elsewhere in the preface to his work on Islamic creed entitled *Jāmi‘ al-mutūn*, Gümüşhānevī specifies the following three causes (*asbāb*) of *ma‘rifah*: creedal belief (*īmān*), ethical character (*akhlāq*), and interpersonal actions (*mu‘āmalāt*) (Gümüşhānevī, 2017, p. 29; cf. *op. cit.*, 1858, p. 31). What is interesting to note here is that unlike the first cause, the latter two causes of *ma‘rifah* clearly have social implications.

Apart from his day-to-day mystical pursuits, Gümüşhānevī was equally intent on preventing the disarray of the Ottoman realm as its state of affairs were becoming increasingly concerning throughout the nineteenth century. This for him partly involved bringing about a revival of Islam through a renewed emphasis on both core religious doctrines (esp. creedal belief and hadith)[240] and the unification of Muslim societies at home and abroad. To this end, he had granted successorship to more than a hundred Sufi adepts across various Muslim populated regions.[241] We also find

[240] According to Katharina Anna Ivanyi (2020), “Like Birgivī, Gümüşhānevī was greatly concerned with the preservation of “correct belief” and “correct ritual” and similarly composed a range of works on Ḥadīth, ethics and exhortation” (Ivanyi, 2020, p. 91n136).

[241] It should be noted that the scale at which successorship was being granted by Gümüşhānevī does

evidence in his works in regard to the stress Gümüşhānevī lays on the idea of revival. In one of his hortatory tracts, he calls for revival in both spiritual and temporal matters:

> 'Attend regularly to greeting one another, the community, patience, gratitude, and modesty. Pay special observance to revitalizing [your] time (*ihyā-i evkāt*) , revitalizing the nation (*ihyā-i beled*), revitalizing [God's] creation (*ihyā-i mahlūk*), revitalizing the endowment systems (*ihyā-i evkāf*), and consistency in [your] servitude to God (*devām-ı ubūdiyyet*)' (Gümüşhānevī, 2006a, p. 49) (translation mine).

As a part of his efforts to revive Islam, Gümüşhānevī could be seen endeavoring to bring Muslims at large closer together by way of advocating fellowship and developing empathy for one another: 'Be a brethren and a friend with all Muslims for the sake of fulfilling your love for God; if someone such as your fellow commits a reproachable mistake, pardon their mistake and make as if you did not see it' (Gümüşhānevī, 2012, pp. 29-30).

Uncoincidentally, Gümüşhānevī's ambitions also aligned with those of Sultan Abdülhamid II and his policy of *İtthad-ı İslam* (lit: 'unity of Islam') or 'Pan-Islamism', as commonly referred to by many contemporary observers.[242] The said policy has been described as the "realization of the Islamic ideal, the unity of the world in Islam, the central direction under a leader (Imam) of the world community," "and that the basic concept from which thought and action sprang was religious rather than racial or national."[243] It also comes as no surprise that Abdülhamid II was a Naqshbandī – as were many Ottoman bureaucrats at the time – who seems to have taken his affiliation with the *ṭarīqah* rather seriously; his library, for instance, housed a number of important manuscripts on the Naqshbandī way. And in light of the looming threat the Muslims faced throughout the *Dār al-Islām*, Abdülhamid II is known to have responded by establishing schools and lodges even as far as China. It is worth noting, however, that despite his strong personal religious convictions and

not seem to have much of a precedent among Naqshbandī shaykhs in centuries prior.

[242] The plausibility that Gümüşhānevī was in some measure acting in the name of *İtthad-ı İslam* moreover rests on the fact that Gümüşhānevī and Abdülhamid II were known to be in close contact with one another and even shared a common objective to preserve Islam's core teachings and values throughout Ottoman society.

[243] Quoted in Dwight E. Lee's (1942) "The origins of Pan-Islamism," p. 279. For a relatively more recent and exceptional study on Pan-Islamism, see Azmi Özcan's (1997) *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*; for the relevant section covering its policy under Abdülhamid II, see pp. 40-63.

mystical affiliation, the pressing concerns within his diminishing territories had Abdülhamid II preoccupied with preserving the integrity of his state and institutions. Meanwhile, unlike many of the Ottoman diplomats and scholars who were sent to foreign lands to serve Muslims in the name of the sultan, Gümüşhānevī acted autonomously. He is moreover to be credited with not only the prominence of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* in the Ottoman capital, but his *irshādī* efforts likewise proved to have a sizable impact above and beyond his own time and surroundings.[244] And whether it was through his travels or deputies, his teachings spread all throughout the Muslim world including Bukhara, Egypt, Mecca, Medina, India, and Tatarstan.[245]

Gümüşhānevī arguably prevailed over his revivalist counterparts in light of his wide recognition as both a religious scholar and Sufi master. We are told that during his sojourn in Mecca, his study circles were attended by local scholars and shaykhs to whom Gümüşhānevī would also grant *ijāzah*s in hadith (see Şevki, 2013, p. 224). While in Egypt, he taught at the prestigious Jāmi'ah al-Azhar where he attracted too large of an attendance which required him to eventually move his lessons to the Imām al-Ḥusayn Mosque; there he would confer on to 175 scholars and scores of students *ijāzah*s at the final ceremony (*ibid*).[246] In the meantime, he is also said to have observed his five-daily prayers in congregation and dedicated his spare time to imparting spiritual instruction to numerous disciples, while also granting them successorship (*ibid*). In the Volga-Ural region, Zaynullāh Rasūlī of Troitsk (1835–1917) became one of Gümüşhānevī's foremost disciples and had quite the impact there. Subsequent to being granted by Gümüşhānevī authority to transmit hadith and initiate disciples into the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, Zaynullāh would, over time, turn the city of Troitsk into "a principal center of learning for the Muslims of the Russian empire as well as a base for the further diffusion of the Khalidi Naqshbandi order" (Algar, 1992, pp. 118, 121). We may observe Gümüşhānevī's influence on Zaynullāh as he too would adopt an accommodationist perspective who, as Algar puts it, "had a remarkable ability to fuse the traditional and the modern;" also, akin to his Ottoman

[244] This includes his legacy that continued to exert considerable influence in the religious and socio-political context well into the Turkish Republican era. See the second part of this chapter for a fuller discussion.

[245] This was apparently foretold by Shaykh Khālid who, according to Fevzī's *Hadiyyah*, instructed Aḥmad al-Arwādī to go to Constantinople (i.e. Istanbul) in order to find the likes of what turned out to be Gümüşhānevī (see Fevzī, 1895, p. 27).

[246] Soon after initiating his Sufi activities, Gümüşhānevī would take special interest in Egypt as the British, French, Italians, and Ottomans were all vying for influence over the contested region (see Kemal R. Haykıran's (2020) "Abdülhamid'in İttihad-ı İslam politikaları çerçevesinde Ahmed Ziyâüddîn Gümüşhanevî ve faaliyetleri," in *Yenifikir* (12), 24, 44-63).

predecessor, his resistance to the Russian Tsarist regime "appear[ed] to have been exclusively religious, educational, and cultural" (*ibid*, pp. 122, 126). Gümüşhānevī's mission to bridge the ostensible gap between the worldly and other-worldly thus had a far-reaching impact beyond just the Ottoman realm.

Even in his mid-sixties we find Gümüşhānevī's activism on full display when he along with his disciples decided to take up arms and fight in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877. His hand in the war is suggestive of how Naqshbandī shaykhs have traditionally taken part in military campaigns, playing multifaceted roles as Muslims fulfilling their religious duties, as moral agents setting an example for the people, and as saintly figures sanctifying the war effort and lifting up the morale and spirits of the fighters.[247] The tensions and wars that the Ottomans were involved in at the time may have also prompted Gümüşhānevī to write his al-*ʿābir fī al-anṣār wa al-muḥājir wa al-jihād*, a short tract dedicated to *hijrah* (migration) and martial *jihād*. He begins the work by underscoring that Muslims living under non-Muslim rule must emigrate to territories ruled by Muslims, especially if they are prevented from practicing their religion. He then goes on to emphasize *jihād* along with its blessings and the obligation for Muslims to engage in its practice: '*jihād* is the most noble forms of worship in terms of reward, par excellence in attaining salvation, most beneficial with regard to good deeds, [and] the most virtuous in degree' (Gümüşhānevī, 2013, p. 242) (translation mine).

Gümüşhānevī's decision to establish his Naqshbandī *tekke* in close proximity to the Sublime Porte is revealing to say the least. According to Hamid Algar (1992), the original purpose of finding the *tekke* was due to the following: "The impulse leading to the establishment of the tekke was the need to provide a secure and uncontroversial focus for a constantly augmented following, rather than anything intrinsic to the Khālidī Naqshbandī path" (Algar, 1992, p. 223). While perhaps innocent of any political motives, the strategic location of his *tekke* does make a tacit statement that Sufism is crucial to the state and has an essential role to play in the society. Even with Gümüşhānevī exercising caution to not directly involve himself in politics, we do learn of a number of high-profile individuals frequenting his *tekke* such as government officials and, most prominently, Sultan Abdülhamid II.

[247] Alexander Papas notes that "Naqshbandīs acted as fighters or saints protecting armies in early modern Asia" (Papas, 2021, p. 19).

Amid the atmosphere of discontent with the new reforms in place, Gümüşhānevī made it a point to underscore and warn not to revolt against the leaders and those in the position of authority (*ulu al-amr*). He adopted a rather moderate stance when it came to his involvement in the affairs of the Ottoman state, which stood in contrast to the more rigid approach representative of the Khālidī-Naqshbandī branch (see Abu-Manneh, 2014, p. 187). In particular, Gümüşhānevī was accommodating to the political reforms of the time, most pertinent among them being the bureaucratization of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*s. This is partly attributable to the fact that he was far less demanding of rulers in operating squarely within the Shariah. His orientation toward Hadith could serve as a partial explanation in this regard. The Ottoman state's modern reforms did not always align with the dictates of the Shariah, that is, as some critics at the time saw it; and yet, as far as evidence suggests, Gümüşhānevī is known not to have expressed any clear disapproval along these lines. What was apparently of greater importance for him was that the Ottoman sultan be a pious Muslim and a just leader who took the necessary measures to ensure the integrity of Islam, the state, and its subjects. He writes, 'Render politics strong and incorruptible for the happiness and security of the homeland' (Gümüşhānevī, 2006a, p. 54). Similarly, he concludes his counsel by stressing the following: 'Render your worldly affairs and intentions proper and resolute' (*ibid*, p. 55). It can be reasonably inferred that his advice – especially the first of the two – is being directed at those individuals holding some form of political power within the state apparatus.

Perceptive to the creeping influences that western Europe was having in the Ottoman realm, Gümüşhānevī would combine his revivalism with his efforts towards resistance to the West. Although clearly intent on countering the trend of westernization from reaching full-scale adoption, Gümüşhānevī's resistance was slightly more tempered in its posture when compared to his spiritual predecessor, Khālid al-Baghdādī. For instance, Khālid believed that upholding the Shariah would serve as a countervailing force against the foreign encroachment experienced by Muslim colonial subjects at the time. However, stressing the Shariah was only part of the solution for Gümüşhānevī. For him, the changing cultural and socio-political contexts required more innovative measures.

Gümüşhānevī's resistance to westernization is perceptible in his writings and, more

specifically, in the rhetoric he uses against foreign culture and physical goods. One almost gets the impression that he felt a deep sense of discomfort given the intrusive circumstances. Moreover, he does not only confine his reproach and advice to eschew both material and nonmaterial elements from outsiders (i.e. non-Muslims), but further implies that doing so is tantamount to immorality. His hortatory writings in particular do well to exemplify these points. To illustrate, while addressing his readers in the form of spiritual and practical advice, Gümüşhānevī urges Muslims 'not to use just any kind of medicine, [especially] those from foreign countries, and to keep away from goods made by disbelievers' (Gümüşhānevī, 2006a, p. 52). Further down the list of his fifty pieces of advice, he also adds: 'Keep away from oil, sugar, and other foods, utensils, and clothing coming from disbelieving countries' (*ibid*, p. 53). The insinuation here is that Muslims should be producing their own goods and technology instead of depending on others for them. Gümüşhānevī's own initiatives in fact do well to support this presumption. For instance, he is known for having set up a community chest in Istanbul to fund various endeavors including a printing press, which would print and distribute reading material free of charge (see Fevzī, 1895, p. 34). He also used the collected funds to establish extensive libraries across various cities including Bayburt, Of, and Rize (see *ibid*).[248]

5.3 Comparative analysis

I would like to conclude this part with a brief comparative analysis between Khādimī, Shāmil, and Gümüşhānevī. Each individual would share an astoundingly similar orientation toward the world despite their unique personalities, backgrounds, and circumstances.

All three figures were well-acquainted with Islamic mysticism and demonstrated their capacity to contemplate God while in action. Worldliness was within arms reach for them as well, but each exercised restraint and caution not to indulge in the worldly pleasures. In other words, in spite of being surrounded by mundanity, they chose not to take part in it (e.g. most obvious example is Gümüşhānevī's *tekke* situated in the heart of the Ottoman realm). They all seem to have been building for this world, but at the same time escaped it whenever the time presented itself. Keeping contact with political leaders and bureaucrats was another common feature

[248] For more details on the libraries founded by Gümüşhānevī, see Alikılıç, 2016, pp. 23-34.

among

Shāmil was not afforded the same luxuries as his two Ottoman counterparts who had not only operated freely but were also generously patronized. He still managed to see things through and was able to prove his scholarly credentials in spite of being brought up in a remote region in the mountains of Dagestan. Shāmil's involvement in revivalism was to the extent that he sought to unite his people under the Shariah and give strength to his newly founded state by introducing an extra-*shar'ī* legal code dubbed *niẓām* (lit: 'system' or 'order') which fundamentally encompassed regulations dealing with military and civil law. But has far as Shāmil was concerned, his *niẓām* was "not legislation but merely interpretations of the holy law, or at most an expansion of its limits" (Gammer, 2005, p. 57). Khādimī along with many other scholar-Sufis throughout the history of the Ottoman state are known to have returned to their hometown to teach and establish educational centers there. Gümüşhānevī, however, would remain in Istanbul.

Part II: Change and continuity in the wake of the late modern and post-modern world

As the Naqshbandīs from the early modern period onward grew in their numbers and overall influence across major centers of Islamdom, their activities as a result would become more and more diversified over time. This section will pin point the changes and continuities of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* in the late modern and post-modern era, focusing in particular on how their core teachings were being understood and implemented across time and space.

5.4 Ban on dervish lodges in early modern Turkey and their repercussions for the Naqshbandīs

The Naqshbandī project of ensuring the supremacy of the Shariah at the political level was put on hold in many parts of the Muslim world as nation states governed under secular rule of law were firmly being established across the globe. One example where the Naqshbandīs played a leading oppositional role in the political arena was in the newly established Turkish republic. They displayed strong defiance against the new reforms being enacted by the regime. The most momentous of them

came in 1924 with the educational reform known as the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*,[249] which saw all religious educational and Sufi institutions banned from hereon in. A fundamental question that emerges is that while the Naqshbandīs are known to have had more *tekke*s in Istanbul than any other Sufi *ṭarīqah* prior to the ban, how are we to substantiate their ability to not only survive but also flourish throughout this entire period?[250]

In the aftermath of the new reforms, which in due course saw the ban on dervish lodges and the public presence of Islam in general and Sufism in particular, the Naqshbandīs would find themselves forced to go underground. Under such repressive circumstance, the Naqshbandīs exhibited their resilience as they continued to carry out their spiritual program and contemplative practices. A major reason for this was by virtue of the fact that their locus of activity – unlike many other Sufi *ṭarīqah*s – had always extended far beyond the confines of the Sufi lodge. Hamid Algar (1992) draws attention to this issue when he writes,

> "Although the [Naqshbandī] tekke provided the focus and setting for many of these [Sufi] activities, they were not organically dependent on its existence. The complex of ceremonies, rich in outward detail, movement, and accoutrement, of orders such as the Mevlevis, Bektaşis, Rifā'īs [Rufais], and even Qādirīs, made them infinitely more needful of the tekke than the Naqshbandīs; for them the tekke was a cultic structure, whereas for the Naqshbandis it was little more than a meeting place" (Algar, 1992, p. 222).

The ability of the Naqshbandīs to persevere and thrive in the absence of a physical location bears testimony to the primacy they assigned to practices like *khalwat dar anjuman*. Therefore, even as the Turkish Republic increasingly began enforcing strict measures against any public display of religion, it was the discrete nature of their mystical regimen that allowed the Naqshbandīs to continue carrying out their practices in plain sight while remaining undetected to the public eye.

5.5 New ambitions in the socio-economic and political arena in the mid Turkish republican regime

[249] For a concise overview of the this particular reform, see Elizabeth Özdalga (1999) "Education in the name of "order and progress" Reflections on the recent eight year obligatory school reform in Turkey" in *Muslim world* (89), 3-4, 414-438.

[250] Arthur F. Buehler (2016) notes that the Naqshbandīs had "the most Sufi lodges in Istanbul [although] was the one best able to dispense with them" (Buehler 2016, p. 133).

This section will focus on two Naqshbandī shaykhs in modern Turkey, Mehmed Zahid Kotku (1897–1980) and Mahmud Esad Coşan (1938–2001), both of whom traced their spiritual chain (*silsilah*) back to Gümüşhānevī and led the Iskenderpasha community (*cemaât*) in Istanbul's Fatih district. The Iskenderpasha community beginning with Kotku became the linchpin of several major political parties.[251] But unlike in previous eras where Naqshbandīs such as Aḥrār who underlined *khalwat dar anjuman* in light of political activism, for Koktu and Coşan *khalwat dar anjuman* took on a more significant function in the context of developing a strong economy and establishing a moral society that was based on the idiom of Islam as culture[252] and Sufism as ethics. This was partly made possible under the new conditions created by the then Turkish regime which, from the 1950s onward, had underwent a gradual process of democratization as it transformed into a multiparty system. Some studies have attributed the impunity enjoyed by Kotku to openly express his religious ideas and introduce a moral vision for society on the basis that political parties had began competing with one another to gain support from Sufi leaders like him.[253] Such explanations, however, are arguably misplaced given that they inadvertently deny the agency of Kotku who in fact, as Ruşen Çakır (1990) astutely points out, demonstrated his ability and effectiveness in adapting to the new environment (see Çakır, 1990, p. 18).

Kotku was a visionary of his time who hailed from Bursa during the late Ottoman period. Having later flourished in Istanbul throughout the mid Turkish republican era, Kotku was able to effectively intertwine, for the whole of his career and mission, both this-worldly and other-worldly objectives.[254] This also becomes especially apparent when scrutinizing Kotku's general thought. He was especially critical of so-

[251] Kotku's support for the National Order Party (*Millî Nizam Partisi*), and its successor National Salvation Party (*Millî Selamet Partisi*), before the military coup in 1980, marks the symbolic starting point of the Iskenderpasha community's political involvement.

[252] The implication here is not that Kotku was trying to reduce Islam to the category of culture, but it was his way of reminding the people that Islam is inseparable from Turkish culture. That is to say, for Muslims to adopt values and customs from other foreign (esp. western) cultures essentially translates into a denial of their own culture which, in the case of the Turks, is rooted in Islam.

[253] See, for example, "Turkey" in A. Sfeir (Ed.), *The Columbia world dictionary of Islamism* (2007, p. 368).

[254] This idea is alluded to by Şerif Mardin who observes that Kotku had filled a critical void, one that was altogether "emotional, personal, and ideological" (Mardin, 1993, p. 223). Mardin further argues that what Kotku was able to accomplish could not have been achieved by other means based on an ideological or nationalistic framing: "A theory that has no "everyday" is a theory of and for intellectuals, not a theory of social action…No item of Kemalism addressed itself to the "everyday," a failure in any social setting but one which cumulates in a setting where the personal as an aspect of the "everyday" is especially salient as community "cement"" (*ibid*, p. 224).

called Sufis who remained passive due to their outward abandonment of the world (see Coşan, 2016, p. 22). He also argues that Muslims must strive toward self-sufficiency by keeping pace with the modernizing process and becoming forerunners in every field and industry. Yet, he elsewhere points out that this outward ambition toward self-sufficiency needs to be balanced with inward devotion. That is to say, self-sufficiency is necessary insofar that one does not depend on others (esp. non-Muslims) for their needs. Otherwise, one should abstain from amassing their wealth by doing their own work in the name of self-sufficiency, and instead should hire others to do the work for them – given that they are financially able – even if they themselves are capable of carrying out the task.[255] At the same time, Kotku argued that in order for Turkey to compete on the world stage and become a force to be reckoned with, the people needed to begin by practicing frugality and desist from wasting their time and material resources.[256]

The idea of *khalwat dar anjuman* is likewise intelligible when we analyze how he combined inward devotion and outward activity in light of his understanding of *jihād*. Kotku believed that martial *jihād* alone was insufficient since it needed to be combined with its spiritual counterpart. In this vein, he points out how the early Muslim generation were able to defeat much larger and more powerful armies without the aid of any other sovereign state. Kotku uses this as a precedent to assign fault to the Ottomans for modernizing its military enterprise, which evidently resulted in the series of military defeats it had suffered, and ultimately rendered all the lands that were conquered during the early Ottoman period to have been in vein (see Kotku, 2018, p. 193). The allusion here is that the Ottomans at some point failed to combine the true spirit of *jihād* with modernization. This idea is confirmed in Kotku's unapologetic criticism of sultans of yore who while claiming to be the caliph of all Muslims nevertheless 'embraced European laws, dress, and style' and found themselves 'overwhelmed with grandeur and extravagance' (*ibid*, p. 192).[257] In the context of *jihād*, he also writes that, 'As for today's *jihād*, it is clear, freedom cannot be obtained except by fully mastering the most vigorous religious (*din*) and worldly

[255] See İrfan Gündüz (1995) "Mehmed Zâhid Kotku (RH.A)'in tarikat ve irşad anlayışı" in *Mehmed Zahid Kotku (K.S.) ve tasavvuf*.

[256] In this context, he gives the example of the Mormons and Japanese, praising their strictness and resolve to live a disciplined life.

[257] Kotku follows his remarks by adducing that had the Ottomans heeded the advice of the first two sultans, Osman and Orhan, and lived in accordance with the prophetic way, Ottoman rule would have been far greater in both its prosperity and well-being (see Kotku, 2018, p. 192).

(*dünya*) disciplines, trade, and commerce' (Kotku, 1984, pp. 26-27).[258] (By religious disciplines, Kotku is most certainly referring to not only discursive learning but also knowledge centered on inward cultivation).[259] Kotku repeats this line of advice in another work of his, which concludes with some slight modification as follows: '… therefore, in order to secure a small place in Paradise, be obliged to [taking part in] *jihād*, holy war (*gaza*), and guard duty (*nöbet*), and do not run away from it, for your welfare (*saadet*) and that of the nation's welfare are in [fulfilling] this' (Kotku, 2010, vol. 1, pp. 251-252).[260]

Kotku was known to have particularly stressed that his fellow Naqshbandīs build for this world and labor for their livelihood. His biographer and foremost disciple, Coşan, recalls Kotku once saying, 'Build a manufacturing plant, come on then!' (Coşan, 2016, p. 143). Kotku's plea was taken quite seriously as his followers soon after would establish the first-ever domestically manufactured automobile company called Gümüş Motor, whose name was inspired by Gümüşhānevī. The company which was backed by a small collective effort of a few hundred people was said to have been funded on interest-free terms. But Kotku was always quick to remind his disciples that although they should go out and seek the world, they mustn't be enthusiastic about earning a living, rather their 'ultimate objective should be to [labor for] the rise of Islam and to not hesitate in making sacrifices for this [cause]' (Kotku, 2010, vol. 1, p. 208).

As for Coşan, Kotku's successor and son-in-law, he would play an important role in bringing Kotku's vision into full fruition through his personal commitment and active role in social, economic, and political affairs. Coşan made much use of modern methods of communication. This allowed him to communicate religious knowledge and teachings of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* on a mass scale to both readers of his periodicals (e.g. *İslam* and *Kadın ve aile*) and listeners of his radio program (Akra FM). Coşan like Kotku would also stress the idea of inward and outward *jihād*

[258] He also writes that the prerequisite of Islamic revival is to busy oneself with seeking knowledge which, alongside armed struggle, constitute the core aspects of *jihād* (see Kotku, 1984, p. 24).

[259] In his main work on Sufi ethics entitled *Tasavvufî ahlâk*, Kotku stresses inward cultivation by way of *zuhd*, which he characterizes as a mode of inner detachment from the world and an attitude of indifference where neither sorrow nor joy is felt for whatever one loses or obtains from this world (see Kotku, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 201-204).

[260] In his work *Ana baba hakları*, we also find Kotku (1983) placing special emphasis on improving social ethics in Muslim societies. He particularly underscores fulfilling the rights of God, that of one's family, neighbors, society, and the nation.

a great deal.[261] The outward *jihād* was leveled against the unbelievers, including most especially those who upheld a western imperialist ideology. He writes that, 'The unbelievers want you to simply spend your time in worship, to pray and recollect God at home, [and to say,] "Look, there is freedom! What else do you want?" They are [essentially] telling you not to be concerned with anything else so that they may be able to exploit the country at will'.[262] The inward *jihād* was understood by Coşan as a constant struggle with fending off one's desires and worldly attachments. Coşan also mentions in one of his radio programs the significance of both inward and outward *jihād* as the ideal form of monasticism in Islam as follows:

> 'As a term, what does *rahib* (monk) mean? It means people who fear God and aspire to regulate their conduct in a way that will make God love them. Indeed, monks in religions of the past, such as in Christianity, were religious people, [and were] striving to earn good deeds…by secluding into a cave, living alone in a tranquil setting, far away from the people, worshipping God, and being free from evil. The Prophet Muḥammad [notwithstanding] said "Our Muslim community (*ummah*) is not of this way. We are not to do as the monks of other communities have done by withdrawing into the mountains and fleeing from the congregation. My community's monasticism is *jihād*." That is to say, we must fight against the enemy, should the need arise, to protect Muslims, the homeland, and Muslim countries; [and] if need be to struggle with the ego-self, or to engage in all kinds of endeavors with your wealth and perseverance to help Islam by resolving social problems…This too is a [kind of] *jihād*' (Coşan, 1993, vol. 1, pp. 155-156).

Coşan offers an uncomplicated explanation of *khalwat dar anjuman* when he says:

> 'Ramadan ended, the religious festival began, *i'tikāf* concluded. What are we to do next? After this, we are to live based on the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, as advised to us by our elders. *Khalwat dar anjuman* is a Persian expression. That is, to maintain a good state in society as if one were in solitude, [and] to be with God among the people. And they also said: The hand at work, the heart with God. This is why I advise *khalwat dar anjuman*, that is, to be as if in *i'tikāf* while among the people, to continue living as a Muslim as if in solitude, to not be heedless of God, to know that He is present and watching at every turn, and to maintain your beautiful Islamic faith' (Coşan, 1999, vol. 7, p. 168).[263]

Similarly, at another point in time, he states:

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[261] See Coşan (1983) "Allah yolunda cihad" in *İslam*. Coşan's periodical *İslam* first began its publication in 1983 and saw its last release in mid 1999.

[262] *Ibid*.

[263] See also Coşan (1996) *Ramazan ve takva eğitimi*. Istanbul, Turkey: Seha Neşriyat.

> ‘Does recollecting God mean: Going to the Süleymaniye mosque in the morning, leaving after the night prayer, having not gone outside, constantly reciting the Quran, and recollecting God with [your] prayer-beads? No! It (i.e. recollecting God) is not to forget God while among the people, at work, in one’s lifetime, and during any human activity. Our Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* calls this *khalwat dar anjuman*. To be as if you are absent, in solitude, and recollecting God in a solitary cell (*halvethâne*) while in society’ (*ibid*, p. 300).

Since Coşan was addressing uninitiated Muslims, this required him to refine the teachings of the *ṭarīqah* by avoiding usage of overly technical language. Therefore, an unintended consequence in conveying solely the content of *khalwat dar anjuman*, for instance, is that the listener is made unaware of its essential component as a mystical state of absorption in God’s recollection.

While Coşan indeed projected more of a worldly persona than Kotku (see Çakır, 1990, p. 38), his commitment to practices like *khalwat dar anjuman* saw him remaining active in both spiritual and temporal affairs as both a well-respected Naqshbandī shaykh and a university professor and head of a holding company. However, the activities that were carried out under Coşan within the *tekke*, which was located at the Iskenderpasha’s mosque complex, would become a lot more visible to the public eye and began to resemble more of a social organization than anything else. In this way, the widening of the Iskenderpasha community’s influence saw their activities become not only more open and accessible to the public, but also seem more acceptable and legitimate.

In addition to what was suggested already, the usage of mass media transformed not only the content and means of conveying the community’s message, but also the manner in which the shaykh and his disciples interacted with one another. This meant that certain key elements of the Naqshbandī mystical regimen needed to be forsaken. Most importantly among them was that of *ṣuḥbah*, which had conventionally complemented the practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* where the disciple would be found in the physical presence of his shaykh, that is, during the entire training process while concurrently remaining active in the world. In this respect, Coşan’s activities in general were rooted in pragmatic concerns.[264] He, for

[264] In one of his *Yeni ufuklar*, Coşan (2001) tells his disciples to be ‘honest and idealist, and at the same time, practical and pragmatic’ (p. 31). Istanbul, Turkey: Vefa Yayıncılık.

instance, draws attention to the importance of studying economics and goes as far as to say that disregarding knowledge of this world may very well lead to retribution in the hereafter (Coşan, 1995, p. 36). We also see his pragmatism on full display in terms of how he would appeal to the wider Turkish society by using modern parlance and vernacular expressions in many of his writings and talks. This would therefore evolve into a clear lack of poetically sophisticated rhetoric in Coşan's written and spoken discourse, which explains why he communicated mystical ideas such as *khalwat dar anjuman* in highly practical terms.

5.6 Central Asian Muslims under the post-Soviet trauma

This section will briefly look at the case of Sufism and its political instrumentalization in modern-day Central Asia. The Uzbek government during the post-Communist era in particular is known to have utilized Sufism to counter fundamentalist elements in its society (Weismann, 2015, p. 269). Specifically, Islam's mystical tradition has become victim to political agendas which have sought to subvert Sufism from being associated with Islam as a religion by presenting it in purely cultural terms. A consequence of the instrumentalization of Sufism has therefore resulted in a situation where certain Sufi principles and practices such as *khalwat dar anjuman* are made to become far removed from past experiences and ways of understanding them.

In the context of the post-modern world, things seem to have taken a new turn in terms of how Naqshbandī ideas were being perceived. In today's Central Asia, Muslims during the Soviet era and later those under the effects of what may be referred to as the post-Soviet trauma, appropriated Islamic spirituality and in particular the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* in ways that would presumably come across as foreign to those of the past.

We may refer to a recent ethnographic study entitled *Everyday Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia*. The author describes how even under the oppression of the Soviets the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* had sustained the faith of the Muslims living in Central Asia. It moreover remained with them as part of their cultural memory, or what Mircea Eliade refers to as an unconscious link with the sacred from the distant past. Yet, according to Maria E. Louw (2007), *khalwat dar anjuman* was able to

reconcile the spiritual with the temporal as they lived by the motto, "The heart with God. The hand at work," *dast ba kār dil ba yār*, which is another way of expressing *khalwat dar anjuman*. For them, this saying "indicate[s] that although they might seem wholly occupied with worldly affairs…they connected everything they did with God, and their work was therefore blessed by God" (Louw, 2007, p. vii). In this way, although some of the values of the Naqshbandī path lived on, they nevertheless vaguely resembled anything the Naqshbandīs in days of yore ascribed to or taught. For instance, the core technique oft-associated with *khalwat dar anjuman*, the silent *dhikr*, does not appear to have been part of their practice. The residual memory of *khalwat dar anjuman* in the minds of Central Asian Muslims seems to thus have become more of a remnant of the past and as such devoid of any real substance, be it religious or mystical.

5.7 Conclusion

The Naqshbandīs during the modern and post-modern era did not necessarily innovate but would rather reinforce ideas of the past by adding emphasis on the context of the time. Many of the Naqshbandī shaykhs have in fact continuously reaffirmed the *ṭarīqah*'s main principles across time and space, although occasionally accentuating certain aspects more than others.[265]

Examples of the Naqshbandīs' adaptive capabilities is evident in how the Iskenderpasha community led by Kotku had engaged with modern economic realities. They saw the new mode of industrialized production important and necessary, although, for instance, rejected the values inherent in a capitalistic and consumerist society.

[265] For example, according to Coşan, Kotku had slightly modified Ghujdiwani's well-known *waṣāyā*, or 'spiritual testament', and tailored some of its fine points as his way of crafting his very own testament. This, as Coşan tell us, was intended to be in keeping with the time, for the benefit of his fellow Naqshbandīs (see Coşan, 2016, pp. 147-152).

CONCLUSION

The relationship between solitary and social life had assumed a tension of prominent and polemical significance in the Islamicate civilization, while in its preceding civilizational traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, Greek antiquity, and Christianity there existed no real tension between the two but rather an idealization of one of these lifeways. The good life as envisioned in Islam, as well as in the four mentioned civilizational traditions anterior to it, was mostly, if not entirely, within the purview of the learned religious or intellectual class, to whom we owe our understanding of whether the social or solitary life was idealized.

In Judaism, the solitary life had never turned into its own object since it has been consistently believed that the good life was to be found strictly within the Jewish community. Jews in general have consequently clung to life in society because the expectation was that salvation was to be granted to them in the here and now on a collective basis rather than an individual one. And although solitude had played a secondary and instrumental role in Jewish thought and practice, the Judaic tradition, nevertheless, never developed solitude into a distinct or organized practice, be it institutionally or otherwise.

The good life from a Buddhist perspective has dictated complete detachment from the mundane and rejection of the world, which ultimately rendered the solitary life within a structured community of monks to become highly idealized throughout all of Buddhist history. While certain conditional precepts laid down by the Buddha were initially intended to prevent people from becoming perpetual hermits, life in individual or communal solitude nonetheless remained a far more desirable option for subsequent Buddhists. The practice of solitude in this context became of the essence and served as a spiritual realm where the Buddhist monk and nun is said to empty the ‘stuff’ of individuality and the vessel of his or her mind from all forms of worldly attachments. After the Buddha’s demise, attaining spirituality of the highest order, as it were, had therefore become restricted to the monastic life until the present day.

The Greek philosophical tradition was very much geared toward the here and now, in

which, consequently, tensions of a this-worldly and other-worldly kind did not exist. Furthermore, since the Greeks saw society as a necessary condition of the human individual, solitude in general was momentous insofar that it provided one the opportunity to speculate and reflect on the world. Even in the case where a handful of Greek philosophical schools were known to have upheld an anti-social or asocial outlook on life, none of these schools would actually come to idealize the solitary life. The widely held presupposition that humans are social and political by nature had, in some measure, contributed to preventing the ancient Greeks from idealizing life in solitude. The ancient Greeks had therefore concluded that the likelihood of securing the good life would radically, if not utterly, be lowered in a life lived in solitude.

Society in Christianity was predominantly viewed as a place of great temptations, which is why many of the earliest Christian monks had desired to achieve a state of complete detachment from all forms of human contact. In contrast to Judaism, the Christian endeavor to live a pious life was mainly centered on adhering to the spirit of the biblical laws and modeling oneself after Jesus himself. Embracing Jesus as an exemplar meant having no worldly ambitions and likewise adopting a highly ascetically disciplined lifestyle. In this respect, the solitary life, which early on manifested in extreme forms of ascetic practices and eventually found its full expression in the burgeoning and wide-scale diffusion of monastic movements, would become the ideal choice of the Christian devout. The idealization of the solitary life in Christianity across varying historical and geographical contexts was subject to how the authentically pious life came to be envisioned by Christians for well over a millennia. Similar to the case of Buddhism, the tension between the solitary and social life in the Christian context would be either nullified or subverted as a result of the radical separation between the sacred and the profane realms of human existence.

In Islam, however, we are confronted with a critical tension between solitary and social life, which, in turn, gave rise to polemical controversy on this specific issue. While certain Muslims upheld the social life as *sine qua non* of the good life, other Muslims proposed that the pious life could best be attained in solitude. This tension in Islam is made more intelligible when perceived from two major fronts. Firstly, from a scriptural and prophetic narrative standpoint, both the Quran and the Hadith

lend themselves to a variety of interpretations such that retreating away from the world and escaping into isolation could be substantiated inasmuch as can living in the world and engaging in society. Secondly, from a historical perspective, there is the highly intricate legal system that Muslims had developed within the first few two centuries of Islam's emergence, which can partly be viewed as an attempt to define the contours of good moral conduct within a social setting. But for those of whom a devotional life characterized by legalistic piety strictly within a social environment was not spiritually satisfying enough, this saw some Muslims develop renunciatory or mystical proclivities in which they began to appeal to quasi-monastic ideals such as physical withdrawal as part of their religious aspirations to earn God's favor or to draw nearer to Him.

A reconciliatory response in Islam to the tension between solitary and social life would thus come in the form of *khalwat dar anjuman* – a concept that embraced both an ethical and mystical facet, and had moreover served to guide how Muslims behaved in, and thought about the world. *Khalwat dar anjuman*, as approached in this study, was taken to be not only a response to a Sufi-specific issue, but also one that pertained to the wider Islamic context and general discourse on the pious devotional life. Moreover, in analyzing *khalwat dar anjuman* from a conceptual historical approach has allowed for a meaningful distinction to be made between similar ideas articulated in ages prior. This stands in contrast to a history of ideas perspective which would simply regard *khalwat dar anjuman* as a constant and unchanging idea. Alternatively, conceptual history enables us to view ideas as unfixed, as possessing the potential to accommodate new meanings, and to appreciate their specific technical usages. In this way, *khalwat dar anjuman* was not only conceptualized in a novel way, but it was also institutionalized by becoming the prevailing attitude of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandīs.

Despite the vast historical and geographical trajectory from Yūsuf al-Hamadānī to Mahmud Esad Coşan, a remarkable continuity was made evident in terms of how the Naqshbandīs reconciled solitary and social life through *khalwat dar anjuman*, that is, in principle at least. The means by which each shaykh had reconciled the said tension in practice, notwithstanding, varied in perceptible ways. Hamadānī as the ideational architect of the Khwājagān introduced *khalwat dar anjuman* as an internalizing practice, that is, in the general context of balancing outward and inward devotional

aspects of Islam. ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghujduwānī who was the doctrinal innovator had embedded *khalwat dar anjuman* as a core principle and systematically regulated mystical journeying squarely within a social periphery. Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband, the eponymous organizational founder, had reemphasized the paramount importance of *khalwat dar anjuman* – interestingly defining it in contradistinction to the conventional Sufi practice of *khalwah* – and made *khalwat dar anjuman* a most fundamental principle which, judging by his words, epitomized the essence of his *ṭarīqah*. ‘Ubaydullāh Aḥrār would introduce into the *ṭarīqah* the novelty of political involvement and direct association with rulers as an act of duty and piety, which defined his practice of *khalwat dar anjuman*. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was one of the major figures to divulge a penchant for solitude, although he is said to have suppressed his desire to flee and likewise veiled his inward state by teaching and learning, which was his way of practicing *khalwat dar anjuman*. Meḥmed Abū Sa‘īd al-Khādimī’s construal of *khalwat dar anjuman* can be seen in his mission to reinvigorate an understanding and practice in Ottoman society that combined inward devotion and outward conformity. Shāmil al-Gimrawī al-Dāghistānī’s practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* was significant in disallowing him to remain a quietist and to devote himself to mystical pursuits, which instead emboldened him to lead the war effort against his oppressors. Aḥmad Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn Gümüşhānevī typified the practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* as one who placed himself at the very heart of the caliphal administration, while earning a reputation for immersing himself in God’s recollection. Zahid Kotku put *khalwat dar anjuman* into practice by stressing inward and outward *jihād* as part of his moral vision which was centered on the idea of cultivating an economically and spiritually robust society. Coşan practiced *khalwat dar anjuman* by personally committing himself to playing an active role in social, economic, and political affairs while serving as a university professor, shaykh, and religious figure.

All things considered, while the substantive meaning of *khalwat dar anjuman* certainly remained consistent throughout the ages, its functional signification had nonetheless changed over time and space. This tells us that certain ideational and practical differences existed between the Naqshbandīs as those who continuously adapted to the times, reconfigured past legacies, and reoriented themselves in light of changing contexts.

In general, however, the Naqshbandīs adopted abstinence when it came to practicing solitude, that is to say, many of them actually desired to flee from the people and possessed a predilection for solitude. This meant that many of the Naqshbandīs were never afforded the luxury to withdraw from their surroundings and relinquish their obligations for spiritual reasons, despite the reclusive tendencies which some had displayed. Mystical thought had ironically propelled the Naqshbandīs to wholly involve themselves in the world. This phenomenon goes against Max Weber's (1965) basic idea of 'contemplative flight', which carries the inherent risk of taking the mystic away from the mundane world and into a mode of intense engagement in other-worldly pursuits. The Naqshbandīs had therefore sought inward devotion and self-betterment not apart from, or independent of society, but wholly within it, and this was based on the underlying assumption that one possessed the capacity to be spiritually strong enough to live in society without having to disengage from it.

GLOSSARY

Adab:	etiquette; ethical code; decorum; protocol; manners and rituals
Āgāh	aware; informed; learned; pure at heart; sagacious
Akhlāq:	ethical character
Awsām:	hermitage
Dhawq:	tasting; mystical experience
Dhikr:	recollection of God
Fanā':	self-effacement
Faqr:	awareness of one's dependence on God; being in a state free from any attachment to material things
Farḍ al-'ayn:	individual obligation
Farḍ al-kifāyah:	communal obligation
Fuqahā':	Muslim jurists
Futuwwah:	chivalric-ethics; noble human behavior; an ethic of action (as opposed to contemplation)
Ḥuḍūr	God's divine presence
Idrāk:	discernment
Ijāzah:	licensure
Ijtihād:	meticulous engagement in a mental or spiritual activity
'Ilm:	discursive knowledge; knowledge acquired through reason and revelation
Jihād:	striving selflessly for the sake of God and the Muslim community
Kasb:	acquisition; gainful activity
Kashf:	unveiling
Khawf:	reverential fear of God
Maghfirah:	remission of sins
Maḥabbah:	affectionate attachment
Majāz:	metaphorical expression
Malakūt:	visible realm

Mansik:	place of ritual practices
Ma‘rifah:	divine gnosis; direct knowledge of God
Masnūn:	personal advice
Mujālasah:	social intercourse
Mulk:	apparent realm
Nafs:	ego-self; carnal soul
Ni‘mah:	divine grace
Qabūl or qubūl:	mystical receptivity
Qanā‘ah:	contentment
Quṭb:	spiritual ‘axis’ of each age
Rajā’:	hope in God’s favor and blessings
Riyā’:	feigned piety; sanctimony
Rūḥāniyyah:	spiritual essence
Sa‘ādah:	bliss, esp. the kind obtained after achieving salvation
Ṣabr:	forbearance
Ṣalāh:	ritual worship
Sanad:	channels of transmission of prophetic traditions
Sayr wa sulūk:	contemplation and action; exerting oneself on the mystical path
Silsilah:	spiritual chain of transmission; legitimacy gained through a spiritually-grounded genealogy to past Sufi masters
Ṣuḥbah:	spiritual companionship; commune between shaykh and disciple
Ṭā‘āt:	pious deeds
Tajallī:	theophany
Talqīn:	spiritual instruction
Tarbiyah:	practical instruction, esp. in relation to ethical comportment and spiritual cultivation
Tasāmuḥ:	tolerance
Tawḥīd:	doctrine of God’s oneness

Wilāyah:	spiritual authority
Wird:	devotional litany
Wuṣūl:	mystical attainment
Ẓāhir:	outward; appearance
Zuhd:	renunciation; abstinence

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[266] See Gerhard Bowering & Bilal Orfali, *Comfort of the mystics*, p. 21; cf. Orfali B., Bowering G., *Seeking solitude. A short Sufi guidebook: Khalwat al-ʻākifīn*. Beirut 2013.

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