The Public Sphere during the Later Abbasid Caliphate (1000- 1258 CE): The Role of Sufism

Atta Muhammad

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies

February 2020

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to Allah the Merciful for His Blessings, which helped me to complete this thesis.

My heartfelt thanks go to my respected supervisor Dr. Fozia Bora for her persistent guidance and invaluable feedback. She has been a guiding star in every step of my research journey. Without her kind guidance and extra support and care, I would not have completed my research. My learning from her was not confined to her comments on my work but drew much inspiration from her many points of general wisdom. I am thankful to Dr. Hendrik Kraetzschmar, for his useful comments on my chapter which I presented for my transfer viva. I am also thankful to Dr. Mustapha Sheikh and Dr. Tajul Islam as they encouraged me at every step, and I had useful discussions with them. Conversations with friends, particularly Dr. Zafar Hussain and Younas Ahmad, have been important for enriching and stimulating my thinking on the matters discussed in this thesis. I am greatly thankful to my friend Mohammad H. Abed for his encouragement and support at various occasions. I greatly acknowledge the kind support of Karen F Priestley, Doctoral College Officer, for the help she provided me whenever I visited her office.

I thank the Punjab Higher Education Commission, Pakistan for granting me the scholarship that funded this research. I also thank the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, for offering me funds to present papers relevant to my research in various international conferences and workshops. The audiences' questions and comments at these colloquia have greatly helped me to refine my main arguments.

I am very grateful to Dr. Tanvir Anjum, Department of History, QAU Islamabad for her guidance and encouragement. During my studies at QAU, she inculcated within me enthusiasm and passion for learning, and for the pursuit of Islamic history. She has been an inspiration for me throughout my PhD research here at the University of Leeds. I am

greatly indebted to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, whose writings encouraged me and have continuously pushed me to pursue learning ever since I became familiar with his works. I am especially grateful to Dr. Irfan Waheed Usmani for his encouragement and kind guidance regarding the pursuit of higher studies. I am also thankful to Nayyar Ijaz Beg for his general wisdom and guiding me to the path of pursuing a foreign PhD. Thanks are due to Seyyed Munawar Abbass Bukhari for his encouragement and support. I am particularly greatful to respected Mukhtar Hussain and his family in leeds for their huge care, hospitality and prayers. I am also thankful to Mohammed Aijaz for his hospitality and wonderful company during my stay at leeds. My deep thanks go to my family for their support and prayers, in particular my wife. I am grateful to my brother and cousins for their financial support for the last couple of months. I particularly thank my niece *Shahrbanu* for inspiration.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my respected *bhau*s (first cousins), and late mother who aspired for my education. Without the care, love and support of *bhau*s through my early education, I would not have been able to reach the stage of completing my PhD.

Abstract

This study reconsiders and overturns key Orientalist assumptions about popular agency and despotic rule in medieval Islamic society. These assumptions encompass the notions that no relationship existed between the lower rungs of society and the ruling elite except through the hegemonic pattern of the absolute and unfettered rule of *sulṭān*s/caliphs, and that people at large enjoyed little to no agency in regard to effecting social, political, spiritual and economic change. My study argues against these assumptions by clearing a space for better understanding of where the social, economic and political agency of ordinary people lay. I argue that medieval Islamic societies did not merely have a single authoritarian sphere of social activity in which only the elite had agency; rather, there were multiple public spheres where people recruited from a range of private spheres expressed differing modes of social agency.

This study reveals that there was a vibrant public sphere in medieval Islamic societies, and particularly in later Abbasid Baghdad, in which *Ṣūfī*s played a significant role. The establishment of *Ṣūfī* lodges in Baghdad created a much broader public space where the community of believers would be involved in public sphere activities of various kinds, through which they could contribute to the public good. The plethora of evidence that I have gathered and analysed in this study reveals that *Ṣūfī*s as social actors used their agency to influence state policies for the betterment of common people. Through their autonomous activities, by instructing the authorities or collaborating with the ruling authorities, *Ṣūfī*s regularly and successfully intervened in the public domains for the welfare of the community, sometimes to quite radical effect. A number of *Ṣūfī*s also tried to build bridges between ruling elites and commoners, to develop and sustain an environment where social actors and community members from various walks of life could contribute to and shape the common values of society.

My investigation breaks new ground in documenting the fact that later Abbasid Baghdad functioned well as a social sphere in terms of social cohesion and a growth in prosperity, not because governments fulfilled their responsibilities impeccably but rather because ordinary people took on some of these responsibilities. I demonstrate clearly a shift in emphasis from the state to society, where whole social strata would contribute to the constitution of public spheres. The involvement of rulers as patrons and facilitators of these public spaces reveals that medieval rulers were not by any means necessarily 'despotic'.

Table of contents

Transliteration and dates

I have used the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* system for the transliteration of Arabic and Persian terms in this thesis with some exceptions for the sake of convenience. The exceptions are; q instead of ḳ and j instead of d̲j. Well-known words, such as the names of dynasties, are rendered in their Anglicised versions.

This thesis provides dates in the Common Era with Hijrī dates. The Hijrī year is followed by the Christian year.

Glossary

ʿābid: (pl. *ʿubbād*) the devotees of God

adab: (pl. Arabic *ādāb*) good manner

al-ʿāmma: the commoners; the masses

al-khāṣṣa: the elite; the notables; the aristocracy

amīr: a member of the ruling elite; one who occupies high official position; military commander

Ashʿarī: the school of orthodox theology in *Sunnī* Islam founded by Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935)

ʿayyār: (pl. Arabic *ʿayyārūn*) paramilitary chivalric bands; chivalric groups

baraka: spiritual power; sanctifying power or authority; God-given sanctity

bāzār: market spaces with 'porous boundaries' and connected with other major institutions of urban Islamic culture; trading zones in urban centres

darwīsh: a member of a *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*; a mendicant ascetic

dhikr: recollections of God's presence; remembrance of God

faqīr: (pl. *fuqarāʾ*) a poor or destitute person; a person who "lives for God alone" and relies only on God for anything; a follower of a *Ṣūfī* group

fatwa: (pl. *fatāwā*) a legal decision or opinion given by a *muftī*

fiqh: knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence derived through legal reasoning; the *faqīh* (pl. *fuqahāʾ*) is the one who has such knowledge

futuwwa: chivalry; chivalric spiritual ethics; *Ṣūfī* good manners

ḥadīth: the collected reports of Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds

ḥāl: (pl. *aḥwāl*) a mystical state

Ḥanbalī: one of the four legal schools of jurisprudence in *Sunnī* Islam. It was formed by the jurist Aḥmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855); a member of this school.

Ḥaqīqa: the ultimate Truth

ḥisba: a term used for the duty of every Muslim to promote what is good and forbid what is evil; to supervise moral behaviour in a town, particularly of a market. The person who was entrusted with the *ḥisba* was called the *muḥtasib*.

ḥuqūq al-ʿibād: the rights of man

ḥuqūq Allāh: the rights or claims of God

ijtihād: a source of law in *Sunnī* Islam; independent reasoning and judgement

imām: a prayer leader; religious, spiritual and political heads in *Shīʿī* Islam; a *Sunnī* religious scholar

javānmardī: chivalry; ethical qualities like generosity, honesty, courage, benevolence and noble heartedness.

kẖānqāh: a *Ṣūfī* centre where a *Ṣūfī* shares his or her spiritual experience with others; *Ṣūfī* dwellings

madẖhab: (pl. *madẖāhib*) School of Law; schools of Muslim jurisprudence or *fiqh*

madrasa: a college for learning

majdẖūb: an ecstatic or an enraptured person who lost his or her sanity and self-control in the love of God; a holy fool

Mālikī: one of the four legal schools of jurisprudence in *Sunnī* Islam. It was formed by the jurist Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795); a member of this school.

maʿrifa: gnosis; profound comprehension of God

maṣlaḥa: common interest; public good

murīd: a seeker of a *Ṣūfī* path; disciple

qalandar: a member of a group of *darwīsh*; "a libertine mendicant having strong antinomian and non-conformist tendencies"

ribāṭ: a type of *Ṣūfī* dwelling

ṣadaqa: voluntary charity

samāʿ: devotional practice of listening to *Ṣūfī* music; a *Ṣūfī* concert

Shāfiʿī: one of the four legal schools of jurisprudence in *Sunnī* Islam. It was formed by the early jurist Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 205/820); a member of this school.

sharīʿa: the Islamic law; God's ideal; a complete way of life for Muslims

shaykh: an elder; a *Ṣūfī* master; a man respected for his piety and learning

Sunna: the exemplary practices, sayings and doings of Prophet Muhammad

ṭāʾifa: *Ṣūfī* community; a group of *Ṣūfī*

tarbiyya: the term used for education and pedagogy; also used for training in respect of individual social ethics

ṭarīqa: literally means the way, the path, or a method; a spiritual lineage

taṣawwuf: Islamic tradition of "mysticism"

ʿulamāʾ: (sing. *ʿālim*) a religious scholar

umma: the community of believers

walī: a person who is close to God; a person who is considered to be friend of God

waqf: a religious endowment

wilāya/*walāya*: the spiritual authority or charisma of a *Ṣūfī* saint or ascetic; in *Shīʿī* islam, *walāya* "conveys a special sense of devotion for and closeness and allegiance to the Imām"

zāhid: (pl. *zuhhād*) renunciants; one who detaches himself or herself from this world

zakāt: mandatory payment that a Muslim pays from the lawful portion of his or her property for the welfare of the poor

zāwiya: a small *Ṣūfī* dwelling

Introduction

In the introduction that follows, I define the concept of the 'public sphere' and then go on to discuss Sufism and its relationship with this sphere during the later Abbasid Caliphate.

The public sphere

The public sphere is a space, physical and/or intellectual, where individuals and groups come together to point out and discuss matters relating to the common good. As Jürgen Habermas argues, this sphere lies between state and civil society, where common people critically and rationally debate matters of common interest.[1] The public sphere resists and monitors the authoritarian tendencies of the state by organizing and mobilizing people against it. It promotes popular causes by both cooperating with and opposing the state.[2] It is a sphere that creates relationships between society and the state through public opinion. In the contemporary world, the media as an institution provide a forum wherein people can freely discuss and debate general issues. The public sphere also involves other segments of society who may discuss any specific issue in their homes and through other social avenues. It is an ideal agency for public discussion, open to everyone having largely equal access and equal rights, which helps to form public opinion in a way that "limits the incursion of bureaucratic and political control into everyday life."[3] It is a public domain that is open to all sections of society and is independent of any state authority or institution.

Scholars such as Armando Salvatore have paid close attention to the idea of the public sphere and have noted that it is not simply about rational critical debate and the

---

[1] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger and intro. by Thomas McCarthy (Massachusetts: Cambridge, 1989), xi.
[2] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 2.
[3] Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt, *Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate* (Routledge: London, 1994), 30-35.

formation of public opinion. Salvatore argues that the public sphere is a complex phenomenon, having various legal, civic and religious roots. It is a process in which the actors come together, argue, act and deliberate in a way that is legitimate in the pursuance of collective wellbeing. The actors in the process also show a fair degree of transparency of communication.[4] The public sphere, by its nature, means the general wellbeing of the people. It is a sphere where people can air all kinds of grievances and address all kinds of problems.

The nature of the public sphere is well illustrated by the example of rational critical debate and the formation of public opinion. Significantly, public opinion is not the opinion of an individual but draws its strength from the groups which participate in critical and rational debate for the common good.[5] Habermas, who based his conception of the public sphere on "critical-rational public opinion", took the idea of critical rationality from Kant, who thought that it was "rational-critical debate" by the public, "human beings", over their collective concerns, which made them "citizens".[6] In this way, "Kant's ideas of public, publicity, and critical reason have become part of a Habermasian story of the progressively liberating aspects of secular, bourgeois society."[7] For Habermas, this critical rational approach by the citizens in the public sphere helped the bourgeoisie to create a liberal constitutional state. According to Dewey, 'public' means "an institution with recognized common goals and at least an informal leadership," so his concept overlaps with Habermas' notion of the public sphere. Thus, Dewey "reaffirms the necessary role of intermediary institutions and authorities, as against the emphasis

[4] Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7.
[5] Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 17.
[6] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 202.
[7] Ibid.

that Kant and Habermas place on the public sphere occupying a social space freed from the influence of such authorities."[8]

There is a need to critically examine the concept of rationality in public discourse as it limits the role of some of the religious forms in the public sphere. As to religion, David Harrington Watt contends, "under certain circumstances at least religious institutions are important elements in the public sphere."[9] These religious forms or institutions have no space within the single predominant public sphere. Nancy Fraser challenges the idea of exclusive focus on the single dominant public sphere in favour of the multiplicity of the public. She wants to focus attention on what she calls "subaltern counter publics." These publics exist at the margins and in the spaces of the single overarching public sphere, and they repeatedly assert their validity and legitimacy.[10] Though Fraser does not explicitly list the subaltern practices that go against the greater interest of the public, presumptions can be made about them as "a number of voluntary associations formed by persons with an attachment to religious ideas and practices that are marginalized by the dominant public sphere."[11] Therefore, it can be argued that there are various, and sometimes contending concepts of the public sphere. Moreover, it can be assumed that some religious institutions and traditions contribute to the formation of these multiple public spheres.

In contrast to the secular, rational public criticism experienced by the liberal democracies, public criticism exists in Muslim countries, but there it is based on its own principles and institutions guided by traditional reasoning,[12] as Talal Asad argues, giving

---

[8] Dale F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, 'The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities', *Arch. europ. social.*, I (2002), 92-115 (p. 95).
[9] David Harrington Watt, review of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992), *Sociological Analysis*, 53(1992), 466-68 (p. 467).
[10] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56-80 (pp. 65-68, 77).
[11] Watt, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (pp. 467-68).
[12] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 213-14.

an example of the Islamic state of Saudi Arabia, where religious scholars and *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholars, including theologians and jurists) criticize those functions of the state which they consider irreligious and against the *sharīʿa* (the revealed law; rules and regulations for governing the life of Muslims) norms in their discourses and sermons. This criticism is based on *naṣīḥa* (signifying honest and faithful advice for someone's good), a moral exhortation to the ruler for the betterment of the *umma* (community of believers). In Asad's words, *naṣīḥa*, "is much more than an expression of good intention on the part of the advice giver (*nāsih*): since in this context it carries the sense of offering moral advice to an erring fellow Muslim (*mansūh*), it is at once an obligation to be fulfilled and a virtue to be cultivated by all Muslims."[13] The above discussion highlights the role of the moral political criticism and its relevance to the construction of the public sphere in the Islamic societies.

To further illuminate the conception of the public sphere, the section that follows discusses the public spheres in some premodern societies. Public spheres existed in premodern societies, for example in "traditional" Indian society, which was based on a "highly hierarchical—non-egalitarian," and relatively flexible system.[14] In that society, Brahmins (members of the highest caste in Hinduism) belonging to both the ruling class and the merchant class played the role of mediator or a "point of linkage" between the kings and different local organizations.[15] Moreover, in premodern India, various social actors and complex networks of castes had access to rulers through the inherently designed duties of the rulers and the subjects. In the case of the rulers, it was their special duty to listen to and address the problems faced by their subjects. On the other hand, though the subjects were bound to pay the taxes, yet they were allowed, to a large extent,

[13] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 214.
[14] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, 'Civil Society and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective', *Polish Sociological Review*, 154 (2006), 143-66 (p. 152).
[15] Ibid.

to organize and manage their affairs.[16] Eisenstadt traces open expression of the public sphere in this premodern Indian society from the relative autonomy of such social sectors.

In medieval Europe, the public sphere was formed by the active role of specific religious and social organizations in the promulgation of the moral order. In this respect, the particular Christian civilizational "conceptions of the transcendental order which contained within itself some combination of this and other-worldly orientation,"[17] played a significant role. In Christianity's inherent 'this worldly' orientations, there is an arena of activities for the reconstruction and reshaping of the mundane world. Doing good in the public domain in this world, for salvation in the next world, contributed to the constitution of the public sphere in medieval Christian civilization.[18]

In the case of premodern imperial China, *gong* (the space open to all) between *guan* (the space of bureaucratic officials) and *si* (the place of self-interest) played a significant role in pursuing the public good.[19] During the late Ming era in China (1368-1644), both state officials and private groups were involved in public good activities.[20] Mary Bucks Rankin treats the public sphere as a much broader space, with less clearly defined boundaries between public and private arenas than the modern Western conception of the public sphere, in which there is a strict line of demarcation between public and private spheres.

---

[16] Eisenstadt, 'Civil Society and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective' (p. 153); Said Amir Arjomand compares Brahmins as the "guardians and regulators of the basic values and norms of the Hindu civilization, as the *ʿulamāʾ* were of the Muslim one, and in both cases independently of the rulers and the state. This similar function was, however, performed very differently, in an ethical and juristic style by the *ʿulamāʾ*, and in a ritual style by the Brahmin." Said Amir Arjomand, 'Axial Civilizations, Multiple Modernities, and Islam', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 11 (2011), 327-35 (p. 331).

[17] S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies: Some Comparative Observations', *Comparative Sociology*, 5 (2006), 1-32 (p. 24).

[18] Ibid., (pp. 24-25).

[19] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities: A Comparative View', *Daedalus*, 127 (1998), 1-18 (pp. 12-13).

[20] Mary Backus Rankin, 'Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere', *Modern China*, 19 (1993), 158-82 (pp. 158-162).

Public spheres existed in various civilizations in the premodern world. Those civilizations contributed to the public good or to public life according to their various social, cultural, religious and intellectual norms, definitions of the common good, and notions of justice.[21] In the case of Islamic societies, the *sharīʿa* played an important role in the emergence and development of the Islamic public sphere.

Sharīʿa, the objectives of *sharīʿa*, and *maṣlaḥa* (common interest)

In the context of Islamic thought, when we think about the public sphere and its role, a key question is going to be: What is the purpose of the *sharīʿa*? Additional questions include the following: What is the *sharīʿa* trying to do? Does the *sharīʿa* belong to the rulers? Does it belong to the *ʿulamāʾ*? Does it belong to God? Does it belong to the public? Who fulfils the *maqāṣid* (objectives) of *sharīʿa*?

The *sharīʿa* is not a narrow system of law but a broader system that defines *maṣlaḥa* (pl. *maṣāliḥ*). *Maṣlaḥa* is generally defined as the principle through which public interests and benefits are sought, and is concerned with the common good.[22] While defining *maṣlaḥa*, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), a jurist and *Ṣūfī*, observes that though the *sharīʿa* does not directly ordain it, it is always in line with the objectives of the *sharīʿa*. According to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, there are five overarching objectives of the *sharīʿa*: to secure religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Some scholars include honour in the essential objectives of the *sharīʿa*. Any measure that protects these essential human values is in the *maṣlaḥa* and is in accord with the teachings of the *sharīʿa*, and if it violates the objectives of the *sharīʿa*, it is not *maṣlaḥa* but is

[21] Armando Salvatore, 'public sphere', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. by Gerhard Bowering and others (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 437.
[22] M. Khadduri, 'Maṣlaḥa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5019> [accessed 28 November 2017]

mafsada (injury; evil).[23] The prime objective of the *sharīʿa* is to secure benefits for human beings and to prevent corruption on earth.

Similarly, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Shāṭibī (d. 789/1388), a fourteenth-century Muslim jurist, argues that God promulgates *sharīʿa* to promote the welfare of men and women and also to stop vice on earth. For al-Shāṭibī, *maṣlaḥa* is not absolute: all *maṣāliḥ* are relative, as the main objective of these *maṣāliḥ* is to promote benefits for human beings, and these benefits do not oppose the objectives of the *sharīʿa*.[24] *Maṣlaḥa* is a principle through which policies are made for the good of the common people, although it is not clearly mentioned in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunna* (sayings and doings of Prophet Muhammad). *Maṣlaḥa*, in a society of believers, gives space to the common people, specifically to *ʿulamāʾ* who better know Islamic religious traditions, to provide ideas, laws and rules for the collective betterment and thus constitute the public sphere.

In premodern Islamic societies, *sharīʿa* played a key role in securing the public interest of the *umma*, the community of believers. Through its interaction with other segments of society, it provided spaces to the whole social strata to contribute to the public good. In premodern Islamic societies, the public sphere was constituted by the interaction of *sharīʿa*, *ʿulamāʾ*, many social and religious organizations of the community, and the rulers.[25] In respect of the crystallization of the public spheres in premodern Islamic societies, *sharīʿa* was the most significant as "it was the main overall framework of Islamic societies, the regulator of the moral and religious vision, the cohesive and boundary-setting force of Muslim communities."[26] The *ʿulamāʾ* as

[23] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 351-52.
[24] Ibid., 352, 357.
[25] Eisenstadt, 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies' (p. 5).
[26] Ibid., (p. 5-6).

interpreters of *sharīʿa*, played a key role in the development of Islamic public spheres in medieval Islamic societies.

The public sphere becomes indispensable when ordinary people find that the political system is not working because the political elite, even the *ʿulamāʾ*, who often work for the political elite, is not promoting the fulfilment of these rights (of objectives of *sharīʿa*, life, property, religion, intellect, lineage). In this public sphere, which promotes the objectives of *sharīʿa*, ordinary people can express their grievances and try to find the means to fulfil their needs. It is important to mention here that *sharīʿa* is basically very broad and can be understood very differently in differing contexts. It has many aspects, such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), the *maqāṣid* of *sharīʿa* and *Ṣūfī* piety. Significantly, these are the objectives of *sharīʿa* that encourage the public good. The *maqāṣid* of *sharīʿa* offer the religious framework in which the public sphere can be facilitated. It creates a very interesting question: Who determines, or who carries the responsibilities of fulfilling, the objectives of *sharīʿa*? In some ways, governments of the day that called themselves either caliphates or sultanates serving the caliphate, employed *ʿulamāʾ* to help them to carry out the *maqāṣid* or the responsibilities of the government or state. In this context, when the government does not adequately serve the people or protect or promote the *maqāṣid*, that is when the *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s step in to promote the common good.

Taṣawwuf (Sufism)

So far, this thesis has focused on the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere. In the following section, I briefly introduce *taṣawwuf* or Sufism.

Sufism (*taṣawwuf* in Arabic) is a religious and spiritual tradition within Islam. It emerged as an ascetic and mystical stream in the very early stages of the development of Islam and "subsequently took a wide variety of devotional, doctrinal, artistic, and

institutional forms."[27] While seemingly trivializing the idea of Sufism as "the mysticism of a marginal party of God-seekers," Nile Green considered Sufism "as primarily a *tradition* of powerful knowledge, practices and persons."[28] As far as the *Ṣūfī*'s spiritual journey is concerned, it is from the outward to the inward. Thus, Sufism can be defined as "the living heart of Islam, the inner dimension of the Revelation given to Muhammad, and not an arbitrary form of occultation."[29] Sufism is defined variously by different scholars of Sufism and Islam.

The *Ṣūfī* approach to God is through *sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa* (the way or the method; a spiritual lineage), *maʿrifa* (intuitive knowledge) and *Ḥaqīqa* (the Ultimate Truth). The *Ṣūfī* strives to follow the path of *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa*, purify his or her inner self through spiritual means, and seeks the love of God and "union with God."[30] However, Sufism is not just confined to the love of God and the inner illumination of the *Ṣūfī*s; rather it focuses on the betterment of people, as *Ṣūfī*s strive not only for their spiritual enhancement but also for the improvement and spiritual purification of other people.[31] Thus Sufism, as an Islamic religious and spiritual tradition, guides and trains people to serve God well, and to become better moral and social human beings.

The *Ṣūfī* worldview is based on personal, ethical, and moral values that affect social attitudes to a great extent. The major doctrines of the *Ṣūfī* worldview are: *fanāʾ* (annihilation of the mortal self or absorption into the Godhead), *khawf* (fear of God), love of God (through personal annihilation), *ikhlāṣ* (the concept of sincerity) and *faqr*

---

[27] Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 1.
[28] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3.
[29] Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. by Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010), 1.
[30] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 2000), 140; Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 11-14.
[31] Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 8; Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 2; Tanvir Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi, 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41.

(voluntary poverty).[32] *Faqr* is one of the eight qualities on which Sufism is founded.[33] Moreover, tolerance, towards other religions, schools of thoughts, and different sects, is one of the universal doctrines of *Ṣūfī*s. The basic spiritual virtues of Sufism are humility, charity and truthfulness. These virtues help *Ṣūfī*s to be humble and charitable towards others while realizing their own imperfection and nothingness before God.[34] All these virtues are indispensable to Sufism and the *Ṣūfī* framework: without these, the individual cannot be a true seeker of the Path and help the believers to become better social human beings in a real sense. Through the dissemination of these virtues in society, *Ṣūfī*s contributed to the ethical and moral betterment of the people.

In the early centuries of Islam, it was difficult to differentiate between the pious *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s, as the term '*Ṣūfī*' and '*taṣawwuf*' did not appear until the later eighth century. In the time of Prophet Muhammad, there was no distinction between esoteric Islam and exoteric Islam as both were practiced seamlessly and simultaneously.[35] Many early *Ṣūfī*s were involved in activities such as personal austerity, fear of God, much recitation of the *Qurʾān* and offering of ritual prayers, and personal ethical and moral development.[36] However, at the turn of the eleventh century, Sufism had moved from "individual piety" into a "social organization," complex *Ṣūfī* religious tradition, and a "vehicle for public outreach."[37] Sufism developed into an institution with its own distinctive "societal structures, its own authorities and its own hierarchies."[38] By this time, Sufism had emerged as a popular spiritual tradition: *khānqāh*s or *Ṣūfī* dwellings appeared

[32] Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis*, 63-65.
[33] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2006), 14-15.
[34] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 134-36.
[35] Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 5-6.
[36] Christopher Melchert, 'Origins and Early Sufism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. by Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3.
[37] Marshal G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience of History in a World Civilization, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Vanguard, 2004), 204, 09.
[38] Victor Danner, 'The Early Development of Sufism', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2008), 263.

as social institutions where master-disciple relationships could flourish, and where large numbers of people accepted *Ṣūfī* practices and doctrines.[39] The *khānqāh* gave people a space in which they could discuss the issues or argue against the state, or talk about their needs not being met, or even taboos in social life. Thus, Sufism provided avenues for the expression of the grievances and collective concerns of the people.[40]

Various *ṭarīqa*s or *silsila*s developed in Sufism during the later Abbasid period.[41] Among the most prominent *ṭarīqa*s that emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the *Suhrawardiyya*, the *Qādiriyya*, the *Rifāʿiyya* and the *Shādhiliyya*. The founder of the *Suhrawardiyya ṭarīqa* was Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 564/1168), a prominent Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*. He was a disciple of Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), and this *ṭarīqa* later spread to the Indian sub-continent. The *Qādiriyya ṭarīqa*, founded by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 562/1166) in Baghdad in the twelfth century, played a significant role in the Islamization of West Africa and had a significant influence on Sufism in the sub-continent.[42] Aḥmad ibn al-Rifāʿī (d. 578/1182), a near-exact contemporary of al-Jīlānī, founded the *ṭarīqa* of *Rifāʿiyya* dervishes, also known as howling dervishes because of their loud *dhikr* (remembrance of God), in Iraq.[43] At almost the same time in Egypt, the *Shādhiliyya ṭarīqa* was founded by Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ash-Shādhilī (d. 657/1258), a *ṭarīqa* that had a significant influence in Egypt and other north African Muslim countries.[44] These *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s and many other *Ṣūfī* networks

[39] Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis*, 56-57.
[40] Nehemia Levtzion, 'The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 110-12.
[41] Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis*, 57. *Ṭarīqa* and *silsila* can be defined as "spiritual lineage or pedigree, or initiatic genealogy. Every *silsilah* traced its spiritual lineage or genealogy to some revered Sufis *shaykh*, considered to be the founder of the *silsilah*, and through him, it was linked to his spiritual preceptor, and this vertical chain of authority was invariably traced back to Prophet Muhammad."
[42] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 247-48.
[43] Ibid., 248.
[44] Ibid., 250-51.

played an important role in the dissemination of *Ṣūfī* ethical and moral virtues, based on the *Ṣūfī* worldview, in the Islamic world.

The role of *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and the *waqf* in the public sphere

In this next section, I set out the argument that in the history of Islamic societies, religious institutions and groups such as *waqf* (endowment), *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods contributed significantly to the public sphere. According to Marshall Hodgson, the three most significant "religiously sanctioned" institutions played significant roles in the collective life of the Muslim community. They were the *sharīʿa* law, the *waqf* and the *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s.[45] The *sharīʿa* worked as a civic force for social order in the Islamic world as it reflected the sentiments of Muslims and was accepted by all religious schools of law with minor differences of interpretation.[46] Though Hodgson does not name them as the public spaces, *sharīʿa* law, the *waqf* and the *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods were out of the control of the ruling authorities, and they played a major role in the religious, spiritual and financial wellbeing of the community. With regard to the role of religion and religious organizations in the public sphere, Daphna Ephrat argues that *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods, *madrasa*s, and *madhhab*s (schools of law) played a role in the religious, political and social life of the public under the Seljuk *sulṭān*s (r. 428/1037-590/1194). She argues that *Ṣūfī* lodges, *madrasa*s and *madhhab*s intersected with the religious, political and social life and incorporated whole social strata into the domain of the public sphere.[47]

While discussing the role of the *ʿulamāʾ* in the public sphere, Nimrod Hurvitz argues that the *ʿulamāʾ* challenged the act of the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 197-218/813-833) in enforcing the religious ideology of one faction of the *ʿulamāʾ* on others in the case of

[45] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol.2, 119.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Daphna Ephrat, 'Religious Leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Seljuk Baghdad', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 31-48.

the *miḥna* (inquisition) of 218-233/833-847.[48] As a consequence of the *miḥna,* in the view of much of modern scholarship, the *ʿulamāʾ* became the autonomous interpreters of religious dogma and continued to enjoy freedom in religious issues in later centuries.[49] But this did not mean that *ʿulamāʾ* and 'state' separated. After the *miḥna,* there was no parting of the ways between religious and political domains; rather, the involvement of caliphs in religious matters continued in the following centuries.[50] However, the *ʿulamāʾ*, through the articulation of religious dogma, shaped public opinion and thus significantly contributed to the public sphere. Similarly, the *ʿulamāʾ* of Seljuk Baghdad enjoyed greater autonomy not only in the institutions related to the application and transmission of *sharīʿa* law but in the public sphere as a whole.[51] The *ʿulamāʾ* worked in the Baghdadi public spheres as pious and charismatic leaders, as spokesmen of the community towards the rulers, and in a charitable role towards the people.[52] Moreover, the *ʿulamāʾ* as interpreters of the *sharīʿa* law cleared a space for the construction of *waqf* as a public institution that contributed remarkably in the public sphere.

While looking at the relations between society and the state through the particular prism of the *waqf,* Miriam Hoexter reveals a very vibrant public sphere through which all strata—rulers, officials, wealthy and poor, male and female—participated in the constitution and improvement of the public space.[53] Said Amir Arjomand has worked on

---

[48] M. Hinds, 'Miḥna', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5019> [accessed 01 November 2019]

[49] Nimrod Hurvitz, 'The *Mihna* (Inquisition) and the Public Sphere', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 17-29.

[50] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'The Caliphs, the ʿulamāʾ, and the Law: Defining the Role and Function of the Caliph in the Early Abbāsid Period', *Islamic Law and Society*, 1 (1997), 1-36. Muhammad Qasim Zaman debates the issue of separation of religion and politics as advocated by some scholars, such as Ira Marvin Lapidus and Patricia Crone, who argue that in consequence of the *miḥna* episode, there was a decisive and permanent separation between religious and political realms in the history of Islam.

[51] Ephrat, 'Religious Leadership and Associations', 36-37.

[52] Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 125-47.

[53] Miriam Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 119-39.

the *waqf* as an institution of public policy in pre-modern Muslim societies and argues that it was an important social institution that worked for mosques, *madrasa*s, and other public works in medieval Islam.[54] These social and religious institutions provided public spaces for Muslims to do good for the community. The *waqf* as a space for the public good will be discussed in detail in the third chapter.

At the end of the twelfth century, *Ṣūfī* orders impacted upon the public sphere when they integrated people from different domains of society within *khānqāh*s, thereby providing a platform for identifying and forming ideas relating to social life and facilitating freedom of debate in matters critical for both ruler and the public at large.[55] In medieval Ayyubid (r. 566-648/1171-1250) and Mamluk (r. 648-923/1250-1517) Palestine, *Ṣūfī*s transformed *Ṣūfī* lodges and saintly tombs endowed by the ruling elite into public spaces, and thus significantly contributed to the formation and expansion of an Islamic public space. These spaces became centres for followers of the *Ṣūfī* spiritual path and of religious learning. Through these spaces, Sufism moved from the private into the public spheres.[56] The above discussion alludes to the notion that Sufism of the later Abbasid period contributed to the public sphere, which this thesis seeks to examine.

Other religious communities and their public spheres

While discussing public spheres in medieval Islamic societies, it is pertinent to mention the role of non-Muslims in these, as they were a visible and crucial part of medieval Islamicate societies. Non-Muslims habitually established autonomous religious

[54] Said Amir Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society: Development of the Institutions of Learning from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41 (1999), 263-93; Said Amir Arjomand, 'Philanthropy, the Law, and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era', in *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*, ed. by Warren F. Ilchman, Stanley N. Katz, and Edward L. Queen II (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 109.
[55] Dale F. Eickelman, 'Foreword: The Religious Public Sphere in Early Muslim Societies', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 3-4.
[56] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 7-8.

institutions for the good of their communities. The Jews and Christians of Egypt and Iraq enjoyed a high degree of legal and civic autonomy, though at times they did indeed suffer, depending on the nature of the rulers and the roles of these communities. In the case of the Jews of Fatimid (r. 363-567/973-1171) and Ayyubid Egypt, religious and legal freedom in public life greatly empowered them to address issues of the common good for their respective communities.[57] S. D. Goitein argues that in the higher middle period in Middle Eastern societies, the welfare of the people was not the concern of the government, except insofar as the latter was responsible for security and justice for its subjects; other social amenities were, to a great extent, managed by the religious communities.[58] Contrary to Goitein's assumption, this study argues that medieval rulers were also concerned for the welfare of the community in respect of other social amenities, which I will examine in the third, fourth and fifth chapters.

Having defined the public sphere, Sufism and the role of religion in the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies, I now further narrow down my research topic and move on to discuss and clarify the need for research on the role of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere.

Problematising assumptions regarding public spheres in Medieval Islamic societies, and the role of Sufism

The discussion below reconsiders some Orientalist assumptions that medieval Islamic societies were devoid of the spheres where commoners had agency to work for the public good. While critically evaluating these assumptions, the present study proposes that

[57] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza: Economic Foundations*, vol. I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 70-71.
[58] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, The Community*, vol. II, 349-50.

public spheres existed in medieval Islamic societies in ways that are documentable in the present day, and specifically that *Ṣūfī*s as social actors played an important role within the public sphere in later Abbasid Baghdad.

Orientalists, the public sphere and Sufism

It is clear that some modern scholars have doubted the existence of the idea of the public sphere in Islamic societies and are of the view that the public sphere is a product unique to Europe that cannot be discerned in Muslim societies, which were devoid of the necessary preconditions for such a sphere, such as democratic norms.[59] For these particular Orientalists, Asian societies and particularly Muslim societies were stagnant, with despotic rulers. These rulers had a purely hegemonic relationship with the ruled and freely imposed their will on the people. Public spaces such as the public sphere and civil society did not exist in these societies in any real sense, as society and state were not interconnected: the state was all-powerful, enjoying absolute political authority, while society was fragmented.[60] The present study challenges these views and argues that in the later Abbasid period, the ruling authorities and members of society were in some senses integrated. People from the whole range of social strata constituted the spaces—in the form of different religious, social and civic institutions—in which they worked together and thereby contributed to the public sphere.

While criticizing the works of modern Western Orientalists, Edward Said has pointed out that the colonial mindset and the needs of the colonizers played a significant role in the production of knowledge about Islam and Middle Eastern Muslim societies during the last two or more centuries. Modern Orientalists imposed modern Western ideas

[59] Bryan S. Turner, 'Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society in Islam', in *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists*, ed. by Asaf Hussain, Robert W. Olson and Jamil A. Qureshi. (Vermont: Amana Books, 1984), 25-27, 33, 35, 39: Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (New York: Verso, 2013), 463-65, 503-06.
[60] Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), 64, 71.

on the non-Western world when they tried to see the Orient through the lens of modern Western culture, history and sociological norms.[61] This approach did not enable them to obtain a true picture of other civilizations, in particular with regard to Muslims, their culture and their distinctive social and religious norms.

It may be argued that in general, for Western scholars of previous generations, the rational model of modern liberalism and the Enlightenment are the criteria for measuring non-Western traditions and societies. Those Islamic states that do not match Enlightenment ideals are typically regarded as "absolutist, and the practice of public criticism is seen as alien to them."[62] For these Orientalists, such "others" did not fit into their conceptions of culture, history and religion as defined by modern Westerners. The history of non-Westerners has been defined as the history of the merely "'local' – that is, as 'histories with limits.'"[63] A majority of the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Western scholars gave much less consideration to religion; for them, religion was a "primitive" and "outmoded" institution and an "archaic mode of scientific thinking."[64] Over the last two centuries, notions of progress and evolution have significantly contributed to Western ideas and methodologies for constructing history. In the modern West, a new idea of historical time emerged according to which it was divided into three great periods: from antiquity to the middle ages; from the middle ages to modernity; and the golden period based on rationality. This approach to historical time has significantly impacted on modern Western constructions of history and attitudes towards other cultures and religions.[65] Orientalist notions, based on Western experiences with regard to their

[61] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 271-74, 328.
[62] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 200.
[63] Ibid., 200.
[64] Ibid., 27.
[65] Ibid., 1, 18-20; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 53-62; "This framework of analysis constitutes the familiar philosophy of history of the 'Uniqueness of the West' stemming from the Max Weber among others, in which the West's historical achievements of capitalism, industrialism, modernity, democracy and so on constitute a reference point for an analysis of world history."

own history and religion, did not allow certain Orientalists to accept the distinctive developmental procedure, and the existence of notions such as the public sphere, in other societies.

Arguing against these assumptions, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter question whether the concepts and ideas developed in the modern European social sciences regarding modernity and modernization will be adequate for analyzing the historical experiences of these other societies. From the perspective of "Orientalism", these concepts and ideas were used by Western scholars to read the other non-Western societies. A major strand of Orientalist thinking tried to impose these ideas on other non-Western societies, though these ideas were culturally bound specifically to European societies.[66] Eisenstadt and Schluchter challenge the assumption of many Western Orientalist historians and sociologists that the particular Western conceptions of developments should be taken as yardsticks to measure the dynamics of other civilizations. They propose instead that "each civilization has developed distinct institutional formations and cultural foundations and that the specific characteristics of these civilizations should be analyzed not only in terms of their approximation to the West but also in their own terms."[67] So in the case of premodern Islamic societies religious traditions and institutions such as Sufism played a significant role in the life of the people and the construction of spaces for the common good as discussed above.

For a better understanding of how *Ṣūfī*s played roles in the public sphere, it would be helpful to reconsider some of the assumptions regarding Sufism: that it is a "fundamentally spiritual", "mystical" and "individual form of piety" in Islam. Though it is indeed a spiritual and individual form of piety, this is only one aspect of Sufism. To simply use "mysticism" in place of *taṣawwuf* or Sufism would not help one to better

[66] Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities' (pp. 5-6).
[67] Ibid., (pp. 6-7).

understand the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere, as the concept of developed "mysticism" is an Orientalist concept formed while thinking within the umbrella of specific Western discourses and systems of power. The construction of "mysticism" by the Orientalists for cross-cultural comparison did not serve the field of study especially well.[68] Contrary to the idea that Sufism was an "individualistic" and "private personal mystical experience", many aspects of medieval Sufism were collective and public rather than private and personalized.[69] The present study contests Orientalist assumptions regarding medieval rulers, society, religion and social structures, and proposes the existence of public spheres in which all social strata pursued the public good in a variety of ways. These spheres were in the form of *waqf*, non-*waqf* charity, community organizations, guilds of merchants and craftsmen, and *futuwwa* groups. The present study discusses and examines those facets of Sufism that were helpful to society in various ways.

Sufism in the public sphere during the later Abbasid period

Contrary to the mistaken notion of Sufism as an other-worldly phenomenon, it can be argued that *Ṣūfī*s did not live a private life of religious adherence. Master-disciple relationships inculcated wide sections of society into *Ṣūfī* ways of life, in which initiates were provided with leadership and guidance. It is misguided to disregard the significant role that *Ṣūfī* orders played in social domains in the history of Islam since "the relations of the orders with the craft guilds, with learning, with certain orders of chivalry and with the perennial renovation of the social ethics of Islamic society are too obvious to be overlooked."[70] *Ṣūfī*s gave guidance and support to people where the state failed to do so. They were the guardians of popular mystical and social networks that helped them to guide people in social and worldly domains. They mediated and conciliated in civil

[68] Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 3-4.
[69] Green, *Sufism*, 1-3.
[70] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 140.

disputes because of their good reputation, integrity, popular appeal and spiritual authority. Ibn al-Athīr reports a story of a local ascetic of the region of Bayhaq, a city near Nishapur. He was concerned about the safety of the local people in the face of the invading army of al-Muʾayyad (n. d.), who marched to Bayhaq in 556/1160. The ascetic pleaded with and preached to al-Muʾayyad for the safety and protection of the people. Al- Muʾayyad accepted the request of the ascetic and the population was saved from plunder and destruction.[71] This story illustrates the prestige of those seen to be pious *Ṣūfī*s, and their role in difficult situations and with regard to the security of communities.

As Sufism developed into religious organizations in the eleventh century, collective and communal aspects of the *Ṣūfī* lifestyle emerged to accommodate the growing number of disciples and aspirants of the path within *khānqāh*s. *Khānqāh*s appeared in the ninth and tenth centuries and were variously known as *zāwiya*s, *ribāṭ*s and *tekke* in different geographical and cultural regions.[72] These *khānqāh*s were endowed by wealthy nobles or prominent *Ṣūfī*s, or both. *Ṣūfī* dwellings such as *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s became more prevalent under the patronage of Seljuks and Ayyubids, and both the rich and the poor were associated with *khānqāh* related rituals and lifestyles.[73] Many *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s transformed into public spaces as public lectures were given by the *Ṣūfī*s and prominent *ʿulamāʾ*, attended by people of every class. For example, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Masʿūdī (d. 584/1188) was a doctor of the *Shāfiʿī* school and a *Ṣūfī*. He came to Damascus and resided in Sumaysāṭ *khānqāh*, where he gave public lectures attended by all and sundry. He was also a teacher of al-Malik al-Afḍal, the son of *Sulṭān*

[71] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193, The Age of Nur al-Din and Saladin*, trans. by D. S. Richards (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 116.
[72] Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis*, 54.
[73] J. Chabbi, 'Khānḳāh', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0495> [accessed 24 January 2018]

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. At his death, he bequeathed his books as *waqf* to the Sumaysāṭ *khānqāh*.[74] From this example we can see that *khānqāh*s provided spaces to the common people for their intellectual and educational benefit.

By the end of the eleventh century, these *Ṣūfī* centres had developed as visible social institutions that played a significant role in the formation of communities around their spiritual leaders.[75] During the twelfth and thirteenth century, Sufism was increasingly becoming "a cosmopolitan phenomenon identifiable with official or semi-official urban spaces, which, aside from the *khānqāh*s, included bathhouses, gardens, and guild organizations."[76] These *Ṣūfī* lodges were used as guesthouses, alms houses, hospitals and spiritual centres for teaching and socialization of the *Ṣūfī* community.[77] For example, Ibn Battūta (d. 771/1369) mentions in his travelogue about a *khānqāh* in Isfahan. He resided in a *Ṣūfī* lodge that belonged to the *Suhrawardiyya Ṣūfī* order. This *khānqāh* had a mosque, a kitchen, rooms for disciples and travelers and a bath.[78] These *Ṣūfī* spheres "had been transformed into a public space—a centre of devotional life shared by all segments of society."[79] In medieval Islam, a significant amount of public space was developed around pious and charismatic *Ṣūfī* leaders who disseminated *Ṣūfī* traditions such as *futuwwa*, formed communities, and guided people in religious, spiritual and intellectual spheres.

---

[74] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* (Ibn khallikn's Biographical Dictionary), trans. by Mac Guckin De Slane, vol. 3 (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1970), 99-100.
[75] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Shi'is, Sufis and Popular Saints', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester and Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 168.
[76] Babak Rahimi and Armando Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks within the Urban-Rural-Nomadic Nexus of the Islamic Ecumene', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Salvatore, 265.
[77] Ibid., 261.
[78] Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 94.
[79] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 1-3.

There is a strong relationship between *futuwwa* (in Persian *Jawānmardī*) and Sufism. *Futuwwa* can mean youth, adolescence; it also encompasses ethical qualities like generosity, honesty, courage, benevolence and noble heartedness. These enduring values were preached by the Prophet of Islam and later on, *Ṣūfī*s, and *Shīʿī imām*s proliferated these virtues.[80] For *Ṣūfī*s, "*futuwwa* is a code of honorable conduct that follows the examples of prophets, saints, sages, and the intimate friends and lovers of Allāh."[81] *Ṣūfī futuwwa* literature, for example *Kitāb al-futuwwa* of Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, (d. 412/1021), encouraged *Ṣūfī* followers to live an active and integrative life of high moral character, a life in which, ideally, thought and actions could not only help human beings in their life after death but could prove helpful for "this worldly life".[82] For *Ṣūfī*s, *futuwwa* was relevant because its sound ethical and moral characteristics helped in achieving spiritual perfection, their ultimate goal. The later Abbasid caliph, al-Nāṣir (r. 576-622/1180-1225), under the guidance of a prominent Baghdadi *Ṣūfī* Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), organized *Ṣūfī*-inspired *futuwwa* brotherhood. Though the caliph may have had political motives, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī "attempted to create a form of *futuwwa* that was free of political interference and that arrogated to masters of *futuwwa* the legitimacy to issue *fatwa*s (an edict, a legal verdict given by a *mufti*), which was traditionally the preserve of the judge (*qāḍī*) and *faqīh*."[83] Also, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī wanted to provide space to common people for communal worship where *Ṣūfī* chivalric virtues could be disseminated.[84] The *Ṣūfī*

[80] Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub, '*Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism*', in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700-1300),* ed. by Leonard Lewisohn, vol. 1 (London: One World, 1999), 549-82.
[81] Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa (The Book of Sufi Chivalry: Lessons to a son of the Moment),* trans. by Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983), 6.
[82] Ibid., 3-96.
[83] Lloyd Ridgeon, 'futuwwa (in Ṣūfism)' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, ed. by Kate Fleet and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27218> [accessed 01 November 2019]
[84] Ibid.

chivalric code gave encouragement and guidance to people to become better human beings. *Ṣūfī futuwwa* brotherhood was a more obvious vehicle for the social good.

Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere

This study focusses on the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad and their roles in the public sphere. Besides ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, there were other prominent *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad involved in nurturing the public good, such as Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 564/1168) and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 562/1166). As mentioned above, two prominent *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s, *Qādiriyya* and *Suhrawardiyya* were founded in Baghdad. Moreover, after the arrival of Seljuk as rulers of Baghdad in 447/1055, it regained some of its importance as a centre of religious learning. Seljuk *sulṭān*s and viziers endowed many religious and social institutions such as *madrasa*s and *ribāṭ*s.[85] While these institutions engaged many scholars and students in the *madrasa*s, they also involved *Ṣūfī*s as administrators and *Ṣūfī shaykh* of *ribāṭ*s. The *Ṣūfī*s of Seljuk Baghdad were involved in the Baghdadi public sphere when they transformed their *ribāṭ*s into "centers of public preaching and spaces for distribution of charity, and places of pilgrimage for the people to seek divine blessing".[86] During the later Abbasid period, many *Ṣūfī*s migrated from other areas to Baghdad and played an important role in the religious, spiritual and social life of the city. The most prominent example is the family of Abū Saʿd b. Aḥmad, later known as the family of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Baghdad, who came from Nishapur.[87]

The picture that is expected to emerge from this study is that of the contribution of Sufism to the Baghdadi public sphere. Sufism emerged as a major network of religious piety and constituted popular religion as it was approved of by people at large. *Ṣūfī*s came together, they created institutions such as *ribāṭ* and a range of mechanisms by which the

[85] Ephrat, 'Religious Leadership and Associations', 31-32.
[86] Ibid., 44-45.
[87] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Farash Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tāʾrīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, vol. 16 (Bierut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1992), 234-35.

population could interact with, even critique, ruling authorities, challenging and even bypassing their authority on occasions, and at other times reinforcing their authority; so a whole variety of different roles were played in this public sphere. The present study aims to discover the spaces for the public good in medieval Islamic societies and how *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad carved spaces for themselves in collaboration with the ruling elite and also autonomously. In investigating the role of *Ṣūfī*s in creating a public space, this analysis broadens the scope of discussion to include aspects that have hitherto been largely neglected in modern scholarship, in particular, the areas indicated by the research questions that now follow.

Key research questions

1. What constituted the "public good" in medieval Islamic societies?
2. What role did Sufism play in the public sphere of the later Abbasid period and to what extent did *Ṣūfī*s actively shape a public sphere?

These questions can be further dissected by exploring the following questions:

3. What role did particular individual *Ṣūfī*s play in pursuing the public good during the later Abbasid Caliphate?
4. What factors allowed *Ṣūfī*s to create a public space for themselves and society as a whole?
5. In what ways and on what grounds were *Ṣūfī* roles and actions in the public sphere accepted or rejected by the dominant *ʿulamāʾ* during the Abbasid period?
6. How did the state and/or ruling elites react to *Ṣūfī* activism in the public domain?

This thesis attempts to answer these questions by examining and analyzing the public spaces in medieval Islamic societies and the social activism of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad.

Scope, aims and limits of this thesis

The primary focus of this thesis is to examine the roles of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere during the later Abbasid caliphate. During this period *Ṣūfī*s reached out to the common people for their religious, spiritual, economic and ethical well-being, and this deserves attention which has hitherto been lacking. Moreover, it discusses the instruments of the public good—*waqf*, non-*waqf* charity, community organizations, merchants' and craftsmen's guilds, *futuwwa* groups, and the imperative of commanding good and forbidding evil—through which the public good was pursued in medieval Islamic societies.

This study does not just concentrate on the specifically social roles of *Ṣūfī*s, but also in the wider sense of "social", encompassing the other religious, spiritual, cultural and political activities that were beneficial for the common people. It examines *Ṣūfī*s' agency in the social and cultural context of later Abbasid Baghdad, in which they articulated their claims of religious and social authority and played a variety of roles for the common good. This study, through investigation of these issues, seeks to contribute to existing knowledge of medieval Sufism, where research has often focused on the lives of great *Ṣūfī*s, their legacies and the spiritual dimensions of Sufism, while overlooking the public role of Sufism during this particular period. My intention is to build up a picture of the social sphere, how it worked, and who worked within it.

The concept of the public sphere helps to challenge the "Oriental despotism" thesis by looking at relations between rulers and society from a broader perspective. Therefore, the present study covers not only the role of the *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere but also the ruler's involvement in this sphere and the nature of ruler-subject relations. It helps to illuminate the social orders of the later Abbasid Baghdad, and notably how *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad played significant roles in the social dynamic of Baghdad. Thus, this study will

examine the work of *Ṣūfī*s who were not disinterested in the world and who concentrated on others' wellbeing.

When we think about the public good and the public sphere, we are trying to close a gap in the literature which is about the elite and the agency of the rulers. My argument is that there was a space in which 'lesser' people also had agency, and that they helped each other and those who were poorer than them. Sometimes rulers were involved in charitable activities, but generally we are trying to discuss history 'from below' in as much as the sources allow, which tries to bypass current obsession with caliphs, *sulṭān*s and the great *Ṣūfī* thinkers: obsession with great men. This study refutes the idea that medieval Islamic society was simply structured around hegemony. Thus my focus is less on what the elite did for the elite than on what the elite and non-elite did for the non-elite.

The period of study encompasses the later Abbasid period, stretching from 391/1000 to 656/1258. It was hard to narrow down the role of Sufism in this period for research purposes, as Sufism had become, in the post-formative period, an extensive and widespread phenomenon in the Islamic world. Much work has been produced on the religious, spiritual and even popular roles of *Ṣūfī*s by the scholars of history and Sufism. This thesis primarily focuses on the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere in Baghdad during the aforementioned period. Moreover, it elaborates on spaces of the public good to enable better understanding of the social structure of the period where almost all social strata—rulers, officials, religious groups, craftmen and traders' association and eople belonged to the lower ranks of society—were involved in activities for the public good as a multifaceted and ongoing project. While discussing the spaces of the public good and the roles of people within these spheres, I employ various examples of *Ṣūfī*s, rulers and the common people from other areas, such as Syria, Iraq and Egypt, as, during the twelfth and thirteenth century, Sufism spread through the central Islamic lands and well beyond,

and had been developed into vast *Ṣūfī* networks.[88] So referring to examples from other areas helps to clarify the picture of Sufism and its role in the public sphere. Moreover, examples from other areas will show that there was a vibrant public sphere, and that *Ṣūfī*s in various times and places contributed to it.

Review of literature

The literature I examine in this study may be classified into three broad categories: works on Sufism, works on the Abbasid period and the literature relating to the public sphere in Islamic societies. In the following section, I review several key works on Sufism chosen for their relevance to the development of Sufism, the spiritual aspects of Sufism and *Ṣūfī* orders, and Sufism's relationship with social and political life. In this review, the focus is on understanding the overall role of Sufism, and to highlight the role of *Ṣūfī*s in supporting the public good, a phenomenon hitherto largely neglected by modern scholarship.

Sufism

A plethora of literature is available on different aspects of Sufism, for example what Sufism *is*, or how *Ṣūfī silsilas* or *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s emerged and flourished. There is much written on the spiritual and pietistic activities of *Ṣūfī*s.

Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi, in *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (2019), discusses the complicated personal and communal aspects of early *Ṣūfī* piety. She argues that Sufism of the formative period was neither a quietist nor a completely individual mode of piety. The author provides insight into how early *Ṣūfī*s as family members and as members of the *Ṣūfī* community managed their interpersonal ties. These ties, both within their own *Ṣūfī* communities and in the wider Muslim society, were sometimes full of controversy and disputation. Salamah-Qudsi's

[88] Rahimi and Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks', 268.

work mainly focusses on the *Ṣūfī*s' interpersonal relationships, their emotions and conflicts. However, her research is valuable for my understanding of early *Ṣūfī*s' interpersonal and communal relationships and how these relationships were contributive to the questions of the public good and the public spheres.

In *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam* (2018), edited by Armando Salvatore, the chapter "The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks within the Urban-Rural-Nomadic Nexus of the Islamic Ecumene" by Babak Rahimi and Armando Salvatore delineates Sufism in the rural and urban landscapes of the Islamicate in the early Middle Period. The authors argue that Sufism between the tenth and thirteenth centuries penetrated every social domain through knowledge practices, master-disciple relationships, *ādāb* and other *Ṣūfī* institutions. *Ṣūfī* ethical literature was disseminated widely, and the flexible and open *Ṣūfī* institutions and associations such as *futuwwa* brotherhoods welcomed lay individuals, not only the learned and the elite, into the *Ṣūfī* circles. Overall, the chapter provides a powerful account of the flourishing of Sufism as a social and civic phenomenon after the tenth century in the Islamicate ecumene. It is of great significance for my research as it helps me to examine how *Ṣūfī* thought and practices regarding knowledge and spirituality were beneficial for the common people. It also makes one more aware of how *Ṣūfī*s' outreach to the common people was beneficial to them.

Hamza Malik, in *The Grey Falcon: Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (2018), elaborates al-Jīlānī's theological and doctrinal aspects. Malik highlights al-Jīlānī's thoughts on Sufism, such as states and stages on the *Ṣūfī* path, direct experience of God, the master-disciple relationship, and *fanāʾ*. Malik, while evaluating the writings of al-Jīlānī, discusses how he was a great *Ḥanbalī* theologian and charismatic preacher, teacher and *Ṣūfī* *shaykh*. The author also includes a short biography of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.

Malik's research is an impressive analysis of al-Jīlānī's theological, *Ṣūfī* and *Ḥanbalī* doctrines.

Alexander Knysh, in *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (2017), explains Sufism as the 'ascetic-mystic' tradition of Islam in his broad historical survey. He explores and examines Sufism as it has been viewed by both insiders (those who are practitioners of Sufism, Muslim scholars) and outsiders (non-Muslim scholars). He examines the emergence of Sufism as ethical and moral piety which developed into a significant and influential tradition that played an important role in the life of the Muslim. While defining Sufism as an ascetic-mystic tradition, Knysh mentions the social and public activities Sufism entails, but he ignores the significant roles of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public domain during the later Abbasid period. He does not elaborate on the various types of *Ṣūfī* piety that played significant roles in the public life of the Muslim community. However, chapter four sheds light on some good manners extolled and exemplified by Sufism and its practices and ethics. While discussing the development of Sufism, Knysh does not seem to accept the idea that the *Ṣūfī*s of the later Abbasid period were involved in what could be called public sphere activities, though he accepts that some *Ṣūfī*s of the medieval period were involved in certain social activities. Nevertheless, the study is significant for my research purposes as the author's complex and elaborate definition of Sufism points towards how it could contribute to the public sphere through certain practices, traditions, teachings and institutions.

Joseph E. B. Lumbard, in *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (2016), explores the life and times of Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. The author states that the works and teaching of the mystic significantly contributed to Persian Sufism. Throughout his life, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī preached the love of God at public sessions in Baghdad. He was not only revered by fellow *Ṣūfī*s but was also appreciated by the courts of the time because of his intellectual prowess. Lumbard focuses on the

mystical, spiritual and metaphysical doctrines of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. However, he also encourages readers to appreciate that the *Ṣūfī*s living under twelfth-century Abbasid rule were not just spiritual masters of their age, but through their spirituality and intellectual endeavours, as in the case of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, worked for the public good via the pursuit of the betterment of their souls. The study gives food for thought concerning the question of how *Ṣūfī*s regarded the public good and how their spiritual teachings fulfilled the exigency of supporting the public good.

The Popularization of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt 1173-1325 (2015) by Nathan Hofer is a detailed discussion of the *Ṣūfī*s of Egypt and their roles in political, social and religious domains during the said period. In a well-designed and robust study, while treating Sufism as an essential part of the "discursive and practical tradition of Islam", Hofer discusses various types of *Ṣūfī*s who migrated into Egypt from other areas and were involved in the popularization of Sufism. *Ṣūfī* institutions such as *khānqāh* played a significant role in this respect. Hofer examines different types of relationships between *Ṣūfī*s and the ruling elite; some were state-sponsored *Ṣūfī*s, as they lived in the *Ṣūfī* lodges endowed by the ruling authorities, some kept themselves aloof from the ruler's domains, and others were critics of the ruling authorities. All three groups were involved in social and political activities in Egypt at various levels. Hofer's study is of great significance as it examines the agency of the *Ṣūfī*s as social actors who spread *Ṣūfī* ideas, practices and beliefs in Egyptian society. His research is valuable to my understanding of *Ṣūfī* social agency in constructing and shaping the Baghdadi public sphere.

In *Chishtī Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (2011) under the title of "Sufism and its Political Dimension: A Historical Perspective," Tanvir Anjum elaborates Sufism, its origin and development, and *Ṣūfī*s' relationship with political authorities from early Islam to the thirteenth century. According to Anjum, *Ṣūfī*s from an early stage had social and political

roles, but these were less prominent than their evident individual piety and love of God. After the tenth century, *Ṣūfī*s played a more visible role in the social and political arenas of society. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, *Ṣūfī silsila*s and master-disciple relationships made Sufism more appealing to common people. Anjum maintains that *Ṣūfī*s had complicated relationships with the ruling authorities, sometimes opposing and sometimes collaborating with the political elite. The ruling authorities were also inconsistent in their policies toward *Ṣūfī*s. Though Anjum offers a short overview of the development of Sufism and its relationship with rulers, her study is instrumental to my research in asking questions about how *Ṣūfī*s carved out a public space for themselves for the pursuit of the public good against the rulers, and how confrontational and sometimes collaborative relationships between rulers and *Ṣūfī*s shaped the social and political environment.

Daphna Ephrat, in *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufi*s *and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (2008), describes the transformative phase of Sufism in Palestine from the seventh to the fifteenth century. She discusses the activities of *Ṣūfī*s (ascetic, mystic and holy figures) who incorporated a more extensive section of the society into *Ṣūfī* ways. These *Ṣūfī* networks played a significant role in the expansion of Islamic religious and spiritual norms in Palestine. The dissemination of these values greatly affected the cultural, social and physical landscape of Palestine, as many *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s were constructed and endowed by the ruling elite for the *Ṣūfī*s and for religious purposes. Ephrat explains how pious and ascetic individuals formed *Ṣūfī* circles and became role models for people at large. Ephrat's study is of great significance as it highlights medieval Sufism as a spiritual and social movement. Though Ephrat focuses on medieval Palestine, her work is highly valuable to my research as it examines how *Ṣūfī*s' religious and spiritual activities were enormously beneficial to society and how these *Ṣūfī*s constructed public spaces for the common good.

Erik S. Ohlander's *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (2008) deals with the life, thought, teachings, practices of a twelfth-thirteenth century *Ṣūfī* of Baghdad, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī. Ohlander discusses ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's role in the complex and interrelated social, political and religious milieu of the city of later Abbasid Baghdad. Ohlander, while employing a great number of primary sources, significantly discusses the role of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and his followers in the rise of *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods. Through his well-researched book, Ohlander discusses the institutionalization of Sufism and the role of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī in this process. Ohlander argues that ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī played a remarkable role in the emergence and development of a universal *Ṣūfī* system. This *Ṣūfī* system greatly influenced the broader medieval religious learning and social and political values. The author elaborates various roles of al-Suhrawardī as *Ṣūfī shaykh*, preacher, *ʿālim*, trainer and jurist. Through his *ṭarīqa*, later known as the *Suhrwardiyya ṭarīqa*, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī disseminated his *Ṣūfī* thought and practice into wider society, including the elite. Ohlander's book is significant in respect of highlighting the various religious, social and political spheres of medieval Islamic life and the role of a *Ṣūfī* in those spheres. Ohlander's book is valuable to my understanding of the role of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and his *ṭarīqa*-based Sufism in Baghdadi religious, social and political environment, which will help the forthcoming analysis of how these roles of *Ṣūfī*s in the religious, social and political domains were good for the common people.

Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality (2007), edited by Paul L. Heck, is an effort to discuss the relevance of Sufism to politics. The contributors discuss the socio-political roles of *Ṣūfī*s in premodern and modern Muslim societies in a range of chapters which reveal *Ṣūfī* involvement in the social and political affairs of the community on various levels. Heck's introductory chapter argues that Sufism, through its particular

spiritual and ethical endeavours and knowledge of spiritual "Truth", contributes to social and political domains. The *Ṣūfī*s' philosophical and intellectual endeavours, Heck argues, inspired people in difficult times and gave solace to their souls. The study does not trace the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public domain from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries when *khānqāh*s proliferated in the Islamicate, and *Ṣūfī* master-disciple relationships developed more broadly. However, the study is significant for my research as it assists our understanding the relevance of Sufism to politics and finding answers to questions about how their spiritual power helped *Ṣūfī*s to form a parallel authority alongside the state and the *ʿulamāʾ*.

Sufism: The Formative Period (2007) is an attempt by Ahmet T. Karamustafa to delineate the historical and analytical development of Sufism in Islamic history from the early Islamic period to almost the sixteenth century. The book scrutinizes Sufism in its social and cultural contexts and examines *Ṣūfī* texts, stories and poetry in an engaging way. The author elaborates the intellectual and spiritual experiences and knowledge of early *Ṣūfī*s, as their spiritual treatises greatly contributed to the spreading of Sufism to other areas, and the formation of various schools of Sufism, mainly the Baghdad and Khorasan schools. During these centuries, Sufism became a popular religious movement and connected itself to politics. Karamustafa makes an important contribution with regard to the role of Sufism in the social domain as the author states in chapter six that the role of *shaykh* in the organization of the community through master-disciple relationships and the training of disciples gave *Ṣūfī*s a degree of agency and freedom in the affairs of the community. These observations are valuable for my research purpose to examine the agency of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public domain as social actors.

Ahmet T. Karamustafa, in another of his books, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1500* (1994), argues that during the medieval period there were dervish groups, for example, *Qalandariyya* and *Haydariyya*

dervishes, in the Islamic world, which were "antinomian and socially deviant". After the disintegration of Abbasid caliphal power, these dervish groups emerged as ascetic collectives, and they protested against the wealthy lifestyles of the ruling elites. The author argues that these "friends of God", through their distinctive way of life, criticized society's established norms. They used various intoxicants and distinctive clothing, and unique dance and music and other 'strange' rituals and doctrines to express their critique of *sharīʿa*. The study offers an important contribution to the field of *Ṣūfī* studies, but there is little scrutiny of sober and ecstatic *Ṣūfī*s' role in public life. The study is important in that it leads to a new understanding of the "renunciation as protest" trends in Islamic history and particularly in Sufism. It helps to elaborate the question of *Ṣūfī* protest, and criticism of rulers and established elites and rules by different means.

J. Spencer Trimingham, in his book *The Sūfī Orders in Islam* (1971), traces the historical development of different *Ṣūfī* orders from early Islam until the nineteenth century. Trimingham argues that *Ṣūfī* orders developed in three phases; the *khānqāh* phase, the *ṭarīqa* phase and the *ṭāʾifa* phase. In the first phase, in the tenth century, *khānqāh* emerged as an institution without regular and common features of *Ṣūfī* life; in the second phase, *ṭarīqa*, various *Ṣūfī* orders established their mystical teachings and master-disciple relationships developed; the third phase, *ṭāʾifa*, emerged when further small *Ṣūfī* orders developed from these orders. Sufism became a popular movement during the fifteenth century. The monograph is useful as it offers information about the organizational development of different *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods. The study concentrates more on the institutional development of Sufism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and presents little information about the *Ṣūfī*s' role for the public good during the later Abbasid caliphate. The author does not address the question of how *Ṣūfī* mystical and spiritual experiences became relevant to the question of the common good. How did *Ṣūfī*s

evolve from individual mystics to social saints? The author does not address these fundamental aspects of the evolution of Sufism.

Sufism has received varying degrees of scholarly attention, from its development to its spiritual aspects, but rarely has there been an adequately comprehensive effort to elaborate on the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad and their role in the public domain for the common good. From some of the literature reviewed above, such as the works of Nathan Hofer and Daphna Ephrat, it can be concluded that Sufism became a social phenomenon and played a role in the social and cultural domains; but the former focuses on the *Ṣūfī*s of Egypt and the latter on those of Palestine. The significant role of *Ṣūfī*s in Baghdadi civic life has been largely ignored by the scholars of Sufism and Islam, and thus their role in the constitution of the public spheres. Little consideration has been given to the religious and spiritual authority of *Ṣūfīs*, which encouraged them to carve a space in society for the common good. Recent scholarship, such as that of Erik S. Ohlander and Hamza Malik, focuses on the teachings and lives of great *Ṣūfī*s. These studies do not elaborate on those *Ṣūfī*s who emerged from humble backgrounds and played their part in public life. Moreover, recent scholarship does not attempt to expose the significant role of the *Ṣūfī* institutions such as *ribāṭ*s for the common good. It does not examine how *Ṣūfī*s' relationship with the ruling elite was beneficial to Baghdadi society, or how the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad became spokesmen of the common people, particularly the underprivileged, and constituted a bridge between the ruling elite and the common people.

In the following section, I select key works on the Abbasid caliphate that offer a detailed picture of early Islamic history, and also engage with the Abbasid caliphate, society and other social and theological institutions.

The Abbasid caliphate

Much has been written on the political, scientific, literary and philosophical achievements of the Abbasid era. Little space has been provided for the role of *Ṣūfī*s as an independent body doing public good in this realm.

Hugh Kennedy's book *The Caliphate* (2016) elucidates the idea of the caliphate in Islamic societies over a period of fourteen centuries. According to the author, Muslims considered the institution of the caliphate essential for the welfare of the Muslim community, as caliphs remained religious and symbolic heads of the community. The institution of the caliphate was so crucial that great Muslim scholars like Abū Ḥāmid al-Gẖazālī and Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) in medieval Islam wrote on the importance of the institution of the caliphate and the distribution of its powers among *sulṭān*s, military leaders, viziers and the caliph himself. An in-depth reading of *The Caliphate* encourages one to think that the Abbasid caliphs were accomplished monarchs. However, during the high caliphal period, they gave much space to different religious and social institutions and groups to flourish and develop. After the disintegration of caliphal power these institutions and groups emerged as strong social organizations and led the communities from the front. Kennedy's research is valuable to my understanding of the role of the ruling elite, the caliphs, in the public good activities as it reinforces the view that the Abbasid rulers and society were not aloof from each other.

In his book, *A History of Islamic Societies* (2014), Ira M. Lapidus argues that during the early Abbasid caliphate the integration of different religious communities, ethnicities and schools of thought helped in the flourishing of philosophical, theological and intellectual development. Moreover, patronage by the caliphs and conscious efforts by the *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and notables contributed to the formation and a degree of blossoming of Islamic civilization. After the disintegration of the Abbasid empire and the decline of caliphal authority, groups from different social domains, particularly those

engaged with theology, Sufism and the schools of law, played independent roles for the betterment of their communities. While discussing Sufism, Lapidus maintains that the early *Ṣūfī*s concentrated more on the inward: the piety of their souls, love of God and the will of God, which was of ultimate importance to them. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Sufism became more appealing because of the integration of *Ṣūfī* teachings with theology, philosophy and the schools of law. The monumental work of Lapidus on Islamic history has only touched on the phenomenon of Sufism and its development. The study does not treat Sufism as a social and autonomous organization during the later Abbasid caliphate. However, it encourages one to trace the role of *Ṣūfī*s for the public good.

Marshall G. S. Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam: Conscience of History in a World Civilization, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period*, Vol. II (1977) demonstrates the evolution and flourishing of Islamicate civilization. For Hodgson, Islam remained the basis of this civilization, although other traditions and cultures also played their role in its development. Hodgson argues that the religion of Islam and the ruling elite played a constructive role in the development of Islamicate civilization and in absorbing the traditions of local cultures. The period of the High Caliphate is the era of high absolute bureaucratic empire, having Sasanian and classical models but in Arabic and Islamic expressions. Hodgson discusses the various religious, intellectual, spiritual and cultural outputs of *ʿulamāʾ*, of *Ṣūfī*s and secretaries and philosophers. After the political disintegration of the Abbasid empire, a universal and social-cultural order emerged. The disintegrated empire encompassed a variety of political ideas embracing military rulers, *sulṭān*s and caliphs, and society was dominated by the religious *ʿulamāʾ*, merchants and *Ṣūfī*s. The author is of the opinion that the absolutist Abbasid monarchs contributed to the later development of Islamicate civilization by giving space to the religious and social groups: *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s and religious schools of thought. These schools and groups

fully blossomed after the tenth century as autonomous institutions. Hodgson maintains that *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s developed after the tenth century and *Ṣūfī*s became more involved in the social and intellectual aspects of Islamic society. Hodgson's work is valuable to my research as this monumental study encourages one to ask questions about how and why *Ṣūfī*s became agents for the social betterment of populations, and to find answers thereto. Hodgson, in his discussion of Sufism in the early and medieval period, recognizes that *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods, alongside *sharīʿa* law and the *waqf*, played a central role in the formation of Islamic civil societies. However, seen from the perspective of the public sphere, the study falls short of highlighting the comprehensive role of Sufism as an independent institution in the domains of society and polity.

Later Abbasid society has attracted very little attention from scholars concerning the autonomous role of *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods in the arena of the public sphere. There is a need for comprehensive research on the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere and on the relationship between society and rulers, and the *Ṣūfī*s' role in maintaining this relationship. There is much lacking on the question of what constituted the public good in medieval Islamic societies, which this study seeks to examine.

In this following section, I review several key works on the public sphere chosen for their relevance to concepts of the public sphere and the common good in pre-modern Islamic societies.

Works on the public sphere

Much literature is available on varied expressions of the public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies. Scholars have explored the roles of the *waqf*, the *ʿulamāʾ* and *qāḍī*s (judges) in the public sphere, but the *Ṣūfī*s' role in this particular domain during the later Abbasid period has been ignored.

In her essay, "The Seljuqs and the Public Sphere in the Period of Sunni Revivalism: The View from Baghdad" in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* edited by Christian Lange and Songul Mecit (2011), Daphna Ephrat deliberates on the significant role of *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and the rulers in the religious public sphere during the Seljuk period. The ruling elite played its part as an actor in the public sphere through the *waqf*: not only rulers but members of all sections and strata of society, male, female, rich and poor were involved in the *waqf*, which served as an institution holding together society and its governance. The study deals with the process of *Sunnī* revivalism, as the *ʿulamāʾ* belonging to the *Sunnī* schools of law continued in their independent social and religious roles without suppression by the rulers. The study also portrays a close connection between society and the state as the *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s played the role of mediators between rulers and the ruled. The author very briefly provides a valuable insight into the vibrant role of Sufism in the arena of the public sphere during the Seljuk period. This article is valuable to my understanding of the role of the religious community and the ruling elite in the public sphere. It is also significant to my research regarding how *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad constructed spaces for the common good with the collaboration of the ruling elite.

Armando Salvatore, in his book *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (2007), objects to the idea of the public sphere as defined by Jürgen Habermas as a universal concept with secular origins based on communicative action and rationality. Salvatore tries to express the idea of the public sphere as having strong connections with religions and other non-religious traditions. He is of the opinion that the conception of the public sphere has its roots in ancient traditions, particularly the Abrahamic religions. He argues that Christian and Islamic religious norms and rituals have played important roles in the formation of the modern idea of the public sphere, though ignored by Habermas. The study does not directly deal with the Abbasid period

or Sufism. However, a major strength of this study for my research is that it examines the concept of the public sphere in much detail, which helps in my understanding of the concept. Moreover, this work is significant as the debate in chapter four about *maṣlaḥa* (common good) and the role of *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s in this respect helps to articulate the issue of the common good in pre-modern Islamic societies.

Another critique of modern Western discussions of the public sphere is provided by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, in his article, "Public Sphere and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies: Some Comparative Observations" (2006). Eisenstadt points out that some Western scholars doubt the existence of civil society and the public sphere in pre-modern civilizations. In his very important survey, Eisenstadt was able to locate the existence of the public sphere in three pre-modern civilizations; the Islamic, the Indian, and the European Christian. He is of the opinion that different types of modernities generate distinct public spheres in different societies. For him, it is problematic to take the idea of civil society and the public sphere of modern Europe as a metric to measure the development of pre-modern societies. Eisenstadt argues that in pre-modern Muslim societies *sharīʿa* was the central ideal of the public sphere, which aimed towards the betterment of the *umma*. The *ʿulamāʾ*, schools of law, *qāḍī*s, *Ṣūfī*s and merchants contributed to the constitution of Islamic public spheres. He argues that medieval Muslim societies independently contributed to the domains of decision making for the sake of the common good and the implementation of Islamic visions and ideals. The author creates a broad overall canvas of the public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies, taking *sharīʿa* and community as central ideals. Eisenstadt's article is of great significance as it criticizes the modern secular Western-oriented notion of the public sphere and explores the concept, particularly focusing on the role of religion in the constitution of the public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies.

The edited collection, *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (2002), deals with the existence of the public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies. The work counters the misconception mentioned above that pre-modern Islamic societies were devoid of public spheres. The study reveals that *sharīʿa* and *umma* were two extraordinary conceptions in the public sphere in pre-modern Islamic societies. The notion of *umma* had a central role in this regard as it aimed not only for the good of common people, individual Muslims and the articulation of social and religious norms. Its consensus also played a significant role in the legitimization of rulers. *Sharīʿa* as an autonomous legal system was independent of the influence of rulers. It focused on the development of values that work towards the improvement of the social, political and intellectual conditions of the Muslim community. The study negates the idea of some scholars about the despotic nature of pre-modern Muslim societies and the idea that there was no relationship between rulers and the society except the hegemonic one.

Daniella Talmon-Heller, in her essay on "Religion in the Public Sphere: Rulers, Scholars, and Commoners in Syria under Zangid and Ayyubid Rule (1150-1260)", reveals how *ʿulamāʾ*, rulers, and common people contributed to the construction of the public sphere. The rulers cooperated closely with the *ʿulamāʾ*, and common Muslims who participated in the process of the formation of religious beliefs and practices. A chapter on the *waqf* by Miriam Hoexter argues that, through this institution, rulers and the ruled were involved in the public sphere. In their ground-breaking examination of the public sphere in premodern Muslim societies, the authors conclude that public spheres existed in medieval Muslim societies in different forms, via institutions like the *miḥna* (inquisition), *waqf* (endowment) and Sufism. The study is of great significance and is highly valuable to my understanding of the constitution of the public sphere in premodern Islamic societies, particularly as it focuses on the role of religion in the construction of the public sphere.

Nehemia Levtzion's chapter, "The dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods", argues that *Ṣūfī* Brotherhoods played an important role as organs of the public sphere in pre-modern Muslim majority societies. These were the *Ṣūfī* s*ilsila*s that, through their master-disciple relationships and the institution of *khānqāh*, brought Sufism from the private to the public sphere. The author opines that before the seventeenth century, most of the *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods were "loosely organized and localized" and these *Ṣūfī* organizations were not self-funded. According to Levtzion, after the thirteenth century, and except for some *Ṣūfī* orders, a majority of the *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s were "closely associated with rulers and accumulated great wealth." The author gives an overview of the *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public sphere in Islamic societies, and mainly focusses on the period from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century. The author primarily relies on secondary sources, and in the absence of primary sources, it is difficult to come out with an accurate picture of the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere. Levtzion does not give much space to a key period of the history of Sufism: the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, when master-disciple relationships developed and *khānqāh* played an important role in the moral and social life of the community.

Said Amir Arjomand's article, "The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society: Development of the Institutions of Learning from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century" (1999), elaborates on how the rulers of Western Iran utilized the *waqf* as an instrument of public policy. All the major actors, including rulers, high officials and the elites, contributed to the establishment of the *waqf*s as an institution of the public sphere, and built educational institutions, libraries, and other public works such as mosques and bridges. The author argues that in pre-modern Muslim societies, the idea of the public sphere was based on an informal understanding of the common moral and social roles of Islamic communities. The *waqf*, which generated benefits that were distributed widely across the strata of civil society, was an institution through which all elements of society

played their role in the service of implementing an Islamic conception of the public sphere and in promoting the welfare of the community of believers. This study greatly assists me in tracing the nature of the relationship between rulers and the ruled, and overturning the idea that pre-modern Muslim rulers were only ever autocratic, and that there was no multifaceted relationship between rulers and society at large. The study also encourages one to critically evaluate to what extent state-sponsored *Ṣūfī*s were successful in constructing and shaping the public spheres while residing in *Ṣūfī* lodges established through the *waqf* as the public policy of the rulers.

Keeping in view the available works on the public sphere, it can be easily argued that comparatively little effort has been made to study the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere during the later Abbasid period in terms of their specific social agency, and their relationships with other sectors, namely the ruling elites and the *ʿulamāʾ* groups. As far as the literature on Sufism and its role in the public sphere is concerned, a majority of the works deal with Sufism as a spiritual phenomenon and its organizational development. Alexander Knysh discusses what Sufism is and how it emerged and developed in the history of Islam. Similarly, Ahmet T. Karamustafa, J. Spencer Trimingham and Joseph E. B. Lumbard try to elaborate and analyze the historical, intellectual and spiritual development of Sufism. In another work, Ahmet T. Karamustafa discusses the *Ṣūfī*s who were antinomian and were severe critics of established social and religious norms. Some scholars of Sufism and Islam have criticized this social reformist strand of Sufism as it supposedly stands against *sharīʿa* norms. Nathan Hofer and Daphna Ephrat have examined the important social and religious roles of *Ṣūfī*s in Egypt and Palestine, respectively. Meanwhile, Tanvir Anjum and Paul L. Heck have usefully discussed the role of the *Ṣūfī*s in social domains and their relationship with the ruling and political elite in early and medieval Muslim societies.

Hugh Kennedy, Ira M. Lapidus and Marshal Hodgson agree that during the later Abbasid caliphate, *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and other social and religious groups and institutions played a significant role in the formation and development of Islamic societies and civilization, and they also discuss the symbiotic relationship between rulers and the community. Authors like Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Daphna Ephrat and Said Amir Arjomand trace the mutual relationship between society and state in pre-modern Muslim history. They argue that members of different sections of society played vibrant roles concerning the common good. Scholars like Armando Salvatore, Dale F. Eickleman and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt criticize Jürgen Habermas' conception of the public sphere as a modern European invention. They argue that pre-modern Islamic societies had their particular conceptions of the public sphere and that religion and religious traditions played a significant role in this respect.

The treatment of Sufism in the public sphere is far too brief as far as the history of the later Abbasid period is concerned. In the field of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies, Daphna Ephrat, Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion have written valuable contributions, but they do not give noteworthy consideration to the important role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere during the later Abbasid caliphate. The historians of the field have generally neglected the *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public arena, and the articulation of public space around pious and charismatic *Ṣūfī*s warrants further study. The scholars have not addressed issues raised in this study: what allows *Ṣūfī*s to play a role for the public good? To what extent did the *Ṣūfī*s and *Ṣūfī* orders enjoy autonomy vis-à-vis the ruling authorities, and did they play a role in social domains where the state failed to do so? How did *Ṣūfī*-*ʿulamāʾ* relationships impact the *Ṣūfī*s' independent endeavours to carve out a space for the public good? To what extent did the *ribāṭ* under *Ṣūfī* administration emerge as a public space for the religious, spiritual and economic wellbeing of the common people? As the present study employs the concept of the public

sphere to examine the role of *Ṣūfī*s within it, the following section critically evaluates Habermas' postmodernist idea of the public sphere.

Conception of the public sphere and the postmodern critique

Jürgen Habermas coined the idea of the public sphere in the 1960s as a sphere wherein common people, outside state authority, critically and rationally discuss issues relating to the common good. The concept emerged in the eighteenth-century bourgeois society of Europe, and Enlightenment ideas like the free-market economy, rationality, secularism and division between public and private spheres helped in its development. A range of postmodernist thinkers have questioned Enlightenment ideas like truth, reason and progress. Postmodernists, among them Michel Foucault, are suspicious of the notion of rational human development. After critically examining the conception of the public sphere and some of its limitations, their scholarship highlights how consensus-based rationality marginalizes specific individuals and groups in society. They also examine the contested role of religion in the public sphere. Many European scholars, including Habermas himself, are of the opinion that the public sphere is a unique product of Europe; it cannot be applied to non-European contexts, particularly to Muslim societies, since the necessary pre-conditions for its existence are in their view mostly absent.

The concept and theory of the public sphere

Habermas argues that the public sphere is a sphere between state and civil society where common people critically debate matters of common interest and arrive at their public opinion.[89] Habermas argues that the bourgeois public sphere emerged from the literary and aesthetic discussions of the Enlightenment in the coffeehouses of England, salons of France and table societies of Germany, where participants shifted their critical rational

[89] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, xi.

debate from literary issues to political matters. The idea of the public sphere progressed in the eighteenth century due to the disappearance of the rule of feudal institutions and the church. In the new environment of the free market economy, "for the first time private and public spheres became separated in a specifically modern sense,"[90] and private people participated in the critical rational debate for the public good. Therefore, the public sphere is a forum where ordinary people can rationally criticize state policy and form public opinion to guide state policies for the betterment of society.

The relationship between truth and power

Postmodernism is generally considered to be a critique of modernity and modernism which challenges the absoluteness of categories and the fixity of narratives. E. Sreedhran argues that postmodernists posit a critical attitude towards Enlightenment notions of rationality, knowledge, technology and economy which foresee "humanity's cumulative advance towards a final state of perfection."[91] Postmodernists resist consensus because "by doing so they could side with those who didn't fit into the larger stories – the subordinated and the marginalized – against those with the power to disseminate the master narratives."[92] Among the prominent thinkers of postmodernism are Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Kristeva, Barthes, Lacan and Baudrillard.

Foucault argues that it is power that determines "truth" and knowledge,[93] while "reason and science are but instruments and tools of the will to power."[94] For Nietzsche, who much impressed later postmodernist thinkers, there is no place for "pure truth" in

[90] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 10-11.
[91] E. Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography: 500 BC to AD 2000* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), 281-82.
[92] Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15.
[93] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-197*, ed. and trans. by Colin Gordon and others (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 128-33.
[94] Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography*, 290.

this world because "truth is *itself* a metaphor that has been invented to lend authority to particular forms of thought and styles of living."[95] Therefore, postmodernism considers truth, reality and reason to be constructed within specific cultures and societies, and it challenges and criticizes existing forms of knowledge and its modes of development.

A postmodern critique of the conception of the public sphere

The concept of the public sphere as, according to Habermas, an Enlightenment idea for the political and social development of modern society, can be discussed from a postmodernist point of view. This is because many postmodernists criticize the idea of "rationality", human perfection based on knowledge and the development of the "Enlightenment era".

Critical rational debate in the public sphere

Habermas is of the opinion that the public sphere provides an arena to reach for the "truth" that is best for the common good, and that this truth can be achieved through rational-critical public debate.[96] For postmodernists, especially Foucault, this conception of progress based on rationality is an illusion. Foucault argues that there is no rational human development, and for him, "man is not, as the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment imagined, a universal category."[97] Nancy Fraser challenges the possibility of equal participation in rational debate because "social peers" have different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.[98] She challenges Habermas' single comprehensive model of the public sphere, and insists on the idea of multiple, competing, subaltern counter public spheres.[99]

---

[95] Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 38.
[96] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 28.
[97] Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography*, 284-85.
[98] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' (p. 65).
[99] According to revisionist historiography, for the lower rank social groups, alternative publics parallel to the single dominant public is more useful. Fraser argues that "the members of the

Mary Ryan also has criticized the dominant idea of the public sphere. Ryan discusses how "diverse, fragmented, and many-sided" public spheres developed in the USA during the nineteenth century. These "orderly and localized" public spheres were far away from the Habermasian idea of rational, reflective participation.[100] Habermas insists that collective emancipatory society can be achieved through rationality based on coercion-free consensus.[101] For postmodernists, rational consensus is negative and oppressive. Poststructuralists Michael Warner and Benjamin Lee argue that Habermas' consensus-based rationality is "aimed at eliminating the diversity of social life."[102] Moreover, public opinion does not depend on education or social status: anyone can have an important opinion about others.

The public sphere as a discourse

This theory of the public sphere can be further criticized within the parameters of Foucault's discourse.[103] Habermas is of the opinion that "informed and critical discourses" by the people help to check the ruler's power and to monitor state authority.[104] He continues that critical deliberation of the public sphere is free from the power of the institutions of the state. In Foucault's view, discourses are not free, they are

---

subordinated social groups, women workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians-have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics." Fraser calls these groups as "*subaltern counter publics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." See, Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' (p. 67).

[100] Kenneth H. Tucker, review of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992), *Social Forces*, 71 (1993), 1081-82 (p. 1081).

[101] Stephen K. White, 'Reason, Modernity, and Democracy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. by Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6.

[102] Tucker, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (p. 1082).

[103] For Foucault, a discourse is based on statements having complex structures and rules. "A discourse is regulated by a set of rules which leads to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements. Some statements are circulated widely and others have restricted circulation . . ." Foucault also argues that discourse is not just a set of statements having coherence, rather it is a "complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation." For details see Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54.

[104] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, xi.

controlled and manipulated, and in every society, "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance…"[105] So it is difficult to believe that Habermas' political public sphere is free of the network of power in society as it is "established through a claim to power … Power is needed to limit power."[106] According to Foucault, it is the power of the state that defines reason and unreason and also to declare irrational those whom it needs to control. Every society has its own "regime of truth", and truth defined by 'authorized people' is an idea accepted by society as a whole.[107] So Foucault's discourses are complex structures strongly challenging the discourses of joining the public sphere based on rationality, as prescribed by Habermas.

Free-market economy and capitalism as pre-requisites of the public sphere

Habermas argued that the public sphere emerged and developed in an early capitalist society where the free market helped in disseminating ideas and criticism of state functions through journals, newspapers, salons, etc.[108] He conceived that private persons, free of dependence upon economic activity, considered themselves "persons capable of entering into 'purely human' relations with one another"[109] and create a public space.

James Van Horn Melton, while criticizing Habermas' conception of the eighteenth-century European public sphere, contends that it was a complex, ambiguous and power-ridden phenomenon, which was a "meeting ground for bourgeois and aristocrat, a space of sociability driven by consumption, fashion and the market, a domain

[105] Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 57.
[106] Bent Flyvbjerg, 'Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 49 (1998), 210-233 (p. 227).
[107] Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 74
[108] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 5-17.
[109] Ibid., 48.

of intermingling of men and women."[110] There is a key underlying problem in assuming that the rational public sphere exists and develops in a capitalistic society, where it is money that governs relationships between individuals, institutions and social groups.[111] This connection of the public sphere and capitalism as elaborated by Habermas seems misconceived, as influential persons and groups controlled it for their own interests. This throws into question its nature as a force for the 'public good' above all else.

The division between public and private spheres as a necessary condition for the public sphere

According to Habermas, the separation between public and private spheres is essential for the emergence and functioning of the public sphere. The public sphere effectively contributed in the political realm when "privatized individuals in their capacity as human beings ceased to communicate merely about their subjectivity but rather in their capacity as property owners desired to influence public power in their common interest."[112]

The separation of public and private spheres is ambiguous in the sense that many private matters are considered outside the sphere of public debate. From a critic's point of view, the boundary between public and private spheres "eliminate[s] important contextual influences", and thus marginalizes the discourses "we deem to be outside of the public domain."[113] Mary Ryan gives a very pertinent example from nineteenth century North American society, where women belonging to different classes and ethnicities were not included in the official public sphere as they were considered to be in the domain of

[110] John L. Brooks, 'On the Edges of the Public Sphere', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 62 (2005), 93-98 (p. 94).
[111] William M. Reddy, 'Postmodernism and the Public Sphere: Implications for a Historical Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology,* 7 (1992), 135-168 (p. 153).
[112] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* 56.
[113] Kendall R. Phillips, 'The Spaces of Public Dissension: Reconsidering the Public Sphere', *Communication Monographs,* 63 (1996), 231-48 (p. 239).

the private sphere when they approached public political life.[114] According to Said Amir Arjomand, during the medieval Muslim patrimonial monarchy, "the significant acts of vizier always had a public character and, more important, that there was no real distinction between the private property of a vizier and the public funds at his disposal" which he used in the domain of education and public welfare.[115] So this confusion of separation between the private sphere and public sphere also contributes towards some classes being denied access to participation in the public sphere.

The separation of religion and politics as a necessary condition for the public sphere

As mentioned above, Habermas assumed that the separation between religion and state politics helped in the formation of the public sphere in European societies. Postmodernists, discounting the appeal of reason and the "progress" of the Enlightenment, give importance to religious elements as they pay attention to "the irrational, the extraordinary and the magical in human life."[116] Religion influences the public sphere in different ways.

Pierpaolo Donati is of the opinion that in the past, in the West, Christian churches played a constructive role in "democratization of the public sphere understood as meaning an increase in freedoms and equality, even though in different ways with different partners."[117] Keith Baker and David Zaret state that different cultural and religious traditions contributed to the development of the public sphere in France and England. According to these authors, "the conflict between these traditions helped constitute the public sphere."[118] Therefore, Habermas' obliviousness to the importance

[114] Mary P. Ryan, 'Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Calhoun, 281-86.
[115] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 290).
[116] Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography*, 306.
[117] Pierpaolo Donati, 'Religion and Democracy: The Challenge of a "Religiously Qualified" Public Sphere', *Polish Sociological Review*, 138 (2002), 147-72 (p. 163).
[118] Tucker, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (pp.1081-82).

of religion in the formation of the public sphere is also criticized by some scholars on the grounds that religion has played some crucial and constructive roles in the development of the public sphere.

The relevance of the theory of the public sphere to the study of pre-modern Abbasid society

The concept of the public sphere has been discussed in the modern Western framework, and it has been argued that it could not develop in Islamic societies. Many scholars have argued that the public sphere existed in pre-modern Muslim societies that had specific pre-conditions for its development; "each civilization has developed distinct institutional formations and cultural foundations and … the specific characteristics of these civilizations should be analyzed not only in terms of their approximations to the west but also in their own terms."[119] In the case of Muslim societies, Tanvir Anjum argues that "there has been civility and public sphere in the Muslim Societies in its own ways including mechanisms to restrain the arbitrariness of rule and to ensure the autonomy of diversified associational life."[120]

To reiterate the arguments, I examine above, different individuals and institutions contributed to the public sphere during the Abbasid caliphate from 132-750/655-1258. As Daphna Ephrat argues, during the Seljuk era, *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods, *khānqāh*s, *madrasa*s and *madhhab*s played a role in the religious, political and social life of the public. She maintains that at the end of the twelfth century, *Ṣūfī* orders impacted on the public sphere when they integrated people from different sections of society in *khānqāh*s, thereby providing a platform for identifying and forming ideas relating to their social life and

[119] Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities' (p. 7).
[120] Tanvir Anjum, 'Civil Society in Muslim Contexts: The Probelmatique and a Critique of Euro-American Perspectives', *Islamic Studies*, 51 (2012), 27-48 (p. 45).

enjoying the freedom to debate matters of critical importance to society.[121] Many *Ṣūfī*s infused a "spirit of protest" among the public, and reminded the caliphs publicly of their rightful duties. At times they even reproached rulers vehemently for their misdeeds.[122] In medieval Islamic societies, the *umma* as both theological concept and social reality played a central role in constituting a public sphere that enjoyed prime importance in the Islamic political system.[123] Miriam Hoexter and Nehemia Levtzion argue that a vibrant public sphere developed in medieval Abbasid societies when "the independence of the *sharīʿa* and the distribution of duties toward the community between the ruler and the *ʿulamāʾ* established very early in Islamic history, were crucial factors in securing the autonomy of the public sphere and putting limits on the absolute power of the ruler."[124] Said Amir Arjomand proposes that during the patrimonial Seljuk Empire, there was no real distinction between a public official and private person, as people from both spheres could contribute to the public sphere. The civil law of *waqf*, therefore, served "as an instrument of agency available both to individuals in the civic community and to rulers and officials of the patrimonial."[125] Masoud Kamali argues that in medieval Muslim societies, *bāzārī*s (the merchants, producers and shopkeepers) played a crucial role as an important socio-economic group which represented indigenous public spheres.[126] Thus in pre-modern Islamic societies, various individuals and groups contributed to constituting diversified forms of public spheres distinctive to Islamic societies.

---

[121] Daphna Ephrat, 'The Seljuqs and The Public Sphere in the Period of Sunni Revivalism: The View from Baghdad', in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. by Christian Lange and Songul Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 145.
[122] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 206-07.
[123] Eisenstadt, 'Civil Society and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective' (p. 145).
[124] Miriam Hoexter and Nehemia Levtzion, 'Introduction', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 15.
[125] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 289).
[126] Masoud Kamali, 'Civil Society and Islam: A Sociological Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, 42 (2001), 457-82 (pp. 457-58).

In summary, the problem with Habermas' idea of the public sphere lies in his emphasis on its relevance within only the European context. For Habermas, there were specific European seventeenth and eighteenth century Enlightenment ideals —rationality, secularism, the free market economy, a division between public and private spheres— that gave birth to the conception of the public sphere. This Eurocentric idea can be rejected, as different societies have had different rational parameters, different socio-cultural environments, and subsequently various kinds of public sphere. The imaginary line between public and private spheres drawn by Habermas has also marginalized many voices, considering their issues to be purely private. Similarly, in the bourgeois public sphere, women were not allowed to participate during the eighteenth century in Europe, in stark contrast to the medieval Islamic public sphere, as I demonstrate later in this thesis.

Moreover, contrary to Habermas' assumption that it was the separation of religion from politics that helped in the formation of the public sphere in eighteenth century Europe, the present study brings to light the contested but highly present role of religion in the public sphere. Religion has played a critical role in the formation of public spheres not just in Muslim contexts but in some European societies as well. Therefore, the Habermasian conceptualisation of the public sphere is marred by concrete flaws and is far from being comprehensive and universal as it has been narrowed to European contexts and conditions, thereby ignoring non-European realities and environments in the construction and explanation of the public sphere.

Note on primary sources

In its examination of the medieval Islamic public sphere, the present study exploits a wide range of historical sources including biographical dictionaries, chronicles, dynastic histories, works dedicated to kings and *amīr*s, travelogues and the hagiographical accounts of *Ṣūfī*s: the use of these diverse sources in different forms can offer a nuanced

context and meaning to the key research questions. As this study presents an overview of the role of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere during the later Abbasid caliphate, it inquires how, why and in which aspects of the public good the *Ṣūfī*s played a role. How did *Ṣūfī*s approach political authority for the public good? The critical examination and analysis of these sources will help to locate the *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public domain.

Historical sources such as *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Farash ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *al-Kāmil fi 'l-taʾrīkh* of ʿIzz al-Dīn Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), and *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya fi 'l-taʾrīkh* of Ibn Kathīr (d. 775/1373) reveal a great deal of valuable information about the period in question, and biographical dictionaries provide information about different notable political, intellectual and religious figures of the later Abbasid period. *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn b. Khallikān (d. 681/1282) is one of the key biographical works that throws light on individual agency in the creation of medieval Islamic public spheres. There is also a substantial corpus of *Ṣūfī* literature written by *Ṣūfī*s themselves, for example, *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya* by Abu 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073) and *Ādāb al-murīdīn* of Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168), which deals with *Ṣūfī*s' approaches towards the lofty but practical goals of the moral and ethical uplifting of humanity. *Ṣūfī* treatises are very much a projection of what Sufism is, or should or could be. It is necessary to discuss the activities which *Ṣūfī*s carried out in the public sphere.

The theoretical literature on Sufism is wonderful but it is "top downwards". On the other hand, the biographical literature is in one sense more "bottom upwards", because it describes the trajectories of individual *Ṣūfī*s and also their activities in helping the non-elite. The biographical dictionaries and travel accounts can tell us more about the people for whom the public sphere was a necessary space for the articulation of their needs. The

study also examines hagiographical texts, composed by the close disciples and devotees of *Ṣūfī*s, a valuable resource for studying *Ṣūfī*s of the medieval period. Political treatises such as *Siyāsat-nāma* of Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī (d. 485/1092) and *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* of Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) offer discussion of polity and the role of *sharīʿa* and the caliphate. Then there is the *naṣīḥa* literature such as *Qābūs-nāma* of Kai Kāʾūs b. Iskandar (d. 480/1087) and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.

This wide range of primary sources helps us to perceive, imagine and represent the past, and to trace the notion of the public sphere in later Abbasid society. I am gathering a range of 'anecdotal' textual evidence from which we can build a picture of *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public sphere. However, the sources do have their limitations, as elite products likely to have been written by the literate class for the literate. Perhaps they do not focus on women in ways we might find helpful because of cultural barriers against identifying women, particularly noble women. Nevertheless, these sources help to create a picture of social activity and, despite the limitations, there is a great deal of information and insight to be drawn from them.

Methodology

In the examination of the problem of whether or not there was a public sphere in the later Abbasid period, and of the role of Sufism in that sphere, my research undertakes a qualitative structural analysis of relevant primary and secondary sources and also employs a phenomenology of religion approach. The phenomenology of religion, less concerned with belief systems and the structure of religion than with how people experience religious life, offers a useful set of strategies for this study. In my case study, the phenomenology of religion and critical structural analysis help in locating the conception of a public sphere in later Abbasid society in *Ṣūfī* texts and in identifying the role of *Ṣūfī*s in that sphere. In *Ṣūfī* literature, some examples and instances are miraculous

and inexplicable from an empirical point of view, even "unobservable", as they are "invisible, hidden, and transcendent."[127] The phenomenology of religion as an approach helps in defining these actions as they carry important meanings from a religious point of view. The phenomenological approach helps to elucidate the inner meaning of religious imperatives and their experiential essence. Religion is understood and practiced by its followers through generations; this is in contrast with a more "objective" approach that explains and defines the phenomenon of religion under more general and impersonal categories.[128] Annemarie Schimmel argues that an utterly objective study of religion is not possible, especially when one is dealing with actions, thought systems and human reactions and responses to something that lies outside purely "scientific research".[129] Religion is not just based on concepts and objective experiences, but also involves subjective experiences. The phenomenological approach "involves the thick description of such subjective experiences in order to locate their structures."[130] That subjective experience is based on a consciousness that is beyond the temporal sphere.[131] This consciousness and Sufism have a strong relationship, as *Ṣūfī*s' write about a primordial consciousness and their experience of that primordial sense, and this gives them, according to their writings, an ability to look deep into the human psyche and to find the spiritual value of any action in this world. Religion includes in its sphere experiential dimensions which are often ignored by modern commentators due to being difficult to measure or quantify, and the phenomenological analysis of rituals thus helps to shed light on various aspect of religious life that are pertinent to this study.[132]

---

[127] *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 50.
[128] Oliver Leaman, review of *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (1994), *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (1996), 96-97 (pp. 96-97).
[129] Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), xi-xii.
[130] *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods*, ed. by Stausberg and Engler, 335.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 340.

Moreover, *Ṣūfī* literature elucidates the culture of the era under examination, and in this sense, an in-depth structuralist reading of *Ṣūfī* studies permits a more profound insight into the relationship between culture and religion, which in turn helps us to define and contextualize the question of the public good in later Abbasid society. Talal Asad problematizes the relationship between religious experience, culture and symbols, arguing that it is difficult to perceive any distinction between a person's life based on his/her religious framework, and the common-sense world of his/her actions and thoughts, between which the individual moves. Religious experiences are a source of change in the common-sense world and in shaping the worldviews of believers. Asad maintains that experience in the specific cultural context and in the common-sense world can be transformative, and religious symbols take on great significance in this context: "[In] the phenomenological approach … religious symbols are sui generis, marking out an independent religious domain."[133] There is a symbiotic relationship between culture and religion, so it is complicated to separate the two: what we call "culture" is the total of peoples' self-expression, self-understanding; religion informs culture and culture informs religion, it is a two-way process.

I employ an empirical examination of primary sources and the post-colonial/post-structuralist critique of secondary sources in this study. The critique of secondary sources is important because this is where problematic misinterpretations of and assumptions about medieval Islamic societies arise: namely that those premodern Islamic societies did not have a public sphere, that their rule was despotic, that they had only authoritarian law; all this is lamentably Orientalist. The post-colonial approach will allow a more in-depth critique of dominant Orientalist assumptions based on a particular and contingent worldview. These dominant assumptions greatly affect one's thoughts, beliefs and

[133] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 51-52.

expectations, and one's complete outlook on life.[134] European assumptions based on Renaissance and Enlightenment ideas shape the worldview of the modern mind.[135] In this worldview, religion has no meaningful place in social and political life. In the case of traditional Islamic societies, they had their own particular worldviews based on a religious perception of reality. In this respect, Sufism and its worldview played a highly significant role in the realm of the public good.

The study uses hagiographical texts, composed by the close disciples and devotees of *Ṣūfī*s, as a valuable source to study Sufism of the medieval period. Hagiographical material helps us to reach certain conclusions regarding *Ṣūfī*s' role in social and cultural domains, as the hagiographical literature was not completely separated from its cultural context.[136] Moreover, these texts are valuable when studying medieval Sufism and help us to reconstruct the atmosphere around a *Ṣūfī* as a 'friend of God' with all of the motives and behaviours that this entailed, including in the social world.[137] Different ways of writing *Ṣūfī* hagiographies shaped the biographical accounts of early *Ṣūfī*s; these offer the modern researcher various ways of examining particular *Ṣūfī* individuals and their roles in social and spiritual contexts.[138] However, as a phenomenologist of religion, one can take these sources seriously in that they reveal how people see themselves as transformed by religious experience. Both phenomenology of religion and source criticism can be used together to study the hagiographical sources. Source criticism allows us to be analytical and critical of the sources, their traditions, their transmissions, their authenticity and their value. Phenomenology of religion is another way of looking at these sources, which allow one to appreciate their contents in a different yet still elucidatory way. Discussion of

---

[134] Huston Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2003), 3.
[135] Ibid., 3-4.
[136] Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 16.
[137] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 8.
[138] Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 16-17.

religious experience as transformative results in a subjective understanding of this experience, but that subjectivity itself needs to be examined and incorporated into research if this kind, due to its measurable social impact, as explicated in the bodies of sources I mention above.

Approaches and methods within the study

I will now break down my research methods and approaches in more detail. In its structural critical analysis of primary sources and secondary sources, this study will examine the above-mentioned historical sources such as *al-Kāmil fī ’l-taʾrīkh* by Ibn al-Athīr, biographical dictionaries, for example, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* of Ibn Khallikān, and political treatises such as *Siyāsat-nāma* of Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī. When looking at Sufism and *Ṣūfī* texts such as *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya* by Abu ‘l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, I will employ a modified phenomenology of religion approach to discuss the importance of *Ṣūfī* religious symbols and *Ṣūfī* experiences, and how these experiences are relevant to the public good. In the first chapter, I employ phenomenology of religion and post-colonial critiques of modern secondary sources as I discuss early Sufism and its relationship with Orientalism and society. In the second chapter, I offer a structural analysis of primary sources and secondary sources in which I discuss the public sphere in the medieval context. In the third chapter, I employ a structural analysis of primary sources and secondary sources as I discuss spaces for the public good in medieval Islamic societies. In the fourth and fifth chapters, I employ the phenomenology of religion approach to study *Ṣūfī* texts, and a structural analysis of primary sources to examine the role of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere. The in-depth structural reading of primary sources and *Ṣūfī* texts will help us better understand the social structure of the Baghdadi society in which *Ṣūfī*s as social actors played a range of significant social roles. The reading of hagiographical texts from the poststructuralist point of view will be helpful in this chapter. In the sixth chapter, I offer post-colonial and post-structuralist critiques of

secondary sources to aid a clear and critical evaluation of concepts such as the oriental despotism thesis and the existence of the public sphere in the later Abbasid caliphate.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that there was a highly vibrant late Abbasid public sphere. It was heavily invested in by members of the public. Charity was the main instrument through which the community of believers played a significant role in the public sphere. *Ribāṭ*, a *Ṣūfī* lodge, was transformed by the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad into a public space for discussing spiritual, intellectual and social issues. It became a place where food, education and spiritual training were provided. *Ṣūfī*s did not live in seclusion: *shaykh-murīd* relations incorporated broad sections of society into *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s and created social bonds and a more significant opportunity for learning *futuwwa* characteristics and ameliorating social problems. *Ṣūfī*s gave guidance and support to the people where the state failed to do so. Through opposition to or collaboration with the ruling authorities, they provided religious and social leadership to the community by means of popular pious and social networks.

The organization of the study

This thesis is divided into five chapters in addition to this introduction. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to early Sufism. It discusses Sufism as a form of ascetic and Islamic piety transformed into a social phenomenon after the tenth century, and examines Sufism and its relationship with society. While critically evaluating the perspective of the Orientalists, that Sufism is an 'otherworldly' and 'individualistic' phenomenon, this chapter argues that it is a social phenomenon as well, and that early *Ṣūfī*s were involved in social and charitable activities that were good for the common people. The last section of the chapter sheds light on prominent *Ṣūfī* literature of the said period and its relevance to the notions of public good.

The second chapter discusses the conception of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies and the debate about *maṣlaḥa* as medieval jurists and scholars argued about it. This chapter deliberates on how *sharīʿa* and the objectives of *sharīʿa* deal with the concept of public interest, as it was given significant importance in pre-modern Islamic discourse. It argues that the medieval Islamic public sphere was open to every section of society, and was for both the material and spiritual wellbeing of the community of believers.

The third chapter elaborates the spaces such as *waqf*, non-*waqf* charity, community organizations, craftsmen's and traders' guilds, *futuwwa* groups, and the duty of 'commanding good and forbidding evil' through which the community of believers contributed to public spheres. It discusses how these spheres were autonomous of the control of government, were interconnected, and were beneficial to large sections of society. It also very briefly highlights the role of women and non-Muslim communities in public good activities, where the sources permit such exploration. The primary premise behind chapter three is that elite and non-elite sections of society of the later Abbasid period contributed to the shaping of the public spaces through which the problems of the common people were discussed and salvation was sought.

This thesis offers a substantial amount of original data mainly in Chapters Four and Five. These chapters elaborate the social agency of the *Ṣūfī*s, and how they performed public roles for the common good, when the state did little or failed to do so. These chapters examine the ways of the guidance offered by Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*s, the nature of their followers, and the operations of the *Ṣūfī*s and their followers in the public sphere. In these chapters, I outline how *Ṣūfī*s perceived their role in society and how, simultaneously with their integration into the world of the *ʿulamāʾ*, they developed their own inner life and organizational forms, and devised ways of integrating into the fabric of social and communal life.

The fourth chapter examines the *ribāṭ*s of later Abbasid Baghdad that emerged as public spaces for the use of a broader sector of society—teachers, students, *Ṣūfī*s, scholars—for learning and teaching activities side-by-side with spiritual training. It also informs us about the roles played by the pious and *Ṣūfī* women in the public sphere activities. These women not only engaged in the scholarly activities for the benefits of other women, some women endowed the *Ṣūfī* lodges for various types of purposes such as the provision of food and dissemination of religious knowledge. This chapter, in particular, discusses the significant role of the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* (chief *Ṣūfī*) of Baghdad, who typically had a collaborative relationship with the ruling elite, in the public sphere.

The fifth chapter debates the extent to which *Ṣūfī*s collaborated with ruling authorities and played intermediary roles between rulers and the ruled for the public good. It also traces *Ṣūfī*s' antagonistic attitude towards the ruling authorities where the public good required this. It elaborates how *Ṣūfī*s as teachers and spiritual *shaykh*s incorporated wider sections of society into *Ṣūfī* spiritual and ethical system for their spiritual and material benefits. Moreover, it discusses how *Ṣūfī*s, as *futuwwa* practitioners and leaders, approached members of the ruling elite as well as the lay community to maximize their access to beneficial *Ṣūfī* spiritual values and to sources of material support.

Chapter Six presents additional support for my argument that medieval rulers were not despotic, and that people had agency. This sixth chapter offers critical analytical discussion of the concept of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies. It also critically evaluates Orientalist assumptions regarding medieval Islamic societies and Muslim despotic rulers. Finally, it contains a brief discussion of the agency of the commoners in medieval Islamic societies.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Sufism

The introduction elucidated the concept of the public sphere in relation to Sufism based on a literary review of key secondary sources centred upon Sufism, the public sphere and the relevant contours of Islamic history. This chapter consists of a brief introduction to early Sufism, a concise and critical review of Orientalism and Sufism, and a short discussion of the relationship between Sufism and society. By shedding light on Sufism, this study encompasses how it transformed gradually from ascetic piety in early Islam to a pietistic social phenomenon during the later Abbasid period. In this study, I have also investigated some selected *Ṣūfī* sources of the later Abbasid caliphate and critically reviewed them in regard to *Ṣūfī*s' attitudes towards society, state and the public good.

Sufism in early Islamic history

Sufism or *tasawwuf* has been defined as a religious, spiritual and mystical tradition in Islam. It is a source of intense spiritual life within Islam that helps adherents to attain ethical and spiritual virtues. However, Sufism is not simply the purification of soul and individual improvement of character; it has social and practical dimensions that contribute significantly to public life. This social aspect of Sufism emerges from the imperative to develop good ethical and moral qualities and to follow God's law with deep spiritual understanding of God's orders without negating their external form.[139] Sufism is an "ascetic-mystical" religious tradition in Islam; adherents often practice certain rituals of renunciation of the material world, and undertake contemplative and meditative self-discipline meant for spiritual purgation. Through these practices, a *Ṣūfī* tries to purge himself or herself to become a righteous person who may obtain "communion" with God.[140] Sufism has its origin in the revealed teachings of Islam and *Sunna* of Prophet

[139] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 15.
[140] Erik S. Ohlander, 'Early Sufi Rituals, Beliefs, Hermeneutics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* ed. by Ridgeon, see note 1.

Muhammad.[141] It is accepted by a majority of early authors of *Ṣūfī* texts that the term *taṣawwuf* originates from *Ṣūf*, which literally means "wool", since the early *Ṣūfī*s usually wore a long woollen garb.[142] Other definitions focus the connection with *Ṣafā*, or purity. Such patched clothes as worn by early renunciants were a symbolic expression of their criticism and negation of the luxurious way of life of the contemporary ruling and wealthy elite.[143] It is clear that this moral and ethical critique has considerable social significance, as it aims for the betterment of society while inculcating the meanings of ethical and social virtues.

In the early centuries of Islam, those associated with spiritual and ethical activities were generally described as *nussāk* (sing. *nāsik*) (devout individuals), *zuhhād* (sing. *zāhid*) (world renouncers or ascetics) and *ʿubbād* (sing. *ʿābid*) (worshippers).[144] Among these prominent early figures of Sufism were Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 185/801). The life of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was characterized, according to the sources, by poverty, otherworldliness, asceticism, abstinence, love for God and knowledge of God.[145] In her *Ṣūfī* character, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya was a disinterested "lover" of God. Although she came from a slave background, she became a pivotal figure in the history of Islamic religiosity because of her piety and spirituality. Early *Ṣūfī*s were not, entirely, separate from worldly life. Some specific *Ṣūfī*s participated in wars against Byzantium and criticized ruling authorities for their luxurious lifestyles or unjust rule.

---

[141] Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din, 'The Nature and Origin of Sufism', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by Nasr, 223-25; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 166.

[142] Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Kalābāḏhī, *The Doctrine of the Sufis (Kitāb al-taʻrruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf)*, trans. by Arthur Johan Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5-11; Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise On Sufism*, trans. by Reynold A. Nicholson (London, Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1911), 30-34.

[143] L. Massingnon and others, 'Taṣawwuf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1188> [accessed 26 March 2018]

[144] Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2000), 6.

[145] Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 168-170,

For example, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī criticized Umayyad rulers for their misdeeds.[146] There were *Ṣūfī*s who were active in the dissemination of religious knowledge and public good activities. Another prominent *Ṣūfī*, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), was a writer, a warrior, an ascetic and a generous person. He spent his wealth on ordinary people. He encouraged his followers to adopt worldly occupations.[147] Among early female *Ṣūfī*s some were excellent preachers and scholars, such as Shaʿwāna (n.d.) from the port city of al-Ubulla on the Persian Gulf. She was a contemporary of the famous *Ṣūfī* al-Fuḍayl b. ʿIyād (d. 187/803). She preached to people and recited the *Qurʾān*. Those who attended her lectures were ascetics, worshippers and those who chose the path of spirituality.[148] In short, the social aspect of Sufism, as an intrinsic part of Islam, sat side by side with the spiritual dimension. Early *Ṣūfī*s played their role in the public life of the people, though not conspicuously.

With the passage of time, the practitioners of Sufism were called by various names. The *Ṣūfī*s were called *faqīr* (poor), one who sought *al-faqr al-Muḥammadī* (Muhammadan poverty), metaphysically meaning he/she is nothing, and that all comes from God. They were also called *ahl al-ṭarīqa* (people of the Way), *ahl al-ishāra* (people who learn through allusion), *ahl-i dil* (people of the heart), in Persian they were also called *darwīsh* (from which the English word 'dervish' comes), the *murīd/a* (he/she who follows the *ṭarīqa*), *murshid/a* (he/she who guides), and *shaykh/a* (elder or master/mistress). These are technical terms which denote an aspect of the spiritual life.[149] Another key aspect of Sufism, that a *Ṣūfī* is a *walī Allāh* (friend of God), is based on the link between *Ṣūfī*s and *walāya* (sainthood). A *Ṣūfī* enjoyed the *baraka* (blessing; beneficent force) of Prophet Muhammad through disciplined following of the *sharīʿa* and the *Sunna* of

[146] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 6.
[147] Ibid., 21.
[148] Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta 'abbidāt aṣ ṣūfiyyāt*, trans. by Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999), 106-07.
[149] Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 126.

Prophet Muhammad and a recognized spiritual genealogy. Indeed, the *Barakāt al-Muḥammadiyya* (Muhammadan grace) is essential for a Muslim saint.[150] The above mentioned traditions developed various spiritual experiences and rituals relating to miracles, exemplary piety and saintly intermediaries.[151] The mystical worldviews enhanced the spiritual authority of the *Ṣūfī*s, which in turn increased their social prestige and power, thereby strengthening their ability to play a role for the betterment of the people.

In the early history of Islam, two prominent schools of Sufism emerged: the school of Baghdad and the school of Khurasan. The former was called school of "sober" *Ṣūfī*s, because they adopted the principle of sobriety and *sharīʿa*-approved behaviour and actions. The latter was called the school of "intoxication" (*sukr*) owing to their ecstatic behaviour, "drunkenness" (spiritual intoxication), loss of self-control and extreme love of the divine.[152] Among notable early *Ṣūfī*s of the school of Khurasan were Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. between 160/776 and 166/783), Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/875) and Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896). *Ṣūfī*s of the school of Baghdad focused on the state of contentment (*ridā*) and the meaning of divine indivisibility (*al-tawḥīd*). The central figure of the school of Baghdad was Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910-11). He was called *shaykh*, a spiritual guide, by his followers. He had a wide circle of disciples and *Ṣūfī* friends.[153] Al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) was also a prominent early Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*. He preached absolute love of God and publicized his spiritual experiences against the wishes of traditional *Ṣūfī shaykh*s of the "sober" School of Baghdad. He was crucified in 309/922 owing to his ecstatic utterance, *anā 'l-Ḥaqq* ('I am the Truth') alongside other political

[150] Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 123.
[151] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 6.
[152] Anjum, *Chishti Sūfīs*, 64.
[153] Among them was the famous Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (d. 295/907) and the best known, Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, who was famous for his theophanic sayings (*shaṭḥiyyāt*) of which the most famous is *ana 'l-Ḥaqq* ("I am the Truth") which was the principle reason for his crucifixion. See Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 173-75.

and social reasons: the weakening authority of the Abbasid caliph, the growing power of Qarmatians (a branch of the *Ismāʿīliyya*, *Shīʿī* school of thought) against the Abbasids, court intrigue against al-Ḥallāj, and the growing popularity of al-Ḥallāj being seen as a threat to the established religious elite.[154] Many individuals belonged to the political elite "were afraid that the effect on the people of spiritual revival might have repercussions on the social organization and even on the political structure."[155] Al- Ḥallāj's teachings about the true meaning of spiritual life "would certainly have been dangerous for a society whose religious and political leaders lived in a state of stagnation with neither the strength nor the intention to revitalize the Muslim community."[156] Early Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*s were generally highly engaged in the spiritual aspect of Sufism, yet some, such as Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Junayd, were also involved in social life through their sermons for the ethical and spiritual good of society.

The Sufism that emerged and developed in the new intellectually and culturally vibrant caliphal city of Baghdad was not just a reclusive ascetic movement. It also had a powerful influence throughout society, as there were some *Ṣūfī*s whose teachings and exhortations related to the ethical, moral, intellectual and social good of the society, reaching out to common people and the ruling elite alike. Examples of early *Ṣūfī*s show their involvement with the care of the poor and needy. Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 199/815) said in his will that his shirt should be given in charity after his death.[157] One day in Baghdad, Al-Karkhī went to the shop of Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867) with an orphan boy and asked al-Saqaṭī, "clothe this orphan", which he did, and received the blessings of the *shaykh*.[158] Significantly, some *Ṣūfī*s engaged with the ruling class and members of the influential

[154] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 68.
[155] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 68.
[156] Ibid., 68.
[157] Abu 'l-Qāsimʿ Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism*, trans. by Rabia Harris (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2002), 22.
[158] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 556.

groups. Abu ʻl-Qāsim al-Junayd's teachings and sermons were not merely for his close circle: even the *kātib*s (secretary; clerk) of Baghdad, the philosophers, the poets and the dogmatic theologians listened to his sermons.[159] Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (d. 295/907-8), while performing the religious duty of a Muslim to command the good and forbid the wrong (*al-amr bi 'l-marʿūf wa 'l-nahyʿan al-munkar*), smashed jugs of wine bound for the caliphal palace.[160] Al-Ḥallāj had supporters in the Abbasid court who liked his teachings regarding the redress of grievances of the poor. His public sermons included teaching regarding community reforms and criticism of social injustices.[161] These *Ṣūfī*s' interactions and communications within and outside the *Ṣūfī* circles played a significant role in the communal and social dynamics of the society. These early *Ṣūfī*s, being representatives of Islamic piety, enjoyed a great deal of public reverence.[162] In short, early *Ṣūfī*s were involved in certain activities intended for the communal and collective good of the wider Muslim community.

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries various types of "mystical" pieties arose in the Islamic lands, different yet interconnected to one another. Some of those were regarded as "antinomian" and were marginalized; others occupied the central stage of social and political life. Among the early ascetic and mystical schools of thought that flourished in Khurasan and Transoxania were *Karrāmiyya* and *Malāmatiyya*. *Karrāmiyya* was founded by Muḥammad b. Karam (d. 255/869). His teachings were popular in the rural and impoverished areas of Khurasan.[163] *Malāmatiyya* of Nishapur followed "the path of blame".[164] They practiced modesty, concealed their spiritual state, and practiced *futuwwa* activities. According to Karamustafa, the early Sufism gave birth to two types

[159] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 340 see note 12.
[160] Melchert, 'Origins and Early Sufism', 18.
[161] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 73-78.
[162] Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, x-xi, 3, 7-8.
[163] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 88-90.
[164] Ibid., 98.

of *Ṣūfī* tendency, "asceticism" and "anarchist individualism". The former became part of orthodox Sufism while the latter was disregarded as having an anti-socio-religious tendency.[165] The individuals and groups attached to the anti-social and religious tendencies were called the *darwīsh*s, and practiced a distinctive form of piety without following many religious and social norms. Later on, *darwīsh*s and *qalandar*s who practiced voluntary and involuntary poverty emerged from the "antisocial" and "antinomian" religious tendencies of *Karrāmiyya* and *Malāmatiyya*.

Another type of socially "antinomian" *Ṣūfī*s, emerged after the eleventh century, called the "wise fool" (collectively referred to as '*ʿuqalāʾ al-majānīn*' in Arabic) and *majdhūb* (the one captivated by God). Although they violated all social norms, people widely tolerated them. They criticized the wealthy and the powerful for their negligence of the pietistic life.[166] These *faqīr*s, *darwīsh*s, *qalandar*s and *majdhūb*s mostly emerged and developed in the eastern part of the Islamic world, and they reacted against the increasing institutionalization of Sufism from the twelfth century onward.[167] These dervish groups belonging to the poor and mendicant section of society criticized established social and religious norms of the religious and wealthy elite in their distinctive way. Such *Ṣūfī* groups and their practices were disliked by some *ʿulamāʾ*.

In the beginning, various strands in Islam such as *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa* did not have names. It was in the later period of the eighth century when Islamic traditions of theology, law and *Ṣūfī* traditions and practices were defined.[168] Then for social, political and confessional reasons these strands began to emerge as separate, and then there began to be tension between them. The tension between the *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* was evident in tenth

[165] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Oxford: One World, 2006), 25.
[166] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Antinomian Sufis', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. by Ridgeon, 114-15.
[167] Ibid., 123-24.
[168] Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*, 170.

century Baghdad when al-Ḥallāj was crucified. However, the late tenth century saw the consolidation of *Ṣūfī* traditions. *Ṣūfī* manuals written during the late tenth and the eleventh centuries played an important role in alleviating the oppositional attitude of *ʿulamāʾ* towards *Ṣūfī*s and vice versa. *Ṣūfī* authors, through their texts, asserted the similarity between their own creed and that of other Muslims. They demonstrated that the spiritual experiences of *Ṣūfī*s were not in contradiction to the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad.[169] These *Ṣūfī* authors drew the boundaries of normative Sufism[170] and "preserved spiritual heritage which had largely disappeared without them."[171] A prominent figure who played an important role in synthesizing the *sharīʿa* and the *ṭarīqa* was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. His "method of combining the life of the heart in strict accord with the law and with a theologically sound attitude made even orthodox theologians take the *Sufi* movement seriously."[172] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, through his works on Islamic spirituality and theology, helped dry theologians of his age to understand Sufism and made *Ṣūfī*s realize the compatibility of the *ṭarīqa* with the *sharīʿa*, thereby reconciling them. By the eleventh century, more people, including jurists belonging to different schools of *fiqh* started joining *khānqāh*s. In *khānqāh*s, lessons related to jurisprudence were given; on the other hand, *madrasa*s (colleges of law and other sciences) incorporated many *Ṣūfī*s.[173]

---

[169] The most famous works were, *Kitāb al-lumaʿ* (The Book of Shafts of Light) of Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), *The Doctrine of the Sufis (Kitāb al-taʿrruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf)* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Nourishment of Hearts) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), and *Ṭabaqāt al- ṣūfiyya* by Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021). For the list of works see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 84.

[170] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 87-88.

[171] Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 81.

[172] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 94-96.

[173] Tanvir Anjum, 'Sufism in History and its Relationship with Power', *Islamic Studies*, 45 (2006), 221-68 (p. 232).

As mentioned above, at the beginning of Islam, there was no distinction between *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s. What made *Ṣūfī*s and their works different from that of *ʿulamāʾ* despite *ʿulamāʾ* often themselves being *Ṣūfī*s? It is difficult and complicated to draw the demarcation line between *Ṣūfī*s and pious *ʿulamāʾ* because sometimes the same *Ṣūfī* taught at a *madrasa*, a *khānqāh* and also gave public lectures, *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī being an example.[174] Also some prominent *ʿulamāʾ*, were leading *Ṣūfī*s.[175] These categories could be somewhat fluid, with some interpenetration and overlapping. However, it can be argued that *Ṣūfī*s were distinct from the *ʿulamāʾ* in some sense because they followed the path of asceticism, self-mortification, poverty and extreme love of God. Even this was not a strict line of difference as some *Ṣūfī*s came from wealthy backgrounds. They mostly ran *khānqāh*s/*ribāṭ*s without accepting personal remuneration. They took responsibility for shaping the faithful trust of the believers and will of the adepts, which the *fuqahāʾ* were unable to do. Though many *Ṣūfī*s belonged to the ranks of *ʿulamāʾ*, they saw their primary task not in administering the *sharīʿa* "but in experiencing and communicating the tensions of the cosmological order in a primary form, and in distilling a practice of piety out of the experience."[176] Moreover, the *ʿilm* of medieval Islamic culture did not reach everybody through the *madrasa*. Sufism, therefore, gave the people means to a religious life despite their being unable to access formal *madrasa* education. The *Ṣūfī* path was a way to engage with the religion without engagement with the *madrasa*. So *Ṣūfī*s fulfilled a role that *ʿulamāʾ* did not properly fulfil. In the medieval Islamic world, there were ordinary people with social, political and economic concerns. Where they could not access the rulers properly or did not have a mechanism for addressing their grievances, the *Ṣūfī khānqāh*s/*ribāṭ*s played a role, while

---

[174] ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (*The Revelations of the Unseen)*, trans. by Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: M. Muhammad Ashraf, [n.d.]), 18-19.
[175] Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 148.
[176] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 149.

the *ʿulamāʾ* did not necessarily provide that function. The role of *ribāṭ*s as a public space in Baghdad is discussed in detail in the fourth chapter below.

Among the female *Ṣūfī*s, those who contributed to the religious and social space as teachers, preachers and scholars included, for example, al-Wahaṭiyya Umm al-Faḍl (n.d.), the companion of Muḥammad b. Khafīf al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/981). She gave public lectures in Nishapur attended by *Ṣūfī*s, teachers and others.[177] These women *Ṣūfīs* played a role in transferring the spiritual and pious teaching to later generations, an example being Amat al-Raḥīm Karīma al-Qushayrī (d. 486/1093), one of the five daughters of Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072).[178] Among the later remarkable female *Ṣūfī* scholars was ʿĀʾisha al-Bāʿūniyya (d. 923/1517) of Damascus. She was an excellent preacher and scholar. She was also a promising writer and wrote many *Ṣūfī* texts. She was author of *The Principles of Sufism*.[179] After the tenth century, female *Ṣūfī*s were a conspicuous part of *Ṣūfī* spiritual, religious and even social life within the Islamic societies. The role of some Baghdadi *Ṣūfī* women in the public sphere is also discussed in Chapter Four below.

During the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Sufism became a vital part of Muslim religious, cultural and social life. Towards the middle of the thirteenth century, Sufism had spread into the villages and cities in the Islamicate and played a significant role in the expansion and popularization of Islamic traditions.[180] Marshall Hodgson points out various characteristics of Sufism in the earlier middle period of Islamic history, when *Ṣūfī*s played an appreciable role in the religious, intellectual and public life of Islamic societies. As *Ṣūfī shaykh* and *ʿālim* they engaged in *madrasa*s and *khānqāh*s. They played roles as *futuwwa* leaders and as community organizers. They engaged with the merchant and craftsmen's guilds. They involved ordinary people as well as members of the ruling

[177] Al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, trans. by Cornell, 226.
[178] Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 53-102.
[179] ʿĀʾisha al-Bāʿūniyya, [al-Muntakhab fī uṣūl al-rutab fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf] *The Principles of Sufism*, trans. by Eh. Emil Homerin (New York and London: New York University Press, 2016).
[180] Rahimi and Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks', 268.

elite in *Ṣūfī* circles through the master-disciple relationship.[181] *Ṣūfī*s' various roles as *Ṣūfī shaykh*, *ālim* in a *madrasa*, *khānqāh* and *ribāṭ* manager, and as preacher, helped people in their religious, spiritual and social wellbeing. Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) is an excellent example of such a *Ṣūfī*, who not only taught at Niẓāmiyya Madrasa but also built a *madrasa* and a *khānqāh* in Baghdad where he was a teacher and also a *Ṣūfī shaykh*.[182] Another prominent *Ṣūfī* was Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, who was given favour and respect by court officials. He was involved in various aspects of the flourishing intellectual culture of the time. He also achieved a high degree of proficiency in *fiqh* and *kalām*.[183] It could be argued that *Ṣūfī*s of the earlier middle period were involved in social, religious and political affairs to an extent that was beneficial for the public, due to their spiritual and ethical worldview and their value system, and the master-disciple relationship which nurtured and trained individuals.

To sum up, Sufism developed in the early history of Islam as a religious and spiritual tradition and transformed itself into a communal and social phenomenon during the later Abbasid period. Before the eleventh century, *Ṣūfī*s engaged in religious, spiritual and social activities in the society. The Sufism that emerged as an ascetic movement at the turn of the eleventh century was ready to play a more obvious and vital role in the public sphere. We examine this role in later Abbasid Baghdad in Chapter Four and Five.

Sufism and Orientalism

This section critically examines a hitherto prevalent Orientalist view of Sufism as an individualistic and merely mystical phenomenon, having no relationship with Islam, society and public life.

---

[181] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 201-22.
[182] Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn (The Sūfī Rule for Novices)*, trans. by Menahem Milson (Massachusetts: Cambridge, 1975), 13.
[183] Joseph E. B. Lumbard, *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016), 11.

Some Orientalists have defined Islam and Sufism in light of their own subjective religious, scientific and cultural Eurocentric worldviews. Many early modern European scholars, theologians and intellectuals wrote and preached pejoratively and deprecatingly against Islam. They characterized Islam as a false and heretical religion, and Muslim rulers, particularly Ottomans, as cruel and despotic, though some theologians and intellectuals presented a positive picture of Islam and the rulers.[184] The dissemination of these ideas about Islam and the Ottoman rulers influenced many Orientalists of the modern period when they wrote about Islam and Islamic religious traditions such as Sufism.

Colonialism and the modern approach to knowledge contributed a lot to Sufism being understood and presented as alien to Islam. Early colonial officials and Western scholars rejected the idea that Sufism is an integral part of Islamic tradition. While some presented the idea that Sufism is the product of other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism, others related it to Hinduism and Buddhism. The understanding of Sufism as a "mysterious" phenomenon continued in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries even among "more probing and culturally self-reflective European intellectuals."[185] The historical methods of these modern Westerners make them incapable of ascertaining that Sufism is an integral part of Islam.[186] A modern interpretation of knowledge accepts only those forms of knowledge that can be scientifically understood and controllable. So Sufism was labelled a "backward" medieval idea and the "work of [a] charlatan".[187] For these early modern Europeans, Sufism was equatable with "exotic" and "peculiar"

---

[184] Noel Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 30-56.

[185] Atif Khalil and Shiraz Sheikh, 'Sufism in Western Historiography: A Brief Overview', *Philosophy East and West* 66 (2016), 194-217 (p. 196).

[186] Rene Guenon, 'Haqiqa and Sharia in Islam', 92 <http://www.fatuma.net/text/Haqiqa_and_Sharia_in_Islam_by_Rene_Guenon.pdf> [accessed 02 December 2019]

[187] Paul L. Heck, 'Sufism - What Is It Exactly?', *Religion Compass*, 1/1 (2007), 148-64 (p. 148).

behaviour.[188] These Western scholars' views, even though they were studying Islam, were "reductive", "historicist" and "excessively literalist and dogmatic interpretations of religion."[189] They were devoid of the real faith that develops real understanding, because as non-practitioners, their ideas were merely conceptual. Sufism was misunderstood as having been imported to Islam.

These European Orientalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were the product of their own particular time, consequently it is necessary to understand the context in which they wrote. They presented the history of Islam and its spiritual aspects (such as Sufism) to a reading public whose intellectual preferences and worldly orientations were influenced by the European Enlightenment.[190] These Europeans took their religion and cultural traditions as a fundamental yardstick against which to study and evaluate other religions and cultures, which was misleading. They ignored the real meanings and spirit of religious rituals and practices under the weight of modern scientific knowledge and its methods, and thus "reduced the sacred to the profane."[191] Before the secular European Enlightenment, all world societies, including the European ones, had social orders which were enmeshed with religion. The modern secular perception of religion removes it from the sphere of having utility in society, politics and power dynamics, and thus also marginalizes its spiritual aspects and contributions.[192] In the case of Sufism, such Orientalists were reluctant to accept it as a unique Islamic religious phenomenon that played a seminal role in Islamic societies.

---

[188] Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2011), 2-4
[189] Khalil and Sheikh, 'Sufism in Western Historiography' (p. 206).
[190] Knysh, *Sufism*, 4-5.
[191] Rene Guenon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. by Marco Pallis, Arthur Osborne and Richard C. Nicholson (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 51-54.
[192] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 10-13.

The term "Sufi-ism" was coined by Orientalists at the end of the eighteenth century. They found it relevant for those specific aspects of Oriental culture which were attractive to Europeans. For the Orientalists, Sufism did not have intrinsically necessary relationship with Islamic faith and the practices of Islam.[193] Also, the definitions of the word "Ṣūfī" by the Orientalists and European colonial administrators were far away from the original meaning of the word, encompassing ethical and mystical goals in "prescriptive passion". Sufism can validly be used as a descriptive term to cover all the external social and historical manifestations associated with *Ṣūfī* orders, saints and the interior practices of Islam.[194] Moreover, in Sufism, there is no separation between the active and contemplative life. For this reason, in Islam, it is better to avoid calling Sufism, "Islamic mysticism" because of the "passive" and "anti-intellectual" colour that this word has come to possess in most contemporary European languages as a result of several centuries of struggle between Christianity and rationalism, and also because of the socio-political passivity of much of Christian mysticism.[195] Though Sufism is primarily a spiritual phenomenon, to reduce it to a simple mystical expression of Islam limits the complex nature and role of Sufism in Islamic societies.

Until the 1970s much of the Western discourse about Sufism was under the shadow of the works of early Orientalists, colonial officials and "modern Muslim thinkers" of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Much of the scholarship belonging to this period fails to see Sufism as an integral part of the Islamic religious tradition. Some put forward the theory of the decline of Sufism and also blame it for the decline of Islamic civilization. According to a modernist reformer, Sufism, as a popular

---

[193] Carl W. Ernst, 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism', in *Teaching Islam*, ed. by Brannon Wheeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4 <https://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/islam/9780195152258.003.0007>

[194] Ernst, 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism', 5-6.

[195] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 126-127; Titus Burckhardt, 'Sufi Doctrine and Method', 1-20 (p. 7) <http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=Sufi_Doctrine_and_Method_by_Titus_Burckhardt.pdf>

religion, became a religion within a religion, keeping Muslims away from socio-ethical religious practices and becoming a reason for the decline of Islamic civilization.[196] Moreover, some blamed *Ṣūfī*s as "fanatics" against the "quietist" early *Ṣūfī*s advocated by the Orientalists.[197] These scholars "privileged the mystical insights and poetry of great *Ṣūfī* masters and championed personal and unmediated religious forms. Sufism's devotional and corporate aspects were unappreciated."[198] To see Sufism in its broader socio-political contexts would help us in understanding the true nature of Sufism, in opposition to the aforementioned reductive and distorting views emanating from Orientalist and colonial perspectives.

To conclude, from the perspectives of the Orientalists, Sufism was simply a mystical and passive phenomenon having no relationships with society and the public good. The particular religious, social and intellectual traditions and political expediency of the time greatly influenced these early European scholars in defining Sufism and Islam in a pejorative way.

The relationship of Sufism with society and the ruling authorities

The section below aims to provide a short discussion of the relationship of Sufism with society and the ruling authorities. While elaborating this relationship, this section argues against that of some Orientalists that Sufism had no concern with societal activities and consequently the public sphere.

Sufism has mistakenly been characterized as "privatized experience", and thus has continued to be perceived as a "subjective" and "inward phenomenon", having no or

---

[196] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 153-54.
[197] Dina Le Gall, 'Recent Thinking on Sufis and Saints in the Lives of Muslim Societies, Past and Present', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010), 673-87 (p. 673); Alexander Knysh, 'Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West', in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. by Youssef M. Choueiri (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 125-26.
[198] Gall, 'Recent Thinking on Sufis and Saints in the Lives of Muslim Societies, Past and Present' (p. 673).

little relationship with social and political life. In the post-Enlightenment rational, scientific and modern philosophical paradigm, religion and "mysticism" were considered "individualistic", "antisocial and otherworldly" phenomena.[199] Opposing this notion, Richard King claims that mysticism is not antisocial and is not indifferent towards social issues such as justice and poverty.[200] Though mysticism has been critically explored, it is still often reduced to a "bare universalism (with minor concessions to religious traditions) and, what is more, to the private experience of an individual."[201] Sufism is not a privatized experience, rather *Ṣūfī*s having either an oppositional or collaborative relationship with the political authorities participated in the affairs of the world to make it better. Thus Sufism in Islam is a social phenomenon.[202] A famous saying regarding Sufism is that "Sufism is all practical ethics."[203] *Ṣūfī*s are constantly reminded of this by the model of the Prophet Muhammad, who plays for them the role of a social and political leader as well as the mystical exemplar.[204] Sufism is very much a community affair that is hard to separate from the rest of life.

Some definitions of Sufism by the *Ṣūfī*s themselves highlight the social and moral importance of Sufism. According to Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Junayd, "Sufism is not composed of practices and sciences, but it is morals," and for Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī, the one "who surpasses you in good moral qualities surpasses you in Sufism."[205] This moral and ethical notion of Sufism helps in uplifting society morally while obeying God's orders and the rules which provide a deep spiritual and moral sense for society. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, while discussing the roles of Sufism in society and governmental affairs, aspires to a

[199] King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 33-34.
[200] Ibid., 33.
[201] Ernst, 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism', 17.
[202] Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 126-28.
[203] Ernst, 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism', 18.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 15

society having no or minimal governmental authority. He argues that this world is not a permanent abode for living: worldly life is brief and is a means towards the eternal life after death. In this world, men and women pursue their desires, which gives birth to animosity between them, which in return needs authority, law and government policies to check lawlessness and disturbance.[206] According to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, if human desires are channeled or minimized, "the need for government and politics would be proportionally reduced."[207] Sufism can play a significant role in this minimizing of self-centred desires, and thus nurturing a harmonious society where everyone is aware of his or her place and responsibility.[208] In short, Sufism with its deep spiritual values trained human beings in a way that enabled them to realize their social roles and play their part for the collective betterment of the society.

In medieval Islamic societies, religious traditions such as Sufism played a major role in the social dimensions of life. In modern Western societies, the government enjoys greater power and influence, in contrast with the medieval Islamic societies where rulers had an often more limited role in governmental affairs relating to services to the people.[209] In medieval Islamic societies, religious institutions such as Sufism played a significant role in providing social services with or without much involvement of political authorities.[210] In medieval Islamic societies, *Ṣūfī*s' relationship with the political authorities varied from *Ṣūfī* to *Ṣūfī*, and *Ṣūfī* to political authority. Some *Ṣūfī*s had cordial relations with the ruling authorities while others had not. Some political authorities sought advice from the *Ṣūfī*s while some were not interested in having any advice from *Ṣūfī*s.[211]

---

[206] OvamirAnjum, 'Mystical Authority and Governmentality in Medieval Islam', in *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800*, ed. by John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (New York: Routledge, 2012), 79-80.
[207] Ibid., 80.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid., 79.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Anjum, *Chishtī Sufis*, 69-70.

It is difficult to identify any uniform attitude among *Ṣūfī*s towards the political authorities. Sufism is a much broader phenomenon, incorporating many religious, philosophical, spiritual and social elements. It has been a "popular Islamic piety" and an arena of profound social interaction.[212] In the case of later Abbasid society, after the disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate, Islamic societies tended towards social self-sustenance, where social groups and actors all too often took responsibility towards all sections of the community. This in turn created a space where a community could work for the betterment of its members through the institutions of *ʿulamāʾ* networks and *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods.[213] Sufism played a vital role in Muslim societies as not only a spiritual discourse but also as a means of social cohesion and organization.

From the discussion above, it can be established that Sufism is a social phenomenon based on its own distinctive religious and spiritual worldviews. Contrary to Orientalists assumptions that Sufism is an "individual" and "privatized experience" that has nothing to do with society, it can be argued that through its distinctive form of piety, Sufism penetrated the social and political domains and trained and guided people ethically and morally.

Primary sources: *Ṣūfī* writings during the later Abbasid caliphate on the conception of the public good

This section examines some selected *Ṣūfī* texts of the latter Abbasid period, and their relevance to the idea of the public good. The works written by *Ṣūfī*s during the later Abbasid period are significant as they give information regarding the phenomenon of Sufism, the *Ṣūfī*s and their lives. So an analytical reading of these sources gives some information regarding the question of what was the conception of public good during this

[212] Jamal J. Elias, *Islam* (London: Routledge, 1999), 52.
[213] Anjum, 'Mystical Authority and Governmentality in Medieval Islam', 78-79.

period and how *Ṣūfī*s conceived it. Selected *Ṣūfī* literature of the later Abbasid period, as relevant to this study, is listed here:

Abu ‘l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya*

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 562/1166), *Futūḥ al-ghayb*

_____, *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*

Abu ‘l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 564/1168), *Ādāb al-murīdīn*

Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*

_____, *Kitāb fi’l-futuwwa*

Abu ‘l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī was a prominent *Ṣūfī* from Nishapur. He contributed to the systematization of *Ṣūfī* thought in his well-known work on Sufism, *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya*. Al-Qushayrī, while conversing on the origin of Sufism in the teachings of Islam, focuses on early *Ṣūfī*s and their teachings. He elucidates various stations and states that a *Ṣūfī* traverses in his or her wayfaring. He narrates the ethical vices and virtues that *Ṣūfī* wayfarers must take care of such as envy, backbiting, contentment, trust in God, chivalry, *khūlūq* (moral character; ethics), thankfulness and generosity.[214] In his last days he founded a *duwayra*, a kind of lesser *khānqāh*, in his hometown, and trained his disciples.[215] The people of Nishapur liked his sermons because of their excellent style and content. Al-Qushayrī elaborates on the moral and ethical virtues that are good for society, but overall he talks very little about *Ṣūfī*s’ social activities and public responsibilities.

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was also a native of Nishapur; later on he went to Baghdad and taught at Madrasa Niẓāmiyya. He became a great theologian, a professor of law and a *Ṣūfī* as well. He produced numerous works on different aspects of Islam such

[214] Abu ‘l-Qāsimʿ Abd al-Kaīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *Principle of Sufism*, trans. by B. R. Von Schlegell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990), 101-30, 214-22, 240-47, 248-59.
[215] Ibid., viii.

as theology, the study of the *ḥadīth* (what Prophet Muhammad said or did, or things in his presence which he gave his approval to), and the Holy Quranic exegesis. But the most critical work, in which he wove *Ṣūfī* concerns into the fabric of his central work of reforms, is *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. This was conceived as a complete guidebook on Islamic piety. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī organizes it into four volumes; the first book is devoted to the topics of *(ʿIbādāt)* worship and divine service, the second deals with worldly usages and social behaviour, the third relates to destructive evils that lead to hell and the fourth is about constructive virtues that lead to salvation (*munajjiyāt*).[216] He focuses on practical matters and avoids any discussion of *Ṣūfī* theories. In *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī made a great effort to combine *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa*. He presents the stations of Sufism through the prism of *sharīʿa*, and proves comprehensively that the *sharīʿa* is not separate from *ṭarīqa*. This book holds a prominent place among medieval Arabic books on ethics and Sufism. He remained on the 'middle course' and endorsed a moderate and practical version of Sufism, locating the path of piety between the solitary life and social life.

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was born in the province of Gilan in Persia and later became a celebrated theologian and *Ṣūfī shaykh* of Baghdad. In his book *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī concentrates more on mystical aspects of Sufism. He discusses how one who aspires to the *Ṣūfī* path needs to control his/her passions and worldly desires.[217] He extols complete dependence on the decree of God, following His commandments and abstaining from the forbidden things. In his eighty discourses, al-Jīlānī comprehensively addresses *tawḥīd* (indivisibility of the divine) in times of trial, extinguishing of the egoistic self, remembering God in wealth and trial, following the

[216] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, trans. by Fazl-ul-Karim, 4 vols (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993).
[217] Al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, trans. by Ahmad, 52-53.

Qurʾān and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad and patience.[218] In the seventy-eighth discourse, al-Jīlānī highlights ten characteristics of travelling on the spiritual path, all of which have great importance for social life. These characteristics inculcate high spiritual and ethical values, such as keeping a promise, not harming people, and humbleness with great sincerity.[219] These characteristics obliquely encourage readers to become generous-minded servants of God and useful members of society. His book mainly discusses purification of self and heart from a spiritual perspective.

In another book, *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq,* al-Jīlānī discusses, in the beginning, five pillars of Islam— sincerely reciting the profession of faith, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. He elaborates how these five basics are essential for beginners on the path of Islam. Then he discusses *ādāb*, good manners or behaviour for everyday life. In this section, he talks about a wide range of topics such as how to marry, how to eat and drink, how to sleep, and how to greet fellow Muslims.[220] Then he discusses in detail praiseworthy deeds and exercises from the religious and theological point of view. His book elaborates the right way that leads to the path towards God. Thus the book is a complete guide on *Islām*, *Īmān* and *Iḥsān*.[221] In the end, he elaborates Sufism; its meaning, stations and the *Ṣūfī* way. Though al-Jīlānī's book discusses the good manners of Sufism, it does not directly discuss Sufism's relationship with activities for the common good.

Abu 'l-Najībʿ Abd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī was born in Shuhraward, a town in the Jibal province in Persia. Later, he moved to Baghdad and became a well-known *Ṣūfī*. In his book, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, he teaches the ethical and moral doctrines that are involved in

[218] Al-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, trans. by Ahmad, 26.
[219] Ibid., 172-77.
[220] Al-Jīlānī, *Ghunya-tu-tālibīn* [al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq], trans. by Muhammad Sadiq (Lahore: Rumi Printers, 1988), 129-220.
[221] Hamza Malik, *The Grey Falcon: The Life and Teaching of Shaykhʿ Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 5.

the training of *Ṣūfī* novices, piety, and better ethical and moral values. He establishes in his book three ranks of *Ṣūfī*s; *murīd* (man of momentary experience (*waqt*)), *mutawassiṭ* (*Ṣūfī* of middle rank), and *muntaḥīn* (consummate *Ṣūfī*). In the last category, when a *Ṣūfī* achieves the highest level of *Ṣūfī* truth, he is called *muntaḥīn* when he may return to society and play an active role in it.[222] He maintains that "the most notable characteristics of the *Ṣūfī*s are their moral qualities."[223] He unfolds ethical rules, such as that a *Ṣūfī* should speak to the people according to their intellectual capacity, it is better for a novice to serve his brother than to engage in supererogatory prayer, and one should not find fault with other people.[224] He also takes the *rukhṣa*s (relaxations of the strict rules) into account in detail in the last chapter,[225] as suitable only for lay members of society. It seems that most of these relaxations reflect customs and practices which were common among regular *Ṣūfī*s during the time of Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī.[226] He suggests in his book that it is a good act to visit a just ruler, and that one should also visit an unjust ruler to reprove him or to exhort him according to one's capacity. Approaching rulers for the welfare of the people is praiseworthy.[227] Al-Suhrawardī thought that it would be useless to concentrate on one's self-betterment away from society, so he preferred to serve society.

Abū Ḥafṣʿ Umar al-Suhrawardī was the nephew of Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī. He lived in Baghdad. His book, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, mainly focuses on ethical and mystical notions of Sufism such as *ʿilm-i-ḥāl* (knowledge of the mystic state), *maʿrifat al-rūḥ* (deep knowledge of the soul), *Wajd* (rapture), *fanāʾ* (effacement) and *baqāʾ*

[222] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Milson, 35-36.
[223] Ibid., 37.
[224] Ibid. 39, 43, 51.
[225] *Rukhṣa* is a legal ruling through which the primary or general nature of injunctions are suspended or relaxed by an exception under certain circumstances. Some *Ṣūfī*s permitted *rukhṣa* in some *Ṣūfī* practices, particularly for the lay members of the *Ṣūfī* community. R. Peters and J G. J. ter Haar, 'Rukhṣa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0937> [accessed 02 November 2019]
[226] Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Muhammad Abd al-Basit (Lahore: Tasawwuf Foundation, 1998), 134-60.
[227] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Milson, 48.

(permanency). The book contains sixty-three chapters which deal with the relationship between *taṣawwuf, shaykh* and *murīd*, customs of the men of *khānqāh*, spiritual state and stages, the *Ṣūfī* worldview, austerity, poverty, love and contentment. The first twelve chapters deal with different aspects and the importance of Sufism. Chapters thirteen to fifteen are about *khānqāh*, its importance, and the duties of the residents of *khānqāh*.[228] His discussion of the importance of the *khānqāh* rituals encourages one to assume that during his time *khānqāh* culture in Baghdad was relevant to social life.

ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, in another book, *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa*, discusses the *Ṣūfī* chivalric virtues. He wrote the book during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when Sufism became a widespread social and religious phenomenon. He locates the origin of *Ṣūfī futuwwa* in the Islamic traditions and claims that it is not an innovation in Islam. He stresses the sober form of *Ṣūfī-futuwwa*, which is not in contradiction to normative beliefs and practices. He is primarily interested in recruiting lay members, warriors and craftsmen into his *Ṣūfī-futuwwa* circle.[229] He wanted to see Sufism proliferating its ethical and moral vision into the practical and social life of the believers.

To conclude, among the selected *Ṣūfī* texts, the works of al-Qushayrī and al-Jīlānī particularly deal with Sufism's origin, *Ṣūfī* stations, and ways to help in understanding the nature of Sufism. Other works, such as those of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī and ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, focus heavily on Sufism as a spiritual and ethical phenomenon and its importance as a social phenomenon. Mainly, these *Ṣūfī* texts deal with the spiritual and ethical values, and how these values, when once attained through religious, spiritual practices, contribute to social life.

---

[228] Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, trans. by Abu al-Hassan (Lahore: Idara-e-Islamiyat, [n.d.]), 256-271, 295-304.

[229] Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa*, trans. by Lloyd Ridgeon in *Jawanmardi: A Sufi Code of Honour* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 42-99.

Normative and mystical aspects of *Ṣūfī* literature and *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public sphere

As the above short overview of the selected *Ṣūfī* texts shows, *Ṣūfī*s do not talk in enormous detail about social activities. They lay more stress on normative, spiritual and mystical aspects of Sufism. These early texts talk about the stations (*maqāmāt*) and spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) that a *Ṣūfī* aspirant has to adopt to traverse the *Ṣūfī* path. *Ṣūfī*s were more involved in interpretation of the religious traditions, as the primary concern of Sufism is the "inner mystical aspect of religion" rather than the outer jurisprudential aspect. So the *Ṣūfī*s focus more on the esoteric (*ḥaqīqa*) than the exoteric (*sharīʿa*).[230] Though in their manuals these *Ṣūfī*s of the later Abbasid period discussed the deep piety and moral conduct inherent in Sufism that is essential for human society, they mainly focus on drawing the boundaries of normative Sufism, *Ṣūfī* teachings and *Ṣūfī* conduct.

The *Ṣūfī* texts discussed above examine two types of *ādāb*: first is the good behaviour that a *Ṣūfī* should adopt to fulfil God's command with utmost sincerity, fear and awe of God. Second is to have good relations with other human beings, giving them good company, assisting them in need, and showing sympathy and kindness towards them.[231] Much of the *Ṣūfī* literature deals with mystical and spiritual values that are beyond the immediate comprehension of ordinary human beings. So, "whereas Sufis do share many virtues, practices, and ethical-moral character traits with the Muslim community as a whole, they spiritualize and allegorize them in ways that are unique to their path to God (*tarīq*)."[232] *Ṣūfī*s mainly worked on the harnessing of self, as when the self is under one's control according to the commands of God, then one becomes beneficial for humanity, for oneself and for other creation. The authors of *Ṣūfī* manuals do not describe how *Ṣūfī*s behave in real situations or conditions, including with regard

[230] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Milson, 6.
[231] knysh, *Sufism*, 138.
[232] Ibid., 144.

to public activities. Instead they mainly describe that how they *should* behave.[233] On the other hand, as we have discussed, after the tenth century, *Ṣūfī*s can be seen to be active in worldly affairs where they strived for the betterment of the people.

In short, though *Ṣūfī*s were primarily religious leaders and were more concerned with the spiritual domain of human life (as the texts show), they were not aloof from public activities that were beneficial for common people. This thesis seeks to explore that public role, which we examine in Chapter Four and Five in the context of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad.

Conclusion

Sufism emerged, primarily as an ascetic and spiritual movement in which individuals practiced intense worship of God. However, some early *Ṣūfī*s contributed to the common good when they preached and disseminated religious and ethical knowledge, engaged in charitable activities and criticized rulers for their misdeeds. Orientalists of earlier generations declined to accept the social role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public domain. Sufism for them was simply a mystical and otherworldly phenomenon. In reality, Sufism penetrated social life, including politics, after the tenth century. Therefore, shortly after its emergence, Sufism transformed from individual 'ascetic-mystical' piety into a social phenomenon. *Ṣūfī* literature of the later Abbasid caliphate mainly discusses the spiritual, ethical and normative aspects of Sufism, but the *Ṣūfī* manuals of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī are important with regard to the role of Sufism in the social domain. These *Ṣūfī*s incorporated lay members into *Ṣūfī* circles and thus contributed to the public sphere. The next chapter discusses the conception of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies.

[233] knysh, *Sufism*, 137.

Chapter 2: The Concept of the Public Sphere in Medieval Islamic Societies

In the preceding chapter, I presented a brief introduction to Sufism in history and its relevance to society and the public good. In this chapter, I elaborate on the concept of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies to argue that the *sharīʿa*, specific Islamic social ethics and legal norms, helped in the formation and development of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies. This sphere provided space to members of a variety of social strata to contribute to the common good. In addition, I argue that in the medieval public sphere, both material and spiritual goods were sought. I also briefly delineate on *maṣlaḥa* (common interest) and analyse its relevance to the public good, and very briefly introduce how *Ṣūfī*s conceived the notion of *maṣlaḥa*. In this chapter, I discuss the concept of the public sphere *qua* concept, a space and a phenomenon.

The concept of the public sphere in premodern Islamic societies

The public sphere functions simultaneously as a diagnostic centre for social problems among the masses and as a platform for devising solutions to these, thus acting as a bridge between public and private segments of society. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt defines the concept of the public sphere I am working with as an area of activity situated between official and private spheres which facilitates the pursuit of the common good. The term "public sphere", therefore, indicates the existence of spaces that are autonomous of the ruling authorities or the political order. These spaces are available to different sections of society.[234] Significantly, the public sphere develops when emphasis shifts from political authorities to society as far as maintenance of the social order is concerned. In societies where the public sphere plays an important role, social order is maintained as much by independent social organizations and networks as by the rulers or ruling authorities, or

[234] Eisenstadt, 'Civil Society and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective' (p. 144); Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities' (p. 10).

even largely by the former.[235] Moreover, these are symbiotic relationships between society and rulers that help in the development of the public sphere. In other words, in societies where there is separation and enmity between state and society, there is no public sphere. Regarding premodern Islamic societies, since there was no separation or estrangement between society and rulers, since there were informal relations and ongoing discourse between the ruling authorities and society, thus the public sphere flourished.[236] It has been recently argued – and appreciated that religious ideas help in the emergence and nurturing of the public sphere.[237] Some specific Islamic concepts and institutions such as the *sharīʿa* and the *umma* played a key role in the development of the Islamic public sphere in medieval Islamic societies.

***Umma, sharīʿa* and the public sphere**

Umma and *sharīʿa* as fundamental conceptions in Islamic political thought played an important role in the development of the public sphere in premodern Islamic societies. In Islamic societies, the role of the *umma*, the community of believers, is fundamental as far as the nature of the public sphere and relationships between society and rulers are concerned.[238] Public life and the collective wellbeing of the community of believers is awarded prime importance by the *Quʾrān* and *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad. The pursuit of common interests is the responsibility of the community of believers. According to Eisenstadt, the common interests of the Muslims were so essential that the rulers, and others belonging to elite and non-elite, particularly *ʿulamāʾ*, strived for their realisation.[239] Said Amir Arjomand summarizes Eisenstadt's ideas in these words, "[Eisenstadt]

[235] Hoexter and Levtzion, 'Introduction', 9.
[236] Ibid., 10, 15.
[237] Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman, 'Preface: Public Islam and the Common Good', in *Public Islam and the Common Good,* ed. by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), xv.
[238] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 120.
[239] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, 'Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies,* ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 147-48.

sketched a model of constant tension between an Islamic primordial utopia—the ideal of the Golden Age of pristine Islam—and the historical reality of patrimonial Sultanism, coexisting with an autonomous public sphere protected by Islamic law and dominated by the religious elite, the *ʿulamāʾ*."[240] Eisenstadt meant that after the middle of the tenth century, owing to the disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate and the rise of *sulṭān*s or military lords, the caliph became purely a nominal figure, enjoying some religious powers only. In this situation, the religious leadership continued to struggle for the 'ideal' Islamic society, which they felt they could see in the earliest period of Islam when the humble caliph was an embodiment of religious and political authority. The *ʿulamāʾ* as interpreters of the *sharīʿa* law played a key role in the constitution of the public sphere by pursuing the common interest of the *umma*, and by pursuing the ideal Islamic society.

Sharīʿa was an autonomous legal system, developed by the *ʿulamāʾ* and *fuqahāʾ* (sing. *faqīh*). *Sharīʿa* as a civic force developed autonomous religious and social groups and institutions.[241] The *sharīʿa* inspired institutions and groups such as *waqf* to provide equal space to rulers and the ruled, in order to pursue the interests of the *umma*. It was a regulator of social order, in which every member of the community could equally contribute to the common good.[242] Miriam Hoexter observes that:

> *Umma* and *shari`a* were thus the center of gravity around which all activity in the public sphere revolved. Their central position in the premodern Islamic world created a situation radically different from the one prevalent in Western civilization: it placed the *umma* as the most significant group in the public sphere, and above the ruler. The *shari`a* embodied the norms of public order, and its

[240] Arjomand, 'Axial civilizations, multiple modernities, and Islam' (p. 329).
[241] Hoexter and Levtzion, 'Introduction', 10.
[242] Ibid.

> preservation was the main moral obligation of both the community and the ruler.[243]

Hoexter emphasizes the open and inclusive concept of the Islamic public sphere in which whole social strata contributed in various ways. The religious leadership, as interpreter of *sharīʿa* law, had the main responsibility for constructing and shaping spaces for promulgation and regularization of the Islamic moral and ethical vision. However, the propagation of the Islamic vision in the community also provided a space for everyone in the community, as members of the *umma,* to pursue the common good.[244] The participation of community members in the definition of responsibilities and obligations of the community and of the 'public good' is a significant aspect of the medieval Islamic public sphere. According to Eickelman and Salvatore, "the public sphere is the site where contests take place over the definition of the 'common good', and also of the virtues, obligations and rights that members of society require for the common good to be realized."[245] The common good is encouraged by the Islamic vision based on the specific ethical and social ordinances of God. The conception of common good and the spaces to pursue it are discussed in Chapter Three. Here it is pertinent to discuss how Quranic spiritual and social ethics encourage and ordain the common good.

Islamic social ethics, the common good and the public sphere

Islamic social ethics concentrate on the universal wellbeing of people. The conception of Islamic social ethics is quite different from modern Western ideas of ethics based on "secular and individualistic perspectives", and which have been portrayed as "universal" ethical and human rights standard.[246] In this regard, the general ethical principles,

[243] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 121.
[244] Eisenstadt, 'Concluding Remarks', 147-50.
[245] Eickelman and Salvatore, 'The Public Sphere and Muslim identities' (p. 94).
[246] Maria Massi Dakake, 'Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society', in *The Study Quran,* ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Harper One, 2015), 1785.

established by the *Quʾrān*, on the character and functioning of Islamic society are often overlooked and misunderstood.[247] The *Quʾrān* stresses five essential social ethics: First, *umma*, the community of believers, having moral obligations to the community as a whole. Second, justice, particularly towards the disadvantaged in society, such as women, slaves, orphans. Third, social harmony. Fourth, essential human equality before God and His laws. Fifth, balancing of rights and responsibilities.[248] The *Quʾrān* guides the community of believers towards the common good through its specific social and ethical teachings. In these social and moral ethics, there is a strong focus on the collective good of *umma*. Thus, Quranic teachings entail the idea of the public sphere, otherwise how can these virtues be pursued? It is inevitable that there must be a space in which people can act on these principles.

While employing these Quranic teachings, religious imperatives played significant roles in the lives of the community of believers in medieval Islamic societies. The religious and intellectual elite, as well as common practitioners – through the initiation and cultivation of legal knowledge and a distinctive philosophy based on those teachings – put much emphasis on social relations and the construction and development of urban public spaces.[249] In the modern world, these are the political conditions through which the groups or individuals pursue their personal and community goals.[250] In medieval Islamic societies, social conditions and spaces (such as *madrasa* and *ribāṭ*) were provided mainly by religious groups, through which individuals and groups could pursue their personal and collective ends. These urban public spaces significantly contributed to the common good in respect of peoples' social, educational, intellectual and financial wellbeing.

---

[247] Dakake, 'Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society', 1785, 1789.
[248] Ibid., 1785-1801.
[249] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 17.
[250] Maximilian Jaede, 'The Concept of the Common Good', Working Paper, 1-18 (p. 2) <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Jaede.pdf>

Material and spiritual good and the public sphere

The modern Western notion of the public good concentrates mainly on the material welfare of people at large. The latter is closer to self-interest, in contrast to the ideas of pre-modern thinkers such as Aristotle, who associated the common good with "higher purposes and a virtuous life."[251] Similarly, in normative *Sunnī* Islamic thought, both the material and spiritual aspects of good are of great importance in the *maqāṣid* of *sharīʿa* (to secure religion, life, intellect, lineage and property) as argued by the great theologian Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī.[252] In these objectives, there is a balance between the good of the self and the good of the spirit.

A range of *Sunnī* Muslim philosophers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries wrote on both the good of the body and that of the soul. Significantly, for some of them, the spiritual good or the good of the soul was prioritized over material welfare. As Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), that real good is the good of the soul.[253] Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037) claims that the highest form of human happiness and perfection can be achieved in the "contemplation of God, or Truth, and in mystical union with Him."[254] Ibn Sīnā also gives great weight to the good or happiness of the soul. In medieval Islam, the common good was sought through following the divine law and through worshipping and loving God as it is in the Christian concept of the common good where "the good is none other than God, and to pursue the common good is to render unto God the love and worship that is His due."[255] Significantly, the 'good of the soul' constituted a significant part of the conception of the

[251] Jaede, 'The Concept of the Common Good' (p. 1).
[252] Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 351-52.
[253] Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb ibn Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character (Tahdhīb al-akhlāq)*, trans. by Constantine K. Zurayk (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2002), 38-44.
[254] Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 143.
[255] Amitai Etziono, 'Common Good', in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. by Michael T. Gibbons, 1st edn (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2015), 1-7 (p. 1) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0178>

common good in medieval Islamic societies and the forms of activism that were inspired by this notion of inward spiritual wellbeing nurtured by worship.

Medieval Muslim thinkers were of the opinion that the good and the happiness of the whole society had greater importance and merit than the good of the individual, though both were important. This collective social welfare was to be achieved by following divine law.[256] It is the moral and ethical education that comes through divine law that helps in achieving ultimate welfare. That is why ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn (d. 809/1406) emphasises and reiterates the *maqāṣid* of *sharīʿa*, the five essential values; religion, the soul, the intellect, progeny and property; all are intrinsic to human spiritual and material good or wellbeing.[257] The emphasis of medieval Muslim theologians, philosophers and historians on spiritual good shows that there is a noticeable difference between the medieval and the modern materially-focused concept of the public good. The pre-modern Islamic concept of *maṣlaḥa* includes acknowledgement of religious life because the first objective of *sharīʿa* is faith itself, followed by protection of life, property, material security, dignity, honour and family, a combination of worldly and spiritual matters.

Merging the boundaries of public and private spheres

The issue of public and private spheres in Islam is a complex phenomenon. There was not a single exact line between the public and private spheres as these spheres shifted according to relations among the actors and groups engaged in any specific situation.[258] In Islam, particular historical, religious, economic and political contexts shaped the boundaries of public and private spheres.[259] It is inappropriate to try to mark a clear line

[256] Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, 13-14.
[257] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. by Franz Rosenthal, vol. 2 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 106-07.
[258] Roy Mottahedeh and Kristen Stilt, 'Public and Private as Viewed through the Work of the Muhtasib', *Social Research*, 70 (2003), 735-48 (p. 736).
[259] Mohsen Kadivar, 'An Introduction to the Public and Private Debate in Islam', *Social Research*, 70 (2003), 659-80.

of separation between society and the state in medieval Islamic societies, since medieval governmental institutions were different from modern institutions, or to rigidly divide concepts such as the "'political', the 'public' and the 'private.'"[260] In traditional premodern Islamic societies, there was a combination of legal, social, religious and political order in which context the public good was sought. Moreover, as far as traditional views of publicness are concerned, they "were not bent toward a sheer formal distinction between the private and the public sphere, but were part of a more organic view of the socio-legal-political order, including a combination and hierarchy of goods."[261] Though state authority sometimes tried to encroach on private space, to a large extent private space was respected, depending on the particular space, time and ruler.[262] Sometimes, in the case of more powerful ruling authorities and their penetration into private lives, Muslims of the medieval period laboured hard to defend their private spheres against the political uses of violence by the Muslim state.[263] Highly multivalent and complicated public spheres emerged, with shifting boundaries depending on specifics of context. People in both public and private capacities worked for the common good in the public sphere (as I discuss in depth in Chapters Three, Four and Five). Non-state actors used their agency to construct spaces not only to defend their own and others' private spheres but also in order to pursue the common good.

Thus it is not possible or appropriate to demarcate a clear line between public and private spheres so far as pursuit of the public good is concerned in pre-modern Islamic societies. This ambiguity between the two spheres can involve considerable tension,

---

[260] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 177.
[261] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 252.
[262] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 381.
[263] Christian Lange and Maribel Fierro, 'Introduction: Spatial, ritual and representational aspects of public violence in Islamic societies (7th-19th centuries CE)', in *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th-19th Centuries CE*, ed. by Christian Lange and Maribel Fierro (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1-5.

because in pursuing the public good, an individual, particularly if he or she is from the ruling elite, may well imperil his or her wellbeing and interests. It is imperative not to gloss over these tensions because, in a real sense, the iteration of the public sphere depends on such dedicated and sincere people who put the public good above their personal interests.

Rulers, society, the public good and the public sphere

In the early days of Islam, the public good was mainly provided by those invested with moral and political authority, namely the caliphs and their governors.[264] Yet as Islam spread, societies became inevitably much more complex—culturally, spatially and linguistically—so that the government was not able to fulfil all its obligations in pursuit of the public good. Consequently, third parties emerged for this purpose. This was where *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* came in, and the space between rulers and the ruled became gained significance.

Though I discuss the problem of medieval "despotic" rulers in detail in Chapter Six, it is important to take on board Eisenstadt's view that the rulers of premodern Islamic societies had relatively limited scope for autonomous decision making. Though rulers sometimes behaved in despotic ways in respect of their relations with their officials, in internal affairs they had severely circumscribed powers beyond taxation and the maintenance of public order.[265] Ibn Khaldūn points out that while caliphs and *sulṭān*s did not allow their royal authority to be shared with judges and jurists, many rulers preferred to have them in their councils and to respect their advice.[266] Thus the religious and intellectual elite sometimes influenced rulers' decision making, particularly with regard to those decisions that were relevant to the common good. In the absence of formal

[264] Timur Kuran, 'The Provision of Public Goods under Islamic Law: Origins, Impact, and Limitations of the Waqf System', *Law & Society Review*, 35 (2001), 841-98 (p. 845).
[265] Eisenstadt, 'Concluding Remarks', 152-53.
[266] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 459.

modern Western-style democratic institutions or norms, such as electoral democracy, parliaments and assemblies, informal relations and an ongoing discourse between society and the ruling authorities governed the public spheres in Islamic societies.[267]

In medieval Islamic societies, certain contextual and religious norms supported the creation of public spheres. Marshall Hodgson shows how during the Middle Period, owing to the disintegration of the Abbasid Empire and the weakness of political authority, there emerged an international society in which *ʿulamāʾ* and *amīr*s (commander; governor or prince) played an autonomous role in the social order. The *ʿulamāʾ* and *amīr*s "together formed the core of authority in the new society, with its minimal dependence on formal political structures."[268] They formed the religious and social associations and networks that contributed to the public good. The religious groups in the forms of schools of law, *Shīʿī* communities and *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods, while representing the legacy of Prophet Muhammad, worked for community solidarity, education, law, personal morality, and the preservation of Islamic religious and spiritual traditions.[269] The independent activities of these religious institutions were carried out in the public sphere as they were beneficial for common people. In the background and foreground of the later Abbasid period, religious and social groups demonstrated their agency in the void caused by the weakening of centralised caliphal political power.

There are a few works in modern scholarship that identify public sphere activity in medieval Islamic societies. The discussion of these works that now follows analyses in more detail the idea of the public sphere in medieval Islam, as a preamble to the excavation of primary soures that follows in subsequent chapters.

---

[267] Hoexter and Levtzion, 'Introduction', 15.
[268] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 17, 46.
[269] Ira M. Lapidus, 'The Golden Age: The Political Concepts of Islam', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 524 (1992), 13-25 (p. 15).

Konrad Hirschler, in his book, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices,* discusses the "public spaces" such as mosques, children's schools, endowed libraries and the tomb libraries, which played an essential role in the popularization of reading and written practices and consequently in the production and dissemination of texts in Syria and Egypt across the Middle Period. Both elite and non-elite participants, particularly traders and craftsmen, engaged in these public spheres. Traders and artisans participated not only in knowledge dissemination practices but also used their wealth to endow spaces such as the *madrasa*.[270] These spaces played a significant role in fostering the religious and educational good of the people at large in urban settings.

The public good was a significant aspect of the development of premodern Islamic societies. Adam Sabra discusses in his book, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517,* the provision of public services such as food and water, shelter, medical care, education and donations for the burial of the dead, to the poor people of medieval Cairo. He mainly focuses on the charitable acts of the ruling elite, *amīr*s, wealthy merchants and pious *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* who played a substantial role in the social life of the city. The ruling and wealthy elite established hospitals for free treatment and schools for free education. They managed the provision of food to the poor at *khānqāh*, mosques and tombs, and provided food to freed slaves on various occasions.[271] Though there could be various reasons for this – such as winning public support, demonstrating piety, and saving one's property from tax – behind these charitable acts, they were still enormously beneficial for the public and particularly for the poor and the underprivileged. Elite philanthropists also spent a considerable amount

[270] Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Words in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
[271] Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), (50-58, 69-100).

on infrastructure, which was of course also highly beneficial to the public. In a way, their motives became irrelevant when they helped people in large numbers and in structurally sustainable ways, as the *waqf*s were endownments to be maintained in perpetuity.

Megan H. Reid, in *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam,* discusses various forms of piety—juridical piety, *Ṣūfī* piety, learned piety, antinomian piety—and their role in the social sphere, which we can call the public sphere. Reid shows how *khānqāh*s/*ribāṭ*s in the medieval Islamic world provided an important space for the provision of food for the poor and travellers. She also discusses the pious, wealthy elite who distributed food to the poor at times of need.[272] These activities were public sphere activities as it was through such charitable acts that many of the needs of common people were met. The government, meanwhile, too often negleced these needs.

In her book *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufism and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine,* Daphna Ephrat discusses the *Ṣūfī*s' activities in the public sphere. *Ṣūfī*s played roles in the social and cultural life of the cities in medieval Palestine through *Ṣūfī* lodges and tombs endowed by the wealthy ruling elite. *Ṣūfī*s transformed *ribāṭ*/*zāwiya*s and tombs of *shaykh*s into public spaces open to all segments of Muslim society for receiving *Ṣūfī* guidance and blessings.[273] Ephrat clearly defines *Ṣūfī*s position in the public sphere between the official and the private sphere, because their activities were not under the control of the ruling authorities.

The activity mentioned in the above secondary literature fits into the concept of the public sphere as argued by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. According to Eisenstadt's definition of the public sphere, it is independent of the political order, and is accessible by various

[272] Megan H. Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-144.
[273] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*.

sectors of society.[274] The spheres of activity discussed above were outside the control of the official sphere and were accessible to every section of society: the rulers, religious groups and commoners. Public sphere consciousness prevailed in medieval Islamic societies, even though the modern terminology did not exist. The understanding of the public good was pursued and demonstrated in many walks of life. The public sphere was a concrete, locatable space in medieval Islamic societies.

In summary, in medieval Islamic societies the public sphere facilitated a particular type of conversation and a particular form of interaction; sometimes it required a physical space as well. It was a sphere where people from both public and private arenas worked for the public good. They preferred the cause of the people over that of their private concerns or that of the ruling authorities. The public sphere was a complicated phenomenon involving various tensions with conflicting facets, particularly in later Abbasid society. Theologians, jurists and *Ṣūfī*s expounded on the public good as a critical characteristic of Islamic religious norms.

Maṣlaḥa and the public sphere

Having defined the conception of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies, in this section, I turn to *maṣlaḥa* and its relevance to the public sphere. Against modern Western notions of the 'common good', other conceptions developed in other civilizations. In Islam, it is most often called *maṣlaḥa* or *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma* (common good). In medieval Islamic societies, scholars and theologians discussed the *maṣlaḥa* as a legal term and with regard to its relevance to the wellbeing of society as a whole.

[274] Eisenstadt, 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies' (p. 2, 5-7).

Origin and development of *maṣlaḥa*

Maṣlaḥa (pl. *maṣāliḥ*) lexically means "welfare" is used by jurists as "general good" or "public interest."[275] *Maṣlaḥa* was raised in the early centuries of Islamic history to refer to the policies that were in the interest of the whole society.[276] It was initiated and used mainly by the *ʿulamāʾ* of the Mālikī school of thought. Imām Mālik used the concept of the *istiṣlāḥ*, meaning "to seek the good." In his research on the notion of the *istiṣlāḥ*, he used the examples of the early companions of Prophet Muhammad, who took various legal decisions in light of the common good. Thus, Imām Mālik argued that "to seek the good" (*istiṣlāḥ*) is one of the basics of *sharīʿa*.[277] In this way, *sharīʿa* encouraged and supported those *maṣāliḥ* that were in the best interests of the community of believers.

Maṣlaḥa developed as a legal term in the eleventh century, when Muslim thinkers gave it much consideration as a universal general principle for the good of society at large.[278] Thus, it would be right to see it as a legal criterion to engineer the common good.[279] The exact meaning and status of this Islamic legal tradition was defined and clarified by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. While elaborating the term "*maṣlaḥa*" from the perspectives of theology and jurisprudence, he divides it into three categories. The first is that which has textual evidence in favour of its consideration. In this form of *maṣāliḥ*, *sharīʿa* guides, therefore they are "clearly authoritative". The second type of *maṣāliḥ* are those which *sharīʿa* indicates are not allowed and are thus prohibited. The third type

[275] M. Khadduri, 'Maslaḥa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5019> [accessed 28 November 2017]
[276] F. Opwis, *Maslaha and the Purpose of the Law: Islamic Discourse on Legal Change from the 4th/10th to the 8th/14th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2.
[277] Tariq Ramadan, 'Al-Maslaha (The Common Good)' <https://tariqramadan.com/english/al-maslaha-the-common-good/>
[278] Khadduri, 'Maṣlaḥa'; Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy: A Study of Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi's Life and Thought* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1977), 150.
[279] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'The ʿUlama of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good', in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. by Salvatore and Eickelman, 131-32.

consists of matters about which foundational texts are silent, neither supporting nor clearly rejecting.[280] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī accepts only the third type as *maṣlaḥa mursala* (undetermined), unsupported by textual evidence (from the *Quʾrān* and *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad). It is in the third category that the *ʿulamāʾ*, as experts in Islamic legal tradition, use their reasoning to formulate a legal decision keeping in mind the historical and geographical context.

For Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *maṣlaḥa* is not just to get that which is useful and to prevent what is harmful, instead, it preserves the objectives of *sharīʿa*—religion, life, progeny, property and rationality.[281] Moreover, for him *maṣlaḥa* is that which ensures the preservation of those objectives; whatever goes against these objectives is *mafsada* (injury).[282] Thus, the objectives of God's will, or the *maqāṣid* of *sharīʿa*, are in the best interests of the people.[283] The principle of "what counts as *maṣlaḥa* is therefore provided by the *sharīʿa* itself rather than by the people, for all that it is the latter who are the beneficiaries of the *sharīʿa*'s concerns."[284] According to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, the objective of *maṣlaḥa* is the betterment of the Muslim community at large, not of any individual or a sub-section of the community.[285] A majority of the theorists and jurists of medieval Islam approved *maṣlaḥa*-oriented reasoning with the condition that "the feature of public interest adopted in a case was *munāsib* (suitable) and *muʿtabar* (trustworthy/relevant) either to a universal principle of the law or to a specific and particular piece of textual evidence."[286] *Maṣlaḥa* approves of and pursues the common

[280] Zaman, 'The ʿUlama of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good', 134.
[281] Ibid.; Ramadan, 'Al-Maslaha'.
[282] Ramadan, 'Al-Maslaha'.
[283] Slavatore, *The Public Sphere*, 160.
[284] Zaman, 'The ʿUlama of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good', 134.
[285] Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul Al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112.
[286] Ibid.

interests as these are already taken as human needs to be fulfilled by the objectives of the *sẖarīʿa*.

According to Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Sẖāṭibī (d. 790/1388), a medieval Andalusian jurist, *maṣlaḥa* is central for the promulgation of the *sẖarīʿa* in society and accordingly important for human life. In al-Sẖāṭibī's words, *maṣāliḥ* "are those matters that have a bearing on the existence of human life, its complete maintenance, and what is required by the characteristics of desire and intellect in the absolute sense so that the human can be blessed with them in the absolute sense."[287] Like Abū Ḥāmid al-Gẖazālī, for al-Sẖāṭibī also, if the dominant aspect of any matter is the betterment of human society, it is called *maṣlaḥa*; otherwise, it is called *mafsada* (injury).[288] Al-Sẖāṭibī divides *maṣāliḥ* into three categories; *ḍarūrī* (necessary), *ḥājī* (needed) and *taḥsīnī* (commendable). The *darūrī* group contains five elements: religion, self, family, property and intellect. This "necessary" group includes all those *maṣāliḥ* which cover essential human needs including both religious matters and worldly affairs.[289] Therefore al-Sẖāṭibī's "comprehensive yet flexible" conception of *maṣlaḥa* encompasses all forms of human development: material, emotional, intellectual, the link between human and God, the human self, procreation, property and reason.[290] Both al-Gẖazālī and al-Sẖāṭibī approve *maṣlaḥa* that is in the best interests of the greatest number of people, and not clashing with the *maqāṣid* of the *sẖarīʿa*.

In short, the *maṣlaḥa* as an intellectual space was independent of state authority. It gave space to religious scholars to formulate laws that were best for the community. *Maṣlaḥa* as a legal term provided theoretical evidence to support "theoretically informed

---

[287] Abū Isḥaq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Sẖāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fi usūl al- sharīʿa (The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islam)*, vol. II, trans. by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2014), 21.
[288] Ibid., 21-23.
[289] Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 226.
[290] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 161; Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 225.

but practice-oriented views" of the common good. These views were "suitable to become platforms for concrete articulations of the pursuit of public weal."[291] Medieval jurists elaborate the idea of the common good as that which protects five intrinsic human values: religion, life, property, family and rationality (or, in some iterations, honour or dignity), which are the essential objectives of *sharīʿa*.

Maṣlaḥa from a *Ṣūfī* point of view

Though there was not any specific *Ṣūfī* theory as far as *maṣlaḥa* was concerned, some *Ṣūfī* minded pious *ʿulamāʾ* or jurists tried to define the *maṣlaḥa* from the perspective of Sufism. Among early *Shāfiʿī* jurists, ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 662/1263) inclined towards Sufism. He first lived in Damascus and then migrated to Cairo. He treated the conception of *maṣlaḥa* from a *Ṣūfī* point of view. He considers *maṣlaḥa* a *ladhha* (pleasure) and *faraḥ* (happiness) and the means leading to them.[292] According to him, there are levels of *maṣāliḥ*; the lowest level of *maṣāliḥ* is common to all people, the higher standard is for the *adhkiyāʾ* (the wise people), and the highest degree of *maṣāliḥ* is for the *awliyāʾ* (friends of God, *Ṣūfī*s) alone. He gives preference to the *maṣāliḥ* of *Ṣūfī*s as "the *awliyāʾ* are anxious to know His commands and laws (in the hereafter), hence their investigation and reasoning (*Ijtihād*) is the most complete one."[293] He classifies *maṣlaḥa* (as rights) into two main types; the rights of God and the rights of men. The rights of God can be further graded into three groups: firstly, there are rights purely of God that relate to the *Ṣūfī*s' relationship with God, such as *maʿrifa* (gnosticism) and *aḥwāl* (mystic states). Secondly, there is a type which combines the rights of God and those of men, for example, *zakāt* ordained by God and performed by men for the betterment of fellowmen. Thirdly, there is a type of rights that are a combination of the rights of God, of His Prophet

[291] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 156.
[292] Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 161.
[293] Ibid.

Muhammad and the people in general. He also divides rights of men into three sub-headings; rights of *nafs* (self), rights of people towards one another, and the rights of animals in relation to humans.[294] Significantly, the inclusion of the rights of animals in his definition shows that the medieval conception of *maṣlaḥa* not only deliberates about humans but also about God's other creatures as well. ʿAbd al-Salām's conception of *maṣlaḥa* gives preference to the rights of God, as *Ṣūfī*s see themselves not only as slaves of God but also as the "lovers" of God. He also focusses on the rights of human beings towards one another as he mentions *zakāt*, which is a significant part of the public good. So *Ṣūfī* ideas of the *maṣlaḥa* give much importance to the good of both spiritual good and material good. While mentioning *zakāt* as an obligation on human beings from God, ʿAbd al-Salām also gives much attention to the public good involved in following *sharīʿa* teachings and regulations.

Furthermore, in the matters relating to *maṣlaḥa*, when there is a choice between a tough and an easy thing to do, a religious scholar or an ordinary *maṣlaḥa*-oriented person chooses the easy way, striving to avoid harm through legal means. On the other hand, a *Ṣūfī* chooses the hard way, even though it is allowed by *sharīʿa* to adopt an easier way.[295] For *Ṣūfī*s, "this attitude, even in its lawful aspects, was quite opposite to the meaning of obligation towards God."[296] *Ṣūfī*s oppose this attitude as *ḥuẓūẓ*[297] (desired but not necessary things) of *nafs* (lower soul); one of the enemies of the wayfarers on the path of Sufism.[298] Concerning *ḥuẓūẓ* and its relationship with *maṣlaḥa*, *Ṣūfī*s disclaim *ḥuẓūẓ* and give more importance to *zuhd* (renunciation; heightened or concentrated piety), *waraʿ*

[294] Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 161-62.
[295] Ibid., 169.
[296] Ibid.
[297] *Ḥuẓūẓ* means things that ate desired but not necessary; in Sufism, *haqūq al-nafs* are such things as are necessary for the support and continuance of life as opposed to *ḥuẓūẓ*. See D. B. MacDonald and E. E. Calverley, 'ḥaḳḳ', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei2glos_SIM_gi_01436> [accessed 01 December 2017]
[298] Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 169.

(piety) and *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity).[299] Therefore, the *Ṣūfī* way is different from the way of an ordinary believer who would likely adopt an easy path, as the *Ṣūfī* rejects *ḥuẓūẓ* and through this experiences joy.

Al-Shāṭibī, objecting to the *Ṣūfī*' rejection of *huzūz*, argues that human passions and selfish desires do not help us in achieving *maṣāliḥ*, whether religious or worldly. So when *Ṣūfī*s deny *ḥuẓūẓ al-nafs*, they "aim at something praiseworthy; but by suspending the observance of the legal obligations or by aiming at things which may bring happiness to them, they are merely obeying the demands of passions."[300] For al-Shāṭibī, *maṣlaḥa* should not be based on the personal fulfilment of passionate desires and individual interests.[301] Thus, the *Ṣūfī* view of obligation to God gives little importance to human interest as the basis of consideration for *maṣlaḥa* regarding social utility. This *Ṣūfī* view was not generally acceptable to jurists. For *Ṣūfī*s, *maṣāliḥ* relating to the hereafter, or purely to God, are more important than worldly *maṣāliḥ*.

Armando Salvatore argues that Al-Shāṭibī considered *Ṣūfī*s to be people who disregarded their self-interest, and saw them as consciously at odds with ordinary people's common sense understanding of right and wrong.[302] While discussing the need for *maṣlaḥa* for the common people as compared to the *Ṣūfī*s, he declared that *Ṣūfī*s were different from the common people as they followed *sharīʿa* obligations extraordinarily, whereas the ordinary people acted on the basis of self-interest and therefore needed the guidance of *maṣlaḥa*. For him the approach of *Ṣūfī*s was "indirectly beneficial to how *maṣlaḥa* orients legal actors toward the balanced middle between the opposite extremes of too much hardship and too much laxity in performing obligations…"[303] Relying on esoteric knowledge, they seemed to be in favour of the use of the principle of *maṣlaḥa* to

[299] Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, 162.
[300] Ibid., 267.
[301] Ibid., 233.
[302] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 166.
[303] Ibid.

facilitate popular needs. That was why Abu ʻl-Najīb al-Suhrawardī included *rukhṣa* (dispensation) for lay members in his manual, so that more ordinary people, while not being obliged to follow all the customs and practices which were common among regular *Ṣūfī*s, could join *Ṣūfī* circles and obtain ethical, spiritual and social benefits.[304] Moreover, as *Ṣūfī*s were involved in the social life of medieval Muslim societies, they were aware of the worldly necessities of people at large, so for them the principle of *maṣlaḥa* could be helpful not only in their moral upliftment but also in fulfilling their worldly needs in a just way.

To conclude, *maṣlaḥa* is a highly significant aspect of the public good, which indicates an important stage in the development of the idea of there being a concept of public good that was an objective of *sharīʿa*. *Maṣlaḥa* as a legal term was interpreted and utilized by medieval Muslim jurists and scholars to facilitate the community of believers so far as their wellbeing was concerned. They tried to interpret *maṣlaḥa* through the lens of the objectives of *sharīʿa*. In this way, they contributed to the inception of a public sphere meant for the interpretation of *maṣlaḥa* and supported by *sharīʿa* objectives. The *ʿulamāʾ* thus led to the initiation of a public space through which the *umma* could define the public good and work for the common good.

Conclusion

In medieval Islamic societies, a public sphere consciousness was prevalent. This public sphere was an open one, to which all social strata contributed. It was both constituted and encouraged by the *sharīʿa* and the concept of the *umma*. The *sharīʿa* encouraged the development of institutions such as *waqf* that helped in the pursuit of the common interests of the *umma*. The common good in medieval Islamic societies was defined as the good of both the material self and the spiritual self. At the same time, it was a complex

[304] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Abd al-Basit, 134-60.

sphere, as people belonging to both official and private spheres were involved in it. The officials and members of the ruling elite participated in the public sphere through charitable acts which were good for the public at large. *Maṣlaḥa*, as debated and argued over by medieval Muslim thinkers, explained the phenomenon of the public good and the need for spaces for pursuing it. *Ṣūfī*s preferred the hard way, involving rejection of desired things for themselves as they sought the nearness of God through self-denial, but lay members could follow the easy way while encouraging *maṣlaḥa*-oriented common good. As the primary concern of the Islamic public sphere was to pursue the public good, my next chapter elaborates on the concept of the common good and the spaces to pursue that good in medieval Islamic societies.

Chapter 3: Spaces for the Public Good in Medieval Islamic Societies

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the concept of the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies. This chapter, taking the idea of the public sphere as its focus, moots the concept of the public good in medieval Islamic societies with specific reference to the later Abbasid caliphate. I examine how medieval Muslim thinkers and activists defined the public good and how they conceptualized activity which contributed to the public sphere. By locating and elaborating avenues of the public good such as *waqf*, community organizations, craftsmen's and traders' guilds, *futuwwa* groups, and commanding good and forbidding evil, this provides a framework for the two subsequent chapters that provide an analysis of the roles of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere. The present chapter also includes a very brief introduction to the roles of women in public good activities. Finally, I touch upon the spaces through which other religious communities sought their wellbeing.

Spaces for the common good

This section describes the spaces in which the elite as well as the non-elite engaged in public good activities in medieval Islamic societies. The foundation stone of the public sphere is public good, which is defined as the welfare of the masses. The public good or the common good is commonly defined as the good provided to every member of any given community and its institutions.[305] The term "common good" has diverse definitions representing different cultures, contexts and a complexity of social norms. The ideas of the common good were devised when social, religious and ethical traditions and values were disputed and redefined through communication, practice and diffusion over generations.[306] Thus, the very concept of 'the common good' is a product of continuing

[305] Etziono, Etziono, 'Common Good', 1.
[306] Salvatore and Eickelman, 'Preface: Public Islam and the Common Good', xiv.

public contestation. The common good which is beneficial for the majority may be harmful to a minority's understanding of it. So there are various forms of the common good, rather than a single dominant form.[307] The community participates in the definition, and sets the boundaries, of the public good.

In Islamic history, the idea of collective good has been given much importance. The *Qurʾān* stresses the need to pursue it not only to serve God: it particularly emphasizes helping the underprivileged, the poor, slaves, orphans and captives.[308] In medieval Islamic societies, there were different forms in which the idea of the public good was ventilated and peoples' wellbeing was sought through this ventilation. There existed "self-steered" local, regional and long-distance networks which looked out for the good of the people through various means and spaces.[309] These spheres were in the form of *waqf, madrasa, khānqāh,* mosque, community organizations, *futuwwa* groups, craftsmen's and traders' associations and the duty of commanding good and forbidding evil. It was not only the *al-khāṣṣa* (the elite; the notables) who were active in this connection, but *al-ʿāmma* (the commoners; the masses) also created these spheres and worked for the public good.

It is difficult to clearly differentiate between the spheres where *al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma* were respectively active. *Al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma* could be used as loose terms, as they were during the Buyid period: soldiers and secretaries were also included in *al-khāṣṣa* for having common group interests.[310] Pseudo-Māwardī, the author of the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk,* includes scholars and ascetics (*nussāk*) in the category of *al-ʿāmma*.[311] In the

[307] Zaman, 'The ʿUlama of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good', 130.
[308] *The Study Quran,* ed. by Nasr, (17: 26, p. 702); (90:13-14-15, p. 1516-17); (76:8, p. 1453).
[309] Armando Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 75.
[310] Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*. 115.
[311] L. Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran, The Nasīhat al-Mulūk of Pseudo-Māwardī Contexts and Themes,* vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017) 141.

early Middle Period, the terms *khawāṣṣ* and *ʿawāmm* were used to divide people "somewhat vaguely according to *tabaqah* or 'level' in society."[312] It is thus difficult to clearly distinguish between *al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma*, as in the later Abbasid period some people were included in *al-khāṣṣa* because they enjoyed social status. According to Hilāl al-Ṣābī (as cited by Roy Mottahedeh), when, in 391/1000, Turkish troops attacked a house of the highest civilian official in Baghdad appointed by the Buyids, the *ʿAlid*s (descendants of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib), "the *ʿāmmah* defended his palace by throwing bricks at the Turks from the rooftops."[313] Since there were poor and rich *ʿAlid*s in Baghdad, and since they were not in the majority, people distinguished *ʿAlid*s from *al-ʿāmma* as Hilāl tells us in this story.[314] Hence various criteria, such as status, wealth, social dignity and lineage, were involved in defining *al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma*. In the early Middle Period, *al-khāṣṣa* were "the special ones" or "the elite", including scholarly, administrative and military elites, whereas *al-ʿāmma* were "the commoners" or "laypersons", the ordinary people, including the unlettered, and the educated middle class, merchants and craftsmen.[315] Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) classifies his contemporary society of Cairo into seven social strata: the Mamluk political elite, merchants, lower-class merchants and tradesmen, peasants, professional scholars, artisans and those who worked for a living, and the urban poor, water carriers.[316] The complicated division between *al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma* in medieval Middle Eastern societies is reflected in the fact that the authors of biographical dictionaries and chronicles mention less specific terms for the lower classes. They mainly used the term *al-ʿāmma* to distinguish them from *al-khāṣṣa*.[317] So people belonging to various social strata fell into the *ʿāmma* category. Hence, these categories

[312] Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, 115.
[313] Ibid., 122.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Caterina Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Salvatore, 294, 296.
[316] Fozia Bora, 'Did ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Destroy the Fatimids' Books? An Historiographical Enquiry', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2014), 21-39 (p. 28) see note 36.
[317] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, 12.

were fluid and there was some room for interpenetration and some overlap. Therefore, the fact that various social classes existed within the community is undeniable.[318] Members of these social groups and classes worked for the public good in different spaces. For clarification, these spheres can be categorized as public spheres devised from above, public spheres devised from below, and public spheres created and sustained from above *and* below.

Public spheres from above

In medieval Islamic societies, individuals and groups belonging to the elite, particularly the ruling elite, contributed much to the public good. They constituted public spheres where many of the needs of the lower sections of society were met. These needs were mainly in the form of education, food and shelter. Examples include Muẓaffar al-Dīn, ruler of Arbela, who was well known for his charity. Every day he distributed a large sum of money in different parts of the city to the needy. He built four asylums for the blind and persons suffering from chronic distemper.[319] Abu 'l-Ḥāri<u>th</u> b. Masʿūd b. Mawdūd b. Zangī Nūr al-Dīn Arslān <u>Sh</u>āh, called al-Malik al-ʿĀdil (ruler in Mawṣil of the Zangid line of Atabegs) (r. 589-607/1193-1211) founded an extraordinarily beautiful college for the *<u>Sh</u>āfiʿīs* in Mosul.[320] These examples show the involvement of the ruling elite in works which were beneficial for the public at large, or sections thereof. The elite mainly contributed to the public good through *waqf* and non-*waqf* charity.

***Waqf* and the public good**

The *waqf* was an independent charitable trust or pious foundation established under Islamic law by a living man or woman for the provision of various types of social

[318] M.A.J. Beg, 'al-<u>Kh</u>āṣṣa wa 'l-ʿĀmma', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4228> [accessed 21 September 2019]
[319] Ibn <u>Kh</u>allikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 535-42.
[320] Ibn <u>Kh</u>allikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 174.

service.[321] These services were in the form of: education and food for the poor; prisoners' freedom; funds for libraries; health services; care of animals and the environment; and the construction of roads, bridges and dams.[322] *Waqf*s were established for slaves and servants to fulfil their particular needs. For example, Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (d. 597/1200), the eminent court secretary in Cairo, a pious and charitable man, established many charitable trusts to provide alms to ransom captives.[323] Marshall Hodgson relates the story of a slave boy in medieval Damascus who stumbled and broke the precious vase of his master. The slave boy was provided money from a *waqf* to buy a new one. He bought the new one and went home safely.[324] This example shows that through the institution of the *waqf*, the elite contributed to various types of material, religious and educational public services.

Among the various institutions established through the *waqf*, the most important was the *madrasa*, the premier medieval institution of learning, which was at heart a college of law. The *madrasa* contributed remarkably to the public good in terms of the provision of education. It provided boarding to poor students, amongst others, alongside wayfarers and pious men who had temporarily or permanently given up material interests.[325] While the *madrasa* was utilized by rulers to exploit the religious class, it helped people in various ways—in providing in-transit shelter to merchants, pilgrims and other travellers. It provided spaces for employment and business opportunities. It also

---

[321] Kuran, 'The Provision of Public Goods under Islamic Law', 842; R. Peters and others, 'Waḳf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1333> [accessed 02 November 2017]

[322] Peters and others, 'Waqf'; Monzer Kahf, 'Waqf.', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0844> [accessed 12 April 2011]

[323] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231, the Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*, trans. by D. S. Richards (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 53.

[324] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol.2, 124.

[325] J. Pedersen and others, 'Madrasa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0610> [accessed 02 November 2019]

became the site of legal courts.[326] From the twelfth century onward, a majority of the *madrasa*s were endowed by wealthy individuals, rulers, *amīr*s and *wazīr*s. These *madrasa*s were often accessible to orphans and children from poor families: in them, children "received in most cases, in addition to free instruction, food, clothes (generally an outfit for summer and one for winter) and sometimes a small stipend."[327] Significantly, the *madrasa* system provided a social space where people could attain to social mobility.[328] Through the *madrasa* system, "at least some of the commoners were able to climb the social ladder and become sufficiently wealthy and educated themselves."[329] There are example of slaves who, through participation in scholarly practices, achieved upwards social mobility and likely eventual manumission. For example Sunqur b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī (n.d.) was a slave who, after obtaining education and scholarly knowledge in Damascus, became a scholar, and, following his manumission travelled to Baghdad and Egypt.[330] In a sense, it can be argued that somebody like al-Turkī, who came from a humble background, went to *madrasa* and became a scholar, was probably more incentivized to think about the uneducated and poor people when compared to someone who belonged to the elite. In short, *madrasa* was a significant instrument available to the public for their betterment in respect of attaining education, religious knowledge and wealth.

It is notable that upward social mobility was a salient characteristic of medieval Islamic society and of the public good. Significantly, individuals belonging to lower social strata were in a better position to understand the public good and serve it well after attaining education. Arguably the drive to create a public sphere for the public good was

---

[326] Gary Leiser, 'Notes on the Madrasa in Medieval Islamic Society', *The Muslim World*, 76 (1986), 16-23 (p. 23).
[327] Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 99-100.
[328] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 92; Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', 296; Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam*, 18, 114, 137.
[329] Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', 296.
[330] Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 43.

top downwards, because of *sharīʿa* requirements of *maṣlaḥa*, and *zakāt* (obligatory alms) and *ṣadaqa* (voluntary charity) to be given to the poor. These religious prescriptions necessitated something like a public sphere. At the same time, there was a push for the public sphere activity that came from below; the impetus came from both directions.

In the *waqf*-financed public sphere, rulers were involved in various charitable activities besides *madrasa*. For example, the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 386-412/996-1021) created an endowment comprised of urban and rural properties in 405/1014 to support the *Qurʾān* reciters and *muezzin*s (prayer-callers) at the congregational mosque of Fustat and Cairo, the running of a hospital, the filling of cisterns and the provision of shrouds for the dead.[331] In Mamluk Cairo, *waqf*s provided various public services such as medical care, education, food and water, clothing, housing and burial of the dead.[332] Therefore, in their public capacity, members of the ruling elite were involved in charitable works that were deeply beneficial for people from various strata of society, for example, the educational-charitable complexes established through the *waqf* after the middle of the thirteenth century which typically included a mosque, a *madrasa* with a library, a teaching hospital, a *Ṣūfī khānqāh* and a hostel for travellers. The inclusion of the *Ṣūfī khānqāh* as part of this charitable complex contributed significantly to the education and edification of the people, as a means to enhance their spiritual welfare.[333] All in all, a plethora of evidence makes it abundantly clear that medieval rulers were not aloof from activities that would augment the public good; rather, they were profoundly involved in public works that were demonstrably useful to urban communities at large.

There was a range of motivations involved endowing properties via *waqf*; sometimes, the founder of a *waqf* endowed his or her property to protect it from

[331] Yaacov Lev, 'The Ethics and Practice of Islamic Medieval Charity', *History Compass*, 5/2 (2007), 603-18 (p. 611).
[332] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, 69-100.
[333] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 272).

confiscation by the government. Sometimes, the endower engaged in charity towards the poor to win spiritual blessing. Sometimes, the wealthy elite endowed to demonstrate piety and to win public support.[334]

Waqf was technically independent of the ruling elite, the *amīr*s and the officials. When the ruling elite created *waqf*s as private citizens, the endowments became more ambiguous and complicated. On the one hand, they created an asset independent of the treasury and of the tax system, but at the same time for public benefit. On the other hand, these people were often embedded in government. So there was still a tension between conflicting interests. Moreover, in the absence of *waqf* deeds available in the sources, it is difficult to ascertain whether endowers were endowing in their public or private capacity. Nevertheless, these charitable works by members of the ruling elite, for whatever purpose, were beneficial to the public in many respects. The above examples are intended to clarify the significant role of the ruling elite for the common good against the Orientalist assumption that medieval rulers were despotic, having no concern for the betterment of the common people. The medieval "despotism thesis" is discussed in detail in a later chapter.

Waqf was a grand system of multi-valent and multi-directional charity, comprising different avenues for helping the needy. In the *waqf* domain, the community of believers competed for leadership through the provision of works for the public good. The rulers also participated in public good activities as endowers and as community leaders.[335] In sum, *Waqf* constituted a significant part of the public good in medieval Islamic societies.

[334] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, 5, 69.
[335] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 154.

Non-*waqf* charity and the public good

Non-*waqf* charity provided another space for wealthy people to help the poor and the needy. As a form of piety ordained by God and in terms of rights of the underprivileged, it was useful to a great many people. In medieval Islamic societies and their normative religious understanding, the concepts of *ṣadaqa* and *zakāt* were of great importance and became entrenched in social and ethical practices. Muslim rulers distributed charity on the occasions of major religious festivals. Ibn al-Athīr reports that on some occasions, such as during Ramadān and during times of natural disaster such as earthquakes, floods and famines, the rulers, the *amīr*s and the rich distributed food and money among the poor and to people in trouble.[336] For example the Fatimid rulers distributed money and food during Ramadān, on the Day of Sacrifice and on the festivals of Rajab and Shaʿbān.[337] These acts of charity were beneficial most importantly to the underprivileged section of society and thus were very useful for the public good. Voluntary charity in medieval societies was considered sacred and transcendent. Though it was most importantly regarded as personal piety, "it was frequently motivated by political considerations or, at least, had political ramifications."[338] In spite of its political and other implications, charitable piety was an important aspect of medieval social life and of meeting the material needs of the underprivileged.

Medieval devotional piety was not "solitary and quiescent"; instead it influenced the ordinary life of Muslims.[339] For example, Ibn Manṣūr (d. 783/1381), the chief *Ḥanafī qāḍī* of Damascus, a person of high social status and an exemplary judge "was held in high esteem because of his personal distribution of alms and bread to the poor."[340] In medieval Islam, charity was not just an ethical duty, it was religious piety. This charity

[336] *The Annals of the Saljuk Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh of ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, trans. by D. S. Richards (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 173, 178.
[337] Lev, 'The Ethics and Practice of Islamic Medieval Charity' (p. 606, 608).
[338] Ibid., (p. 607).
[339] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 21.
[340] Lev, 'The Ethics and Practice of Islamic Medieval Charity' (p. 607).

was directed towards those sections of society that were poorer and ignored by the government.

Non-*waqf* charity was not just confined to Muslims; it was sometimes undertaken by other religious communities on occasions such as during times of famine or other natural disasters. So charity crossed community borders and became a great source for the alleviation of public miseries during times of trial. For example, a Christian, Abu 'l-Malīh (father of al-Asad al-Mammātī, who died in Aleppo in 606/1209), widely distributed alms and other provisions such as food and clothes, particularly to the Muslim children, during the time of great famine in Egypt. He was called *Mammātī* (mother) by the Muslim children, probably because of his generous acts towards them.[341] Non-*waqf* charity, while providing essential human needs like food and shelter to underprivileged sections of society, contributed significantly to the public good.

From the above discussion, it can be argued that *zakāt*, *ṣadaqa* and other charitable activities were part of the public good. Usually, public sphere activity involves sacrifice, because in the activity of the public good the giver of charity through *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa* gives things in the way of God. In doing so, sometimes he or she has to push back his or her interests to enact what they regard as the command of God. The charitable actions of numerous rulers were substantial contributions to the public good, carried out through the mechanisms of *waqf* or non-*waqf* charity. Thus elite charitable acts were significant aspects of the public sphere, though pre-modern Muslims had no term for the public sphere as we understand it today.

Public spheres from below

People belonging to non-elite section of society formed spaces through which they contributed to the public good and to shaping the public sphere from below. These spheres

[341] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 195-96.

were in the form of community organizations, craftsmen's and traders' guilds and *futuwwa* groups.

Community organizations and the public good

From the middle of the tenth century, many social and religious associations emerged and contributed to the public good in various ways. Some individuals who belonged to non-scholarly groups came together based on religious allegiances, ethnic backgrounds or participation in craft associations, and played an important role in the social and political life of the towns.[342] Sometimes these groups were organized by the local people of a city, or quarter of a city, for self-protection or for commanding good and forbidding wrong. Some groups protested against the ruling authorities, as reported by Ibn al-Athīr.[343] Many times, groups gave rise to disturbances and chaos in this cause as well, as I now elaborate.

From a story by an eleventh-century author from Baghdad, we can understand how people belonging to the elite and non-elite showed their agency in matters that were relevant to the common people" they protested for the common people's cause. In Baghdad in the year 462/1069, a terrible riot occurred. The cause was that a Turkish soldier tried to assault a woman outside the *Jāmī* Mosque. When she cried to ordinary Muslims for help, a fight broke out between the Turkish soldiers and the common people in which many people were wounded or killed by the soldiers. On the following day. many people gathered outside the palace of the caliph and demanded justice and punishment of the culprits. "The jurisconsults, the *sharīf*s (a man of distinguished rank: *ʿAlid*s: Hāshimid), the merchants, and the notables gathered in the Dīwān; and they were told: 'We have sent the message to Alp Arslān and acquainted him with the case.'"[344] This story demonstrates that in the later Abbasid period in Baghdad, the whole

[342] Marshal Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 110-11.
[343] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 98, 184.
[344] George Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdad, Parts III, IV & V (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 39-40.

community, both *al-khāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma,* were involved in the matters of peace and justice, significant elements of the common good.

Although the urban gangs called *ʿayyārūn* (paramilitary chivalric bands) were often the cause of disturbances and riots[345], they still often provided security to their quarters and their community members, as in the case of disturbances between the troops of the prefect Īlghāzī ibn Artuq (n.d.) and the local populace of Baghdad. The urban gangs of the quarter of the cotton merchants and the quarter of boatmen beat back the troops of Īlghāzī.[346] These groups of commoners were sometimes led by *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and other distinguished figures. For example, Qāḍī Abu 'l-Faḍl al-Hamadhānī (n.d.) encouraged and led ordinary people of eastern Baghdad against Abu ʾl-Ḥārith Arslān al-Muẓaffar al-Basāsīrī (d. 451/1059) (originally a Turkish slave who became one of the main military leaders at the end of the Buyid period) when he attacked Baghdad, and caliphal troops were unable to give security and protection to the people against him.[347] Sometimes, these groups and associations showed unity among themselves for a more significant cause; for example, Ibn ʿAbdūs of Ḥarrān (d. before 601/1204) a *Ḥanbalī*, "got away with pouring out the ruler's wine because of his standing with the common people of the city."[348] There are examples in medieval Islamic history when rulers were forced by the common people to act in the interest of the people. For example, Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī Mawdūd b. ʿImād al-Dīn Zankī (d. 576/1180), the lord of Mosul and Jazira, was forced by the people to stop selling wine, to which he agreed.[349] Through these community networks, the commoners used their agency in social, political and religious matters. They took their initiatives

[345] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 89.
[346] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146, the Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response*, trans. by D. S. Richards (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 55-56.
[347] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 121-122, note, 14.
[348] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 500.
[349] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 270.

independent of the ruling authorities for the welfare of the community. This welfare was mainly in the form of the protection of the community, to help the needy, and to work for a peaceful social order and security.

Merchants' and craftsmen's guilds and the public good

A guild is commonly defined as an organization of craftsmen and merchants designed for mutual support and cooperation. It is also for the protection and promotion of the professional interests of its members.[350] My understanding of guilds in the premodern Islamic world is different from the use of the world guild in the modern European context. In Arabic there is no specific word denoting the professional corporations. The word *ṣinf* (pl. *aṣnāf*) is used for "profession" (synonym *ḥirfa*, pl. *ḥiraf*). In medieval Islamic societies, professional communities existed which were directed by the *shaykh*s.[351] Among these professional corporations, each craft had specialization in its profession and had a specific location in the market (*bāzār*; *sūq*). They shared in the supervision of the market. These communities had quarters in the city according to their profession, giving them better communication and strong cohesion. Because of the common interests relevant to their trades, crafts and taxes, they had "a degree of common organization, sometimes amounting to regular guild life."[352] These professional corporations undertook various activities. They managed business dealings between artisans, merchants and consumers. They acted as spokespeople between the profession and the rulers. They helped rulers in raising taxes and controlling the subjects.[353] These professional

[350] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Guild', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/guild-trade-association> [accessed 04 December 2019]
[351] A. Raymond, W. Floor and Nutku Ozdemir, 'ṣinf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1085> [accessed 02 November 2019]
[352] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 110.
[353] Raymond, Floor and Ozdemir, 'ṣinf'.

organizations were one of the communities (*ṭawāʾif*; sing. *ṭāʾifa*) which significantly contributed to the functioning of society.

Regarding artisans and their role in the creation of a public space, in the contemporary Islamic world, such as in Pakistan today, people still come together in the shops of artisans, for example in a cobbler's or ironsmith's shop, to talk about the issues of the day. It is a form of networking, a social space, and a space of discussion, and therefore an aspect of the public sphere. These artisanal spaces connect with the medieval guilds, the whole purpose of which was to upskill their members and make them part of a community who supported each other. It would be valid to say that the traditions of creating mini discursive spaces or mini public spheres within the shops of artisans is a custom that is continued to this very day in Pakistan.

Thus craftsmen's and merchants' guilds played an important role for the public good as they engaged in charitable activities for the good of ordinary people. During Fatimid rule in Egypt (r. 297-567/909-1171), professional corporations enjoyed much prosperity and took part in social and charitable activities.[354] They played a significant role in the public sphere through charitable institutions, and endowed institutions such as *madrasa*s and mosques for public use. For example, in medieval Damascus and Cairo, craftsmen, merchants and traders endowed children's schools where orphans and other poor children received basic education.[355] Guilds with schools of law and *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods contributed significantly to the provision of public services in urban centres.[356] In short, craftsmen's and merchants' organizations mainly worked in the public sphere through their charitable activities.

---

[354] Bernard Lewis, 'The Islamic Guilds', *The Economic History Review*, 8 (1937), 20-37 (p. 25).
[355] Hirschiler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 99-113.
[356] Şerif Mardin, 'Civil Society and Islam', in *Civil Society: Theory History Comparison*, ed. by John A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 286-87.

Futuwwa groups and the public good

The chivalric groups that appeared in Arabic and Persian speaking regions from early Islamic history until the twelfth century were called *futuwwa*.[357] These groups were "guided by a code of chivalry that committed them to the protection of communal values in such ways suitable to sublimating lower-class violence into charismatic, collective power."[358] Strongly loyal to one another, they engaged in various activities; some were active in sports while many others were more inclined towards ethical virtues, such as bravery, hospitality and self-sacrifice.[359] However, there were urban *ʿayyāri-futuwwa* groups in the medieval Arab world which "engaged in extortion, violence and political intrigue."[360] Though these urban *futuwwa* or *ʿayyārūn* groups were involved in making profit from political and social unrest, and though some took the law into their own hands, there were other groups which "attempted to preserve the existing law."[361] In the case of the *futuwwa* groups of Mamluk Egypt, they followed the ideals of chivalry, such as clothing widows, and feeding the poor and the orphans.[362] In some cases, members of the *futuwwa* order convinced fellow members to forgive the debt of other fellow members. Thus it can be argued that one of the purposes of these *futuwwa* groups "was to cement fraternal ties between members of different social classes and professions."[363] Since the ideals of these *futuwwa* groups and that of the *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods were the same, they often overlapped.

[357] Lloyd Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi: A Sūfī Code of Honour* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 1.
[358] Rahimi and Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks', 264.
[359] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 126-27; Rahimi and Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks', 264.
[360] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 2.
[361] Ibid., 8.
[362] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, 13-15.
[363] Ibid., 14.

***Futuwwa* and Sufism**

Several characteristics are common between Sufism and *futuwwa*. Early *Ṣūfī*s in their manuals identified the origin of *futuwwa* in Islamic *Ṣūfī* traditions. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, while tracing the origin of *futuwwa*, writes that it is a code of ethical behaviour that follows the examples of prophets, *Ṣūfī*s and wise men. For example, he relates that when the *Shīʿī Imām* Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (ra) was asked, what is *futuwwa*? He replied: "*Futuwwah* is not possible with quarreling and backbiting. *Futuwwah* is feeding people, giving to them, being pleasant and honorable to them, and not causing them difficulties."[364] Al-Sulamī's *Kitāb al-futuwwa* is a *Ṣūfī* code of honour that delineates the meaning of love, compassion, hospitality, kindness, contentment, and sacrifice and care for others.[365] In his other book on *Ṣūfī* women, *Dhikr an-niswa al-mutaʿabbidāt al-ṣūfiyyāt*, he mentions *futuwwa* groups in Nishapur who were involved in the spiritual and social life of the city. Even female *Ṣūfī*s were part of these *futuwwa* groups, though they did not have their own separate *futuwwa* groups. In one example he mentions a female *Ṣūfī*, ʿĀʾisha of Merv, the wife of Aḥmad ibn as-Sarī (d. 352/963), who used to serve the *futuwwa*, *fityān* (sing. *fatā*; "young man") groups who visited her house.[366] According to Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, "the foundation of chivalry is that the servant of God always exerts himself in the service of others."[367] These chivalric virtues consist of being humble, helping others, being generous, just and hospitable, and being caring towards others irrespective of their religion or creed.[368] Another prominent *Ṣūfī* of the later Abbasid period, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, also finds the origin of *futuwwa* in Islamic traditions. In reference to caliph ʿAlī, he portrays *futuwwa* as a universal ethical code of compassion,

[364] Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa*, trans. by al-Halveti, 64.
[365] Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa*, trans. by al-Halveti.
[366] Al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, trans. by Cornell, 196.
[367] Al-Qushayrī, *The Risalah*, trans. by Harris, 237.
[368] Abu 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism: *al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi ʿilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. by Alexander D. Knysh, rev. by Muhammad Eissa (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 237-42.

mercy, love and knowledge.[369] Until the later Abbasid period, *Ṣūfī futuwwa* was a significant part of urban religious, social and spiritual life.

In his *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa*, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī presents and promotes his *Ṣūfī* form of *futuwwa*, whereby even lay members of society who display certain ethical and moral qualities such as sexual modesty, eating legally permitted food, refraining from slander, not listening to or looking at anything unworthy, and not engaging in violent conduct, could obtain *futuwwa* membership.[370] Thus the *Ṣūfī-futuwwa* brotherhood in the medieval period was an inclusive network promoting manners and ethics largely designed to regulate relations between 'brothers' who lived a "'semi-Sufi' lifestyle, sometimes within a communal setting and often enjoying Sufi-esque ritual activity."[371]

The above discussion helps clarify that after the tenth century, there emerged and developed *futuwwa* groups that were mainly promoted by *Ṣūfī*s and organized by commoners. They played important roles for the common good, especially in respect of peace, social bonding and the ethical and moral uplifting of society, and thus significantly contributed to the public sphere.

Public spheres—from above and below

In medieval Islamic societies, both the elite and non-elite contributed to the construction and shaping of the public spheres when they involved themselves in the activities of commanding good and forbidding evil. They also shaped the conception of the public sphere through their written criticisms of the ruling elite.

Commanding good and forbidding evil: a space for the public good

It is a Quranic injunction to command what is virtuous and to stop what is evil: "Let there be among you a community calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It

[369] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, (*Kitab fi'l-futuwwa*, pp. 42-95), 42-44.
[370] Ibid., 7.
[371] Ibid., 15.

is they who shall prosper."[372] In the history of Islam, countless Muslim scholars, *Ṣūfī*s, nobles, *qāḍī*s, government officials and commoners engaged in this activity; they criticized rulers mildly or harshly for their wrongs when they considered that their actions and behaviour were not in line with Islamic teachings and prophetic examples.[373] Through this activity, they created space for defining the public good and played their practical part in the establishment of public spheres.

***Naṣīḥa*: moral (political) criticism**

Naṣīḥa is moral (often political) criticism, and there is a strong link between espousing *dīn* (religion) and giving *naṣīḥa* (moral advice).[374] According to a tradition of Prophet Muhammad, religion is *naṣīḥa*. It was asked of him, "unto whom?" He replied, "To God, and to His Book, and to His Prophet, and to the leaders of the Muslims and to their common folk."[375] Thus, the true believer is encouraged in normative source texts to give good advice to other human beings and desire their wellbeing. As a form of moral political criticism, this could be directed to all rulers and their officials.

The *naṣīḥa* literature of the later Abbasid period is an excellent example of this kind of moral criticism. Niẓām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī (d. 485/1092), a grand vizier of Seljuk *sulṭān*s, in his book, *Siyāsat-nāma* or *Siyar al-mulūk The Book of Government* or *Rules for Kings*, advises rulers that they should take an interest in the affairs of the state and do good to the people. In a *naṣīḥa* tone, Niẓām al-Mulk advises and admonishes the king, in this case *sulṭān* Malik Shāh (r. 465-485/1072-1092), advising him that good actions towards his subjects will not only be praised by the people but will be rewarded by God,

[372] *The Study Quran*, ed. by Nasr, 3: 104, p. 159. This ordinance is found in another seven verses of the *Qurʾān* (3:110, 3:114, 7:157, 9:71, 9:112, 22:41, 31:17).
[373] Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 50-67.
[374] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 214-15.
[375] *The Study Quran*, ed. by Nasr, 530; Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 214-15.

and that bad actions or injustices will be punished by God after death.[376] In a sense, this is a critique of sultanic behaviour in which Ṭūsī, through soft moral political criticism, reminds rulers of their duties towards the people and towards God. He sets out that the ruler is not merely expected to serve the elite but is also responsible for serving the non-elites. The work also offers a reminder that a ruler should rule with kindness and compassion, as "it is on the basis of these principles that the king should govern the people."[377]

Another work of *naṣīḥa* literature, *Qābūs-nāma* by Kai Kāʾūs ibn Iskandar (d. 479/1087), offers moral ethical advice to monarchs, observing that if a ruler inculcates within himself or herself fear of God and keeps himself or herself away from envy, meanness and selfishness, he or she walks in the footprints of *Ṣūfī*s who always try to think and to do good to others. In this way, a ruler can be more beneficial to common people.[378] The authors of "mirror for princes" literature "negotiated the uncertain ground between critical advice and awed subservience, and characteristically packaged their counsels in the form of clichés and maxims, and stories set long ago in far-away locales."[379] Such literature, written by prominent, learned and experienced figures, stresses that a good, just and kind ruler can play an important role for the public good.

The mirror for princes literature focuses on changing rulers' attitude towards the public. This *naṣīḥa* literature, especially *Qābūs-nāma*, talks about adopting *Ṣūfī* chivalric values. The inclusion of *Ṣūfī* values in this book, written by a statesman, shows the growing influence of Sufism by the end of the eleventh century. The incorporation of *Ṣūfī*

[376] Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan Niẓām al-Mulk al-Tūsī, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyāsat-nāma or Siyar al-mulūk,* trans. by Hubert Darke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 1-13, 33.
[377] L. Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran, The Nasīhat al-Mulūk of Pseudo-Māwardī Contexts and Themes*, vol. II (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 201.
[378] Kay Kāʾūs ibn Iskandar, *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs nāma*, trans. by Reuben Levy (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), 245-49.
[379] Marlow, *Counsel for Kings*, vol. II, 17.

noble virtues in the mirror literature gives a flavour of the changing attitude towards Sufism, approving of *Ṣūfī*s' noble character and care for the people. The mirror for princes literature encourages the growth of a set of practices which are of great social value.

In imparting advice, the *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s criticized ruling authorities for their misdeeds. Abu 'l-Wafāʾ ʿAlī b. ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), a twelfth-century Muslim scholar and theologian of Baghdad, wrote letters to government officials of high rank and to ministers in which he criticized and censured them for their neglect of religious duties and violating the public moral order. He also criticized religious authorities for their cynical and corrupt behaviour.[380] Even philosophers like Ibn Sīnā, through their moral advice, encouraged rulers to adopt humane ways of justice, to be of good moral character, and to make their soul supreme, so to speak.[381] The notion of moral advice has such importance in the history of Islam that some rulers had poets in their offices as confidants (*nadīm*), and these poets were expected "to function not only as boon companion and familiar, but also as a source of counsel and of moral guidance."[382] Thus, commoners as well as the elite contributed to the public good through offering *naṣīḥa* to the ruling elite. Through this activity they constructed a space, theoretical as well as practical, to contribute to the public sphere. From the above discussion, it can be inferred that *naṣīḥa* was a public sphere activity as it provided a space of criticism for people against unjust or authoritarian officials and rulers.

Ṣūfī literature, *naṣīḥa* and the common good

*Ṣūfī*s in their literature offered *naṣīḥa* to the ruling elite in order to benefit the people. *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī is a traditional Islamic *naṣīḥa* directed at

---

[380] George Makdisi, *Ibn Aqil: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 189-203.
[381] Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, 156.
[382] Jan-Peter Hartung, 'Enacting the Rule of Islam: On Courtly Patronage of Religious Scholars in Pre- and Early Modern Times', in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), 307.

rulers. Through it, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī gives counsel to rulers to practice Islamic rituals sincerely with spiritual intent and to provide justice and welfare to the people.[383] He reminds them of the punishment of God if they act wrongly, and reward from God if they do good for the people.[384] In medieval Islamic cultures (in Christian and Jewish as well), it was believed that human actions or behaviour, good or bad, on the earth, would be rewarded or punished in the hereafter. "Such beliefs, it might be thought, apparently endorse psychological egoism and make ethical egoism uninterestingly true, since any self-sacrifice made for good moral reasons will ultimately be rewarded."[385] In respect of doing good to the people, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī prompts the rulers to use worldly wealth and power not for their own sake but for the sake of the good of the people.[386]

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī is a pioneer of the mainstream position of Sufism. Before him, it was a strand among the other strands. In the post-Ghazālī period, Sufism became a norm, just as having a *madhhab* was a norm. When he admonishes the rulers, he is reminding them of the *tarbiyya* (training of heart and mind) and *tazkiyat an-nafs* (self-purification) that Sufism provides, in which the latter is "the only way that can bring about the emergence of a noble character (*khuluq*) and the proper inward and outward attitude (*adab*) in a human being."[387] One cannot be a person of *tazkiyat an-nafs* unless one has undertaken those activities of self-purification that entail or necessitate working toward others' good. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī opens the space for a critique of the *sulṭān*s, rulers or caliphs who are out of touch with the people. He persuades them that through adopting the *Ṣūfī* ways and ethics, a ruler can better fulfil his responsibilities towards people. So

[383] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Nasīḥat al-mulūk* (Counsel for Kings), trans. by F. R. C. Bagley (New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3-13.
[384] Ibid., 15-16.
[385] John Marenbon, 'Self-Interest, Self-Sacrifice, and the Common Good', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. by Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 326-27.
[386] Al-Ghazālī, *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, 29, 44.
[387] Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 12.

his *naṣīḥa* literature dealing with good governance is a useful example of the public good consciousness that was prevalent in medieval Islamic societies.

Another *Ṣūfī* who provided *naṣīḥa* to rulers was Najm al-Dīn Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Rāzī (d. 654/1256), better known as *Dāya*, "the wet-nurse." He belonged to *Kubrāwiyya Ṣūfī Ṭarīqa*.[388] In his book, *Mīrsād al-ʿibād min al-mabdaʾ ilā l-maʿād* (Path of God's Bondsmen), he discusses how a king or a ruler should be just and should keep in mind the welfare of his or her subjects while following the divine path. The rulers should be an example for their subjects through their moral character.[389] They should purge evil thoughts and actions from their souls and should support the poor and the needy. It is advisable for them to be generous to and caring for students, travellers, religious scholars and ascetics.[390] They should respect the rights of their subjects and act justly with those subjects.[391] The rulers should rule not for their own sake but for the sake of God and the good of society. They should look after endowments so these can be used for the good of ordinary people via the building of dams, bridges, caravansaries and fortresses.[392]

*Ṣūfī*s also made *naṣīḥa* to other important sectors of society such as merchants and craftsmen. Najm al-Dīn encourages them to help not only those who are ascetics, *ʿulamāʾ*, devotees and saints, but also to care for the poor and the weak in every city for the sake of God.[393] These pieces of advice clearly manifest *Ṣūfī* concerns for the betterment of

---

[388] The *Kubrāwiyya ṭarīqa* was founded by Abu 'l-Jannāb Aḥmad (d. /1220), surnamed *at-ṭāmmat al-kubrā*, 'the greatest affliction', which is shortened to Najmuddin Kubrā. The *Kubrāwiyya ṭarīqa* flourished in central Asia and from there to Turkey and India. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 254-57.

[389] Najm al-Dīn Abū Bakr Rāzī, *Mīrsād al-ʿibād min al-mabdaʾ ilā l-maʿād* (*Path of God's Bondsmen*), trans. by Hamid Algar (New York: Caravan Books, 1982), 411; the soubriquet "wet-nurse" was an allusion to the spiritual suckling of new-born seekers on the path. He wrote his book for the *sulṭān* of Rum, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubad of Anatolia.

[390] Ibid., 412-13.

[391] Ibid., 416-17.

[392] Ibid., 429.

[393] Ibid., 478-88.

society by having both good rulers and good members of other social classes who are committed to the public weal.

Advice literature, such as books by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, reproached the ruling authorities for their misdeeds and gave them moral advice to do good towards the people under their authority and sphere of responsibility.[394] *Ṣūfī*s in this way, while commanding good and forbidding wrong, played a crucial role in the construction of the public sphere wherein common people and scholarly authorities who spoke on their behalf had a medium by which to criticize the rulers and find ways for the betterment of the society.

From the above discussion of selected *Ṣūfī* literature, we can take notions about what *Ṣūfī*s brought to the public good. and how they defined it. One may compare the conception of legal scholars such as al-Shāṭibī, who encouraged *sharīʿa* driven *maṣlaḥa*, common good, with *Ṣūfī*s, who conceived of the common good in terms of justice, peace, the human rights of ordinary people and equity. Though God is the most powerful entity, human beings, and in particular rulers, must adopt "self-restraining" or "self-limiting" "dimensions of power" and accept being held to account.[395] *Ṣūfī*s, with other religious and intellectual elites, played an important role in explaining the self-limiting nature of power to rulers. Though *Ṣūfī*s did not explicitly speak the language of the public good or *maṣlaḥa*, they effectively and consciously defined it and worked on it. Significantly, *Ṣūfī*s were not oblivious to the notions of common good in terms of the provision of social services and utilities such as education, bridges and caravanserais to the public.

Ṣūfī concepts of the common good were based on Quranic ideas of humanity, charity, humbleness towards others, kindness and justness towards the whole of

[394] Knysh, *Sufism*, 138.
[395] Armando Salvatore, 'Eccentric Modernity? An Islamic Perspective on the Civilizing Process and the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14 (2011), 55-69 (p. 66).

humanity, and nobility of character. *Ṣūfī*s, while propagating the equality of interests of the whole populace including the ruling elite or rulers, helped underprivileged classes to realize that their interests need not conflict with those the rulers. Thus, *Ṣūfī* ideas of common good come across as inclusive and cosmopolitan, as they were beyond the interests of any particular group or community. *Ṣūfī* involvement in the public sphere is discussed in more detail in the next two chapters.

Ṣūfī literature and commanding good and forbidding evil

*Ṣūfī*s deliberated over the issue of ordering people via their literature to do good and forbid the wrong. In *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī discusses the responsibility of members of the community to act in the face of evil. He divides those who forbid evil into three groups: firstly, those who have the power to do so should prohibit rulers from harmful conduct; in the second group are the *ʿulamāʾ*, who forbid wrongdoing through their words; the third group are those commoners who can only dislike evil in their hearts.[396] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī elucidates in *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* the critical issue of preventing wrong. For him, this activity is essential: without this, the world is full of disturbances and calamities. Rulers should be advised with soft words by those having full knowledge of what 'evil' is. Other ways of advising, such as advising a ruler harshly without knowing what is good and what is evil, are not recommended, as this will cause disturbances.[397] According to Muḥyi 'l-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī (560/1165-638/1240), known as *al-shaykh al-akbar*, only a spiritual saint (*ʿĀrif*) should "call to good" as only those who know God can know good.[398] The *Ṣūfī*s undertook the task of

[396] ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Ghuniyat-ul-talibeen* [al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq], trans. by Shamas Sadiqi (New Dehli: Arshid Brothers, [n.d.]), 122-127. Al-Jīlānī also discusses five conditions for commanding good and forbidding wrong; the person involved in this activity should be an *ʿālim*, he should do this for the sake of God, not for personal gain, he should adopt a soft way, he should be tolerant, and should be a practitioner of that particular virtue for which he is preaching.

[397] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, trans. by Fazl-ul-Karim, vol. 2, 180-206.

[398] Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 465-66.

commanding to undertake good and forbidding evil for the good of the people through their spiritual ethics, as they did not intend to boost their egos or to highlight the faults of the others.[399]

The role of the *Muḥtasib* in commanding good and forbidding evil

In medieval Islamic societies, a *muḥtasib* was appointed by the ruler with the duty of promoting what was good and forbidding what was evil in a specific town. He was particularly entrusted with the supervision of moral behaviour in the markets and to maintain order in social life. In early Islamic eras, the person having this office was called *sāḥib al-sūq*, but during the caliphate of al-Maʾmūn (r. 197-218/813-833), the *sāḥib al-sūq* was replaced by the *muḥtasib*.[400]

Some medieval Muslim thinkers attended to the issue of commanding good and forbidding wrong through the institution of *muḥtasib* and its relevance to public interests. Abu ‘l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Māwardī (d. 1058), a theologian and *qāḍī* of Baghdad, in chapter twenty (*Ḥisba* (public order)) of his book, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* (The Ordinances of Government), deliberates on the issue of commanding good and forbidding wrong as a shared obligation of the community as a whole. The author, while highlighting the importance of this duty, differentiates between the *muḥtasib* (market inspector) appointed by the ruler and the volunteer, whether person or group, that commands good and forbids wrong.[401] The distinction in the ability of the officially appointed *muḥtasib* and the private or voluntary *muḥtasib* to undertake this duty can be understood from a specific account. Abu ’l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (d. 295/907) was a famous *Ṣūfī* of Baghdad involved in forbidding

[399] Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 465-68.
[400] Cl. Cahen and others, ‘Ḥisba’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0293> [accessed 02 November 2019]
[401] Abu ‘l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya w’al-wilāyāt al-dīniyya* (The Ordinances of Government), trans. by Asadullah Yate (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., [n.d.]), 337-38.

wrong in the capital of the Abbasid caliphate. When he broke the wine jugs assigned to the caliph al-Muʿtadid (r. 279-290/892-902), he declared himself as *muḥtasib*. When he was brought before the caliph, there was an interesting conversation: when the caliph asked him, who are you? And who has appointed you over *ḥisba*? He replied, "I am a *muḥtasib*" and "the One who appointed you over *imāma* (*khilāfa*) appointed me over *ḥisba*."[402] The caliph admired al-Nūrī for his piety, courage and knowledge, and he was permitted to continue in forbidding wrong.

For ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, the office of the market supervisor (*ḥisba*) is a religious position as it falls under the religious duty of a Muslim to command what is right and to forbid what is reprehensible. While doing his duty, the inspector gives preference to public interest: for instance, he prohibits the obstruction of roads, and he forbids porters and boatmen from transporting excessively heavy loads.[403] The market supervisor's preference for the public interest shows that the rulers do not embody the moral standard; preferably, the public good is itself the moral standard. Rulers can fall short of pursuing the public good effectively, and the *muḥtasib* has to recognize that potential discrepancy or shortfall and then make up for it.

The inspector, though recruited by the ruler in the official sphere, uses his (occasionally her) authority in the public sphere to uphold religious values and to protect the private rights of individuals. The compliance inspector is therefore appointed by the ruler to ensure that the public sphere is orderly and operates according to Islamic standards. He is appointed to prevent any violation of "rights" and perpetrations of "wrongdoing".[404] The inspector also uses his authority to uphold religious values, protect the rights of individuals and endorse and defend the interests of society. In this way, he

[402] Ahmad Ghabin, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 58.
[403] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. by Rosenthal, vol. 1, 462-63.
[404] Kadivar, 'An Introduction to the Public and Private Debate in Islam' (p. 673).

shapes and contributes to the constitution of public spheres. There is a significant danger of encroachment by the official *muḥtasib* into people's private spheres when he favours rulers' interests over public interests and violates private individual rights. So the activity of the *muḥtasib* as an upholder of the moral order can contribute to shrinking the public sphere and broadening the official sphere or vice versa.[405] Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of the *ḥisba* is to integrate the individual and the community in pursuit of the wellbeing of the community.[406]

Commanding what is good and forbidding evil has played a beneficial role in Islamic political and legal thought, social ethics and practices. Muslim attitudes to and reaction towards political and moral authority put the notion of the public sphere and the public good into practice and increased interactions between state and society. In medieval Islamic societies, Muslim jurists, *ʿulamāʾ*, ascetics, pious and common people who were involved in commanding the doing of good and forbidding evil thus constructed a space for defining the public good and doing well for the people.[407]

In summary, pondering over the preceding discussion over the public spaces, it is almost impossible to determine whether people were active for the public good in a private capacity or a professional (governmental) capacity. The parameters of the public sphere or spheres were porous, without clearly drawn lines. This flexibility of borders meant that many more people could participate in the public space or public sphere, not only those who were unconnected with government. People who were in government enjoyed agency and often had resources of money, power and reputation; they could take part in public sphere in a private capacity. To be part of the government and to do public

[405] Kadivar, 'An Introduction to the Public and Private Debate in Islam' (pp. 674-75).
[406] Eduardo Manzano, 'Why Did Islamic Medieval Institutions Become so Different from Western Medieval Institutions?', *Medieval World,* 1 (2015), 118-137 (p. 132).
[407] Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong,* 469-70.

work in a private capacity is a complicated issue in some sense, but people found ways to serve the public good even when they formed a part of the ruling authority.

Women and the public good

This section briefly introduces elite and non-elite women's roles in public good activities in medieval Islamic societies. Medieval sources generally tend to offer sparse information about women and their roles in social and political spheres. However, we can draw conclusions from the small quantity of information we have about their roles in public good activities. Women certainly were involved in some social and intellectual activities relating to the good of society. Some women belonging to the wealthy and ruling classes donated for *waqf,* and in individual acts of non-*waqf* charity beneficial for the common people. For example, al-Ḥusāmiyya *khānqāh* and al-Barrāniyya *madrassa* in Damascus were endowed by Ayyubid princess Sitt al-Shām (d. 617/1220). Khātūn *khānqāh* and Khātūniyya *madrasa* were financially managed by Khātūn bint Muʿīn, wife of *Sulṭān* Nūr al-Dīn (r. 536-569/1142-1174) of Syria.[408] Women belonging to both elite and non-elite groups played an advantageous role in the transmission of religious knowledge, especially the *ḥadīth*.[409] For example, Fakhr-un-Nisāʾ Shuhda bint Aḥmad (d. 573/1178), who was a prominent *ḥadīth* scholar of Baghdad. Also, Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (d. 739/1339) of Damascus was one of the most noteworthy female *ḥadīth* scholars of medieval times.[410] Some women were involved in public preaching, and women preachers' roles in the Baghdadi public sphere are discussed in Chapter Four.

[408] Daphna Ephrat and Hatim Mahamid, 'The Creation of Sufi Spheres in Medieval Damascus (mid-6th/12th to mid-8th/14th centuries)', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2015), 189-208, (pp. 199-200).
[409] Jonathan P. Berkey, 'Al-Subki and His Women', *Middle East Documentation Centre* (2010), 1-16 (p. 5).
[410] Berkey, 'Al-Subki and His Women' (pp. 10, 13).

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī in his book, *Ḏhikr an-niswa al-mutaʿabbidāt al-ṣūfiyyāt* makes mention of early *Ṣūfī* women engaged in charitable and *futuwwa* activities.[411] Female *Ṣūfī*s played a remarkable role as financiers and donated food, alms, presents and money to the poor *Ṣūfī*s. For example, ʿĀʾisha bint Aḥmad al-Ṭawīl (n.d.) of Merv, wife of ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Sayyārī (d. 375/985), "spent more than five thousand *dirham*s on the *Ṣūfī*s (*fuqarāʾ*)."[412] More of the charitable and chivalric activities, such as the *khidma* (service) and *futuwwa* of these pious and *Ṣūfī* women, were for their own relatives and other non-relative *Ṣūfī*s whom they served.[413] Their financial support to male *Ṣūfī*s illustrates "women's impressive financial service that helped support *Ṣūfī* communities with a vibrant backing through the effective system of *afrāq* (the plural form of *rifq*; donations and alms)."[414] Their contributions to the financial wellbeing of poor *Ṣūfī* fellows were a public sphere activity, as they were in the context of the *Ṣūfī*s' local public spheres, in which pious and wealthy individuals could serve pious destitute men or women.

Women also worked in the public sphere when they participated in the activities of commanding good and forbidding wrong. Umm Zaynab (d. 715/1315) had a good reputation for performing this duty in the spheres and domains in which men could not do well.[415] She was in charge of *Ribāṭ al-Baghdādiyya* in Cairo, which housed divorced or separated women in conditions of strict discipline.[416] Though these women did not contribute to the constitution of the public sphere as men did, in certain spheres, such as the endowment of *waqf*, as religious scholars, and as supervisors of women's *Ṣūfī* lodges, they played significant roles for the public good.

---

411 Al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, trans. by Cornell, 86, 190, 196, 256.
412 Ibid., 258.
413 Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 66-68.
414 Ibid., 68.
415 Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 486.
416 Ibid., also see note 135.

Diverse religious communities and the public good

This section discusses very briefly the role of other religious communities in the public good activities. Parallel to the public spaces established by Muslim communities, there were public spaces where other religious communities played autonomous roles for the good of their community fellows. S. D. Goitein argues that non-Muslim communities, particularly the Jews in Egypt during the period of Fatimid (r. 359-567/969-1171) and Ayyubid (r. 567-648/1171-1250) rule, "formed a state not only within a Muslim state, but also beyond its confines."[417] They enjoyed a great deal of freedom in respect of their religious and social practices. Contrastingly, there were occasions when these communities had to suffer a lot owing to the antagonistic attitude of the ruling or religious elite. Moreover, non-Muslims, particularly the Jews, had to pay unjust taxes and wear distinctive dress.[418] In addition, though they could usually enjoy social and religious privileges, sometimes their property was confiscated by the Muslim rulers, and these religious minorities had to face often drastic changes to their circumstances.[419] However, in a time of chaos and disturbance, both the Christian and the Jews "could provide some kind of protection and maintain a certain solidarity in the face of occasional pressures and of the permanent disadvantages of being in a minority."[420]

The Jewish communities developed "civic forms of communal organization," in which an individual member of the community played a significant role through the synagogue. Synagogues played a central role as public institutions and provided a significant number of social services.[421] Religious institutions such as churches and

[417] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. II, 403.
[418] Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, trans. by David Maisel, Paul Fenton and David Littman (London, Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985), 205-06.
[419] Tamer El-Leithy, 'Living Documents, Dying Archives: Towards a Historical Anthropology of Medieval Arabic Archives', *Al-Qantara*, XXXII (2011), 389-434 (p. 395-405).
[420] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York, Boston: Warner Books, 1991), 118-19.
[421] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. II, 2.

synagogues were involved in the care of orphans, widows, the ill, the disabled and the old. They managed the education of poor children, care for needy travellers and foreigners, and the freedom of captives by providing ransom funds. Charity was the backbone of all these activities.[422] This attachment of social services with religious institutions called for much communal organization, even beyond their territorial boundaries, and also entailed a spirit and devotion to the common good.[423] Though sometimes charity crossed religious community boundaries, religious minorities mainly looked after their social services by themselves.[424] There were occasions when the Muslim and other religious minority groups tended to compete in charity-like activities, as Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Maqdīsī (d. 381/991) wrote at the close of the tenth century, when he praised the people of old Cairo for their spirit of charity and liberality.[425]

These communities played a role in their own public spheres, if not so much in the Islamic public sphere, though there was an intersection between the two in that they took on responsibilities for social welfare that the government was theoretically responsible for. They can be described as having separate or local public spheres, as these activities involving ordinary non-Muslims were outside official channels and the control of the government.

Conclusion

Medieval Islamic societies did not have merely a single authoritarian sphere of social activity where only the ruling authorities were at the helm of affairs. Rather, there were multiple public spheres where people recruited from private spheres expressed differing

[422] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. II, 3; Ye'or, *The Dhimmi*, 205.
[423] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. II, 3.
[424] Ibid., 91.
[425] Ibid., 138.

modes of social agency. The forums in which the public good was achieved incorporated the agency of the public sphere and contributions of both elite and non-elite members of society. The public sphere is multifaceted, with different aspects and different meanings for different groups of people. The people who made *waqf*s and those who organized the *futuwwa* groups all contributed to the public good by devoting resources, time and money, as a unity of people committed to the public good. Then there are those who were recipients of the public good, notably the poor and the disadvantaged. The medieval Islamic public sphere is not merely an idea, not merely space, and is not only a process: it is a combination of all these things. It is a multidimensional phenomenon. When we think about the public good and the public sphere, we are able to bridge a gap between the elites and the lower sections of society. Within the context of medieval Islamic societies, it was not just rulers who had agency; rather there were local spaces where people at large also had agency to help the poor amongst them and to act independently for the public cause. These community organizations led others in ethics, social and communal issues. These were types of local public spheres. Such public spaces as *waqf*, merchants' and craftsmen's organizations, and *Ṣūfī futuwwa* groups intersected with one another. Since in medieval Islamic societies, various spheres and domains existed for pursuing the public good, it can be concluded that there were many public spheres rather than a single public sphere. The next two chapters explore and discusses the roles of *Ṣūfī*s of medieval Baghdad in the public sphere.

Chapter 4: The *Ribāṭ*: An Institution of the Public Sphere

> ***While shari'a-based jurisprudence provided the normative ideal to Muslim society, and Sufi orders supplied it with moral leadership, the waqf represented the structural and even fiscal infrastructure that secured the public weal, especially in the two fields that we today define as 'educational' and 'charitable'.***
>
> Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 153.

This chapter aims to foster an understanding of Sufism in Baghdad, and the role of specific *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere during the later Abbasid caliphate from the years 1000 to 1258 CE. In the previous chapter, I discussed spaces such as *waqf*, community organizations, *futuwwa* (chivalry) associations, and public commitments to written or verbal interventions that "command good and forbid evil", through which the individuals and groups in the period concerned were involved in public sphere activities. As discussed, the imperative of "commanding good and forbidding evil" became in itself a significant intellectual and theoretical space in which scholars, *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ* and philosophers discussed and debated the notions of the public good and the ways to achieve it. In this chapter and the one that follows, I examine the roles of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in religious, social and political spheres that brought tangible benefits to common people. These *Ṣūfī* figures tried to fulfil a range of the religious, spiritual and material needs of common people through the charitable institutions of *ribāṭ*s or *Ṣūfī* lodges. The *Ṣūfī*s' charitable works were, in fact, their public works, not private works, as they went beyond taking care their own families to look after the welfare of those outside their immediate circle of familial responsibility; this renders it *public* work that falls into the category of public sphere activity. Indeed, their other modes of social engagement, as preachers,

teachers or *Ṣūfī shaykh*s, were also acts of public service where they contributed to the spiritual and ethical uplift of common people without accepting any remuneration for their work. These activities were beneficial to society in both material and spiritual senses, in accordance with what was considered the "public good" in premodern Islamic societies. To reiterate: *Ṣūfīs were autonomously involved in activities such as providing religious, social and spiritual leadership to the community. Their activities went well beyond their private interests; rather these activities were in the interest of the public*.

In this context, I also draw attention to the significant role of the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* (chief *Ṣūfī*) of Baghdad, who typically had a collaborative relationship with the ruling elite as part of his work in the public sphere. A title similar to that of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* is mentioned by early *Ṣūfī* writers such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī and Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. Al-Sulamī describes Muḥammad b. Khafīf al-Shīrāzī (d. 371/981) as *shaykh al-mashāyikh fī waqtihī* (the master *shaykh* of his age) while al-Qushayrī uses the title *shaykh al-shuyūkh wa-wāḥid waqtihī* (the master *shaykh* and the peerless one of his age).[426] These were not references to any particular organization that he headed or office that he held but are symbolic of his spiritual importance in society. There was no relationship of patronage between al-Shīrāzī and the ruling elite, for instance, in a way which developed in Baghdad during the Seljuk period (r. 447-591/1055-1194).[427] I will further elaborate the title and activities of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Baghdad and discuss the efforts of the *Ṣūfī*s to develop solidarity and social order between various sectors of society.

In a variety of ways, *Ṣūfī*s provided a physical and moral venue to various social strata, particularly to commoners, for better communication between different classes and

[426] Nathan Hofer, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Sufi" in Egypt, 1173-1325' *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 3 (2014) (p. 8).
[427] Ibid., (pp. 8-9).

groupings within society. Thus we see that an idea of the "centrality of ordinary life" and the "value of communication among commoners" is one of the preconditions of the modern public sphere.[428] In other words, better deliberative understanding and communication among social actors for their collective good is a significant aspect of the modern public sphere.[429] I focus, therefore, on the significant social and political role of *Ṣūfī*s in bridging the gulf between people in different social strata and in the improvement of the provision of public services to the poor.

I have incorporated maps and tables in this chapter to locate key relevant physical spaces in the city of Baghdad. Table One lists prominent individuals and their endowment activities concerning *Ṣūfī* lodges, while Table Two illustrates *Ṣūfī* attachment to particular *ribāṭ*s. While I do not attempt a numerical analysis, which would be difficult in view of the patchy nature of extant sources on medieval Baghdad's social history, the number of *Ṣūfī*s and *ribāṭ*s shown here evidences the importance and prevalence of Sufism and its vibrant social role in later Abbasid Baghdad. *Ṣūfī* piety encompasses a broad spectrum of activities and attitudes. While relying on *Ṣūfī* and non-*Ṣūfī* biographical and hagiographical literature, this chapter includes among *Ṣūfī*s those who were ascetics, mystics and spiritually revered individuals living in later Abbasid Baghdad.

This chapter (and the next) moves forward my argument on the agency of the common people in medieval Islamic societies by tying it to specific data concerning key *Ṣūfī* figures in Baghdad and their social activism. The data has been gathered from a range of both primary and secondary sources. Of the medieval sources, I have relied mainly on standard – that is to say widely edited and well accessible – works, namely *al-Kāmil fi 'l-taʾrīkh* by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), *al-Muntaẓam fī tarʾīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* by Ibn Khallikān (d.

[428] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 2-3.
[429] Ibid., 3.

681/1282), *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa* by Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī (d. 631/1234), *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya fi 'l-taʾrīkh* by Ibn Kathīr (d. 775/1373), alongside several other works of *tasawwuf*, hagiography and biographical dictionaries. The latter, written by individuals about their contemporaries, companions, intimates or forbears, offer a deep understanding of the learned classes, scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and their activities. The book of Ibn al-Jawzī, a prominent *Ḥanbalī* preacher and a writer from Baghdad, *al-Muntaẓam fī tarʾīkh*, is both a chronography and a biographical dictionary. It provides vital information about important events in the city of Baghdad and about caliphs, viziers, *qāḍī*s, prominent officials, *ʿulamāʾ* and pious and ascetic individuals. Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh* offers multiple accounts of the history of later Abbasid Baghdad. It also gives brief accounts of the lives and the dates of death of prominent personalities such as officials, scholars and *Ṣūfī*s. From the historical evidence offered in these works, along with others in the same genres, I have tried to isolate and hence trace the identities of *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad in relation to their role in the public sphere. I provide a dedicated bibliography for Chapters Four and Five in the end of the latter in order to help the reader to follow the sources I have used.

Maps and tables

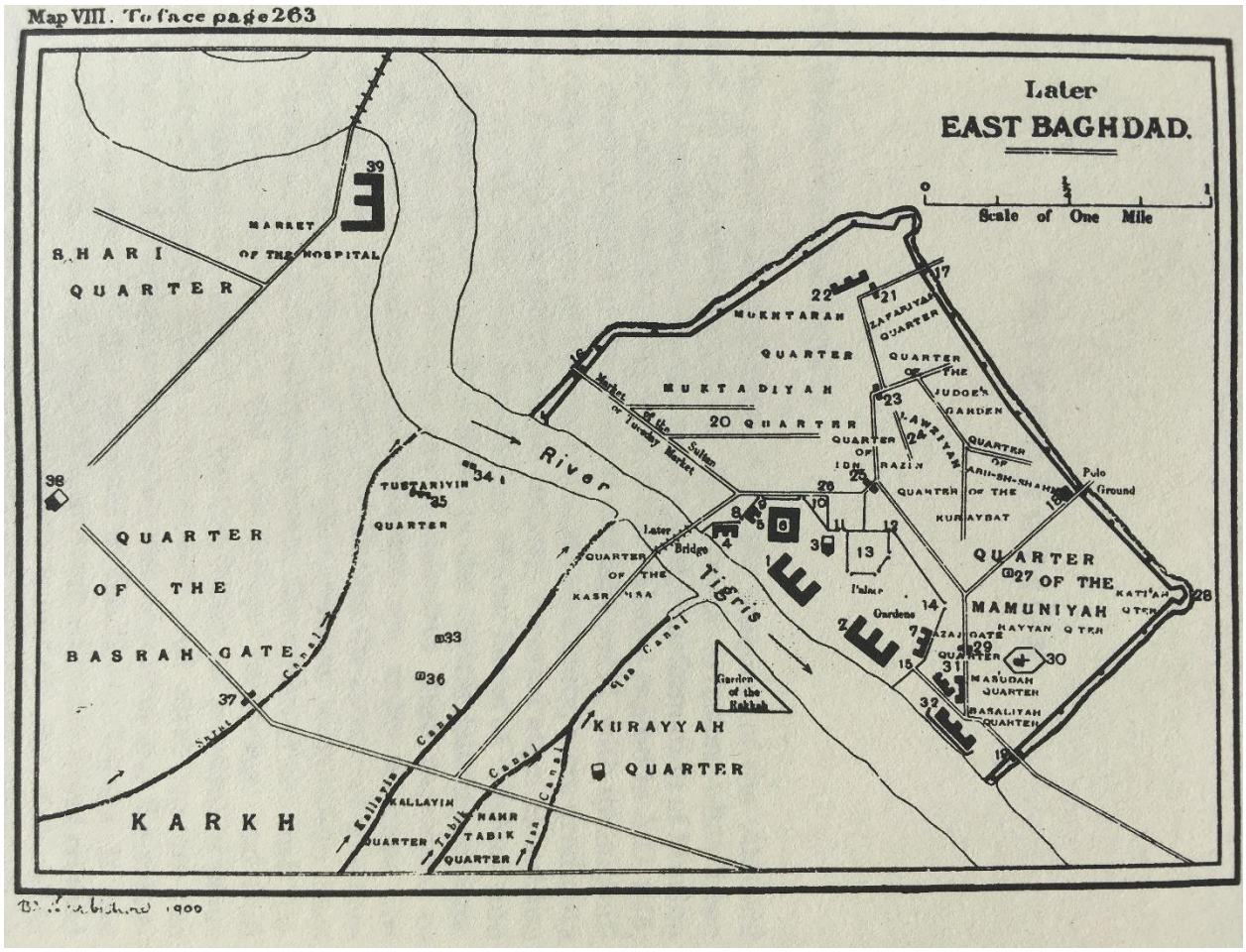
This section introduces very briefly the maps and tables and their use. The accompanying maps of later Abbasid Baghdad indicate the locations of various key buildings and monuments such as mosques, *madrasa*s, palaces and city gates. It is helpful to appreciate the locations of *ribāṭ*s, which existed in considerable numbers in later Abbasid Baghdad. We know much about the *ribāṭ*s from biographical dictionaries and chronicle literature. The two tables provide information about them, their endowers and their locations in the city. Comparing the information about *Ṣūfī*s and *ribāṭ*s in the tables with the locations in the maps helps us to piece together in visual terms the social and public activities of *Ṣūfī*s

of later Abbasid Baghdad. The information about *Ṣūfī*s and their attachment to the *ribāṭ*s in Table 2 helps us to extrapolate the roles of *ribāṭ*s and *Ṣūfī*s in public sphere activities.

Map 1


Map VII. To face page 231
BAGHDAD
between
400 and 700 A.H.
(Buyid Saljuk & Mongol Periods)
Scale of Engl. Mile
NEW BAGHDAD
KARKH
River Tigris
KALWADHA TOWN

Map 2



Maps

Map 1: Baghdad between 400 and 700 A.H. (Buyid Saljuk and Mongol Periods); Map 2: Later East Baghdad. Both taken from G. Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate: From Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources*.[430]

[430] G. Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate: From Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 231, 263.

References to Map 2

1. The Hasani Palace. 2. The Taj Palace. 3. The Mosque of the Caliph. 4. The Mustansiriyah College overlooking the wharf of the needle-makers. 5. Palaces of the Princes. 6. The Rayhaniyin Palace. 7. Palace of the Maydan Khalis. 8. Gate of the Willow-tree. 9. Gate of the Date Market. 10. The *Badr* Gate. 11. The Nubian Gate. 12. The Public Gate. 13. Outer Precincts, with the three Gates called Bab-ad-Duwwamat, Bab Ullayan and Bab-al-Haram. 14. The Garden Gate. 15. Gate of Degrees. 16. Gate of the Sultan (Modern Bab-al-Muazzam). 17. Gate of Khurasan or Bab-az-Zafaraiyah (Modern Bab-al-Wustani). 18. The Halbah Gate and the Belvedere (Modern Bab-al-Talsim). 19. Gate of Kalwadha or Bab-al-Basaliyah, later called Bab-al-Khalaj (Modern Bab-ash-Sharki). 20. Street of Bricks and Darb-al-Munirah. 21. Abraz Gate of Older Wall and Cemetery of the Wardiyah. 22. The Tajiyah College. 23. Archway of the Armourers. 24. Street of the Canal. 25. Archway of the Artificer. 26. The Great Square and the Perfumers' Market. 27. Tomb of Abd-al-Kadir Gilani. 28. The Persian Bastion. 29. The Azaj Gate. 30. The Zandaward Monastery. 31. The Bahaiyah and the Tutushi Hospital in the Tutush Market. 32. The Nizamiyah College, Wharf and Market. 33. The Tomb of Ma'ruf Karkhi. 34. The Barley Gate (Bab-ash-Shair). 35. Palace of Adud-ad-Din, the Wazir. 36. Shrine of Awn and Muin (site of the Modern Tomb of Zubaydah). 37. The Basrah Gate. 38. The Mosque of Mansur. 39. The Hospital of Adud-ad-Dawlah.[431]

[431] Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, 263. The list of references is reproduced from the text.

_Ribāṭ_s in Baghdad from 1000 to 1258 CE

Ribāṭ	**Location**	**Founder/Endower**
Ribāṭ Ibn Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ al-Awwal	Near Dār al-Khīlāfa	Abu 'l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad renowned as Ibn al-Muslima (d. 450/1058)[432]
Ribāṭ al-Zawzanī	Opposite (Caliph) Manṣūr Mosque	Named after ʿAlī ibn Maḥmūd b. Ibrāhīm al-Zawzanī (d. 451/1059)[433]
Ribāṭ Abū Saʿd/*Ribāṭ* al-Kabīr/*Ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*	In the Muʾalla Canal quarter	Abū Saʿd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 479/1086)[434]
Ribāṭ Saʿāda or *Ribāṭ* Saʿādat al-Khādim	On the Tigris near the Bāb al-Ghurba, in East Baghdad[435]	Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Rūmī al-Mustaẓhirī (d. 500/1106)[436]
Ribāṭ al-Urjuwāniyya	In the Alley of Zakhi in east Baghdad	Umm Sālim Hanim Urjuwān (d. 512-513/1118-1119), mother of caliph al-Muqtadī[437]
Ribāṭ Ibn al-Janāza	East Baghdad	Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿĀmirī renowned as Ibn al-Janāza al-Baghdādī (d. 530/1136)[438]
Ribāṭ Bahrūz	Next to the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa in Bāb al-Marātib	Mujāhid al-Dīn Bahrūz al-Ghiyāthī (d. 539-40/1145)[439]
Ribāṭ al-Badīḥ	East Baghdad	Abu 'l-Muẓaffar ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. al-Ḥusayn b.

[432] Mustafa Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' *Sumer*, 10 (1954), pp. 218-49, 245-46.
[433] *The Annals of the Saljuk Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh of ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, trans. by D. S. Richards (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 132, note 35; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Farash ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, vol. 16 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1992), 59.
[434] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 230; Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, 235.
[435] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146, the Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response*, trans. by D. S. Richards, (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 241.
[436] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 249; Eric S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition:* ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī *and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 72, 76. ʿIzz al-Dīn Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Rūmī al-Mustaẓhirī was a *mamlūk* of caliph al-Mustaẓhir (r. 487-512/1094-1118).
[437] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 197, 241; Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 237.
[438] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 317-318; Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 244.
[439] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 46; *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 378; Vanessa Van Renterghem, 'Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad during the Saldjuk Period (mid. Vth/XIth mid. VIth/XIIth c.)', *Waqf of Marmara University Faculty of Theology*, 1 (2011), 1-20 (p. 10).

		ʿAbd al-Ghafār al-Zanjānī (d. 548/1153)[440]
Ribāṭ Thikat ad-Dawlat Abu 'l-Ḥasan	Close to the Azaj Gate on the Tigris bank	Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ad-Duraynī (d. 549/1154)[441]
Ribāṭ	At Azaj Gate	ʿIṣmat Khātūn (536/1141), wife of caliph al-Mustaẓhir[442]
Ribāṭ ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī	Outside the city walls	ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166)[443]
Ribāṭ Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī	On the west bank of the Tigris	Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168)[444]
Al-Kātibah *Ribāṭ*	Near the Palace Mosque Square	Fakhr al-Nisāʾ Shuhda b. Aḥmad b. Abū Naṣr (d. 574/1178)[445]
Ribāṭ al-Darjā	Near the Cistern Arch on the west side of the Tigris	Fakhr al-Dawla Abu 'l-Muẓaffar al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn al-Muṭṭalib (d. 578/1182)[446]
Ribāṭ Khilātiyya or Caliph's *Ribāṭ*	Near the Mosque of al-Manṣūr[447]	Saljuqa Khātūn (d. 584/1188-89), wife of caliph al-Nāṣir[448]

[440] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 238.

[441] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* (Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary), trans. by Mac Guckin De Slane, vol. 1 (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1970), 625-26. Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ad-Duraynī, who was better known by the name of *thikat ad-Dawla* (devoted to the dynasty) al-Anbarī. He was a man of high rank and close to the caliph al-Muktafī, he built a college for *Shāfiʿīs* at the gate of al-Azaj on the bank of Tigris river and close to it a *ribāṭ* for *Sūfī* and endowed a vast property for these two institutions. He was the husband of a famous Katībah (scribe) Shuhda al-Katībah bint al-Ibarī (d. 1178); Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 241-42.

[442] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 108.

[443] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193, the Age of Nur al-Din and Saladin*, trans. by D. S. Richards, (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 162; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 173.

[444] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 170, see note 6; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 150-51; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 180.

[445] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4, 35. As cited in Reem Saud AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods of the Abbasid Caliphate (339-447/950 1055 & 447-547/1055-1152): The Case of Iraq' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2014), 249.

[446] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 290, see note 19. According to Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, Abu 'l-Muẓaffar al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh was buried in his *ribāṭ* "which had a window on the Tigris river". Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī saw it in 645/1247-8, partly encroached upon by the river and threatened with complete ruin.

[447] *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231, the Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*, trans. by D. S. Richards, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 183, see note 32.

[448] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', 236.

Ribāṭ Banafsha/*Ribāṭ* al-Shunīziyya	At ʿĪsā Canal, near the Shunīziyya quarters	Banafsha (Amethyst) (d. 598/1201), concubine of caliph al-Mustaḍī[449]
Ribāṭ/*Ribāṭ* of Fāṭima Raḍiyya	At the Tuesday Market near the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa	Banafsha (Amethyst) (d. 598/1201), concubine of caliph al-Mustaḍī.[450]
Ribāṭ al-Bisṭāmī	On the Tigris west of Baghdad	Abu 'l-Ghanāʾim ibn Muhallabān[451]
Ribāṭ Zamurrud/al-Maʾmūniyya	Maʾmūniyya quarters in east Baghdad	Zumurrud Khātūn (d. 599/1203), mother of caliph al-Nāṣir [452]
Ribāṭ Ibn al-Bul al-Dūrī	Al-Shahzīn quarters at Nahr ʿĪsā, west Baghdad	Abū al-Muẓaffar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Naṣr, renowned as Ibn al-Bul al-Dūrī (d. 611/1214)[453]
Ribāṭ al-Marzubāniyya/ *Ribāṭ* al-Nāṣirī	In the Marzubāniyya neighborhood alongside the Nahr ʿĪsā	Al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (d. 622/1225)[454]
Ribāṭ al-Falak	By the Tigris river	Al-Nāṣir li Dīn Allāh (d. 622/1225)[455]
Ribāṭ al-Fayruziyya	Unknown	ʿĀʾisha, better known as al-Fayruziyya (d.

[449] Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, 79; *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 66. See note 4; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 238; ʿAlī b. Anjab, Abū Ṭālib Tāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtaṣar fi ʿunwān al-tawārīkh wa-ʿuyūn al-siya*, vol. 9 (Baghdad: al-Matba'a al-Siryaniyah al-Kathulikiyah, 1934), 273. Ibn al-Sāʿī has reported this *ribāṭ* as *Ribāṭ al-Shuwanīziyya*.

[450] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 1992, 238. It seems that it was this *ribāṭ* which was later reported by Ibn Kathīr as *ribāṭ* of Fāṭima Raḍiyya (d. 521/1127) and discussed by J. Spencer Trimingham. See ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya fi 'l-taʾrīkh*, trans. by Akhtar Fatih Puri (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1989), vol. 12, 264; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 18.

[451] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 33; *The Chronicle: Part 2, The Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 16. It was built initially for the Baghdadi ascetic and *Sūfī* Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Bisṭāmī (d. 494/1100), Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 112.

[452] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 71; Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 247-48). It was formerly the house of a mamluk (slave) of caliph al-Nāṣir, Sunqur al-Saghir, and was transformed into a ribat and endowed by Zumurrud Khātūn. She endowed *madrasa*s, *ribāṭ*s and mosques. When she went on pilgrimage, "she allegedly spent 300,000 dinars for alms and on repairs of Meccan cisterns and water-supplies." See Renate Jacobi, 'Zumurrud Khātūn', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8209> [accessed 17 September 2018]; Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol. 1, p. 340. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 252-53.

[453] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 240).

[454] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 93; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi: A Sufi Code of Honour* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 26; *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 11. In the Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr, it is reported that *Ribāṭ* al-Nāṣirī or *Ribāṭ* al-Ḥarim al-Ṭahirī was situated in the Ṭahirī Ḥarim neighbourhood, in western Baghdad on the Tigris river.

[455] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 244).

		640/1243), daughter of Caliph al-Mustanjid[456]
Ribāṭ Dār al-Shaṭ	Unknown	*Amīr* ālāʾ al-Dīn al-Ṭubrūs al-Ẓāhirī (d. 650/1252)[457]
Ribāṭ al-Bashīrī	West Baghdad	A concubine of caliph al-Mustaʿṣim (d. 656/1258)[458]
Ribāṭ Dār Susiyān	At Nahr ʿĪsā	*Amīr* Muẓaffar al-Dīn Abu 'l-Fātiḥ Susiyān b. Ayldagi b. Aktagan[459]
Ribāṭ Ibn Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ al-Thānī	West Baghdad	ʿIzz al-Dīn Abu 'l-Futuḥ al-Mubārak b. ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad[460]
Ribāṭ Dār al-Rūm	Mohala (quarter) Dār al-Rūm[461]	Unknown
Ribāṭ al-Ziatīn	Mohalla (quarter) al-Ziatīn at Nahr ʿĪsā in east Baghdad[462]	Unknown
Ribāṭ Raḥba	In the courtyard of the palace mosque at the eastern bank of the Tigris river[463]	Unknown
Zāwiya	Unknown	*Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Ghanī (d. 597/1201)[464]
Zāwiya	Unknown	*Shaykh* ʿAlī ʿAbīd Khabāz (d. 656/1258)[465]

The data in the above table shows that the majority of the *ribāṭ*s mentioned therein were founded during the twelfth century and endowed by members of the ruling elite, such as the caliph al-Nāṣir (r. 575-622/1180-1225) and Zumurrud Khātūn (d. 599/1203). People from less elite backgrounds, such as Fakhr al-Nisāʾ Shuhda bint Aḥmad b. Abū Naṣr (d.

[456] Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtaṣar*, vol. 9, 135-36 also see note 2.
[457] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 243).
[458] Ibid., (p. 239).
[459] Ibid., (p. 242-43).
[460] Ibid., (p. 246).
[461] Ibid., (p. 245).
[462] Ibid., (p. 248).
[463] ʿUmar Ridā Kahhālah, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ fī ʿālamay al-ʿarab wa'l-islām* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1991), vol. 2, 309. It was a well-known *ribāṭ* in Baghdad where Fakhr al-Nisāʾ Shuhda bint Abū Naṣr became renowned as female scholar of *ḥadīth* along with other *fuqahāʾ* and preachers. See Alrudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 187.
[464] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 53.
[465] Ibid., 257. According to Ibn Kathīr, *Shaykh* ʿAlī ʿAbīd had many followers and disciples in Baghdad.

574/1178), were also involved in endowing *ribāṭ*s. This particular woman was the daughter of Abū Naṣr Aḥmad (d. 506/1112), who was a scholar and teacher.[466] While in medieval Islamic societies the social strata are mainly divided between *al-kẖāṣṣa* (the rulers, the elite or the aristocracy) and *al-ʿāmma* (the commoners or masses), it is extremely difficult to be more precise about these two segments of the population as medieval Islamic social hierarchy was a complex phenomenon. There were various social classes such as the rulers, the military elite, the urban religious and merchant notables, the urban poor, the non-Muslims, peasants and slaves.[467] While the ruling elite were involved in establishing and patronising *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s, wealthy individuals, *Ṣūfī*s themselves and members of the general public were also engaged in establishing these *ribāṭ*s. For example, the *ribāṭ* of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was founded by members of the *Ḥanbalī* community.

*Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad from 1000 to 1258 CE

Name	**Date of Death**	**Attached/resided with (in) *Ribāṭ***
Abu'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nisābūrī	441/1049[468]	*Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī
ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī	442/1050[469]	Unknown
Staytīyyaḥ bint al-Qāḍī Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Bajlī	447/1055[470]	Unknown
ʿAbd Allāh al-Baradānī	461/1069[471]	Unknown

[466] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 625.
[467] M.A.J. Beg, 'al-Khāṣṣa wa 'l-ʿĀmma', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4228> [accessed 21 September 2019]
[468] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 108.
[469] Khidr Jasmin al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs (1055-1160 A.D.) with Special Reference to Baghdad,' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1970), 291.
[470] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, 412. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 192.
[471] George Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdad Parts III, IV & V (Aldershot, Brookfield: Variorum, 1990), 33-34.

Abū Saʿd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad	479/1086[472]	*Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī and the *Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Abu ’l-Ḥasan al-Bisṭāmī	493/1100	*Ribāṭ* al-Bisṭāmī[473]
ʿAbd al-Razzāq	493/1100	*Ribāṭ* of ʿAttāb/ *Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī [474]
Ardashīr b. Manṣūr al-ʿAbbādī	495/1101	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*[475]
Abu ’l-Maʿāli al-Sāliḥ	496/1103[476]	Unknown
Abū Bakr ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad	497/1104[477]	Unknown
Abū al-Muʾayyad al-Ghaznawī al-Wāʿiz	500/1106	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*[478]
Abū Bakr al-Alāthī	504/1110[479]	Unknown
Aḥmad al-ʿArabī	512/1118[480]	Unknown
Abū as-Saʿd al-Mukharrimī	513/1119[481]	Unknown
Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf Abū Ghālib al-Naubanjanī	513/1119[482]	Unknown
Abu ’l-Futūḥ al-Isfarāyīnī	516/1122	*Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya[483]
Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad al-Ghazālī	521/1127[484]	Unknown
Fāṭima Razia	521/1127	*Ribāṭ*/ *Ribāṭ* of Fāṭima Raḍiyya
Ḥammād ibn Muslim al-Dabbās	525/1131[485]	Unknown
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Habīb al-Amīrī	530/1136[486]	*Ribāṭ* ibn al- Janāza [487]

[472] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 230. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, 1992, 235. In *al-Muntaẓam* the death date is 477/1084-85.
[473] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 33; Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 112.
[474] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 33.
[475] Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni ‘Ulama’ of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 72.
[476] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 75.
[477] Ibid., 82.
[478] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 72.
[479] Ibid., 145.
[480] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 188; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 174. In *al-Muntaẓam*, he is called Aḥmad al-Qazwīnī, and the death date is 513/1119.
[481] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 54.
[482] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 174.
[483] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 241.
[484] Ibid., 268.
[485] Ibid., 289; Ibn al-Jawzī, vol. 17, 1992, 266.
[486] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 331.
[487] Jawad, ‘Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya’ (p. 244). Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 317-18.

Wajīh al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī	531/1137	*Ribāṭ* Saʿāda or *Ribāṭ* Saʿādat al-Khādim [488]
Abū Saʿd Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Saʿd	542/1146	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh* [489]
Abu 'l-Qāsim Ṭāhir ibn Saʿīd ibn Abi Saʿīd ibn Abi 'l-Khayr al-Mihanī	542/1147	*Ribāṭ* al-Bisṭāmī[490]
Abu 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Muẓaffar ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Muslima ibn *Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ*	542/1147[491]	*Ribāṭ* Khilātiyya or Caliph's *Ribāṭ*
ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥasan al-Qassār	542/1147	Al- Kātibah *Ribāṭ*[492]
al-ʿAbbādī	547/1152[493]	*Ribāṭ* Banafsha/*Ribāṭ* al-Shunīziyya
Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abi Ghālib, known as Ibn al-Ṭalāya	548/1153[494]	Unknown
Kāmil b. Sālim b. al-Ḥusayn Abū Tamām al-Takrītī	548/1153	*Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī[495]
Abu 'l-Muẓaffar ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Ghafār al-Zanjānī	548/1153	*Ribāṭ* al- Badīḥ[496]
Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ghaznawī	551-1156	*Ribāṭ* built by ʿIṣmat Khātūn for al-Ghaznawī.[497]
Abu 'l-Waqt al-Sijzī	553/1158[498]	*Ribāṭ* Bahrūz
Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Ṭalḥa	556/1161[499]	Unknown
Ṣadaqa ibn Wazīr,	557/1162[500]	Unknown

[488] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 72, 74; See Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn* (A Sufi Rule for Novices), trans. by Menahem Milson (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1975), 11 where the name is Umar bin Muḥammad and death date is 532/1138.

[489] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 11; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 50.

[490] Ibid., 16; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 59.

[491] Ibid.; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 61.

[492] Al-Baghdadi, *Dhayl ta'rīkh Baghdad*, vol. 1, p. 340. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 249-50.

[493] Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, 79.

[494] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 66.

[495] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 93.

[496] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 238).

[497] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 108.

[498] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 75.

[499] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 131.

[500] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 154; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 12, 322; Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmi, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, trans. by Ahmad Ali Shah (Lahore: Shabir Brothers, 2002), 535.

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī	561/1166[501]	*Ribāṭ* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī
Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī	563/1168[502]	*Ribāṭ* Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī
Muḥammad al-Fāriqī	564/1169[503]	Unknown
Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān *al-Ṣūfī*	575/1180	*Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī[504]
Shaykh āla al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī	577/1181	*Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya[505]
Fakhr al-Dawla Abu 'l-Muẓaffar al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn al-Muṭṭalib	578/1182[506]	*Ribāṭ* al-Darja
Abū al-Barakāt al-Anbarī	577/1183[507]	Unknown
Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm	580/1184[508]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
ʿAbd al-Ghanī	583/1187[509]	Unknown
Ibn al-Mannī	583/1187	*Ribāṭ* Thikat ad-Dawlat Abu'l-Ḥasan[510]
Shaykh Abu Yaʿqūb al-Shīrāzī	585/1189	*Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya[511]
ʿAbd al-Mājid al-Miṣr	591/1194	*Ribāṭ* Umm al-Nāṣir.[512]
ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad	596/1200[513]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Dārī	600/1204[514]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān al-Hamadhānī	605/1208	*Ribāṭ* Banafsha/*Ribāṭ* al-Shunīziyya[515]

[501] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 162.
[502] Ibid., 170, see note 6; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 150-51.
[503] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 182; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 1992, 186.
[504] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 269.
[505] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 248.
[506] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 290.
[507] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 72. During the last days of his life, he abstained from teaching and lived an ascetic life in his home in isolation.
[508] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*,109; *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 303.
[509] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 53; Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 305.
[510] Megan H. Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29, 61, see note 13. It seems that Ibn al-Maanī resided in the *Ribāṭ Thikat ad-Dawlat* as it was close to the Bab al-Azaj; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 91.
[511] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4, 403. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 248.
[512] Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol. 1, 340. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 253.
[513] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 110.
[514] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 82.
[515] Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 9, 273.

Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allāh	607/1210[516]	Unknown
Muʿīn al-Dīn Abu 'l-Futūḥ ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Abi Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Amīn, ibn Sukayna	608/1211[517]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Abu 'l-Thanā al-Naʿāl	609/1212	*Ribāṭ* Thikat ad-Dawlat Abu 'l-Ḥasan[518]
Abū al-Badr al-Nafīs ibn Hilāl *al-Ṣūfī*	611/1214	Al- Kātibah *Ribāṭ*[519]
Aḥamd ibn Abi'l-Faḍayl ʿAbd al-Munʿim ibn Abi 'l-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir ibn Saʿīd ibn Faḍl Allāh ibn Saʿīd ibn Abi 'l-Khayr	614/1217	*Ribāṭ* Khilātiyya/ Caliph's *Ribāṭ* [520]
Asad al-Suhrawardī	614/1217[521]	Unknown
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-*Ṣūfī*	616/1219[522]	Unknown
ʿAbd al Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā al-Zubaydī	620/1223	*Ribāṭ* Banafsha/*Ribāṭ* al-Shunīziyya [523]
Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Hibat Allāh ibn al-Mukarram	621/1224[524]	Unknown
Qamar al-Dīn ibn Abi al-Badr	621/1224	Al-Kātibah *Ribāṭ*[525]
Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī	632/1234[526]	*Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī, *Ribāṭ* al- Marzubāniyya, *Ribāṭ* al- Maʾmūniyya [527]
Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī	635/1237-1238	*Ribāṭ* al-Marzubāniyya[528]

[516] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 154. He was a Baghdadi *amīr*, a *Ṣūfī*, a lawyer and a *Ḥadīth* scholar.
[517] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 110; *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 156, 157.
[518] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 61, see note 13. It seems that al-Naʿāl resided in the *Ribāṭ Thikat ad-Dawlat* as it was close to the Azaj Gate; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 91. In *al-Bidāya* the name is Maḥmūd b. ʿUthmān b. Makaram al-Naʿālī al-Ḥanbalī.
[519] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4. 322. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 250.
[520] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 183, see note 32.
[521] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 75.
[522] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 335.
[523] Ibn al-Dubaythī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, 234. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 249.
[524] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 172.
[525] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4. 748. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 250.
[526] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 382.
[527] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 97-98.
[528] Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 249.

ʿUthmān b. Sulaymān	636/1238[529]	Unknown
Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq	635/1238[530]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Shaykh Bahāʾ al-Dīn Abū Ṭālib ibn al-Yazdī	639/1241	*Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya[531]
Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Razzāq	644/1246[532]	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*
Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar ʿAlī b. Nayyar	656/1258	*Ribāṭ* of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*/*Ribāṭ* al-Maʾmūniyya[533]
Shaykh ʿAlī ʿAbīd Khabāz	656/1258	*Zāwiya*
Abu 'l-Ḥayyān ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Tawḥīdī[534]	Unknown	Unknown
Yūsuf ibn al-Malīh[535]	Unknown	Unknown
Shaykh Abū Bakr ibn Zahrā the *Ṣūfī*.[536]	Unknown	Unknown
ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Abu 'l-Jaysh al-Ḥanbalī	Unknown	*Ribāṭ* Dār Susian[537]
Abū Ṣaliḥ Naṣr b. ʿAbd al-Razzaq b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī	Unknown	*Ribāṭ* Dār al-Rūm[538]
Shaykh Ḥasan al-Nīshāwrī *al-Ṣūfī*	Unknown	*Ribāṭ* al-Ziatīn[539]
Ibn al-Kawwāz al-zāhid (the son of a potter)[540]	Unknown	Unknown
Jawharah bint al-Dawāmī[541]	Unknown	Unknown

As it is evident from the data in Table 2, a great number of *Ṣūfī*s were attached to various *ribāṭ*s founded by the elite and the non-elite. The table also shows that a significantly high number of *Ṣūfī*s were attached to the *ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*. The *ribāṭ*s such as *Ribāṭ*

[529] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 335.
[530] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 111.
[531] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Ḥawādīth al-jāmiʿah*, 9. 134. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 248.
[532] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*,111.
[533] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Ḥawādīth al-jāmiʿah*, 285. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 252. According to some sources the *ribāṭ* already existed but was repaired and renovated by the Zumurrud Khātūn as it was damaged by floods.
[534] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 50, see note 2.
[535] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval* Islam, 123); *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 75.
[536] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 75.
[537] Jawad, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya' (p. 243).
[538] Ibid., (p. 245).
[539] Ibid., (p. 248).
[540] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 31.
[541] Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol. 1, 200. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 200.

al-Zawzanī and *Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya were also popular in the city. Among the *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad were *ḥadīth* scholars, ascetics, and charitable and putatively saintly figures. Some were teachers and preachers of excellent repute, such as the mystics Ardashīr b. Manṣūr al-ʿAbbādī and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. There were *Ṣūfī*s who were highly revered as both mystics and scholars, such as Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī. Others belonged to the ruling elite, such as Abu 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Muẓaffar ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Muslima ibn Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ (chief of chiefs). He had become a *Ṣūfī* and resided in a *ribāṭ* or *khānqah,* which is a residential lodge.[542] There were also some *Ṣūfī*s who were designated as directors of *ribāṭ*s and as heads of *waqf* properties, for example Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad, who was *shaykh* of the *Ribāṭ* Khilātiyya or the Caliph's *Ribāṭ,* and managed its endowments.[543] Among the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad were ascetics such as al-Baradanī (d. 461/1069), who was engaged in knowledge dissemination.[544] There were some *Ṣūfī*s whose attachment with *ribāṭ*s is unclear. On the other hand, there were also *Ṣūfī*s who were not attached to any *ribāṭ* at all. There was thus a wide variety of *Ṣūfī* practitioners in later Abbasid Baghdad involved in public life in one way or another.

Baghdad of the later Abbasid caliphate

Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasid caliphate was founded in the year 145/762 by the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775). Since its founding, the city played a significant role in the religious and scholarly activities of the empire. It became a productive locus for scholars of exoteric traditions but also attracted those involved in spiritual and mystical disciplines. The coming of the Seljuks (r. 429-590/1038-1194) in the eleventh century as military lords of the Abbasid Empire significantly affected the religious, social and political landscape of the empire. Under Seljuk rule, much of the urban land of Iraq

[542] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam,* vol. 18, 61; *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193,* trans. by Richards, 16.
[543] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 183, see note 32.
[544] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts III, IV & V, 33-34.

was endowed as part of religious institutions aiding the welfare of *Sunnī* Muslims.[545] This meant in effect that innumerable religious and social institutions, such as colleges, mosques, *Ṣūfī* lodges, hospitals and caravansarais, were established in Baghdad. These social, religious and educational institutions in turn attracted many people from both contiguous and distant areas, and the flourishing city of Baghdad became a magnet for diverse migrant communities. The proliferation of religious institutions such as *madrasa* and *ribāṭ* provided the Seljuks with religious and ideological legitimacy,[546] while simultaneously opening avenues to the religious elite, the *Ṣūfī*s and the *ʿulamāʾ*, to contribute to the Baghdadi public sphere.[547] The famous Andalusian traveler, Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217), visited Baghdad in the year 580/1184, and in his travelogue he mentions several *madrasa*s and hospitals run as endowed properties. According to his account, at the time, Baghdad had passed its glory days and many areas were in disrepair.[548] Baghdad had gone through a spell of floods and also suffered many wars due to which many buildings were partially or entirely damaged, yet at the close of the twelfth century, the city had a dynamic topography with many mosques, palaces and *ribāṭ*s.[549] There arose a culture of establishing charitable organizations, and large areas of lands were donated as endowments to religious and social institutions that provided the *Ṣūfī*s with modes through which they could participate in public sphere activities as scholars, preachers, *shaykh*s, administrators, and as *futuwwa* leaders.

***Ribāṭ*: a social and religious space**

There were two types of *Ṣūfī* institution: the incorporeal social institution of the master-disciple relationship (*tarbiyya, irshād, ṣuḥba*), meant to encourage correct Islamic

[545] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 118.
[546] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 32.
[547] Renterghem, 'Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad', 5.
[548] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. by R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Darf Publishers, 2003), 226-27, 238-39.
[549] See Renterghem, Renterghem, 'Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad'.

behaviour. This was the means by which the *Ṣūfī shaykh* could guide his disciples in their personal and professional life. The *Ṣūfī shaykh* not only transferred his religious knowledge and practices to his disciples, but also transmitted professional or recreational craft and trade (*ṣinā'āt*) knowledge, alongside spiritual training.[550] "Although informal, the ties between master and disciple in Sufism have a substance and concreteness as significant as such formal and legally recognized institutions as guilds, pious endowments (*waqfs*) and mosque-universities (*madrasa*s)."[551] Through this institutional practice, *Ṣūfī*s transferred particular practices and disciplines to their disciples and also inculcated innumerable members of society into the *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s. The second type of institution was the physical institutions of the *madrasa*, the mosque and the *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*/*khānqāh*. These institutions were endowed by the wealthy ruling elite of the city.[552] Through these tangible institutions, particularly *ribāṭ* and *madrasa*, *Ṣūfī*s worked in the public sphere. In Baghdad, from the second half of the eleventh century, through the efforts of *Ṣūfī*s such as *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abu Sa'd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 479/1086), 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) and Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168), *Ṣūfī ribāṭ* emerged as a "socio-religious space" alongside the mosque, *madrasa* and public pulpit.[553] These *ribāṭ*s became places where not only food and shelter were provided to the poor but also sound religious and spiritual education and training. Many *murīdīn* (sing. *murīd*, disciple) or students immigrated from other districts and countries to join these *Ṣūfī* lodges. For example, Ḥammād ibn Muslim al-Dabbās (d. 525/1131), who came to Baghdad from *Raḥbat al-Shām* (probably the name of a village), later became a *Ṣūfī* with many followers in Baghdad. Many prominent *shaykh*s and *Ṣūfī*s, such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, were his

[550] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 28.
[551] Dale F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, 'The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities', *Arch. europ. social.*, I (2000) (p. 100).
[552] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 28-29.
[553] Ibid., 33.

disciples.[554] The foundation of *ribāṭ*s such as the *Ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, *Ribāṭ* Saʿādat al-Khādim and *Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya is a clear indication of the process by which Sufism moved from the margins of ascetic life to become a central part of the religious and social order in Baghdad, and contributed to the public sphere.

Ribāṭ: a space for education and learning

While discussing the role of *ribāṭ*s in the public sphere, the following sub-subsection examines the *ribāṭ*s of later Abbasid Baghdad that emerged as public spaces for the use of a broad sector of society—teachers, students, *Ṣūfī*s, scholars—for learning and teaching activities side-by-side with spiritual training.

Ribāṭ: a house for scholars, preachers, *Ṣūfī*s and commoners

Many well-known *Ṣūfī*s, preachers, scholars and aspiring students from various areas of the Islamic world visited Baghdad and often lived in *madrasa*s and *ribāṭ*s to learn, teach and preach. Some *Ṣūfī*s residing in *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s delivered public lectures in mosques, *madrasa*s, public squares and *ribāṭ*s. Women had their separate *ribāṭ*s, as is discussed below.

From the following examples, we are able to deduce how these *Ṣūfī* lodges provided space to scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* for their activities that were beneficial to the people in their religious learning and ethical training. When Abu Naṣr ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm (d. 514/1120), son of Abu ʻl-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), came to Baghdad in 469/1077, he held *majālis al-waʿẓ* (assemblies for public exhortation) in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa and the *ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, and many people benefited from his reforming lectures. The learned men of Baghdad "unanimously agreed that they had never

[554] Abu ʼl-Ḥasan al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahjat al-asrār: Ahwal-o-aasar Seyedna Ghos-e-Azam Jilani*, trans. by Ahmad Ali (Lahore: Shabir Brothers, 1999), 494.

heard a preacher like him."[555] These preaching sessions were useful to the public at large for their religious, ethical and moral development. The *ribāṭ*s provided lodging to students and scholars alike. For example, Abū al-Wakt as-Sijzī (d. 553/1158) from Herat (in present-day Afghanistan) came to Baghdad and resided in Bahrūz *Ribāṭ* and continued his teaching and learning activities in Baghdad until his death.[556] *Ribāṭ*s accommodated people belonging to different walks of life, such as Yaʿqūb, the secretary (d. 547/1152). According to Ibn al-Athīr he had been a resident of Niẓāmiyya Madrasa,[557] while for Ibn al-Jawzī, he was called *al-khattāt*, the calligrapher, and he died in the *Ribāṭ* Bahrūz.[558] From Ibn al-Jawzī's report, it may be assumed that while residing in the *ribāṭ*, Yaʿqūb might have shared his knowledge and expertise with *Ṣūfī shaykh*s and other residents of the *ribāṭ*. It also shows the relationship between the early development of Islamic calligraphy and the role of *Ṣūfī*s and *ribāṭ*s. Muslims of diverse levels of religious learning, belonging to varied social classes, were engaged in religious, devotional, educational and social activities carried out in the precincts of the *ribāṭ*s.

Public places such as *ribāṭ*s and mosques played an essential role in the public life of Muslims in medieval Islamic societies. Daniella Talmon-Heller discusses the role of the mosque in the Muslim community's educational and spiritual well-being and the role of the community of believers in its foundation. She argues that "Muslims of diverse level of religious learning could and did engage in the devotional and educational activities carried out in the precincts of the mosque, whether patronised 'from above,' or initiated 'from below.'"[559] As far as initiation from below was concerned, it could be argued that

[555] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 154; *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 193.
[556] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 171.
[557] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 54.
[558] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 89.
[559] Daniella Talmon-Heller, 'Religion in the Public Sphere: Rulers, Scholars, and Commoners in Syria under Zangid and Ayyubid Rule (1150-1260)', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 56.

people belonging to the common folk not only sought the establishment of institutions such as mosques, *madrasa* and *ribāṭ*s for their spiritual and ethical upbringing but also contributed to the foundation of these institutions. In the case of the *ribāṭ*s, it was not only the elite who endowed them, but commoners also contributed; for example, the pious individuals of *Ḥanbalī* community who donated funds for the *ribāṭ* and *madrasa* of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[560] The commoners' participation in the foundation of public spaces such as mosques and *ribāṭ*s shows that whole social strata took part in activities beneficial to the people.

***Ribāṭ* libraries: spaces for religious and intellectual development**

During the later Abbasid period, *ribāṭ* libraries emerged as a public space where *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ* and commoners could meet to discuss religious, intellectual and social issues. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, during this period there were *khānqāh*s having libraries, such as the *Sumaisaṭ khānqāh* in Damascus, which had many books endowed by a *Ṣūfī*, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Masʿūdī al-Bandāhī (d. 584/1188).[561] Al-Bandāhī also delivered lessons free of cost there. There are examples from other areas of the Islamic world where *ribāṭ*s were founded and equipped with libraries. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, Abu'l-Maʿālī al-Marwazī (d. 539/1145) was a charitable person and a man of devotion. He built a *ribāṭ* in the city of Marv (in present day Turkmenistan) and endowed many books to the *ribāṭ* as a permanent *waqf* (trust).[562] The autonomous role of *Ṣūfī*s such as that of al-Bandāhī in the *khānqāh* shows that *Ṣūfī*s used their agency in

[560] Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2000), 180.

[561] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 3, 99-100; It was called *Sumaysāṭiyya khānqāh*, was formerly the palace of the Umayyad ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d. r. 717-720), and was bought by a *Ṣūfī*, *ḥadīth* scholar and astronomer, *shaykh* ʿAlī al-Sumayāṭī (d. 453/1061), who left it as an endowment for his disciples. It subsequently emerged as the most important *Ṣūfī khānqāh* in Syria during the Ayyubid and Mamluk period, when its *shaykh* was known as *shaykh al-shuyūkh*. See Daphna Ephrat and Hatim Mahamid, 'The Creation of Sufi Spheres in Medieval Damascus (mid-6th/12th to mid-8th/14th centuries)', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2015), 189-208, (p. 197).

[562] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 375-76.

transforming *Ṣūfī* lodges into public spaces for religious and ethical training of the people, thereby constituting a significant part of the common good in medieval Islamic societies.

From the twelfth century onward, local endowed libraries emerged in Egypt and Syria. These libraries not only accommodated learned scholars and *ʿulamāʾ* but "the holdings of such libraries catered also for wider groups of readers in society and played a considerable role in the popularization of reading practices."[563] Significantly, these libraries were not just confined to *madrasa*s and mosques, but existed also in other institutions such as hospitals, *Ṣūfī* lodges and mausoleums.[564] An excellent example is the Ashrafīya Mausoleum library in Damascus. Originally a mausoleum of al-Malik al-Ashraf (d. 635/1237), the Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, it was endowed by the ruler himself. The mausoleum was not just the resting place of the ruler, through having the library it supported scholarship as well. It was "not an enclosed and restricted space. Rather its reading space expanded beyond the typography of its immediate neighbourhood and into the wider typography of Damascus where its books circulated."[565] In Baghdad, the Umm al-Khalīfa Mausoleum may have had such a space for reading, as we have an example of an officer, ʿIzz al-Dīn (n.d.), endowing 500 volumes to the Umm al-Khalīfa Mausoleum.[566] These local libraries offered books to those poor or ordinary people who were unable to purchase them. They could read the books in the library or they could borrow.

There were also some *ribāṭ*s equipped with libraries in later Abbasid Baghdad. Some *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s endowed their books to *ribāṭ*s. It is likely that some of these *ribāṭ*s, such as *Ribāṭ* al-Maʾmūniyya, had a rich collection of books. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-

[563] Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 124.
[564] Ibid., 135.
[565] Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus, Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Libray: The Ashrafiya Library Catalogue* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 95.
[566] Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 136.

Baghdādī (d. 629/1231), who became a well-known teacher, studied a book on grammar, *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* by Ibn as-Sarrāj (d. 316/929), in the *Ribāṭ* al-Maʾmūniyya.[567] The availability of such important works and the visitation of well-known scholars to the library reveal its significance as a centre for knowledge dissemination, learning and discussion. In the year 589/1193, caliph al-Nāṣir ordered the building of a library in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa at Baghdad and bestowed thousands of valuable books on it. At the same time, caliph al-Nāṣir founded the *Ribāṭ* al-Marzubāniyya/*Ribāṭ* al-Nāṣirī, one of the most beautiful *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad in respect of its architecture as Ibn al-Athīr tells us. It was endowed with many valuable books.[568] At the time of the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 656/1258 there were 36 public libraries in Baghdad. These were attached to mosques, *madrasa*s, *Ṣūfī* lodges and mausoleums such as the Umm al-Khalīfa Mausoleum mentioned above. These libraries "made scholarship more accessible to the masses."[569] The above discussion shows that both elites and not-elites worked for the provision of learning spaces for the latter.

These *ribāṭ*s with libraries provided a public space for discussion and learning for the scholarly, for the *Ṣūfī* community and for anyone who visited them. Among the later Abbasid caliphs, caliph al-Nāṣir himself was a *mujtahid* (authoritative interpreter) of all four *Sunnī* orthodox schools of law. He founded *ribāṭ*s with a good number of books and supported *madrasa*s, *ribāṭ*s and orthodox learning in general. He also "added public meetings and debates at *Ṣūfī* convents to the repertoire of activities in the public sphere. This ingenious meeting point of the college and the convent could have had tremendous consequences for the trajectory of Islamicate development."[570] Libraries in the *ribāṭ*s

---

[567] George Makdisi, *The Rise Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 86.
[568] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 11.
[569] Violet Moller, *The Map of Knowledge: How Classical Ideas Were Lost and Found: A History in Seven Cities* (London: Picador, 2019), 79.
[570] Said Amir Arjomand, 'Transformation of the Islamicate Civilization: A Turning-point in the Thirteenth Century', *Medieval Encounters,* 10 (2004) (p. 225).

provided a space for religious and intellectual discussion and debates that were beneficial to Baghdadi literary society, and were beyond the sphere of influence of the endower or founder of the *ribāṭ*s. It can also be assumed that these discussions intersected with other *Ṣūfī* activities in the *ribāṭ*s relevant to the religious and spiritual good of the people. Moreover, these scholarly activities converged with other cultural and public activities where the illiterate public was involved.

***Ribāṭ*: a space for the needy and the poor**

*Ribāṭ*s attracted and accommodated those who disseminated religious knowledge and education but also provided shelter to the needy, the underprivileged, the unemployed and the poor peasantry.

***Ribāṭ*: an accommodation for the *fuqarāʾ* and needy students and scholars**

In medieval Islamic societies, *Ṣūfī*s worked in the public sphere when they provided food to the needy and the destitute. The provision of food to the needy was regarded as a social responsibility, and a pious act enjoined on every Muslim.[571] The *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, while fulfilling this religious and pious duty, welcomed the needy and the poor into the *ribāṭ*s and provided them with food and shelter.[572] For *Ṣūfī*s, mainly this act of "providing meals could be a means of solidifying bonds with followers and transferring *Baraka*, or God-given blessings." Some of these providers gained renown in the historical and biographical sources "as paragons of selflessness and service."[573] For example, Muḥammad ibn al-Sakrān (d. 667/1268-69), the "son of the drunkard", was an ascetic *Ṣūfī*, who worked his land near the Ruṣāfa neighborhood of Baghdad, and also founded a charitable *ribāṭ* there for the needy, travellers, fuqarāʾ (sing., *faqīr*, the materially-impoverished dervish) and other *Ṣūfī*s. In the words of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (cited by Reid):

---

[571] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 100.
[572] Ibid., 102.
[573] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 100.

> He lived in this district from the beginning of his life and worked his land himself, sharing with travellers whatever it yielded. Then he constructed a place where the poor could seek shelter, and thus it remained for a time. Eventually, the place was rebuilt for him as a convent (*ribāṭ*). He cultivated next to this a garden, planting it with date palms and other trees, which he bequeathed as an endowment for the needy. Then a group of virtuous people joined forces with him, each one lending a hand in the tilling, and the productivity [of the place] ceased to be his burden alone.[574]

From his story, it is revealing that there were *Ṣūfī*s who were not getting help from rulers or the wealthy class, and who were themselves helping the poor, the needy and their fellow *Ṣūfī*s in their *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s.

During the late twelfth century, the *ribāṭ* of one of the colleagues of the *Ḥanbalī shaykh* Ibn al-Mannī (d. 583/1187), Abu 'l-Thanā al-Naʿāl (d. 609/1212), was a popular destination for scholars and the needy. Al-Naʿāl was a preacher and well reputed ascetic in Baghdad who was noted for his friendly and kind behaviour towards people. His *ribāṭ*, "though dishevelled on the outside, was filled with both mendicants and jurists, many of whom had travelled to see Ibn al-Mannī."[575] Ibn al-Mannī was a *Ḥanbalī shaykh* who taught many *Ḥanbalī* scholars of law and *ḥadīth*. He was so well reputed that students from all over the Middle Eastern Islamic world visited his *ribāṭ* for learning and blessings from the *shaykh*.[576] He deliberately chose a life of ascetic piety.[577] Though he lived a life of asceticism, he was so beneficial to the people that visitors came from far-off lands for knowledge and blessings. From this example, we can see how *Ṣūfī*s transformed their

---

[574] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Kitāb al-Ḥawādīth*, p. 397. As cited by Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 100, see note 12.
[575] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 29, 61, see note 13.
[576] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 29.
[577] Ibid.

*ribāṭ*s into spaces to which needy students, scholars and spiritual wayfarers were attracted.[578] From the above discussion, it can be discerned that the *ribāṭ*s of later Abbasid Baghdad were not only a source of shelter and food for the poor and the needy but also for students of religion and spirituality. The above data significantly support the argument that *Ṣūfī*s had autonomous agency in the public sphere. While using their agency, they transformed the *ribāṭ*s, basically for spiritual purposes, into a public space where the needy and poor could obtain food and shelter.

***Ribāṭ*: a shelter for poor peasants and for the unemployed**

The *ribāṭ*s as charitable institutions helped some of those who were in dire need of food and shelter, in both urban and rural areas, especially those who were direct and indirect victims of wars and natural disasters. For example, the people of Baghdad and its surrounding countryside suffered when the armies of Prince Muḥammad, son of *Sulṭān* Maḥmūd II (r. 512-525/1118-1131), and *amīr*s (military commanders) attacked Baghdad in 1148-49: they plundered the countryside, and many families fled, eventually finding refuge in Baghdad.[579] After the security situation improved, some returned to their plunder-stricken areas while others stayed permanently in the city. It can be discerned that many of those who settled in the city relied on charitable institutions such as *ribāṭ*s.

During the later Abbasid period, under the military rule of the Seljuks, both rural and urban classes suffered at the hands of extortionists—officials, tribal leaders and tax-collectors. Peasants had to flee to other areas to escape miserable conditions in rural areas, in pursuit of a better life; some of them found shelter and regular food in *Ṣūfī* lodges.[580] Though Baghdad provided many opportunities for skilled individuals seeking jobs and

[578] Daphna Ephrat, 'Religious Leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Saljuk Baghdad', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 45.
[579] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 23-24, 26.
[580] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 195; Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 103.

professions, a large number of people still remained unemployed. Among these was a large contingent of soldiers who were dismissed from their posts whenever military rulers changed. After the demise of Buyid rule (r. 333-447/945-1055), many soldiers were fired from their roles. Many of these soldiers became *ʿayyār*[581] (pl. *ʿayyārūn*, paramilitary chivalric bands), and it is likely that some of these dismissed or retired soldiers, and many of those who were unemployed, joined *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s or took refuge in the mosques.[582] During these times of crisis, *ribāṭ*s such as *Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī and Saʿādat al-Khādim provided shelter and food to the needy and to those who were otherwise socially marginalized through loss of wealth, social status or profession.

The above discussion shows that the government played little or no role in providing shelter and food to the poor and the needy. This negligence allowed *Ṣūfī*s to use their agency in the public sphere. Significantly, the above data shows that emphasis regarding the provision of public services and maintenance of social order shifted from the government to the social and religious organizations led by the *Ṣūfī*s.

*Ṣūfī*s as *ribāṭ shaykh*s and administrators, and their involvement in political corruption

Sufism is not a perfect system but a human one that tries to channel piety and to direct it towards God. At the same time, it is a social activity, so there will be corruption, and there will be problems as it has its hierarchy. It is a complex phenomenon. In chapter 11 of his book *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deceptions), Ibn al-Jawzī criticised the Sufism of his age which, according to him, contradicted the earlier "pure Sufism", which was asceticism.

[581] *ʿAyyār*. (pl. Persian, *ʿayyārūn*; Arabic, *ayyarun*) "is a term used historically to refer to a member of the paramilitary chivalric bands that constituted an important element in premodern Islamic society, primarily in the pre-Mongol Middle East (the Mashriq) and the Eastern Iranian lands." See F. Taeschner, 'ʿAyyār', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0927> [accessed 21 November 2019]

[582] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 273.

He criticized officials and individuals involved in the foundation of new *ribāṭ*s which they built with ill-gotten money. He criticized the comfortable ambiance of the new *ribāṭ*s with baths and gardens, and *Ṣūfī*s who enjoyed married life there. According to Ibn Jawzī, earlier *Ṣūfī*s ate little and fasted much, but contemporary *Ṣūfī*s were overeating. He disliked laziness and mendacity in the *Ṣūfī*s of his period, qualities that contravened *sharīʿa*.[583]

The flourishing of *ribāṭ*s and endowed institutions also involved some *Ṣūfī*s in corruption and embezzlement. Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 614/1217), the *Ṣūfī shaykh* of caliph's *ribāṭ*/ *Ribāṭ* Khilātiyya in Baghdad was a pious man.[584] According to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī and Abū Shama, "Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad's father was chief *shaykh* and head of the *Ṣūfī*s at Baghdad. Aḥmad was *shaykh* of the Khilātīyya hospice and administered its endowments. He ended his life in disgrace due to his slave embezzling some money and the involvement of his own sister."[585] From this report, we can assume that the *Ṣūfī* Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad did not care about endowed funds and properties, though they were for the welfare of the *Ṣūfī* community and other *ribāṭ* relevant public works, such as for feeding the poor.

From another example we can understand how after the twelfth century there were *ribāṭ*s where corruption and personal political and material profiteering by the administrators occurred. Yūsuf ibn al-Malīh (a contemporary of al-Mārdīnī, who died in 602/1206, was a *Shāfiʿī* jurist and *Qurāʾn* expert who taught law at Niẓāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad and resided in the same institution. After some time, he became weary of the politics of the *madrasa*, and took up residence at a *ribāṭ*. Again after some time, he left the *ribāṭ* because "he then grew wary of the food of endowments, so he shut himself away

[583] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Farash Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deceptions) (Birmingham: Dar as-Sunnah, [n.d.]), 270-506, 274, 288-92, 411-12.
[584] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 183.
[585] Ibid., see note 32.

in his house where he ate, accepting no benefaction (*birr*) from sultans whatsoever."[586] There could be many reasons why he left the *ribāṭ*. It might have been that the administration of the *ribāṭ* was corrupt, or that the *ribāṭ* administrators were not mindful of the needs of the poor and the vendors working there, or that the *ribāṭ* had become a place of iniquity. So it can be argued that some *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s became places where the administration became involve in the corruption. The ruling authorities and *ribāṭ* officials, even *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s, used these establishments, which were significant social institutions, for their own personal material and political benefits. Those *Ṣūfī*s who became involved in corruption did not contribute to the public sphere; rather they preferred to serve the private or the official sphere. We can also see that there were *Ṣūfī*s who played an essential role serving the public good through endowed institutions. There were also *Ṣūfī*s who were more concerned with the family sphere than the public sphere, as in the case of Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad mentioned above.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that in later Abbasid Baghdad, *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ*, the rulers and the commoners were all involved in the public sphere through endowed *Ṣūfī* lodges. *Ṣūfī*s' activities as *shaykh*s of *waqf*-based *ribāṭ*s were autonomous activities beyond the official sphere. It would be fair to say that *Ṣūfī*s as *shaykh*s of the *ribāṭ*s created a public space for people's education and training. They accommodated the needy and the underprivileged in the *Ṣūfī* lodges in the absence of state-sponsored institutions. Though the *madrasa* was a place contributing to the education of Muslims, the *ribāṭ* was of even more central importance because it accommodated those lay members, poor and irregular students who could not get a place in the *madrasa*; besides, it also provided shelter and home to the poor and the needy. These *ribāṭ*s were a working part of the public sphere. *ʿUlamāʾ* of the contemporary period largely welcomed *Ṣūfī*

[586] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 123.

involvement in the public sphere, while there were a few *ʿulamāʾ*, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, who were critical of *Ṣūfī* involvement in the public domain.

To further understand the role of *ribāṭ* in the public sphere, the section below explores the idea that some pious and *Ṣūfī* women of Baghdad contributed to the public good through their charitable activities. They endowed lodges not only for *Ṣūfī*s' religious and spiritual activities, but also for pious, ascetic and needy women.

Ṣūfī, pious and charitable women and their roles in the public sphere

I have already given a brief sketch of pious and *Ṣūfī* women in Chapter Three under the rubric of "Women and the Public Good" where I alluded to women's involvement in religious, social and intellectual activities that were beneficial for common people in medieval Islamic communities. In this section, I argue that some specific women of Baghdad, belonging to both elite and non-elite sectors of society, contributed to the public sphere as they endowed *ribāṭ*s where the religious, spiritual, material and intellectual needs of the people were met. Moreover, some women engaged in scholarly activities relevant to dissemination of religious knowledge, specifically for the benefit of other women.

Charitable women and the funding of *ribāṭ*s for *Ṣūfī*s, scholars and the needy

As table 1 shows, pious and charitable women founded almost nine *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad during the period under discussion. These women mainly belonged to the royal house. For example, *Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya was built by Urjuwān (d. 512-513/1118-1119), mother of caliph al-Muqtadī (r. 468-487/10751094), on the tip of the Zakhi road. It was one of the largest and most popular *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad.[587] Another *ribāṭ*, close to the Azaj

[587] Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ al- ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*, ed. by Mustafa Jawad vol. 4 (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafah wa-al-Irshad al-Qawmi, 1965), 403; Jamal al-Dīn Abi Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Maḥmūdī ibn Ṣābūnī, *Takmilat ikmāl*

Gate, was founded by ʿIṣmat Khātūn (d. 536/1141), wife of caliph al-Mustaẓhir (r. 487-512/1094-1118). According to Ibn al-Jawzī, the preacher and *ḥadīth* scholar ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ghaznawī (d. 551/1156) supervised this *ribāṭ*.[588] The *ribāṭ*s endowed by women of royal household were managed by *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* who were involved in the dissemination of religious and spiritual knowledge. Banfasha ("Amethyst") (d. 598/1201), the concubine of caliph al-Mustaḍī (r. 565-576/1170-1180), was very charitable towards *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and the poor. Ibn al-Athīr reports that she endowed *ribāṭ*s and mosques in Baghdad and also had a bridge constructed there.[589] According to Ibn al-Jawzī, she founded a *ribāṭ* especially for women, and at the inauguration she distributed money among the audience. It was entrusted to the sister of the *Ṣūfī* Abū Bakr, *shaykh* of the *Ribāṭ* al-Zawzanī.[590] Another *ribāṭ*, the *Ribāṭ* al-Maʾmūniyya, the largest among the coeval *ribāṭ*s, receiving huge donations, was chiefly endowed by Zumurrud Khātūn (d. 599/1202-03), the mother of caliph al-Nāṣir. It attracted many *Ṣūfī*s of contemporary times, who, after leaving their old residential *ribāṭ*s, settled in this newly constructed spacious establishment. According to al-Samʿānī, "most of the *Ṣūfī*s arrived and resided at the *Ribāṭ al-Maʾmūnīyya* which was built by the mother of our honourable master al-Imām al-Nāṣir."[591] The above examples of charitable women support the idea that women belonging to the ruling elite contributed to the public sphere, as they endowed *ribāṭ*s which facilitated the contributions or benefits of *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ*, preachers and students; these *ribāṭ*s provided a space for learning activities to the common people. Moreover, the above data show that women belonging to the Baghdadi ruling elite

al-ikmāl fi al-ansāb wa al-asma wa-al-alqāb, ed. by Mustafa Jawad (Baghdad: Matba'a al-Majma al-Ilmi al-Iraqi, 1957), 309.

[588] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 108; AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 189.

[589] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 66, see note 4.

[590] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 238.

[591] Al-Samʿānī, *Dhayl ta'rīkh Baghdad*, 188. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 251.

supported *Ṣūfī*s' activism in the public sphere while endowing *ribāṭ*s for various types of purpose—the provision of food, dissemination of religious knowledge, intellectual discussions, shelter for the poor, and for the spiritual purposes.

We have examples in the primary sources of pious and learned women belonging to the commoners' ranks in society also contributing to the public sphere through the endowment of *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad. The best example is Fakhr al-Nisā Shuhda bint Aḥmad b. Abu Naṣr, better known as *al-Kātibah*. According to Ibn Khallikān, "By her learning she acquired an extensive reputation and ranked among the first scholars of the age; she wrote a beautiful hand and instructed great numbers in the Traditions, which she had received from the highest authorities: thus connecting the traditionists of the rising generation with those of the past."[592] This information about Shuhda reveals that she achieved fame and reputation as a scholar because of her learning. She was wife of Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ad-Duraynī, who after marrying her "rose in the world till he became the favourite of al-Muqtafī (r. 1136-1160)."[593] Though she was married to a person of eminent rank, she got a good reputation through learning, as Ibn Khallikān tells us. It was mentioned earlier that it is difficult to draw a clear line between the *al-khāṣṣa* (elite) and *al-ʿāmma* (commoners) in medieval Islamic societies, as many people belonging to the educated middle class and artisans fell into the category of commoners.[594] Nevertheless, she had a *ribāṭ* built known as al-Kātibah *Ribāṭ* beside her house in the Palace Mosque square. She donated one of her gardens, Dibājī Garden, as *a waqf* to the *ribāṭ*. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (cited by al-Rudainy) mentions in his book, in the biography of *Shaykh* ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Khawarī (n.d.), the transaction process relating to the *waqf* deed between al-Khawarī and Shuhda, according to which he

[592] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 625.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Caterina Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*. ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 294.

was responsible for purchasing the fruit crops of the Dibājī Garden which was reserved as *a waqf* for the *ribāṭ*.[595] From this example, one may note how commoners such as Shuhda were involved in the vital process of *ribāṭ* endowment, and contributed to the educational activities useful for fellow "commoners". These *waqf* based institutions were key to the public good in medieval Islamic societies. As Armando Salvatore argues in the above-mentioned quotation, the *waqf* secured interpersonal contributions in the key areas of "educational" and "charitable" activities.[596] Charitable women belonging to both the ruling elite and the "commoners" significantly contributed to the public sphere by endowing *ribāṭ*s where *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* imparted religious and spiritual knowledge for the benefit of the public.

It is very useful to be aware that women, who were not usually seen in public if high-born, nevertheless sponsored *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s and other institutions of learning such as *madrasa*s. The concept of helping people is manifested in women's endowments of institutions in which they were not even going to be involved or play any role. This shows the selflessness on the part of the charitable women, and also how deeply the concept of helping people permeated Islamic culture. It was all about spreading their resources for public use.

Women's *Ṣūfī* lodges for pious learners, the needy and poor women

There existed female *Ṣūfī* lodges in Baghdad where pious, ascetic and *Ṣūfī* women preached and accommodated needy and poor women. Among these lodges, the *ribāṭ* of Fāṭima Raḍiyya (d. 521/1127) was the best known.[597] According to Ibn Kathīr, Fāṭima bint al-Ḥusayn was a preacher and *ḥadīth* scholar, and female *darwī*sh (members of a

[595] See Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ majmaʿ*, vol. 4, 35. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 249.
[596] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 153.
[597] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 18.

religious fraternity) would visit her *khānqāh*.[598] Ibn Kathīr does not mention which sectors of society these *darwī*sh women belonged to. By reason of the scarcity of available information regarding women in the biographical dictionaries, it is difficult to state with certainty whether these *ribāṭ*s were for female *Ṣūfī*s who were solely attached for the spiritual practices and religious knowledge or whether they were spaces for poor and needy women. However, it can be assumed that these were the endowed *ribāṭ*s for the welfare of the poor and for widows rather than lodges catering solely to female *Ṣūfī*s.[599] Some pious women not only contributed to the founding and funding of *ribāṭ*s, they also held learning councils and worked as effective preachers within the *ribāṭ*s. For example, ʿAmmāt al-Islām al-Mubārakaḥ (n.d.) had a *ribāṭ* in the Ẓafarīyya area of Baghdad, where she would preach and counsel.[600] In the absence of any state-sponsored institutions for the religious knowledge of needy and poor women, these female *Ṣūfī* lodges provided a public service to them. From an eleventh-century diary of Ibn al-Bannāʾ of Baghdad we know that there were charitable *madrasa*s for girls, but there were very few, for example, *Shaykh* Ajall Abu 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Riḍwān (d. 474/1081), the *Ḥanbalī* wealthy merchant founded a school for girls in Baghdad and appointed Abū Ṭālib al-ʿUkbarī (d. 461/1068) as a teacher there.[601] Through the female *Ṣūfī* lodges, charitable and *Ṣūfī* women played a significant role in the public sphere, as their activities were for the religious, spiritual and financial wellbeing of other women. It is significant to note that it was the limited or nonexistent role played by the government in providing for women's religious and financial good that prompted pious and *Ṣūfī* women to create these public spaces in the form of female *Ṣūfī* lodges.

---

[598] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 12, 264.
[599] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 126.
[600] Kahhālah, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ*, vol. 3, 257-58.
[601] George Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, Parts I & II (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 258, see note 1.

The role of pious, ascetic and *Ṣūfī* women in scholarly and preaching activities

Some *Ṣūfī*, pious and learned women contributed to the public sphere while disseminating religious knowledge and ethical values through their preaching and scholarly activities. Among these pious women, some were poets as well, such as Jawharaḥ bint al-Dawāmī (n.d.), who was an ascetic, *Ṣūfī* poetess, scholar and preacher.[602] Another selfless, pious and spiritual woman, Khadīja bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 460/1067), known as *al-Shiḥjāniyya*, was one of the celebrated preachers in Baghdad. She accompanied *Shaykh* Abā al-Ḥusayn ibn Samʿūn (n.d.) in preaching.[603] From the example of Khadīja bint Muḥammad, it seems that some pious women were not only learned but also that they preached parallel with male preachers. Moreover, it can also be concluded that women attended those preaching sessions in person: there is evidence in the primary sources that women in Baghdad were present in preaching sessions and learning councils (*majālis al-ʿilm*) delivered by male preachers, scholars, *fuqahāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (cited by AlRudainy) informs us about an occasion when a large number of women attended a learning session in Baghdad, and they received their lessons side by side with men though seated in separate circles.[604] From this report, it can be deduced that most of the women who attended these learning councils were poorer women or women belonging to non-elite sectors of society who did not have resources to hire teachers in their homes. From another example of a female scholar and pious woman, Umm al-Bahāʾ Zaynab bint Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī (d. 610/1213), it can be discerned that *Ṣūfī* women were active in preaching. According to al-Mundhirī, she was a famous preacher in Baghdad and of sufficiently scholarly calibre that she delivered her sermons in the *Ṣūfī* House,[605] although

[602] Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol. 1, 200. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 200.
[603] AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 187.
[604] Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, vol. 8. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 185.
[605] Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol. 2, 281. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 190.

the source does not provide more detail about the *Ṣūfī* House where she preached. These *Ṣūfī*s and pious learned women were busy in the dissemination of religious knowledge and spiritual and ethical values. Staytīyyaḥ bint al-Qāḍī Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Bajlī (d. 447/1055) was another noted ascetic woman of Baghdad who was an authority on the subject of Sufism and was a narrator of *ḥadīth*.[606] There are also records of women engaged in preaching in other areas of the Islamic world. For example Ibn al-Jawzī (as cited by Salamah-Qudsi) tells us that al-Māwardiyya of Basra (d. 466/1073) "used to write and read and preach to women."[607] From the above examples it can be extracted that women held spiritual assemblies and learning councils where they could share their spiritual and religious experience with their fellow women and also could provide religious and spiritual guidance to their female students.[608] These examples also show that *Ṣūfī* and pious women used their agency to preach religious knowledge to other women.

As far as religious agency is concerned, it contributes to shaping and forming the structures of society, and particularly of the religious institutions, whereby actors could follow their own choice, and act and participate in the gradual transformation of society and institutions.[609] Individuals and groups use their religious agency to "transform" the society or religious institution, meaning that their actions or activities bring changes to the shape, form or appearance of that society or institution.[610] Keeping in mind this definition of religious agency, we can see how *Ṣūfī*s in later Abbasid Baghdad used their agency to transform the institution of the *ribāṭ*s into a public place for the wellbeing of the common people. The *Ṣūfī*s and pious women also significantly contributed to the

[606] Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, 412. As cited in AlRudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods', 192. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, 353.
[607] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa*, vol. 4, p. 26. As cited by Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 78.
[608] Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 78.
[609] Laura M. Leming, 'Sociological Explorations: What is Religious Agency?', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48 (2007), 73-92 (p. 74).
[610] Ibid.

public sphere when they used their religious agency to participate in the dissemination of religious knowledge. Muslim women from the *al-ʿāmma*, such as Shuhda, also succeeded in placing themselves within the broader framework of knowledge dissemination in social institutions through the endowment of *ribāṭ*s. In particular, Muslim women found ways to express their agency in urgent matters, such as distribution of religious knowledge among the women, and to help impoverished women as well.

In summary, the above discussion demonstrates that *Ṣūfī* and pious *Ṣūfī* women contributed to the public sphere in a variety of ways. They not only endowed *ribāṭ*s for the religious, spiritual and mystical activities of men but also for poor and needy women. In the absence of any government-funded institution for the learning of women, *Ṣūfī* women preached and disseminated religious knowledge to mainly those women who were from the non-elite backgrounds. It is pertinent to note that pious and *Ṣūfī* women belonging to the common people contributed to the public sphere as they were connected with endowing *ribāṭ*s, disseminating religious knowledge and "commanding good and forbidding evil". The activities of these women are not always as visible in the sources as those of their male counterparts, but clearly they were part of the vibrant public spheres that existed in later Abbasid Baghdad.

Shaykh al-shuyūkh **of Baghdad and his role in the public sphere**

So far this chapter has focused on the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad and their activities in the public sphere; the following section will examine the roles of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Baghdad in that sphere, where I argue that the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* constructed spaces for the common good while having a productive relationship with the ruling elite.

I deal with the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* and his institution, the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, separately from *Ṣūfī*s in general because the locus of *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* played a specific role in the social, religious, cultural and political matters that were beneficial for

common people. Below I provide a list of the chief *Ṣūfī*s of a specific area of Baghdad (not explicitly mentioned in the sources) from 442/1050 to 656/1258.

1. Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Dūstzādā al-Nisābūrī (d. 441/1049)
2. Abū Saʿd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Dūstzādā al-Nisābūrī (d. 477/1084)
3. Abū Saʿd Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Saʿd (d. 541/1146)
4. Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (d. 580/1184)
5. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf (d. 596/1200)
6. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Abi Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Amīn, known as ibn Sukayna (d. 608/1211)
7. Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 635/1238)
8. Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Razzāq, who held the post from 635/1238 to 644/1246
9. ʿAlī b. Nayyar, who held the post from 1246 until his execution (along with other public notables) by the Mongols in 656/1258.[611]

The title of *Shaykh al-shuyūkh*

The details regarding the title and duties of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in Baghdad are sketchy. The role of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* seems to have first appeared during Ayyubid (r. 566-648/1171-1250) and Mamluk (r. 648-923/1250-1517) rule, when the office-holder was responsible for controlling the practice of Sufism, and his role was more political than spiritual.[612] Louis Massignon was of the view that the office of *mashāyikhat al-shuyūkh* (chief of the *Ṣūfī*s) of Baghdad was established by the vizier Ibn al-Muslima in 437/1045 "in order to keep liaison between the city's *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s and the administration as well, ostensibly, to oversee the pious endowments (*awqāf*) which sustained them."[613] It seems that during the Seljuk period in Baghdad the title was honorific as there is no traceable evidence that the office-holder was in a position to control mystical activities in the city.[614] According to Daphna Ephrat, the first ever *Ṣūfī*s to be given the title of *shaykh as-*

[611] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 108-11.
[612] E. Geoffroy, 'Shaykh', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6890> [accessed 21 November 2019]
[613] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 107-08.
[614] Renterghem, 'Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad' (p. 10), see note 38.

Ṣūfīyya or *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of a specific locality were the *Ḥanbalī Ṣūfī* ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 371/981) and his disciple Abū al-Ḥasan az-Zawzanī (d. 451/1059). However, when *Ashʿarī Ṣūfī* Abū Saʿd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 477/1084) became the *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, the title was officially recognized, and the title holder became the director of the *awqāf,* overseeing the foundation of *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s in Baghdad. Thus "the creation of the office may be seen as a part of the broader process of the institutionalization of Sufism, which began in the eleventh century and formed the basis for the appearance of the *Ṣūfī* fraternities in subsequent centuries."[615] It is likely that the first chief *Ṣūfī* was Abū Saʿd Aḥmad al-Nisābūrī who built the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* in Baghdad.[616] Abū Saʿd Aḥmad was followed by Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl (d. 541/1146), ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Saʿdr (d. 580/1184), ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad (d. 596/1199), and Ibn Sukayna (d. 607/1210).[617] It is difficult to know whether, after the death of Ibn Sukayna, the office of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Baghdad remained within the Nisābūrī family.[618] However, the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* continued to play an important role in religious, spiritual and social domains. What follows here is a discussion centring on the work of the chief *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, who were involved in various religious, spiritual, intellectual and social activities. Having collaborative relationships with the ruling authorities, they played a significant role in the public sphere when the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* became a locus for social and religious activities during the latter Abbasid era.

***Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*: a lodge for teachers, preachers and *Ṣūfī*s**

The *Ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* provided lodging to various scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* who visited Baghdad for teaching and preaching activities. Such a preacher was Abu 'l-

[615] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 167-68.
[616] Hofer, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Sufi" in Egypt' (p. 10).
[617] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 169.
[618] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 168-69; Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 111.

Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Yaʿlā al-ʿAlawī (d. n.d). He came to Baghdad in 516/1122, resided at the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* and gave public lectures at the Qasr Mosque (Palace Mosque), Tajiyya and the *Ribāṭ* Saʿāda. The *Ḥanbalī*s received him very well. He accepted a considerable amount of money from them, as had been agreed with them,[619] though details of the agreement are not available in the sources. After al-ʿAlawī, came another preacher and *ʿālim,* Abu 'l-Futūḥ al-Isfarāʾinī (d. n.d.), who also took residence at the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* and preached in the same places as well as in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa in 516/1122. Caliph al-Mustarshid (r. 512-529/1118-1135) attended his *majlis*[620] (sessions for teaching or discussion) and was impressed by his teachings and entrusted him the *Ribāṭ* al-Urjuwāniyya.[621] From the examples above, it can be concluded that the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* welcomed attendees irrespective of their school of thought or creed. Though the *ribāṭ* was putatively an anti-*Ḥanbalī* bastion,[622] a *Ḥanbalī* preacher resided there. The public lectures given by these scholars and *Ṣūfī*s were of various types and were beneficial to ordinary people, as most of them were open to the public at mosques, *ribāṭ*s and in open grounds. For example, The *Ashʿarī Ṣūfī* scholar Abū al-Muʾayyad al-Ghaznawī al-Wāʿiz (d. 499/1106) (the preacher), while settling in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, had a *majlis* for the instruction of the Arabic language and grammar in the Qasr Mosque.[623] In medieval Islamic societies, "grammar was always an important part of education. It was learned especially in order to better understand scripture."[624] Thus to give a public lecture on grammar was very beneficial to members of the public. These lectures were attended by both elite and non-elite people, as evidenced by a report

---

[619] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 241.
[620] According to George Makdisi, "the term majlis, therefore, originally meant the position assumed by the professor for teaching after first having performed the ritual prayer in the mosque. It was then used, by extension, to apply to all sessions wherein the activity of teaching or other learned discussions took place, and later to a number of activities." See Makdisi, *The Rise Colleges*, 10-11.
[621] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 241.
[622] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 230, see note 150.
[623] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 72.
[624] Makdisi, *The Rise Colleges*, 214.

about two scholars by Ibn Khallikān, who reveals that both elites and lower classes would attend these lectures. In a rivalry between Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn Thābit al-Thamānīnī (d. 442/1051), a professor of grammar, and Abu'l-Qāsim ibn Barḥān (d. n.d.), it seems that they both gave public lessons at al-Karkh, the suburb of Baghdad. "[T]he course of the latter was frequented by persons of rank and respectability, whilst that of al-Thamānīnī was only attended by persons of the lower class."[625] The public lecturers such as that of al-Thamānīnī were particularly helpful to the ordinary poor people for their basic education as they could not afford to attend *madrasa* or to hire teachers at their homes. It is evident from the above examples that the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* accommodated preachers and scholars whose public lectures in Baghdad were beneficial to the common people for their basic religious knowledge.

Some of the chief *Ṣūfī*s themselves were excellent scholars and teachers. For example, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Abi Aḥmad (d. 608/1211), better known as Ibn Sukayna, was a *Ṣūfī* with many qualities and virtues. According to Ibn Kathīr, who mentions that he was among '*abdāl*',[626] he listened to *ḥadīth* devotionally, consumed much of his time in this holy activity, and conducted *majālis* for *ḥadīth* in different cities.[627] He also had an "excellent hand", was the author of some fine poetry, and enjoyed the status of a scholar of jurisprudence.[628] From this report, it also appears that he was an excellent calligrapher and a celebrated literary figure. Thus, enjoying various qualities, he was able to interact with ordinary people through the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, which had become a public place. As the *ribāṭ* was home for the scholars, the *Ṣūfī*s and others, so it is most

[625] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 379-80. Al-Thamānīnī's surname was ad-Darīr ('the blind', because he suffered that infirmity). He had great talent as a grammarian.
[626] *Abdāl* (sing. *badal*, 'substitute') is "one of the degrees in *Ṣūfī* hierarchical order of saints, who, unknown by the masses (*rijāl al-ghayb*), participate by means of their powerful influence in the preservation of the order of the universe." See I. Goldziher and H. J. Kissling, 'Abdāl', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0132> [accessed 21 November 2019]
[627] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 88.
[628] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 156-57.

likely that the chief *shaykh* shared his expertise and virtues with those who visited the *ribāṭ*, as further corroborated by Daphna Ephrat's view that the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* was a centre of religious education and learning.[629] The chief *Ṣūfī*s contributed notably in the public sphere as the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* accommodated those *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ* and preachers who were involved in the dissemination of religious knowledge and education – activities which constituted a substantial part of the public good in medieval Islamic societies.

***Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*: a tolerant space for scholarly activities**

The *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* provided a tolerant atmosphere for those who were involved in teaching and learning activities. As has already been mentioned, when Abū Naṣr, son of Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, visited Baghdad in 469/1077, he gave a lecture at the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*. His lecture in Niẓāmiyya Madrasa became a source of disturbances between the *Ashʿarī*s and *Ḥanbalī*s in which many people were killed. The reason was "his zealous attachment for the doctrines of al-Ashari led him into a controversy with the Hanbalites on points of faith."[630] According to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (cited by Peacock), one *Ḥanbalī* preacher used inflammatory terms about the intolerant environment of Niẓāmiyya Madrasa: "This madrasa which al-Tusi—meaning Nizam al-Mulk—has built is a madrasa which corrupts Muslims' religion and it should be knocked down and destroyed."[631] On the other hand, there is no direct evidence that Abū Naṣr's lecture in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* caused any disturbances. From the above discussion one can speculate that the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* as an anti-*Ḥanbalī* bastion could accommodate and provide shelter to those who were caught in the crossfire between the

[629] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 167-68; Hofer, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Ṣūfī" in Egypt' (p. 11). According to Hofer it was "an educational site that was, along with the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa, a major center of study and instruction in *Ashʿarī* theology."
[630] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 155.
[631] A. C. S. Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 271.

two groups, the *Ḥanbalī*s and *Ashʿarī*s, during the riots and disturbances with an understanding that those who were provided shelter were innocent.

From another example, we can discern the role of the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* in welcoming scholars and teachers belonging to different schools of thought and thus in providing a tolerant and conducive environment for learning. A *Ṣūfī* preacher, the *Ashʿarī* Ardashīr b. Manṣūr al-ʿAbbādī (d. 494/1101), settled in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa, where he held his *majlis waʿz* (assembly for public exhortation) attended by *Ṣūfī*s, scholars, students and commoners.[632] He soon left the *madrasa* and settled in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, and continued to preach in one of the prayer grounds outside the city.[633] It is not clear from the sources why he left the *madrasa* and took residence at the *ribāṭ*. Yet it can be assumed that the *ribāṭ* had a tolerant environment or space where everyone was treated well.

There question arises why many scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and preachers resided in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*. The answer can be traced to the fact that as the chief *shaykh* was the head of the *waqf* endowment of the *ribāṭ*s of the specific area of the city,[634] so the residents of the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, under his courteous supervision and powerful authority, would be treated well. The above discussion demonstrates that the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* played the role of a bridge among scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and the commoners who visited it. It is also significant that the chief *Ṣūfī*s shaped the public sphere as they converted their *ribāṭ* into a public place for scholarly, religious and educational activities.

***Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*: *samāʿ*, *Ṣūfī* wayfarers and commoners**

The *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* at Baghdad provided a space for *Ṣūfī* concerts open to *Ṣūfī* wayfarers and non-*Ṣūfī*s alike. The chief *shaykh*s used to hold *samāʿ* (devotional *Ṣūfī*

[632] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 268-69.
[633] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 72.
[634] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 167.

music; a *Ṣūfī* concert) sessions where *Ṣūfī*s gathered and listened to sacred music and participated in sacred dance. Ibn al-Athīr reports that in the year 600/1204, a group of *Ṣūfī*s gathered in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* and held a *samāʿ* session. During the *samāʿ*, a *Ṣūfī*, Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Dārī (d. 600/1204) died on account of the potency of his ecstatic vision of God. He was a follower of the chief *shaykh* Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm.[635] This story reveals that the chief *shaykh* had followers and disciples in the city, and that he facilitated sessions and meetings of *Ṣūfī*s. These *Ṣūfī* sessions provided spiritual welfare to *Ṣūfī* wayfarers. ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī claims that *samāʿ* offers many benefits to the *Ṣūfī* wayfarer: it protects the soul and heart against sin, and also from weariness and despair that appear on account of many mundane matters.[636] These sessions brought together many individuals and lay members who participated for the enjoyment of the music and ecstatic dance available there.[637] Also, many ordinary people attended these *Ṣūfī* sessions to receive *baraka* (spiritual or sanctifying power) of the *Ṣūfī*s. Some participated in the *dhikr* (remembrance of God; recollection of God's presence) assemblies. Nehemia Levtzion argues that in medieval Islamic societies, many ordinary people attended *Ṣūfī* gatherings to obtain relief from their mundane anxieties.[638] These *Ṣūfī* gatherings, including those at the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, provided a social and spiritual venue to the Baghdadi people. The *Ṣūfī* way of life did not encourage strict isolation from city life but rather to become part of it and its administration, its gratifications and its delights. "The flexible grid also kept the Sufi type of brotherhood more porous to the informal interference and contribution of the external social world."[639]

---

[635] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 82.
[636] Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif-u'l-maʿārif*, trans. by H. Wilberforce Clarke (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 2001), 49-50.
[637] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 12.
[638] Nehmia Levtzion, 'The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 113; Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 127-128.
[639] Babak Rahimi and Armando Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks within the Urban-Rural-Nomadic Nexus of the Islamic Ecumene', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*. ed. by Salvatore, 267-68.

From the above discussion regarding *Ṣūfī* behaviour and rituals, we may ascertain with confidence that the chief *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, while providing a religious, spiritual and social space to *Ṣūfī*s and commoners alike, contributed to a remarkable degree to the public sphere, as this space brought religious, spiritual and psychological benefits to attendees. The chief *ribāṭ* was a place encouraging social integration, and it played an important role as a public sphere institution. *Ṣūfī*s used their autonomous agency in the public sphere to transform the *ribāṭ* into a public space for cultural activites such as *samāʿ*.

***Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*: a hope for the persecuted**

The *ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* was not only a centre of religious, educational and charitable activities but it was also a source of shelter and protection to those who feared the ruler and his officials. The chief *shaykh*s were ready to help those who came to them for help. Ibn al-Athīr relates that the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abū Saʿd "was a man of lofty aspiration, full of supportive zeal for any who sought protection with him."[640] The powerful Seljuk *Sulṭān* Malik Shāh (d. 485/1092) said about the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abū Saʿd: "we thank God who brought Abu Saʾd's head out from a Sufi's patched cloth. Had he produced it from a *qabaʾ*-coat, we would all have been done for!."[641] This report shows the extent to which members of the ruling elite were respectful towards the chief *shaykh*.

The *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* provided shelter to people who feared persecution by rulers, as in the case of ʿAdud al-Dīn (n.d.), the son of Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ. When Quṭb al-Dīn Qaymāz (n.d.), the senior and powerful *amīr* of Baghdad, ordered ʿAdud al-Dīn to leave the city, he took shelter in the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*, where the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm gave him protection.[642] According to Ibn al-Athīr, Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm was "a unique [figure] of his time, having combined

[640] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 230.
[641] Ibid., 231.
[642] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 227.

leadership in both secular and religious matters. He was a refuge for anyone in fear, righteous, generous and mild. He was a man of many virtues."[643] Whether this act of giving refuge was a public service or not, this incident should be seen within the context of contemporary political practices. From the available sources, we learn of a rivalry between the caliph al-Mustaḍī (r. 565-576/1170-1180) and Quṭb al-Dīn Qaymāz for political power in Baghdad. In 568-569/1173-74, ʿAdud al-Dīn was ordered by Quṭb al-Dīn to leave the city against the wishes of the caliph, who wanted to make him his vizier. Earlier, in 566-567/1171-72, the caliph had dismissed ʿAdud al-Dīn because Quṭb al-Dīn had forced him to do so.[644] Though the caliph was at the side of ʿAdud al-Dīn , he was too weak in the presence of Qaymāz to do anything for ʿAdud al-Dīn. However, the chief *shaykh* gave him protection. This shows the importance and power of the *shaykh* of the chief *ribāṭ*. The angry city mob later expelled Quṭb al-Dīn Qaymāz, and his house was looted and destroyed.[645] One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the chief *shaykh* was providing shelter and protection to those who were unjustly persecuted by the ruling authorities, or was supporting the caliphs against the *amīr*. Because of the complex nature of the relationship of chief *shaykh*s with the caliphs, it is difficult to give a satisfactory answer to this question. However, it can be ascertained that ʿAdud al-Dīn was caught in the contest of power in Baghdad between the caliph and a powerful *amīr*. In this case, it could be declared a public service to give shelter to those who had apparently not done anything wrong, as the *amīr* had wanted him out of his way due to his hunger for power. In this case, the chief *shaykh* provided ʿAdud al-Dīn with refuge in a spirit of support, which he deserved, and without which he would have suffered. Another possible explanation of the above story could be a personal rivalry between the sacked vizier and the powerful *amīr*. In the case of personal rivalry, it is difficult to argue

[643] Ibid., 303.
[644] Ibid., 201.
[645] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 227, 238-39.

that the chief *shaykh* provided a public service to ʿAdud al-Dīn. In any event, the importance of the chief *shaykh* and the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* in the religious and political affairs of the city cannot be ignored, as they provided shelter to the terminated vizier against the wishes of a powerful *amīr*.

***Shaykh al-shuyūkh* in the governmental sphere**

The chief *Ṣūfī*s were involved in certain welfare activities in the governmental sphere. Among the chief *shaykh*s, Ibn Sukayna was a charismatic figure who for some time had been a supervisor of the ʿAdudī Hospital.[646] However, after some time he gave up this position and concentrated only on *ribāṭ* matters.[647] It is not clear whether the caliph al-Nāṣir ordered him to head the affairs of the hospital or that the *shaykh* himself chose to undertake the duty, or whether he was paid for this job or it was voluntary. However, it could be assumed that the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* did not wish to continue as a hospital administrator because of a fear of potential blame attached to involvement in political and financial corruption. When deciding whether or not to take on governmental services, *Ṣūfī*s had in their minds the fear of corruption and related charges, and also the loss of basic *Ṣūfī* spiritual and ethical values. Some *Ṣūfī*s who accepted offers to head a governmental post refused to accept any payment. So it could be surmised that the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* accepted the office of head of the hospital but refused to take remuneration, to prevent himself from being identified with the rulers, as Daphna Ephrat argues in the case of the *ʿulamāʾ* of Seljuk Baghdad.[648] However, if the caliph appointed him it is difficult to declare this work a public sphere activity. On the other hand, if he was doing it in a private capacity, then it could be deemed public sphere-oriented effort.

---

[646] It was situated on the west side of the river Tigris and was founded by the Buwaid ruler ʿAdud ad-Dawlat (d. 372/983). See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2. 484.
[647] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 156-57, see note 7.
[648] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 133.

Some of the chief *Ṣūfī*s were involved in the official bureaucracy in their private capacities, which was good for the religious and material wellbeing of ordinary people. The *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abū Saʿd Aḥmad (d. 477/1084) founded a large *ribāṭ* with the permission of caliph al-Qāʾim. In his *ribāṭ*, the *Ṣūfī* community was provided with good dining and lodging.[649] It was later called the *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh*. Abū Saʿd Aḥmad had *waqf* properties constructed for it.[650] He built the *waqf* properties of the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa and arranged to rebuild the holy shrine of Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 199/815) after it was burnt down in an accidental fire.[651] The *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abū Saʿd Aḥmad was ordered by the caliph to repair the shrine, so it is difficult to maintain that this work was a public sphere activity as it seems that it was done in the official sphere. However, it can be considered a contribution to the public sphere if the chief *shaykh* did it as a pious act, as he was the director of the *waqf* properties of the *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad. It was a place that was beneficial to the public in the sense that it was visited by the people for its healing qualities as well.[652] Tombs such as that of al-Karkhī were public sacred sites where generations of pilgrims and visitors performed public devotional rituals. These shrines not only became sites of pilgrimage but also spaces of connection between rural and urban people, "providing key nodes for long distance networks benefiting travelers carrying goods, information, and instructional knowledge."[653] They were also places where people received food distributed by the wealthy and pious. Since these places brought benefits to the common people, it was in the interest of the common people that they were

[649] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, 235. *Shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abū Sa'd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad was from Nishapur, Khurasan. He travelled widely with *fuqarāʾ (*sing. *faqīr)* and with his followers visited Arab tribes before coming to Baghdad. He sold all his belongings in Nishapur and came to Baghdad where he built the *ribāṭ* of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*.
[650] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 230.
[651] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, 102; *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 161, 230-231. The reason for the fire was that the intendant (administrator) was ill, and when he tried to cook something for himself fire erupted from his careless cooking.
[652] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 131.
[653] Armando Salvatore, 'Sufi articulations of civility, globality, and sovereignty', *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*, 4 (2018), 156-74 (pp. 162-163).

maintained or if necessary rebuilt. From these roles of chief *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere, we see the complex nature of that sphere in medieval Islamic societies, in which it was difficult to clearly demarcate the line between the public and private sphere, as described in chapter two. Yet so much pietistic social activity straddles the boundary between the two, encouraging us to rethink the notion of the public sphere so as to make it more expansive. Even officials in the primary service of the state could simultaneously serve the public good, as the examples above demonstrate, insofar as many of their actions were double-faceted in being both state-sponsored and yet also charitable in nature.

Thus a *Ṣūfī* who was part of the government and connected with the common people could have insight into both spheres, and be in a perfect position to act as the buffer between the ruling authorities and the common people. On the other hand, a *Ṣūfī* who had no connection with the government could be highly critical and disdainful of those in power, and not effectively lobby the government for the public good. So the *Ṣūfī*s who worked in the governmental sphere were well positioned to facilitate conversation between people and authorities. The chief *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad contributed considerably to the public sphere while playing the role of a bridge between the common people and the ruling elite.

The religious, spiritual, and political missions of the chief *shaykh*s

The chief *shaykh*s played important roles as spiritual and religious envoys of the caliphs. The caliphs required *Ṣūfī*s to carry out this role because of their piety, and the respect they thus commanded among the ruling elite and common people alike. When al-Nāṣir became caliph, he sent *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (d. 580/1184) to Pahlawān (n.d.), ruler of Hamadan, Isfahan and Rayy, to require him to take the oath in the name of the caliph. When Pahlawān refused to accept the demand, the chief *shaykh* spoke to his troops in the court and said, “This man is owed no obedience to you, as long as he does

not recognize the commander of the faithful. On the contrary, you must depose him from his ruling position and fight him."[654] After this, Pahlawān took the oath and made the *khuṭba* (Friday sermon) in the name of the caliph al-Nāṣir. This story shows the respect for and power of the chief *shaykh* among the people. Caliph al-Nāṣir also sent the chief *shaykh* Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm with Shihāb al-Dīn Bashīr the eunuch as an envoy to Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (r. 569-589/1174-1193) to discuss peace between ʿIzz al-Dīn, ruler of Mosul, and Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, ruler of Egypt and Syria. The negotiations failed, and the chief *shaykh* died on the way back to Baghdad.[655] It is difficult to determine whether such activities could be said to be beneficial for the public at large. Caliph al-Nāṣir was at that time trying to regain the political and territorial power of the Abbasid caliphate, so he sent the chief *shaykh* as an ambassador to Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn. In one sense, we can assume that the chief *shaykh* supported the Abbasid caliphate in regaining its lost power and prestige. On the other hand, it seems that the chief *shaykh*'s journey could help to bridge the gulf between rulers, could minimize wars and consequently reduce the difficulties of the common people who suffered most from the miseries of battles. These journeys and meetings with rulers provided an opportunity for the chief *shaykh*s to give moral and pious guidance to the ruling elite.

Another chief *shaykh*, Ibn Sukayna, had a good relationship with the caliph al-Nāṣir and was involved in some missions outside Baghdad. Ibn Sukayna travelled widely and headed *Ṣūfī* establishments in Jerusalem and Damascus before he returned to Baghdad. He died when he was on a mission to Kish, an island in the Gulf.[656] It can be taken for granted that the caliph would send the chief *shaykh* with the intention that he should carry out a state-sponsored *futuwwa* mission, or to obtain the support of rulers in his consolidation of power, or to gain the support of *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* for his rule. Not

[654] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 268.
[655] Ibid., 303.
[656] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, 156-157, trans. by Richards, see note 7.

all chief *shaykh*s felt comfortable to act as the caliph's envoy: the chief *shaykh*, Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad, offered his excuses to the caliph al-Mustarshid when he was asked, along with *naqīb al-nuqabāʾ* (chief *naqīb*; 'chief leader' of a tribe; head of the community of ʿAlids descendants), in 522/1128 to carry a caliphal message to Seljuk *Sulṭān* Sanjar (r 512-548/1118-1153). They were forced to pay 30,000 and 15,000 dinars respectively to be excused from the duty.[657] It can be assumed from this that some of the chief *shaykh*s were wealthy. The different personalities of the chief *shaykh*s and their varied relationships with the ruling authorities show that they had variable levels of involvement in religious, social, spiritual and governmental activities.

During the said period, *Ṣūfī*s from other areas were also travelling at the behest of the rulers for various purposes. An excellent example of this is that of Ṣadr al-Dīn Abu 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Ḥamawayh al-Juwaynī (d. 617/1220), the chief *shaykh* in Egypt and Syria. He was a great *faqīh* and *qāḍī* of Harran who later went to Egypt and taught at the Madrasa al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī and rose to the role of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in both Cairo and Damascus.[658] He died in Mosul while on a mission not explicitly described by Ibn al-Athīr, who refers to his death.[659] While chief *shaykh*s' travels played supportive roles for the ruling elite, at the same time their travelling was directly or indirectly beneficial to the many people who attended their lectures and public sermons. The exhortations in these public sermons helped people to better shape their moral and social behaviour, which is always considered beneficial for social order.

In summary, the above discussion highlights a complex picture so far as the role of the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in the public sphere is concerned. What makes the chief *shaykh*s' role complicated is its involvement in the governmental sphere. The chief *shaykh*s

---

[657] Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntaẓam,* vol. 17, 249.
[658] David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World: Ibn al-Adam and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (London: E.J. Brill, 1994), 118-19.
[659] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 231, see note 51.

provided guidance, support and leadership to the community in religious, spiritual and social domains. As *Ṣūfī* leaders, they were asked by ruling authorities to work in the governmental sphere; thus, they contributed to the public sphere. Though to some extent the Abbasid caliphs obtained the support that they needed for their caliphate, the chief *shaykh*s' activities were still in another sense independent of the control of the ruling authorities. The *Ribāṭ Shaykh al-shuyūkh* not only accommodated those who engaged with teaching and learning activities but also provided shelter and protection to those who were persecuted by the ruling elite.

Chapter 5: *Ṣūfī*s' Relations with the Ruling Authorities and their Contribution to the Public Sphere

The previous chapter discusses the *ribāṭ* as a public space and its constitutive role in the public sphere. In the present chapter, I discuss *Ṣūfī* relations with various sections of society, particularly with the ruling elite, and their contribution to the public sphere. I seek to evaluate how *Ṣūfī*s, while having various types of relationships with ruling authorities, contributed to the public sphere in order to bring multiple benefits to common people. I elaborate how *Ṣūfī*s as teachers and spiritual *shaykh*s incorporated wider sectors of society into a *Ṣūfī* spiritual and ethical system that would allow them to accrue both spiritual and material benefits, and analyse precisely *how Ṣūfī*s worked for social stability and peace in Baghdad through instrumentalizing their moral and social authority. I emphasize how *Ṣūfī*s, as *futuwwa* practitioners and leaders, approached members of the lay community to maximize their access to sources of material and spiritual support. Moreover, I argue in this chapter that *Ṣūfī*s played a key role in the construction of spaces through which to influence state policy where they could work independently for the good of ordinary people. They mediated between the learned men or *ʿulamāʾ*, preachers, charity-minded benefactors including members of the ruling elite, and common people in regard to various social activities aimed at enhancing the public good.

*Ṣūfī*s' collaborative relationships with the ruling elite and their roles in the public sphere

We may take note at this juncture that the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad sometimes had collaborative relationships with the ruling authorities and at other times had oppositional relationships with the ruling class and were critical of the authorities. Meanwhile, other *Ṣūfī* personalities were seemingly apolitical. *Ṣūfī* protagonists might also espouse all or any of these attitudes towards power in the course of their careers. I now elaborate on some of these permutations.

Some ‘Abbasid rulers in Baghdad manifested great respect towards *Ṣūfī* personalities, and sought their guidance and *baraka*. For example, on account of the growing fame of Abu ‘l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Sulṭān* Masud and his *amīr*s visited him.[660] Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī’s popularity and respect as a *Ṣūfī* attracted the attention of the caliph al-Nāṣir, who “sought to shore up the crumbling authority of the Abbasid state by rallying around his cause through various religious and social organizations in the lands under his sway.”[661] The ruling class was also interested in having links and seeking advice from *Ṣūfī*s as the “ruling authorities were often deeply suspicious of the Sufi orders because of their autonomy and capacity for independent action, linking the local arenas with much wider spheres of influence.”[662] The good relationships between *Ṣūfī*s and the ruling authorities brought many benefits to common people as the *Ṣūfī*s were often concerned with the difficulties they faced at a practical level, and asked ruling authorities to work towards their wellbeing and fulfilling their basic needs of survival in regard to financial security, food, shelter and the like. The discussion below provides examples of *Ṣūfī*s who became spokesmen of the poor and the underprivileged and established their role in the public sphere.

_Ṣūfī_s’ good relationships with the ruling authorities and helping people in lower social strata

Some *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad maintained a cooperative relationship with the rulers and were thereby involved in social activities that were outside of their prescribed spiritual roles as ethical guides. They took on a variety of socially and politically oriented tasks and undertook governmental posts in the hope of playing the role of intermediaries between the rulers and their subjects. A good example is that of the *Ṣūfī* ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī (d. 442/1050), who had good relations with the caliphs and helped those who were treated

[660] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 76.
[661] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 197.
[662] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 150.

unjustly by them. The caliph al-Qāʾim visited al-Qazwīnī every Thursday night and ordinary people brought the *Ṣūfī* their petitions (*qisas*) so that the caliph might sign them and give them some redress.[663] It can be surmised that most of the followers and visitors of al-Qazwīnī belonged to the lower and middle classes as they were generally more exposed to injustices than members of upper classes who had greater financial and social clout. On the basis of their good relations with the ruling authorities, some *Ṣūfī*s also helped people of lower social status to obtain tax concessions from the government. Some leaders of rural *Ṣūfī* fraternities in Iraq were not only relieved of paying the *Kharāj* (agricultural land tax) but were also authorized to grant such exemptions to others. In this case, the most telling example is of the *Ṣūfī al-Shaykh* ʿUthmān (d. 636/1238), who had special signed caliphal papers "which upon presentation to the officials concerned exempted the bearer from the *kharaj*."[664] Also, sometimes tax obligations were suspended at the behest of prominent and revered *Ṣūfī*s. For example, in 541/1146 and 547/1152, the *mukūs* (illegal taxes) and *darāib* (dues) were abolished at the request of two ascetics named al-Ibadi[665] and Ibn al-Tallaya.[666] These examples provide concrete evidence of *Ṣūfī*s who contributed to the public sphere through supporting the interests of people at large while having an influential relationship with the ruling authorities. It is also important to note that the ruling elite appeared to accept this vital role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public domain. The above evidence also shows that the *Ṣūfī*s contributed significantly in the public sphere as representatives of the underprivileged and the poor.

---

[663] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 291-292; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam,* vol, 15, 326-327.
[664] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 205
[665] According to Ibn Khallikān and Ibn al-Athīr, his name was al-Muẓaffar ibn Ardashīr al-ʿAbbādī. Owing to his 'exemplary character' he had friends in all social classes. Caliph al-Muqtafī (r. 530-555/1136-1160) gave him much favour and sent him to Seljuk *sulṭān* as an envoy. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān,* trans. by De Slane, vol. 3, 365-66; *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 41.
[666] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 294.

_Ṣūfī_s as moral, political and spiritual advisors

The ruling authorities not only funded and endowed *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad but also appointed *Ṣūfī*s as ambassadors, advisors and spiritual guides. From medieval historiographical Arabic texts, we often get the impression that the initiative for absorbing *Ṣūfī*s into governmental apparatus and their involvement in political affairs came from the ruling authorities rather than the *Ṣūfī*s themselves, as in the case of Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī. When ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī was sent by the caliph al-Nāṣir on a diplomatic mission to Ayyubid rulers in Egypt and Syria, he was highly respected and revered by the rulers and notables of both countries. In his preaching session to the ruler and the nobles of the city at the Dār al-ʿAdl (the palace of justice) in Aleppo, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī offered counsel or *naṣīḥa* which was so deeply felt by the audience that many in attendance burst into tears.[667] While conveying the message that the caliph had offered relaxation of taxes on natural products that amounted to 300,000 dinars, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī encouraged the *amīr*s and the notables to take care of the peasants and the common people. Al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (r. 1186-1216/582-613), the ruler of Aleppo, showing his generosity, granted him 3000 dinars to be distributed among the needy in Damascus.[668] Through these journeys and meetings with the rulers, *Ṣūfī*s would take the opportunity to fulfill their duty to give ethical and moral guidance to rulers.[669] These *Ṣūfī*s' activities in the political sphere in their private capacity gave them the necessary space to offer exhortations and *naṣīḥa* to the rulers and officials, so that they might rule with justice and for the betterment of common people.

As an envoy to foreign lands, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī "enhanced the prestige of the Suhrawardi brand of Sufism and its involvement with the institutional developments that

[667] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 94.
[668] Ibid.
[669] Levtzion, 'The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', 111.

included closer ties between *Ṣūfī* organizations and political elites."[670] The relationship between *Ṣūfī* organizations and the ruling elite initiated by ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī continued to develop through the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras in Egypt,[671] throughout the Ottoman period, and also in India . ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's friendly relations with the ruling authorities "determined the attitude of his followers in India in later centuries; they were usually more open to the exigencies of the world and more willing to accept political participation than their brethren in other orders."[672] Charismatic *Ṣūfī*s of the early Ottoman period, while having a close relationship with the ruling elite and being authors of statecraft manuals, played a significant role in the refashioning and reshaping of the Ottoman rulership. They were not only increasingly involved in public life but some, as "tutors for princes, were renowned scholars whose teachings centered on esoteric, spiritual and moral interpretations of rulership."[673] *Ṣūfī*s, through their *Ṣūfī* treatises, presented their vision of governance expressing a direct mutual relationship between the governance of society and the governance of self.[674] The key notion here was that one's management and control of the self would be conducive to being a good ruler able to maintain a high standard of piety and morality. *Ṣūfī*s gave much importance to the development of the ethical and pious character of the rulers for good governance and thus for the public good, as discussed in chapter three. The above discussion shows the religious and political agency of *Ṣūfī*s in respect of their provision of ethical and moral training to rulers. As moral, religious and political advisors to the rulers, *Ṣūfī*s were able

[670] Devin DeWeese, 'Organizational Patterns and Developments within Sufi Communities', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Salvatore, 333.
[671] Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 35-105.
[672] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 2006), 245.
[673] Huseyin Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 3, 7-8.
[674] Ibid., 89.

to create a spiritual discourse through which they encouraged both piety in rulers and just rule that would be beneficial to people at large.

Patronage of the ruling elite of *Ṣūfī*s and *Ṣūfī* lodges

The relationship of patronage between political rulers and *Ṣūfī*s provided the latter with space conducive to their contribution to the public sphere. There is no doubt that some rulers patronized *Ṣūfī*s due to genuine belief and religious zeal. However, among the ruling class, some supported *Ṣūfī*s and their lodges to attain support and legitimacy for their rule since the *Ṣūfī*s had many followers and enjoyed popularity among common people.[675] To some rulers, this popularity and respect of the *shaykh*s among the masses was a social threat, so supporting *Ṣūfī shaykh*s would be a wise strategy. As the caliph al-Nāṣir wanted to bring those institutions and public spaces populated by the *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s under personal control, he "actively patronized madrasas, *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s and associated institutions."[676] ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī enjoyed the special patronage of al-Nāṣir when the caliph handed over to him the new *ribāṭ*, *Ribāṭ* al-Marzubāniyya, in 599/1203. The *ribāṭ* had a house, a garden and a bath for the *shaykh*. Two years later, in 601/1205, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī was ordered by caliph al-Nāṣir to preach at the *Badr al-Sharīf* Gate.[677] He continued in this activity every week for at least the next four years; this pulpit gate was situated near the palace congregational mosque (Jāmiʿ al-Qaṣr), so the position of the preacher here was an official one as the caliph had handpicked him. The position given to ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī by al-Nāṣir "confirmed his status as a legitimate religious authority, but also evinces the extent of the relationship between Suhrawardī and his patron because such appointments were not given out casually."[678] Al-Nāṣir provided an opportunity to ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī to preach and to manage the affairs of the *ribāṭ*s since

[675] A. K. S. Lambton, 'Sufis and State in Medieval Persia', Research School, (1995), 30.
[676] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 25.
[677] Ibid., 93.
[678] Ibid.

he was an accomplished scholar, revered by the people of Baghdad. While an informal pattern of patronage existed between the political rulers and *Ṣūfī*s, it is important to note that institutions such as *ribāṭ*s were maintained and funded by the *waqf*, and were thus to a great extent politically independent and financially autonomous.[679] This cements the notion of cooperative relations between middle/lower levels of society and religious groups and the ruling elite, against an Orientalist assumption that medieval Islamic societies were wholly class differentiated governed by an aloof ruling elite. *Ṣūfī*s provided moral leadership to the community, supported people at large and helped them to solve their social and economic problems, as evinced in the historical records showing that they made requests to the rulers for tax relief for both the middle classes and the underprivileged.

This relationship of patronage through endowed institutions, particularly the *ribāṭ* and *madrasa,* suited both the rulers of the time and pious individuals, by "contributing to the rulers' aura of piety and legitimacy, and enhancing the authority of the holy men [and women]."[680] In the case of the *ribāṭ*s in Baghdad, patronage ties extended to every class and community of the city. In a sense, the ruling elite tried to hold all important social threads together through the *waqf* institution. The *waqf* provided a public space to independent groups and community associations to contribute to the shaping of social life and the public sphere.

In general, *Ṣūfī*s had different roles and relationships with the ruling elite in different contexts. A *Ṣūfī* might advocate for the public good in his advice to the *sulṭān* despite being embedded in government. Again, there is a complexity to the issue: being intellectually independent of the government or the ruling elite did not mean that these

[679] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience of History in a World Civilization, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period*, vol. 2 (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 213-14.
[680] Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 255.

ʿulamāʾ or *Ṣūfī*s were financially independent. Owing to the commonness of patronage, most *ʿulamāʾ* looked for patronage from a local ruler,[681] and the *Ṣūfī*s did likewise. Moreover, there were *Ṣūfī*s who were *ʿulamāʾ* as well, while some among them were members of government. So the categories were blurred, and there was some interpenetration or overlapping of roles and modes of agency when it came to contributing to the public sphere.

*Ṣūfī*s' oppositional relationships with ruling authorities and the public sphere

From the discussion above, it would not be correct to assume that all *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad gained popularity because of the patronage of the rulers. Although some cooperated with the authorities and supported the caliph politically, others did not benefit from the financial patronage of rulers and acquired high regard among the people through their public service.

Ṣūfī criticism of unjust rulers and *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s as sanctuaries

Some *Ṣūfī*s criticized ruling authorities for their injustices towards the common people. Owing to this, they kept themselves away from charitable institutions owned by ruling authorities, and mainly lived on gifts and individual donations offered to them by the pious wealthy. To fulfill their needs, they carried out teaching activities or adopted other professions. The most striking example, in this case, is that of the renowned *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. The widespread respect for ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and his extraordinary piety, brought forward pious individuals from the community of believers, who would donate funds for his *ribāṭ* and *madrasa*.[682] He lived a life of poverty and simplicity. He criticized the wealthy, unjust elite and the courtly fashion of the city of Baghdad.[683] Some *Ṣūfī*s from other cities were also critical of unjust rulers, such as the

[681] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 126.
[682] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 180.
[683] Ibid., 191.

mystic al-Kurdī al-Kawrānī (d. 644/1246), a *Ṣūfī shaykh* of Damascus. He censured the ruling authorities for their "evil" ways when he came to Aleppo. According to a report, "he would have nothing to do with the great ones of the world, taking favours from no prince, speaking to them rudely, fulminating against them in sermons, and he forbade them to commit evil, and reproached them for doing so."[684] In criticizing ruling authorities for their harmful conduct in relation to the best interest of the public, *Ṣūfī*s contributed to the public sphere as a space of ethical critique.

Some of the *ribāṭ*s of prominent *Ṣūfī*s offered financial support and protection to those who were wanted by the authorities or otherwise suffered from their wrath. Such was the *ribāṭ* of Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, a sanctuary for people who wanted to escape the wrath of a *sulṭān* or caliph. According to Abu Naṣr al-Subkī, his *madrasa* and *ribāṭ* were highly effective places of protection for ordinary people, and many of those who sought refuge there achieved worldly success and upward mobility while residing in that *ribāṭ*.[685] Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī "enjoyed such prestige and honour that if anybody sought shelter in his ribat (*Ṣūfī* dwelling), he could not be forcibly taken away even by a Caliph or a Sultan."[686] It is not clear whether those seeking shelter in the *ribāṭ* were political dissidents wanted by the authorities or if they were undesirable for some other reason. However, the *ribāṭ* of Abu 'l-Najīb was a shelter and support for the socially disgraced and the underprivileged. Nehemia Levtzion, discussing the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere and the significant role of *ribāṭ* in this respect, demonstrates that they played a positive role in reconciliation and arbitration in public disputes, and their houses and *ribāṭ*s/*khānqāh*s were revered as holy places that were considered as sanctuaries and

[684] Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World*, 61.
[685] Tāj al-Dīn Abu 'l-Naṣr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿyya al-kubrā*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dar ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyah, 1992), 173-175.
[686] Tanvir Anjum, 'Sufism in History and its Relationship with Power', *Islamic Studies*, 2 (2006), 261.

places of safety from violence.[687] From the above examples, it can be clearly discerned that *ribāṭ*s such as that of the *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, discussed earlier, and that of Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī were prominent places in respect of providing shelter and safety to the oppressed and the needy. *Ṣūfī*s' role in providing a platform for the public sphere in this way was out of the control of the institutions governed by state authorities, and was crucial as far as the common good was concerned. These individuals were major players within society in the creation and maintenance of public spheres.

***Ṣūfī* resentment of unjust taxes and of the oppression of peasants and the labour class**

*Ṣūfī*s further contributed to the public sphere in the act of showing their resentment of unjust taxes on poor peasants and labourers. During the later Abbasid period under the military rule of the Seljuks, both rural and urban classes suffered at the hands of extortionists—officials, tribal leaders and tax-collectors. Peasants often left their land and fled to other areas to live under better conditions, but mostly they found shelter in *Ṣūfī* lodges. While criticizing the *Ṣūfī* preachers of his time, Ibn al-Jawzī (as cited by al-Dūri), says: "How many times we have seen a peasant who—as a result of Sufi preaching—has left his farm and sat in a convent? He reduces himself to this condition in order to relieve himself of his burden."[688] From this one can infer that peasants often sought refuge from tax collectors in *Ṣūfī* lodges. Sometimes, entire villages sought refuge from the oppression of tax collectors, for example the peasants from the village *al-Firnith* or *al-Firth* in Iraq.[689] These taxes, along with their method of collection, were so brutal that *Ṣūfī*s of the time severely criticized the rulers for the injustice. For example, in a hagiographic account of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī written by al-Shattanawfī, the caliph al-Mustanjid (r. 555-566/1160-1170) presented ten purses of money carried by his slaves to al-Jīlānī as a

[687] Levtzion, 'The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', 110.
[688] Al-Duri, Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs, 95.
[689] Ibid., 196.

gift when the *shaykh* was in his *madrasa*. The *shaykh* refused to accept them. When the caliph insisted, al-Jīlānī took one purse and squeezed it in his hand. The money turned into blood. Al-Jīlānī exclaimed: "Do you not feel ashamed before God for sucking people's blood? And more than that, do you bring it to me?"[690] This story, while devotional as well as allegorical in nature, illustrates the resentment of some *Ṣūfī*s toward the conditions in which the poor peasants and labouring classes lived at the time. There are many other accounts of *Ṣūfī*s tending to the underprivileged or to those struck by misfortune, including ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī and Ḥammād ibn Muslim al-Dabbās. The power of their prayers to heal the sick is became legendary, as recounted in the hagiographical text *Bahjat al-Asrār* by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shaṭṭanawfī (d. 703/1304), and though not 'factual', offer insights into the concerns of spiritual leaders for the masses.[691] While these hagiographies of saintly figures would be viewed sceptically today, medieval hagiographical texts frequently relate such stories of prominent *shaykh*s as an intrinsic part of the prevailing religious and social worldview.

Ṣūfī protests against unjust decisions by the ruling elite

Scholars, *Ṣūfī*s and ascetics in Baghdad supported the vizier Abū Shujāʿ when he was dismissed in the year 484/1091 by the caliph al-Muqtadī (r. 467-487/1075-1094) and put under house arrest. The *Ṣūfīs* protested against this dismissal, along with scholars and other supporters. The caliph was forced to do so by *Sulṭān* Malik Shah (r. 464-485/1072-1092) and Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092).[692] Ibn al-Jawzī reports that after his dismissal the vizier would attend the mosque with the *ʿulamāʾ*, and the ascetics and a large crowd gathered in his support. He was ordered by Niẓām al-Mulk to leave Baghdad because of

---

[690] Al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahjat al-asrār*, trans. by Ali, 206-207.
[691] Ibid., 213-214, 494-495.
[692] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 248-249, see note 66; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 3, 288. According to Ibn Khallikān, when he received the orders, he recited the following verse: "He entered into office without an enemy; he retired without a friend."

the fear of more public protests. He later refused an offer of reconciliation by Niẓām al-Mulk. [693] Ibn Khallikān writes about Abū Shujāʿ:

> He gave large charities in secret; having one day received a note mentioning that, in such a house, in the street of the pitch-seller (*darb al-Kaiyar*) there was a woman with four orphan children, naked and hungry; he called for one of his followers and said: 'Go clothe that family and give them to eat.' He then took off his clothes and, having sworn not to put them on nor warm himself till the messenger returned, he informed him that his orders had been executed, and he waited, trembling with cold, till that person came back. His charity was immense.[694]

This description supports the view that the vizier was a man concerned with the plight of the poor. Clearly, the *ʿulamāʾ* and ascetics supported him and rallied in his favour because he was a righteous man. The inclusion of ascetics in public protest supports my argument that the *Ṣūfī*s of the time were not recluses divorced from political and social concerns. They were involved in affairs they considered vital for the common good. Another example of public protests is concerned with the popular *shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. When caliph al-Muqtafī appointed Abu 'l-Wafāʾ Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd (n.d.), known as Ibn Mazahim, who was known to be a harsh, cruel *qāḍī*, al-Jīlānī severely criticized the caliph from the pulpit, saying: "you have appointed a cruel person as a judge; how will you answer God on the day of judgment?"[695] The caliph dismissed the *qāḍī*, which shows that the ruling authorities accepted the spiritual authority of the *Ṣūfī*s in the public domain. It also shows how *Ṣūfī*s used their social support and political agency to protest against any act that went against the common good.

---

[693] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, 292-293.
[694] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 3, 290.
[695] ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Ghunyat-ut-talibeen*, trans. by Muhammad Sadiq (Lahore: Rumi printers, 1988), 59.

Apolitical *Ṣūfī*s and their public sphere

It is also possible that some *Ṣūfī*s of the time kept aloof from politics and therefore shunned the *ribāṭ*s and religious establishments funded by powerful rulers and members of the wealthy elite. Informal *Ṣūfī* groups continued to gather in mosques and in private houses.[696] Although they engaged in prayer and *dẖikr*, there was a deep commitment to promoting the common good. For example, ʿAbd Allāh al-Baradānī (d. 462/1069), an ascetic and saintly *Ḥanbalī* of Baghdad, lived his life in isolation in a room in the Dār al-Qaṭṭān Mosque. Abu ʿAlī b. Bannāʾ tells us, "He never used to accept anything from anyone; but he had a brother who used to carry to him, each night, a pot of food from someone in our quarter who offered it gratuitously."[697] From the diary of the eleventh-century historian of Baghdad, Abu ʿAlī b. Bannāʾ (d. 471/1078), it is evident that people asked al-Baradānī to pray for their health and it seems that his saintly presence was seen as beneficial for people in the city. Moreover, from the diary it is evident that al-Baradānī commanded religious knowledge.[698] From this report, it may be surmised that residing in the mosque and having great religious knowledge meant he may have offered counsel to those who came to the mosque for prayers or for learning. Mosques at the time were places of learning without charge. The author of the diary mentions a mosque, Masjid Ibn Jarada, where "people have assembled for Quranic recitations, reporting and learning of traditions, reading of books on *fiqh*, and other subjects."[699]

When al-Baradānī died, people from every class of society—the great, the small, the leaders, men of religion and the men of worldly success—attended his funeral prayer. According to one (rounded up) estimation, they numbered about 100,000.[700] The

[696] Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 114-115.
[697] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts III, IV & V, 33-34.
[698] Ibid., 34.
[699] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts I & II, 258, see note 1.
[700] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts III, IV & V, 33-34.

participation of a huge number of people at his funeral shows how the people of Baghdad held him in high regard, even though he kept away from political circles. The above discussion about al-Baradānī, and other *Ṣūfī*s such as al-Jīlānī and ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, demonstrates that in medieval Islamic societies, different types of *Ṣūfī*s were involved in acts of public service.

In medieval Islamic settings, there tended to be two types of ascetics: those who performed religious duties devotionally but preferred the solitary life of contemplation, confining themselves to the mosque and the house, and those who performed their religious duties equally faithfully, but were also "deeply committed to social justice" as they saw it, and would renounce the patronage of men of wealth and power whose connection would tend to compromise their independence, freedom of action and speech, or appear to people at large as tending to do so."[701] These types of men are easy to recognize in the biographical literature, as *zāhīd*s (ascetics) or mystics.[702]

To conclude this section, while *Ṣūfī*s were often engaged in a collaborative relationship with the ruling elite, their resentment and criticism of the unjust policies of government are a manifestation of their concern for the interests of the common people. This also brings into sharp relief the social and political agency of *Ṣūfī*s insofar as they helped shape the ethical norms of society. *Ṣūfī*s played a significant role in the public sphere by providing leadership to the community in the pursuit of their rights, while they also played the roles of spiritual advisors and guides. The ruling authorities not only patronized *Ṣūfī*s and their lodges but also accepted their critiques and often tried to redress their grievances on behalf of the common people. The *Ṣūfī*s created and sustained discursive and practical channels to bridge the gap between official and unofficial channels in meeting the needs of ordinary people that rulers and statutory bodies (such as

[701] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* 'The Sunni Revival—VI', 165-166.
[702] See chapter three by Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 97-144.

tax agencies) wittingly or unwittingly neglected, and their *zāwiya*s gave material and spiritual support to those in need.

The section that follows examines the roles played by *Ṣūfī*s as teachers, preachers and *Ṣūfī sh<u>aykh</u>*s for the religious, spiritual and financial wellbeing of the people.

The *Ṣūfī*s' roles in the public sphere as teachers, preachers, ascetics and charitable *sh<u>aykh</u>*s of *ṭarīqa*

Sufism was not an isolated phenomenon, as *Ṣūfī*s lived and worked as members of society as a whole. From their activities and commitments, it can be seen that they were useful to other members of society. *Ṣūfī*s among others— the caliph, the *Sh<u>ī</u>ʿī Imām*, the traditionist-jurist—were "representative of foundational trends in Islamic leadership, intellectual life and piety and further, as competing and complementary constructions of the legacy of Prophet Muhammad."[703] Annemarie Schimmel takes the stance that the ideal Islamic society is "an egalitarian theocracy of lay members" where the *ummah* (community of believers) and their consensus play a central role. A perfect society and good life are theorized as being achieved through the "divinely-inspired vision" of Prophet Muḥammad, where both *sh<u>a</u>rīʿa* and *ṭarīqa* have great importance.[704] *Ṣūfī*s as representatives of both *sh<u>a</u>rīʿa* and *ṭarīqa* tried to become good examplars of normative Prophetic practice within society. In the opinion of Armando Salvatore, in Islam, exemplary conduct was not just private ascetic behaviour such as the that of the pure Christian saint or that of the civilizing models of the Byzantine and Persian imperial cultures. Instead, this conduct played a significant role in the social life of the community, linking all social strata.[705] In what follows, my discussion examines the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad

[703] Joseph E. Lowry, 'Institution' in *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, ed. by Jamal Elias (London: Oneworld, 2010), 202.
[704] Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 201-202.
[705] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 136.

as teachers, preachers, and pious, charitable *Ṣūfī shaykh*s and their roles in the public sphere.

*Ṣūfī*s as teachers and *shaykh*s in *madrasa* and *ribāṭ*

Some *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad played increasingly visible roles in the urban public spheres as teachers and *Ṣūfī shaykh*s. *Ṣūfī*s such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī contributed their labour to both *madrasa*s and *ribāṭ*s. *Madrasa* educational and religious culture were to some extent replicated in the *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s as "the culture of religious learning which existed within the *madrasa*s of major urban centres such as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Isfahan, was intimately linked with the culture of the *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s and the *khānqāh*."[706] ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was very popular in Baghdad, where a substantial number of people attended his *madrasa* and *ribāṭ*.[707] As already mentioned, *Shaykh* Abu 'l-Thanā (d. 609/1212), who was famous in Baghdad for his kindness and politeness, preached in his *ribāṭ* at the Azaj Gate, which was crowded with the poor, the rich and the *ʿulamāʾ* who had come to listen to him, as he was a well-known teacher and preacher.[708] Some *Ṣūfī*s were ready to adopt the role of public intellectual for their communities.[709] For example, *Ṣūfī*s such as Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī became popular because of their persuasive sermons. According to Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī was a fine teacher, an eloquent public preacher, and enjoyed divine favour manifested in his performance of miracles.[710] He travelled widely and served *Ṣūfī*s in many regions. *Ṣūfī* journeys helped in the dissemination of *Ṣūfī* ideas and in establishing and promoting a "world of learning and devotion. The networks they formed cut across political and geographical boundaries and blurred regional

[706] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 34.
[707] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 162; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 173.
[708] Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam*, 61, see note 13.
[709] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 151.
[710] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 1, 79-80.

differentiation…"[711] Some *Ṣūfī*s, wearing the turban of the *ʿālim* (pl. *ʿulamāʾ*) while also being *Ṣūfī shaykh*s, contributed to the public sphere because their teaching and preaching activities were without remuneration. Through their activities, *Ṣūfī*s focused on the religious, spiritual and moral good of the community that constituted a significant dimension of the public good in medieval Islamic societies.

_Ṣūfī_s as public preachers

*Ṣūfī*s as preachers[712] and *Ṣūfī shaykh*s held public assemblies that were attended by all and sundry. As mentioned above, the *Ṣūfī Ashʿarī* preacher al-ʿAbbādī became well-known among the people of Baghdad as a preacher and charismatic *shaykh*. Large crowds attended his sermons. Ibn al-Jawzī relates one of al-ʿAbbādī's lectures which was attended by about 30,000 men and women. The people of Baghdad loved his lectures so much that they abandoned their routine work to attend them. After listening to his lectures, many people turned away themselves from evil ways, wine drinking, and smashed their musical instruments.[713] According to Ibn al-Athīr, "at one of his public lectures the area taken up by the men attending was measured, and in length, it was 175 cubits and in breadth 120 cubits, and the men were crowded tightly together. The women were even more numerous than that."[714] Women also attended the public sermons, which strongly suggests that these were beneficial for them.

Some *Ṣūfī*s, such as Abū Bakr ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad (d. 498/1104), were not only celebrated *Ṣūfī*s but were scholars of *ḥadīth* as well.[715] Ṣadaqa ibn Wazīr (d. 558/1162) was a *Ṣūfī* preacher. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, he was notable for three things: his

[711] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 80.
[712] According to Makdisi, there were various types of preachers in medieval Islam. One, the *Khatīb*, preacher of the Friday sermon in the Friday mosque. Two, the *waʿiz*, preacher of the academic sermons in a *halqa* or *majlis*. Three, the *qass*, and four the *qari al-kursi*, both popular preachers. Makdisi, *The Rise Colleges*, 217
[713] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 3.
[714] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 269.
[715] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 82.

extreme asceticism, and his *Ash*ʿ*arī* and *Shī*ʿ*ī* tendencies.[716] When ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī went to Arbela as an envoy sent by caliph al-Nāṣir, he held regular assemblies there in which he preached to many people belonging to every class.[717] Once on hearing exhortations of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, "the whole assembly was seized with an ecstasy of divine love, and a great number of the persons present cut off their hair and turned (from the world to God)."[718]

It would not be justified to think that *Ṣūfī*s, having relationships with the ruling authorities, only expected material and political benefits from them. Rather, it would be reasonable to think that *Ṣūfī*s having contacts with rulers were "motivated by an 'inner mission' to convert people (through 'repentance,' *tawba*) from a purely exoteric understanding of Islam to a holistic Islam properly grounded on 'inner knowledge,' just as, in the same spirit, they invited the general public to repent in their public and private preaching and teaching."[719] Some idea of *Ṣūfī*s' role as public preachers can be gained from a story below. Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī intended to visit Jerusalem in 557/1162; when he arrived en route in Mosul, he gave a public lecture at the Old Mosque. He was very much respected by the poor and the rich. When he arrived at Damascus, the ruler of Syria, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd (r. 451-569/1146-1174), gave him an honourable reception. Abu 'l-Najīb held assemblies in Damascus and preached to people including the educated, the ill-educated, the rich and the poor alike.[720] These examples support the view that *Ṣūfī*s were involved in teaching and preaching activities that were good for the urban populace in line with Ahmet T. Karamustafa's suggestion that an increasing number of *Ṣūfī*s played an important role in the urban public sphere as public

[716] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 137; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 204-205. According to Ibn al-Athīr Ṣadaqa Ibn Wazīr was a preacher, while according to Ibn al-Jawzī, he was a *Sūfī* preacher.
[717] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 383.
[718] Ibid., 382.
[719] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 153-154.
[720] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 150-151.

preachers.[721] Though to preach was a primary duty of *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s were very useful in this domain as preachers of esoteric Islam. Though they were the same people, being a *Ṣūfī* and an *ʿālim*, both were doing different things because of their respective esoteric and exoteric domains, wherein the former had the esoteric knowledge, and the latter was an exponent of the exoteric sphere.

As far as the question of commanding good and forbidding wrong was concerned, there are very few examples of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad being involved in this as it was being practiced by the *Ḥanbalī*s, who were the moralist activists, during the tenth and eleventh centuries.[722] A *Ḥanbalī* ascetic Maḥmūd al-Na'al (d. 609/1212) with his groups of preachers once came upon a gathering of *amīr*s and destroyed their liquor.[723] There is no *Ṣūfī* theory or interpretation of forbidding wrong; however, they were involved in forbidding wrong mainly because they supported the idea of the pietistic way or spiritual power.[724] As the moral and ethical training of the community formed an essential part of the public good in medieval Islamic societies, *Ṣūfī*s as public preachers constructed a space to guide and train people.

Significantly, there is such a thing as spiritual nurturing, which *Ṣūfī shaykh*s did in their public lectures. Moreover, they brought their knowledge, guidance, encouragement and inspiration to the public through these public lectures which did not depend on the formal affiliations of a student with a teacher. These *Ṣūfī* public lectures were clearly a public sphere activity because they were intended to help the masses. It might not be material help but it certainly added value and enhanced the life experiences of communities for whom these visits were very important.

---

[721] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 151.
[722] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114-121.
[723] Ibid., 127.
[724] Ibid., 260-265.

Ṣūfī outreach to common people outside _madrasa_ and _ribāṭ_

During the first half of the twelfth century, *Ṣūfī*s adopted various worldly professions to get close to common people who were unable to attend a *madrasa* or *ribāṭ*. In Baghdad, such a *Ṣūfī* was Ḥammād ibn Muslim al-Dabbās (d. 525/1131). He was a vendor of syrup (*sharbat*; a type of sweet water for drinking in summer), and a celebrated ascetic and miracle worker.[725] He was a student of *ḥadīth* and had many followers and pupils who learnt from him in places such as the *bāzār* (marketplace). Through such professions, *Ṣūfī*s such as al-Dabbās had a close relationship with common people and guided aspirants to the spiritual path. For example al-Dabbās the syrup seller was a spiritual *mentor* of the prominent *Ṣūfī* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[726] Some ascetics and pious men had businesses and occupations in the *bāzār*, including Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abi Ghālib (d. 548/1153), who was a bookseller. He was known as Ibn al-Ṭalāya, the Baghdadi ascetic, and a pious man. He transmitted both *ḥadīth* and belles-letters.[727] These examples show that some individual *Ṣūfī*s operated outside the *ribāṭ* among the common people and proliferated religious, spiritual and *Ṣūfī* moral values among those commoners who could not join a *madrasa* or *ribāṭ* for various reasons. Among these *Ṣūfī*s, some did not belong to the *ʿulamāʾ*, including al-Dabbās, who is believed to have been unable to read and write.[728] He was a *Ṣūfī shaykh* who had guided both ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī.[729] According to Ibn al-Jawzī, he was deprived of *sharīʿa* learning, so he misled the ignorant.[730] Ibn al-Jawzī said this because he was critical of the *Ṣūfī*s of his time. This was indeed a curious statement because this person was the teacher and

[725] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 289.
[726] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol.2, 208.
[727] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 66; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 91.
[728] Abu 'l-Najībʿ Abd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn (The Sūfī Rule for Novices)*, trans. by Menahem Milson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1975), 12-13.
[729] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 179; *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 289.
[730] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 266.

spiritual *shaykh* of some very great luminaries of Sufism such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[731] Here it is important to note the relationship between formal learning, piety and contribution to the public sphere, as is evident in the example of al-Dabbās: he was not formally educated and he was not an *ʿālim* yet he was a *Ṣūfī* and a follower of *sharīʿa*. Those not formally educated, could still contribute to the public sphere. Clearly al-Dabbās was in the mystical-spiritual sense a learned person, and thus a teacher of Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī and al-Jīlānī. Such *Ṣūfī*s significantly contributed to the dissemination of religious knowledge and *Ṣūfī* ethics to the entire community, including to non-*Ṣūfī* society.

_Ṣūfī_s as charitable towards the needy and the poor

The *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad practiced various aspects of communal piety, often through charity. Some *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad would distribute gifts from rulers and wealthy individuals among the needy. Caliph al-Nāṣir's mother Zumurrud Khātūn was famous for her piety and endowed works. She once gave 10,000 dinars and a slave girl in marriage to her favourite *Ṣūfī* ʿAbd al-Ghanī (d. 583/1187). After a year, ʿAbd al-Ghanī gave all those gifts and money in alms to the needy and the poor.[732] Ibn Kathīr mentions the same story in *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*. According to him, ʿAbd al-Ghanī was among the *darwīsh* and the pious. He had a *zāwiya* in Baghdad. He had many followers and *murīdīn*. Whenever he received a gift, he would distribute it among his *murīdīn* and those who visited the *zāwiya*, including those who were poor.[733] Some pious and ascetic *ʿulamāʾ* were also involved in acts of caring for the poor with charitable money and goods. For example, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāʾinī (d. 406/1015), the great *Shāfiʿī* scholar of Baghdad, would distribute *zakāt* (obligatory poll tax) and *ṣadaqa* (alms) which people gave to him

[731] Hamza Malik, *The Grey Falcon: The Life and Teaching of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018). 212.
[732] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 305.
[733] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 53.

to dispense among the needy and the poor.[734] The caring aspects of *Ṣūfī*s towards the poor is evident from the example of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī who, whenever he received money, ordered one of his companions to pay the debts of the *baqqāl* (grocer), *ṭaḥḥān* (flour-seller), *zayyāt* (oil-seller) etc.[735] So he would help the poor and the needy by taking on their debts. Owing to his piety, "he received a large amount of money from those who made him their channel for charity, as well as *waqf* endowment funds; in addition to individual alms, he distributed bread to any of the poor who came for it, every day before evening prayer."[736] For al-Jīlānī, it was a noble and pious act to help the needy and the underprivileged. Another example of such a welfare-minded *Ṣūfī* was Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī, who was both popular and respected among the ruling elite of his day. He was awarded great wealth by the caliph and wealthy *amīr*s, and would distribute all his wealth among the poor and the needy: he clearly showed a great passion for helping people.[737] *Ṣūfī*s, through such charitable acts, contributed to the public sphere as they helped the needy and the poor in ways that were neglected by the governmental sphere. Moreover, as spiritual and popular leaders, they played the role of bridge between the wealthy and the underprivileged, as they received wealth from the rich and distributed it among the poor.

_Ṣūfī_s in the field of jurisprudence

Among the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, some joined the ranks of jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), gained recognition and fame, and explained the law by issuing *fatwā*s (legal opinions). For example, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, who followed the *Ḥanbalī* School of Law, after the midday prayer, "gave out fatwa decisions on points of Shar'i law and ethics; sometimes

[734] Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 162.
[735] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 313.
[736] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 208-209.
[737] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya*, vol. 13, 176.

requests for fatwàs were sent him from distant lands."[738] Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī was not only a renowned *Ṣūfī shaykh*, but he was also an authority on *fiqh*. Ibn al-Jawzī records that in 531/1137 Abu'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī gave a public lecture on *fiqh* which was attended by jurists and *qāḍī*s.[739] Another classic example is that of ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī. He was a *faqīh*, a *Ṣūfī*, a *zāhīd*, an *imām* and a spiritual master of his time.[740] He was an authority in matters of *fiqh* so was contacted by *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* to obtain *fatwās* on points of law. He replied to the following question: "My lord! If I cease to work, I shall remain in idleness; and if I work, I am filled with self-satisfaction; which is best?" with the highly practical reply: "Work: and pray to Almighty God to pardon thy self-satisfaction."[741] This kind of advice-giving was part of his extensive and multivalent public service. *Ṣūfī* interpretations of religious law and *Ṣūfī* guidance regarding jurisprudential matters can be seen to be highly beneficial to common people as *Ṣūfī* piety was "more tolerant of human weakness."[742] Through their involvement in *fiqh* issues, *Ṣūfī*s constructed and shaped a theoretical space that was previously the prerogative of theologians.

*Ṣūfī*s as *shaykh*s of *ṭarīqa*

Ṣūfī communities of an earlier period in Baghdad had loosely organized groups of disciples and their *Ṣūfī shaykh*s, as discussed in Chapter One. *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Abu 'l-Najīb al-Shurawardī established the *Ṣūfī* orders of the *Qādiriyya* and *Suhrawardiyya* respectively, and incorporated more extensive sections of the community into *Ṣūfī* circles. Through the *ṭarīqa* brotherhoods and networks, the master-disciple relationship developed, and, according to Marshall

[738] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 208.
[739] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 17, 322.
[740] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿyya al-kubrā*, vol. 8, 338-341.
[741] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 383-384.
[742] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 207.

Hodgson, "produced at once a needed discipline and a vehicle for public outreach."[743] ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was much revered by a large number of people as a *murshid* and a charismatic teacher.

Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī included *rukhṣa*s (dispensations) for lay members in his book *Ādāb al-murīdīn*. A *Ṣūfī* novice can do his or her business while practicing *rukhṣa*, can have a regular income but should also be committed, where appropriate, to public philanthropy. *Rukhṣa* also allows one to visit or associate oneself with the rulers.[744] Through these dispensations, al-Suhrawardī supported "the idea that those who imitate disciplined Sufis mainly in their morals and patterns of behaviour are warmly welcome to accompany them."[745] The inclusion of such dispensations in his work "evinces the continued penetration of *ṭarīqa*-based Sufism into the wider social arenas of late 6th/12th-century Baghdad."[746] Daphna Ephrat, highlighting the roles of the *Ṣūfī shaykh* in the public domain notes that typically,

> Their beginning had been modest, as religious and social life orbited around shaykhs who led an ascetic and exemplary life, refusing any worldly benefits… the more he provided for the spiritual and nonreligious needs of the common people, the more they gathered around him; the larger his following became, the more he was admired. Eventually, in the course of the thirteenth century, the Sufi brotherhoods were to replace the *madhahib* as the most significant religiously based and led social organizations in the public sphere.[747]

---

[743] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 209.
[744] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, 73, 76.
[745] Arin Shawkat Salamah-Qudsi, 'The Idea of Tashabbuh in Sufi Communities and Literature of the Late 6th/12th and Early 7th/13th Century in Baghdad', *Al-Qantara*, XXXII (2011) (p. 179).
[746] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 33.
[747] Daphna Ephrat, 'Religious Leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Seljuk Baghdad', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 44-45.

Ephrat here means that the involvement of *Ṣūfī*s in religious, spiritual and worldly matters for the betterment of the common people made them more popular than scholars of exoteric religious sciences, and, having a large number of followers and disciples, the *Ṣūfī* orders played a fruitful role in the public sphere. *Ṣūfī* institutions such as *ribāṭ*s played a central role and provided a place to *Ṣūfī* novices who engaged themselves in ascetic, devotional and communal *Ṣūfī* rituals under the guidance of a recognized master.[748] Where the *madrasa* provided a space for religious educational and legal studies, the *Ṣūfī* spiritual path through the *ribāṭ* provided a space for "deeper spiritual life" in Baghdad.[749] After the twelfth century, institutionalized Sufism played a pivotal role in the civic life of the community. During that time, "the Sufi movement entered a much more symbiotic relationship with urban associations, providing them a permanent source of ties of trust underpinned by the authority of the shaykhs of the brotherhoods."[750] The emergence of *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods under *Ṣūfī* spiritual masters popularized Sufism in Baghdad and provided avenues to lay members and commoners to satisfy their spiritual and religious needs through joining a *ṭarīqa* and becoming the disciple of a master.

Ṣūfī tombs as sacred sites for pilgrimage, social integration and the charitable distribution of food

The tombs of some *Ṣūfī*s had become a place for social integration, and a place to acquire food by the needy and the poor, and had countless visitors from all walks of life. When Aḥmad al-ʿArabī (d. 512/1118), who was a pious man and saintly figure, died, his tomb in Baghdad became a site of pilgrimage for many.[751] When *shaykh al-shuyūkh* Abu 'l-Barakāt Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad (d. 541/1147) died, his death anniversary was celebrated on the 10th of Jumada al-Thānī. The directors, *shaykh*s and students of the *ribāṭ* and *ʿulamāʾ*

[748] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 521.
[749] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 3.
[750] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 149.
[751] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 188.

attended the death anniversary in large numbers; meals and sweets were presented to the attendees on this occasion.[752] People used to visit these places for the food and money distributed by pious and wealthy individuals as acts of charity. When the caliph al-Nāṣir's mother, Zumurrud Khātūn, died in 599/1202-03, the caliph gave alms and distributed a large amount of money to the *ribāṭ*s, *zāwiya*s and *madrasa*s of the city.[753] The *Ṣūfī* tomb emerged as a sacred place which people visited for sanctity and simultaneously developed into a public space central to the life of the community, as Daphna Ephrat and Hatim Mahamid stress in the context of the Damascene *Ṣūfī*s of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.[754] The death anniversary at some *Ṣūfī* tombs was not only an occasion when food was distributed: these places were also a source of integration and entertainment for the common people, facilitating bonding events that over time transformed the culture of the city by fostering social cohesion.

Concluding this section, it can be clearly substantiated that *Ṣūfī*s as teachers, preachers, *faqīh*s and *Ṣūfī shaykh*s provided leadership and guidance to the community and shared *Ṣūfī* ethical values with a broad section of society. *Shaykh-murīd* (master-disciple) relations incorporated more extensive sections of society into *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s and created social bonds. The *Ṣūfī* as an *ʿālim* could be seen in the *madrasa*, mosques and open grounds, where he might engage many different kinds of people in learning, guiding and training activities. *Ṣūfī*s not only engaged within the spheres which were not their domains before the tenth century but could easily move between *ribāṭ*, *madrasa*, mosques and preaching grounds in ways that brought practical help to the poor and needy.

[752] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 50.
[753] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 92.
[754] Ephrat and Mahamid, 'The Creation of Sufi Spheres in Medieval Damascus' (p. 16).

*Ṣūfī*s' relationships with artisans and traders

Strong relationships existed between *Ṣūfī*s and the merchant class in medieval Islamic societies. In their teaching and preaching, *Ṣūfī shaykh*s addressed the everyday mundane problems of traders and artisans. For example, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī "put his spiritual teachings in such a form as to illuminate the everyday moral problems of the tradesman…"[755] These teachings attracted the merchant classes to the *ṭarīqa*s and encouraged them to visit *ribāṭ*s. According to Ibn al-Athīr, ʿUmar ibn Abi'l-ʿIzz Masʿūd, Abu 'l-Qāsim (d. 608/1212) was a wealthy cloth merchant and a righteous man of Baghdad who was generous towards *Ṣūfī*s, and whose house was a gathering place for them.[756] These gatherings provided a space for *Ṣūfī*s to disseminate their ethical values to wealthy traders, who in return could be charitable towards the *Ṣūfī*s and other needy people in society. From a story related by Ibn al-Jawzī, it can be understood how *Ṣūfī*s and the guilds had close relationships. Ibn al-Jawzī reports that in the year 538/1143, urban gangs were active, and looted traders and merchants. They killed a person who had sold a beast of burden for 25 dinars and took his money. This incident made the people of *bāzār* angry and roused them. The people closed their shops and demonstrated. The person leading the protesters was the ascetic *Ṣūfī* Ibn al-Kawwāz (the son of the porter).[757] This story clearly shows the relationship between the traders and the *Ṣūfī*s, and how the latter were concerned for the traders and craftsmen and their issues. The story also shows that *Ṣūfī*s played a role as a bridge between the ruling authorities and the merchant class.

It is very probable that the artisans and traders' organizations in Baghdad during the twelfth century were autonomous, as there is no evidence from the selected sources that the ruling authorities exerted any control over them. Rather, the ruling elite had good relations with traders and merchants and acknowledged their charitable acts. Both the

---

[755] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 209.
[756] *The Chronicle: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231*, trans. by Richards, 157.
[757] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 30-31.

caliph al-Qāʾim and the Alp Arslān had great respect for the wealthiest merchant family in Baghdad, that of *Shaykh* Ajall Abu 'l-Qāsim b. Riḍwān.[758] The autonomous roles of traders and merchants are telling evidence of the agency of the guilds during the later Abbasid caliphate. During the Ottoman period, these guilds or trade associations could be seen to be more active in the public sphere, as argued by Haim Gerber.[759]

Ṣūfī aid for lower and middle-class workers and traders

Some *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad helped the poor labour class by speaking to the ruling authorities in defence of their rights. During the later Abbasid period, the labour and merchant classes of Baghdad suffered many arbitrary taxes and other exploitative measures to meet the increasing expenditure of the *sulṭān*, the caliph and their officials. Urban workers and traders sought help from influential *Ṣūfī*s who had good relations with the ruling authorities. As discussed earlier, ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī helped those who suffered from the injustice of the authorities. Most of his followers and visitors belonged to the lower and middle classes, which were less protected and more exposed to injustice than members of other classes. So al-Qazwīnī could be regarded as their leader or unofficial representative to the ruling authorities.[760] Most of the members of these two classes were traders and artisans who were also members of *Ṣūfī ribāṭ*s. So those *Ṣūfī*s who had a good relationship with the ruling elite contributed to the public sphere in concrete ways: the labour and the merchant classes benefitted from *Ṣūfī*s who helped in the abolition of unjust taxes.

In conclusion, it can be contended that *Ṣūfī*s provided leadership to trade associations and played the role of a bridge between guilds and the ruling class. As leaders

---

[758] Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts I & II, 250, see note 3; Makdisi, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad,* Parts III, IV & V, 33.
[759] Haim Gerber, 'The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies,* ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion, 80.
[760] Al-Duri, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs', 291-292.

of the merchant associations, *Ṣūfī*s protested and protected their rights, once again appearing as social actors, using their agency for the betterment of this class. They played a role in creating an independent space for trade associations where they could efficiently work as autonomous institutions outside the spheres of ruling authorities. *Ṣūfī*s shaped the public sphere as *Ṣūfī shaykh*s, as leaders of craftsmen's association; they incorporated guild members into *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa*s, and thus reached into the lower social strata, as the craftsmen mainly belonged to the middle or lower classes.

The role of *Ṣūfī*s in minimising riots and disturbances

After the eleventh century, *Ṣūfī*s tried to extend their moral authority in the complex social and political environment of later Abbasid Baghdad and worked in pursuit of peace and the avoidance of riots. By the early eleventh century, Baghdad had lost its economic and political power as the centre of the Abbasid Empire, owing to the disintegration of the empire. There was no imperial revenue for the caliph of Baghdad and no income from Eastern trade. Also, the city suffered from sectarian differences and chaos caused by the *ʿayyārūn*.[761] Throughout the *al-Muntaẓam* and *al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh* by Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Athīr respectively, riots, looting and burning are mentioned in the years 441/1049, 442/1050, 449/1057, 450/1058, 451/1059, 479/1086 and 481/1088. Ibn al-Athīr mentions several incidents of sectarian riots and disturbances in Baghdad during the tenth and eleventh centuries, for example, riots over religious differences in 442-443/1050-1051[762] in which many people lost their lives. The caliphs, *sulṭān*s and prefects of Baghdad tried to make peace between the communities but failed. Ibn al-Athīr reports that these communities reached agreement without intermediary,[763] but in the absence of details, it seems that the growing influence of Sufism and its penetration into the city's religious

[761] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 22.
[762] *The Annals*, trans. by Richards, 56-57.
[763] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 143-144.

and social life played an important role in lessening riots and disturbances because of the piety associated with Sufism and its general popularity in an era of social surge. *Ṣūfī*s, having moral authority, played a significant role in framing and shaping social bonds and solidarity, and thus may well have contributed to the public sphere through fostering social harmony and cohesion.

Houses of officials and merchants as meeting places for *Ṣūfī*s and scholars

The houses of some of the officials were gathering places for scholars, *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s. The house of Abu'l-Fath al-Muẓaffar ibn Raʾīs al-Ruʾasāʾ Abu 'l-Qāsim ibn al-Muslima (d. 491/1098) hosted such gatherings. *Shaykh* Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), an ascetic *ʿālim* and head of the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa frequently attended the meetings in this house until his death.[764] The houses of the pious ascetics and the *Ṣūfī*s were also places for social gatherings, for example the house of Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī ibn Ṭalḥa, who was incharge of a storeroom and an important member of the ruling elite during the caliphates of al-Mustarshid and al-Muqtafī (r. 530-555/1136-1160). He had a *madrasa* built for *Shāfiʿī*s near his own house. After the pilgrimage, he wore *Ṣūfī* garb and left behind worldly professions. All and sundry continuously visited the house for various purposes.[765] It may be assumed that his house was a place where *Ṣūfī*s could meet with other members of society belonging to different walks of life. Another example is that of *Shaykh* Abū Muḥammad al-Fāriqī (d. 564/1169), a teacher of theology and an ascetic known for saintly miracles.[766] He would preach to people in the house of Sayf al-Dawla, the vizier. People had an excellent perception of al-Fāriqī because of his knowledge and ascetic virtues.[767] His preaching sessions were attended by people belonging to different social strata as the house of the vizier was a place visited by a wide variety of people.

[764] *The Chronicle: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146*, trans. by Richards, 19.
[765] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 131.
[766] Ibid., 182.
[767] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, 186.

*Ṣūfī*s who had a solid relationship with ruling authorities again played a bridging role between the commoners and the ruling class, as argued by Armando Salvatore: "the Sufi orders, without coinciding with civic associations, provided to them moral leadership, a discourse of justice, and a permanent channel of communication that facilitated connections between commoners and authorities."[768]

To summarize, the *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad, having moral authority, played the role of communal patrons and contributed to bringing social order and stability to society. Through providing this leadership, *Ṣūfī*s performed public services to the community at a time when these were much needed, against the backdrop of considerable political and potentially social disintegration and rapid change.

*Ṣūfī*s as *futuwwa* leaders: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī

During the later Abbasid period, Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*s not only provided leadership in promoting social stability but also played a role in proliferating *Ṣūfī futuwwa* values in Baghdadi society. ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī played an important role via his efforts to increase the scope and influence of Sufism in Baghdadi society by establishing and channelizing *futuwwa* associations. While discussing *futuwwa* in his book *Kitāb fī 'l futuwwa*, he included in *futuwwa* groups those who were not available full time for *Ṣūfī* spiritual practices, such as guards, soldiers, merchants and commoners in general.[769] These could join *futuwwa* associations without resigning from their occupations and professions. ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī wanted these part-time individuals to take *futuwwa* values with them to their working lives and into their respective communities, so that more members could learn about *futuwwa* ethics.[770] These members of *Ṣūfī* orders and *Ṣūfī futuwwa* associations were social beings who had social intercourse with all kinds of

[768] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 150.
[769] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 47, (*Kitab fi'l-futuwwa*, pp. 42-95).
[770] Ibid., 5.

people living in society.[771] Before him, his uncle Abu 'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, in his book *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, seemed to accommodate lay members into his *ribāṭ* so that the maximum number of people could benefit from ethical, spiritual and social aspects of Sufism. These lay members were permitted *rukhṣa*s which were not allowed to regular *Ṣūfī*s. They could follow any profession.[772] *Ṣūfī*s of this period adopted a lenient approach which was "indeed one of the most influential procedures in early Sufism to exempt new initiates from strict codes of behaviour and spiritual practices, as a measure of facilitating broader and more solid recruitment."[773] *Ṣūfī*s such as ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, through the initiation of *Ṣūfī futuwwa* brotherhood and their lenient approach towards novices' participation in *Ṣūfī* congregations, disseminated ethical and spiritual values into the broader community.

ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, in his book *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa*, discusses aspects of the outer behaviour of lay members of *Ṣūfī futuwwa* such as how to eat at the dining table and how to drink, as these courtesies (*ādāb*) help the people of *futuwwa* to perfect themselves.[774] He also throws light on the inner and outer dimensions of good behaviour: how to develop good intentions, how to become contented and how to be compassionate; such were the values he taught. Al-Suhrawardī, differentiating between *futuwwa khāna* (lodge) and *khānqāh*, states that though a *futuwwa* lodge is similar to the *khānqāh*, the former is built by the *shaykh* himself and not by rulers, while the latter is constructed by kings and princes. He mentions in his book the advantage that an individual who comes into the *futuwwa khānqāh* receives: "food, drink, clothing, slippers, a stipend, knowledge, discernment, wisdom, gnosis and courtesy. When the door of the *futuwwa* lodge is locked, and the travellers, strangers, the poor and seekers of knowledge come to *khānqāh* and see

[771] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 34.
[772] Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, 72-83.
[773] Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety*, 124.
[774] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 72-75, 85-86, (*Kitab fi'l-futuwwa*, pp. 42-95).

that it is locked and so they remain destitute and comfortless."[775] ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's inclusion of common people, tradespeople, manual workers and soldiers into the *Ṣūfī futuwwa* suggests that Sufism was flourishing in his era in Baghdad and it provided spaces for the learning of ethical and spiritual values, thus contributing to the sustenance of a socially and spiritually inclusive public sphere.

State-sponsored *futuwwa* organization and ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī

The increasing popularity of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's *Ṣūfī futuwwa* in Baghdad possibly compelled the caliph al-Nāṣir to join the *Ṣūfī futuwwa* brotherhood. One may speculate with the help of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī as a spiritual advisor, he wanted to regain caliphal powers which had been lost in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[776] During the last century of Abbasid rule, when the institution of the caliphate became less present in both material and spiritual spheres, a mystical reading of the caliphate started to gain prominence through the efforts of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī in institutionalizing state-sponsored *futuwwa* as the spiritual aspect of the caliphate.[777] It is not clear when ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī started *futuwwa* organization in Baghdad. However, the caliph al-Nāṣir joined his *futuwwa* brotherhood in 578/1182, and from 600/1203 onward the caliph personally started deciding on the admission of princes and governors into the royal *futuwwa* association. In 603/1207, al-Nāṣir declared all *futuwwa* brotherhoods illegal except the royal one and proclaimed himself '*qibla*' or the "central authority and support."[778] ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī was sent on diplomatic missions to various rulers to promote state-sponsored *futuwwa* and was sent by caliph al-Nāṣir to Ayyubid rulers in Egypt and Syria bearing the caliphal robe of honour (*khilʿa*) of the *futuwwa* brotherhood. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries,

[775] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 58, (*Kitab fi'l-futuwwa*, pp. 42-95).
[776] Ibid., 26.
[777] Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 278.
[778] Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi*, 26; Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub, 'Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism', in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (700-1300), ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: One World, 1999), vol. I, 578-580.

these *futuwwa* urban organizations popularized by ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī "had evaded the civilizing embrace of the caliphal sponsorship in al-Nasir's Baghdad and became sufficiently autonomous as popular militias and volunteer Sufi-guild associations."[779] Al-Nāṣir's involvement in the affairs of the *futuwwa* associations and patronage as head of the royal *futuwwa* brotherhood shows the social importance and the authority of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī as the head of this *Ṣūfī futuwwa* in Baghdad.[780]

To conclude, this discussion shows that *Ṣūfī*s contributed to the public sphere while providing public places such as *ribāṭ* to commoners where they could learn *futuwwa* values. The social spaces provided by the *Ṣūfī futuwwa* networks incorporated lay members into the *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa* and thus helped commoners to ameliorate their social problems as laymen: they discussed and shared their problems with other members of *Ṣūfī* circles. Though the caliph al-Nāṣir used *futuwwa* brotherhood to consolidate his caliphate, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī obtained wider space to reach out to the common people as well as members of the ruling elite, and contributed to the public sphere as a *futuwwa* leader. Indeed, the ruling elite accepted ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's role in the public domain in this capacity.

Concluding remarks

Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter define the public sphere as the middle sphere between the official and private spheres, which enacts the public good and where emphasis shifts from state to society. In line with this definition, *Ṣūfī*s constituted a place, in the form of *ribāṭ*, that permitted and promoted social bonding, learning and helping the poor. The establishment of *Ṣūfī* lodges by elite and non-elite members of society created a broad public space where the community of believers could be involved in public sphere activities of networking, religious education, charity-giving and airing political discourse.

[779] Rahimi and Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks', 265.
[780] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 26.

The emergence of these institutions changed the social status of the *Ṣūfī*s as more than *Ṣūfī shaykh*s, teachers, preachers and mystics by revealing their social activism. It also changed the status and role of the *ribāṭ*, which emerged as an accessible and popular locus in Baghdad, where social change could be discussed and organized at the local level. These institutions served the vast majority of the Baghdadi population, many of whom had otherwise limited access to the written traditions of Islamic scholarship in respect of religious education and ethical training. Ascetic, pious and charitable women belonging to both elite and non-elite sectors of society, regularly and frequently contributed to the public sphere via their charitable, religious and scholarly activities, which were beneficial to the whole of society, but particularly so to the women of the underprivileged classes. Women as scholars, preachers and *Ṣūfī*s constructed spaces and thus shaped the public sphere: in this, women were important social actors alongside men in medieval Islamic communities.

The words of Salvatore, cited at the beginning of this chapter, help to establish how philanthropic and charitable activity relates to the concept of a public sphere most often associated with public discussion/debate and collective, societal problem-solving. Through the examples and analysis offered in this chapter, we may discern the key role of philanthropy, which played a significant part in the Baghdadi public sphere of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. *Ṣūfī*s who were initially spiritual *shaykh*s attached themselves to charitable institutions such as *ribāṭ*s and *madrasa*s, and thereby became involved in public service. The endowed *Ṣūfī* lodges supervised by such men or women became centres of religious education, where a range of academicians, teachers, preachers and students were accommodated. However, philanthropy was not the only instrument that *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad used to aid their work in the public sphere. They engaged in the ethical, moral and spiritual training of the community outside of these endowed lodges. As I argued in Chapter Two, the spiritual wellbeing of the

community was a significant aspect of the medieval Islamic public sphere as compared to the modern conception of the public sphere, in which the material aspects of wellbeing are usually given preference.

My investigation has shown that later Abbasid Baghdadi society functioned well not because of governments doing an adequate job of discharghing their responsibilities towards the populace but because ordinary people took on significant aspects of these responsibilities, with members of the various social strata contributing to the constitution and maintenance of the public spheres. The involvement of rulers as patrons and facilitators of public spaces shows that medieval rulers were not necessarily or inherently despotic. My next chapter critically analyses the question of despotic rule vis-à-vis the agency of commoners in medieval Islamic societies.

Chapter 6: The Public Sphere in Medieval Islamic Societies: The Medieval Despotism Thesis and the Agency of the Commoners

In the previous chapter I presented evidence from a range of textual sources for the significant roles of many of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere of the city writ large, and also in specific loci within the city, in particular the *ribāṭ*s. In this chapter, I critically evaluate key Orientalist assumptions regarding medieval Muslim rulers: that they were inherently despotic, that Islamic society was stagnant, and that a cooperative relationship between society and the state did not exist, as this set of assumptions is no longer tenable in the face of evidence I have presented in the preceding two chapters. I argue here that medieval rulers were not in general demonstrably despotic, but were, rather, all too often involved in activities promoting the common good, and that they helped to nurture an environment conducive to the development of public spaces through instruments and organizations such as the *waqf* and the *futuwwa* organizations discussed earlier in Chapter Three. I addressed the instrumentality of commoners in medieval Islamic societies, arguing that they did indeed exercise agency in the public sphere. This chapter further underlines my argument that there existed autonomous religious and social organizations through which commoners were active in the public sphere.

The thesis of Oriental despotism in modern scholarship

A brief list of key works by scholars who propound or refute the thesis of Oriental despotism or its essential ideas now follow. These ideas include the notions that Muslim rulers were despotic, Islamic societies were stagnant, there were no autonomous social groups, and thus there were no public spheres in those societies. Moreover, society and the rulers did not have a cooperative relationship, and the rulers did not take any interest in societal issues. These ideas are expressed in a manner of ways in works such as Malcolm (2019), Anderson (2013), Curtis (2009) Crone (2004), Lindholm (1996),

Gellner (1994), Sadowski (1993), Springborg (1992), Springborg (1987), Turner (1984), Wittfogel (1957).

At the same time, a number of prominent studies have argued against these assumptions in ways that have contributed to the field in highly productive ways, and whose work my own research builds on. These include Eisenstadt (2006), Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion (2002), King (1999), Arjomand (1999), Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998), Said (1994), Chamberlain (1994), Berkey (1992).

My own research evidences the argument of Miriam Hoexter and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt that a vibrant public sphere existed in medieval Islamic societies, and also supports the argument of Armando Salvatore that in premodern Islamic societies, the public sphere was complex and multi-faceted. The medieval Islamic public sphere gave valuable space to the community of Muslim believers, including the ruling elite, to work for the public good. In this research I have demonstrated that various public spheres existed in medieval Islamic societies, particularly in the later Abbasid caliphate. The existence of these public spheres and the role of wider sections of society in these spheres negates the idea of Oriental despotism and that various social groups did not play a role in public good activities.

Various forms of Sufism and its role in the social, political and religious domains are discussed by scholars of Sufism and Islamic history in works discussed earlier They highlight *Ṣūfī*s' social and communal roles in medieval Islamic societies. As far as their social role is concerned, my research aligns with works by Karamustafa and Ohlander: these authors discuss the roles of *Ṣūfī*s in the social, political and religious life of pre-modern Muslims. As far as *Ṣūfī*s' role in the public sphere is concerned, Ephrat, and the edited work, *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, both support my argument that *Ṣūfī*s significantly contributed to the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies. Nathan Hofer similarly argues that *Ṣūfī*s of Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt reached into the various strata

of Egyptian society, using their agency and creating opportunities to spread their ideas and practices throughout society.

While refuting the idea that medieval Islamic society was structured on hegemony, I have made an attempt to examine history from below, albeit through the large elite-oriented written sources that are extant, and I have elaborated on the existence of various independent spaces open to every sector of society through which both the elite and non-elite worked for the good of the non-elite. Though Ephrat and Wolper have studied *Ṣūfī*s' social and religious roles, they have worked in different contexts, the former on medieval Palestine, the latter on Anatolia. My work draws attention to the public activism of *Ṣūfī*s in medieval Baghdad in particular. That so many strands of argument and opinion are to be found on the concept (or perhaps fallacy) of Oriental despotism amongst modern 'Orientalist' scholars does beg the questions of how we define who an 'Orientalist' is, and is there a definition that encapsulates the various and often quite antithetical approaches to research espoused by a range of modern Orientalists?

Orientalism: who is an Orientalist?

Orientalism is generally defined as the study of Asian societies; their culture, history, religion, philosophies and art. So it can refer to the general interest of Western people in things Asian or "Oriental".[781] The word "Orientalist" applies to anyone who teaches, writes or researches the Orient, the East, or eastern countries.[782] It was (and is) an intellectual and philosophical movement to which many people belonged in the West, though they may have worked in different fields; they might have been scholars, bureaucrats, officials, intellectuals or theologians.

[781] <https://www.britannica.com/science/Orientalism-cultural-field-of-study>
[782] Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

Among Orientalists some – or most – were deeply interested in knowing the inner traditions of Asian civilizations, cultures and religions. On the other hand, the term was also used by British colonizers for their own political purposes to disparage Asian culture and religion, particularly that of Muslims, as Edward Said famously argued. These kinds of Orientalists have presented a complex and varied array of reductive ideas, such as Oriental despotism, splendour, sensuality, cruelty, lack of civilization, and backwardness.[783] In opposing Said, Knysh argues that Orientalists translated religious, theological and other spiritual literature of Muslim societies into Western languages in modern terms for the understanding of their reading publics.[784] This was a natural process, as these European intellectuals translated Asian, particularly Muslim, religious traditions according to their own cultural, intellectual background and worldview, providing a means by which they could convey the complex and varied forms of Islamic cultural and religious traditions to their people.[785] So without the efforts of these nineteenth and twentieth century Orientalists, the modern world would not have a profound knowledge of Islamic religious traditions, including Sufism. In this view, despite their prejudices and errors, we should be grateful to them.[786] Orientalism involves a broad range of scholarship in which Western authors have written on different aspects of Asia, and particularly Islamic societies and religious traditions. There were various sorts of Orientalists: some were deeply prejudiced against Eastern peoples and their values and practices, while others researched for the main purpose of attaining genuine knowledge.[787]

To conclude, it would not be fair or accurate to paint all Orientalists with the same brush, as there were various strands. Nonetheless, one needs to remain critical of those Orientalists who argue points that are reductive of Islamicate civilisation, a prime

[783] Said, *Orientalism*, 7.
[784] Knysh, *Sufism*, 3.
[785] Ibid., 3-4.
[786] Ibid., 6.
[787] Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 416.

example being the tropes that Muslim rulers were despotic, tyrannical and oppressive, that there was no justice to be gained under their hegemony and that there were no autonomous independent organizations working for people's wellbeing in medieval Islamic societies.

Unpicking the persistent notion of medieval "despotic" rulers

Some Orientalists have argued that the (presumed) absence of public spaces, such as civil society and the public sphere, created the conditions for despotism in medieval Islamic societies.[788] Karl Wittfogel argues that Oriental regions had all-powerful and absolutist rulers. There were no independent and autonomous groups as compared to the Occident, where there were politically organized non-governmental groups and forces which kept a check on the absolute state or its rulers.[789] These Asian, mainly Islamic, societies did not have democratic institutions such as representative parliaments and independent associations that are essential for the existence of civil society and the public sphere.[790] According to another Orientalist, Islam as a belief system was the basic reason for this despotism: its women were degraded, its rulers were despotic, and the ordinary subject would face cruelty and violence from those rulers.[791] In Western societies, political structures and institutional arrangements emerged "that could restrain the central ruling power. By contrast, Oriental systems lacked such general restraints or the separate corporate bodies that could limit the power of rulers."[792] Since there was no civil society or public sphere in medieval Islamic societies, the rulers had absolute power and were

[788] Turner, 'Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society in Islam', 25-27, 33, 35, 39; Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 463-65, 503-506.
[789] Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 49, 103.
[790] Patricia Springborg, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 19; Patricia Springborg, 'The Contractual State: Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism', *History of Political Thought*, VIII, Issue 3 (Spring 1987), 395-433 (pp. 395-396, 414, 423-443).
[791] Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers on Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32.
[792] Ibid., 40.

theoretically answerable to no-one but God, and practically answerable to no-one at all.[793] In tracing the origin of the "despotic" nature of medieval Muslim political rule, Charles Lindholm argues that after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, pious Muslims kept their distance from issues of polity and society, and therefore a symbiotic relationship between community and rulers could not develop. This lack of correlation between the two kept the government aloof from social problems.[794]

As I argued in the Introduction and Chapter One, much of this early modern intellectual, theological and political debate in the West considerably impacted on and shaped the thinking of many Orientalists. In the early modern period, Muslim political and religious rule was a much-debated phenomenon in the West. Many early modern Western thinkers considered Muslim, and especially Ottoman, rulers to be "oppressors", "tyrants" and "despots".[795] These thinkers, following Aristotle in his *Politics*, argued that rulers who acted for their personal interests and against the will of the people were despotic. According to one fourteenth century Western thinker, a tyrant was one whose "actions aim[ed] not at the common good but at the good of the tyrant himself."[796] Most early Western thinkers wrote negatively about Muslims and particularly Ottoman rulers, while others wrote positively about the rulers, though they were very few.[797] However, the conceptualisation of Muslim medieval rulers, particularly Ottoman rulers, changed from negative to positive among Western European thinkers during the eighteenth century, when there was no longer an Ottoman military threat.[798] Noel Malcolm argues that

---

[793] Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 276-278.
[794] Charles Lindholm, 'Despotism and Democracy: State and Society in the Premodern Middle East', in *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, ed. by J. A. Hall and I. Jarvie (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), 329-355.
[795] Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 201-202.
[796] Ibid., 201.
[797] Ibid., 201, 205.
[798] Ibid., 408.

> For many Western thinkers, the Ottoman Empire and Islam played an important part in their own mental world, not as mere 'others' to be put in their subordinate place, nor simply as threats to be conceptually isolated and neutralized, but as active ingredients to be worked into their theories. Western political thought, in this period, was in the West and for the West, but never exclusively about the West. The East was not only too important to be ignored; it was too interesting—and, most of all, too useful.[799]

So according to these particular Orientalists, institutions and public networks could not be developed that could play an autonomous and independent role in furthering the public good. Thus, they argue, the public sphere could not exist in medieval Islamic societies.

The notion that medieval Islamic society was based on Oriental despotism is highly effectively challenged by Said Amir Arjomand. In order to better understand the nature of medieval Islamic society and its politico-religious leadership, he proposes the use of the concepts of the patrician household, civil society and the patrimonial state, "with law as their common instrument of social action."[800] As Arjomand describes it, the "law regulates the pursuit of the respective ends of the patrician households, civil society, and the patrimonial state as the three organizational loci of social agency and, thereby, brings them into a modicum of mutual articulation."[801] The *sharīʿa* system played a central role in medieval Islamic society that gave agency to members of the community, including rulers, to work in the public sphere. The rulers not only guaranteed public order as rulers: they also worked for the common good as endowers and as members of the community of believers.[802] In medieval Islamic societies, the *waqf* was a major institution via which whole social strata contributed to the public good. The rules of the institution

[799] Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 417.
[800] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 264).
[801] Ibid., (p. 264).
[802] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 154.

of the *waqf* were an "integral part of the *shari`a*—the sacred law."[803] Persons belonging to both official and private spheres could use the law of *waqf* for the public good and thus constitute the public sphere. Therefore, the civil law of *waqf* "served as an instrument of agency available both to the individuals in the civic community and the rulers and officials of the patrimonial state."[804] In Chapters Three, Four and Five I detailed examples of members of the patrician household or the ruling elite who worked for the public good through the law of *waqf*, and thus used their social agency in the public sphere in clearly demonstrable ways.

In this complex social ecology, individuals, religious and social groups and organizations, such as rulers, *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s, merchants and artisan groups, mainly worked under the umbrella of the *waqf*. The major providers of endowment to the *waqf*s were the rulers. This legal instrument and the system that supported it provided a central stage for cooperation between the rulers and society at large to work for the common good.[805] Muslim rulers participated in public good activities through the *waqf*, and thus they represented the general interests of the community of believers while still remaining rulers, thus embodying different kinds of social agency simultaneously, one overtly hegemonic and the other philanthropic and public-facing. This representation of the general interests of society by the state or the ruler is a significant aspect of the emergence of the modern public sphere.[806]

While countering specific Orientalist assumptions, it also has to be noted that in medieval Islamic societies, the rulers had limited powers to govern society however they might have wished because of the overarching framework of *sharīʿa* that theoretically and usually in practice qualified and conditioned their political agency. Though some

[803] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 120.
[804] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 289).
[805] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 119.
[806] Salvatore, 'Public Sphere', 437.

rulers were despotic and authoritarian towards officials, they often had limited power over internal affairs beyond taxation and maintenance of public order, and would have to pay at least lip service to the precept that religious law was to be their ultimate policy guide.[807] Religious institutions enacting the social as well as religious power of *sharīʿa* played a significant role in keeping a check on ruling authorities. The *ʿulamāʾ* and *qāḍī*s maintained a high degree of independent authority to interpret the *sharīʿa* and its laws for the benefit of the community of believers, and to disseminate notions of justice sometimes even against the wishes and interests of rulers.[808] For example, Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066) accepted the post of *qāḍī* of *Dār al-Khilāfa* after the caliph agreed certain conditions, such as that he would not be obliged to be present in ceremonial processions and he would not attend the Sulṭān's residence. Similarly, Abū Bakr ash-Shāmī (n.d.) posed the following conditions: "he would not receive any remuneration for judicial rulings; there would be no intervention in the favour of the disputants; and he would be obliged to alter his dress."[809] The above example shows that Muslim rulers were not by any means all-powerful: there were spaces where individuals from other strata of society, particularly the religious elite, shared the duty to govern society according to religious norms. Significantly, both the *ʿulamāʾ* and *qāḍī*s demanded and sustained space for dispensing justice without pressure from the ruling authorities.

The *ʿulamāʾ*, through their interpretation of *sharīʿa*, tried to correctly interpret the use of power: that is, how political power could be used effectively for the betterment of the community. Among the educated elite, too, some wrote on the issue of the effective use of power. As I discussed in Chapter Three, writers such as Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī and Niẓām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī observed that the abuse of power would be harmful to rulers not

[807] Eisenstadt, 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies' (p. 9).
[808] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York and Boston: Warner Books, 1991), 67.
[809] Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition*, 133-134.

only in this world but in the next also. Through their writings, individuals such as al-Ghazālī also spoke up for the rights of the underprivileged.[810] In the case of *Ṣūfī*s, their criticism of ruling elites is fleshed out in Chapter Three and Five, where I examine how *Ṣūfī*s such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī openly criticized rulers for their misuse of power and their unjust conduct towards ordinary people. Moreover, religious and social networks such as *futuwwa* brotherhoods and community organizations established by *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s as public representatives significantly contributed to sharing responsibility for working towards the wellbeing of the public. The existence of these networks indicates that medieval rulers were not despotic, as they were given space to work autonomously for the common good and thus contribute to the constitution of a public sphere.

Since medieval Muslim rulers did not rule for their personal interests only, they perforce did not ignore the wellbeing of common people. Muslims of medieval Islamic societies considered their rulers responsible for providing social facilities and justice. The caliphate was not just an imperial religious and geopolitical order; rather it "was the embodiment of the body politic of the Muslim community at large, a formal necessity for the rendition of a number of public services."[811] The public services that the Muslim population expected from its rulers included education, medical facilities, roads, bridges, inns, mosques and security. Some rulers tried to provide these services as they were not completely aloof from contributing to the common good, although there were others who did not pay heed to such public goods.[812] Medieval Muslim rulers were often involved in activities for the public good in both their public and private capacities. For example, Abū Manṣūr Qaymaz ibn ʿAbd Allāh as-Zaynī (d. 596/1199), a ruler of Mosul, built many public buildings at his own expense, such as the Great Mosque, a college, and a *ribāṭ* that he erected outside the city. He also constructed a new bridge across the river of Mosul for

[810] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 143, 146.
[811] Yilmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 278.
[812] Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 305-314.

"the greater convenience of the public for whose service the old bridge was insufficient."[813] He also established public charitable funds for works that were beneficial to the underprivileged: for example, he endowed an orphan school.[814] Such endowments by the rulers or members of the ruling elite clearly exemplify a social reality in which rulers were not demonstrably careless of the common people, their needs and their wellbeing. To substantiate this point, I analyzed in Chapters Three, Four and Five various examples of members of the ruling elite (notably the women of the Abbasid family) who endowed funds for public infrastructure such as *madrasa*s and *ribāṭ*s.

Therefore, in their public capacity, members of the ruling elite were involved in charitable works that were deeply beneficial for people from various strata of society, for example, the educational-charitable complexes established through the *waqf* after the middle of the thirteenth century which typically included a mosque, a *madrasa* with a library, a teaching hospital, a *Ṣūfī khānqāh* and a hostel for travellers. The inclusion of the *Ṣūfī khānqāh* as part of this charitable complex contributed significantly to the education and edification of the people, as a means to enhance their spiritual welfare.[815] All in all, a plethora of evidence makes it abundantly clear that medieval rulers were not aloof from activities that would augment the public good; rather, they were profoundly involved in public works that were demonstrably useful to urban communities at large.

Some Orientalists have argued that in medieval societies, moral cohesion and the communal values of a society were engineered by these presumed despots rather than any autonomous group or organization. Yet the *Ṣūfī*s of later Abbasid Baghdad clearly contributed to the channelling and shaping of the communal moral values of the Muslim community as we saw in Chapters Four and Five. They trained and educated people on

[813] Ibn Khallikān, *wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 510-512; *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 246.
[814] Ibn Khallikān, *wafayāt al-aʿyān*, trans. by De Slane, vol. 2, 246.
[815] Arjomand, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society' (p. 272).

how they should behave with family, friends and other members of society. They performed this moralizing and nurturing activity not only as *shaykh*s in *ribāṭ*s, but also as public preachers. This nurturing of communal values contributed significantly to the public sphere, and clearly negates the tired trope of Oriental despotism in which the moral cohesion of a community is manipulated by self-serving megalomaniacal rulers.[816]

We may therefore confidently conclude that the notion that medieval Islamic world rulers were uniformly despotic is very much a peculiar time-bound projection of the Western mind, and a specific strand of unhelpful Orientalism. Though some rulers were high-handed and coercive, and did not act in the interests of those over whom they ruled, the Oriental despotism thesis does not fit the critical mass of evidence that I have gathered during this research. As discussed in earlier, non-hegemonic spaces developed, such as *waqf*s, community organizations, *futuwwa* groups, craftsmen's and merchant guilds, commanding good and forbidding evil. The rulers were by and large not against these public spaces, rather they sometimes used them in the furtherance of the public good. In this, they worked with rather than against the interests of commoners, who also played a pivotal role in maintaining a well-functioning public sphere, as I now discuss in more detail.

The agency of the commoners and the public sphere

It is a complicated matter to examine the agency of commoners in medieval Islamic societies because this phenomenon was not discussed in medieval sources in a way that is easily relatable to modern terms. Moreover, it is also challenging to identify this agency, as medieval social structure was divided by class, groups and communities in quite different ways from those we are familiar with in modern societies.[817] As I discussed

[816] Salvatore, 'Public sphere', 437.
[817] Beg, "al-Khāṣṣa wa 'l-ʿĀmma".

earlier, medieval Islamic societies saw the social strata divided between *al-kẖāṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma*.

In the previous chapter, I examined how many *Ṣūfī*s, even if from humble and non-elite backgrounds, exercised some agency in terms of politics, charity and knowledge. Using their political agency, they intervened in the governmental sphere, and criticized rulers for injustices and for not providing good governance as we discussed in Chapter Five. They were involved in charitable activities and were instrumental in the sphere of knowledge dissemination as well. Their knowledge-transmitting and teaching practices were significant: some scholars from a poor background were able to attain knowledge as a means of upwards mobility, and thereafter used their agency in the spheres of transmitting knowledge and educating people at large.

The system of education within formal institutions alongside the provision of open spaces for informal knowledge practices in medieval Islamic societies provided opportunities for people from various layers of society to share in the transmission, production and consumption of knowledge. In the Mamluk period, it was not only the wealthy and influential families who had access to education and power; other segments of society, particularly the craftsmen, attained significant wealth, power and education. Common people often had access to education and learning through the *madrasa*s, and "could indeed climb the social ladder and become more or less wealthy and educated persons."[818] In the case of Mamluk Cairo, though, there were specific barriers in respect of language and culture that kept Mamluk rulers away from ordinary people, and there were also certain legal and social restrictions regarding the role of women in society. Yet, "education, if it did not obliterate those boundaries, at least rendered them porous and

[818] Thomas Herzog, 'Social milieus and worldviews in Mamluk *adab*-Encyclopedias: The example of poverty and wealth', *Annemarie Schimmel Colleg*, History and Society during the Mamluk Era (1250-1517), ASK Working Paper (2013), 1-24 (pp. 2, 4-5). <https://boris.unibe.ch/48543/>

permeable. In a very real sense, education acted as a leveler."[819] The non-elite of the urban areas of Egypt and Syria significantly contributed to the popularization of reading and writing practices in the Middle Period. The emergence and development of the endowed libraries significantly contributed to the incorporation of people from various social strata, particularly traders and artisans, in the reading and writing culture.[820] Moreover, the "non-scholarly layers of society were not only recipients of texts but also the agents of new cultural practices."[821] Among those non-scholarly sections were traders, artisans and an economic and bureaucratic elite that not only endowed those learning institutions for the benefit of people from all sectors of society but also participated in the aforementioned reading and writing practices.[822] Thus the relatively inclusive system of education in the medieval Islamic world "did bring together in the public sphere groups that might otherwise have remained separated in their private worlds."[823] Among those groups, *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad not only benefited from the charitable educational institutions themselves, but also, by providing leadership to the community in these institutions, contributed significantly to the public spheres by offering material, symbolic and infrastructural support.

The dissemination of knowledge helped people in the formation of public opinion and to show their agency in matters relating to religious issues. Commoners' access to knowledge allowed them to use their agency in religious domains encompassing the question of faith as well as legal and practical issues. "The faith of the modest person, the one who does not possess the intellectual capacities to uphold it, can well be voiced through acceptance of the reliable formulations of the knowledgeable ones, that is, the

[819] Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, New York: Princeton University Press, 1992), 217.
[820] Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands*, 197-198.
[821] Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', 295.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, 217-218.

scholars, the *ʿulamāʾ*."[824] The commoners' involvement in such matters created concern among the religious elite, as they saw it as a threat to their monopoly over theological issues and matters relating to faith and God. That such groups emerged from below to the point where they competed with and challenged the religious elite indicates the extent of their agency in matters of religion, knowledge and religious practices.[825] However, it is quite difficult to say precisely how public opinion was formed in medieval Islamic societies because the *ʿulamāʾ* dominated the scene: they had the voice, they delivered the *khuṭba* (sermon) and they were preachers. The *ʿulamāʾ*, as de facto representatives and interpreters of a variety of interests, "shaped civic spaces and channeled public opinion."[826] Where there were divergent opinions among the *ʿulamāʾ*, they approached their peers (*al-khāṣṣa*) and the common public (*al-ʿāmma*) for their opinions on critical theoretical and specialized issues and those of common interest.[827] Thus it was in practice quite difficult for someone to have a voice if they were not from ranks of the *ʿulamāʾ*. It is for this reason challenging to ascertain what, if any, public opinion bypassed the *ʿulamāʾ*. Whereas after the tenth century, because of the overlap between *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s became scholars, teachers, preachers and advisors. They constructed spaces such as *ribāṭ*s that gave them the platform to shape public opinion on religious and social issues, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

In the context of spaces where public opinion was shaped and public voices heard, it is pertinent to ask whether there were any institutions through which people were allowed to speak up freely. In medieval Islamic societies, the *ribāṭ* and *Ṣūfī* circles provided spaces to the commoners where their grievances could be heard and then presented to the ruling authorities. In the case of the *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, they became

[824] Bori, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', 306.
[825] Ibid., 306-307.
[826] Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam*, 117.
[827] Ibid.

spokesmen for ordinary people: the merchants, the peasants and the underprivileged as we saw in Chapter Five.

Besides institutional spaces such as *ribāṭ* and *madrasa*, there were extra-institutional spaces such as the *bāzār*, where people would come across *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ* and famous preachers of the day. So the *bāzār* can also be regarded as a space where people belonging to different walks of life would meet and discuss a range of social and political issues. These spaces, in the form of the *madrasa*, the *Ṣūfī* lodge, craftsmen's associations, *futuwwa* networks, even inns, bath houses and markets, could facilitate the formation of public opinion on the prominent issues of the day, and were "loci of civic encounters and social transactions."[828] In wholly public places such as the *bāzār*, where the commoners and the underprivileged had free access, they could voice their more general opinions.

This kind of commoners' agency is in keeping with the view expressed by Salvatore that Islam as a religion "authorizes the lay agency and reflective capacities of the commoner with only a modicum of eschatological projection."[829] Keeping in mind their roles as 'vicegerents' on the earth,[830] the community of believers contributed significantly to the public sphere when they used their agency in shaping, constructing and reconstructing those religious and social domains. In this context, we may cite the example of those *ʿulamāʾ*, *Ṣūfī*s and common people who sometimes gained influence over rulers as far as political decision-making was concerned. For example, during the Saljuk period, Fakhr al-Dīn (n.d.), lord of Hisn Kayfa, joined a *jihād* against the Franks because he was compelled to do so by local *Ṣūfī*s, *ʿulamāʾ* and common people.[831] This

[828] Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam*, 118.
[829] Armando Salvatore, 'Beyond the Power of Power? The Public Sphere in Islamic Societies in Comparative Perspective', *Erwagen, Wissen, Ethik*, 17 (2006), 66-68 (p. 67).
[830] Eisenstadt, 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies' (p. 5).
[831] *The Chronicle: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193*, trans. by Richards, 147. When Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zankī, ruler of Syria during the Seljuk rule, wrote to the rulers of other areas or

incident reflects the involvement of the community of believers in social and political affairs, expressly for the betterment of society as a whole. In normative *Sunnī* Islamic thought, it is the shared collective responsibility of the community to take care of public life.[832] Though an *umma*, the community of believers could not directly participate in the policy making of the rulers routinely, yet they used their agency as social and moral actors within communities[833] involved in religious institutions such as *waqf*, *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*. As I discussed above, *waqf* as a religious and social institution played an enormously significant role in the civic life of the community, performing an intermediary role between the community and the ruling elite, and between individuals and the community at large.[834] Moreover through the institution of the *waqf,* space was provided to common people to formulate and present their grievances to local authorities, as explained by Salvatore.[835] Moreover, many of the interpreters of the law of *waqf*, administrators and workers in *waqf* institutions, belonged to non-elite groups who worked for the improvement of both these institutions and of society as a whole.[836]

To turn once again to the issues of charity, philanthropy and almsgiving, *zakat*, as an ingenious Islamic institution, played a critical role in the social, economic and religious life of the Muslim community as one of the five pillars of Islam. The instrument of *zakāt* gave individuals a stake in the life of those less well-off than themselves.[837] Paying *zakāt* was deemed a "ritual act of purification, the focus is on the payer; as a system of revenue-

provinces, requesting aid against the Franks. He also wrote to *ʿulamāʾ*, scholars and *Ṣūfī*s. Some of the lords, such as Fakhr al-Dīn, lord of Ḥiṣn Kayfā, joined the campaign against the Franks because he feared that otherwise the people of the area he ruled would rebel against him. The people of these areas had great respect for *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ*, who were encouraging rulers and people to join the *jihād*. These *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* had their supporters and followers among the people.

[832] Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, 7.
[833] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 121.
[834] Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam*, 122.
[835] Ibid., 138-139.
[836] Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 134.
[837] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, 33.

raising, the centre of concern is the recipients, particularly the poor."[838] As discussed in Chapter Three, voluntary and involuntary charity through *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa* constituted a significant part of the common good in medieval Islamic societies. The space provided by charitable religious institutions not only mitigated the financial burdens suffered by lower and underprivileged sectors of society but also played an important role in social integration, thus constituting a significant further dimension of the public sphere.

In summary, it can be argued in light of evidence I have presented in preceding chapters that after the tenth century, in terms of the maintenance and sustenance of social order, the emphasis shifted from the ruling authorities to society at large when certain social groups, notably *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ*, used their agency to transform society and thereby constitute the public sphere in a large sense, as well as specific mini public spheres on the ground.

Inclusivity was the key defining feature of the medieval Islamic public sphere. People belonging to both *al-<u>kh</u>āṣṣa* and *al-ʿāmma* contributed to the public sphere in a complex social structure in which the role of the ruling elite in social and educational matters led them to adopt a more nuanced view of their position, and of their wider role within society. Significantly, Muslim rulers not only provided spaces to religious and social groups in order to demonstrate their social agency and autonomy in social matters, but also significantly contributed to the common good in measurable, material terms. This clearly supports the notion that medieval rulers were not by any means inherently despotic, and that the conceptualisation of 'the common good' carried multivalent and significant weight within those societies. Particularly during the later Abbasid period, the broader sectors of Islamic society had access to the public sphere, and indeed it was the agency of commoners that helped individuals and groups to constitute this public sphere.

[838] A. Zysow, 'Zakāt', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1377> [accessed 2 November 2019]

Agency in the public sphere was certainly complex, as there were various social strata accommodated within it. Yet various individuals and groups were able to move between the elite and the non-elite groupings because of the porous boundary between the two.

Conclusion

This study was designed to analyze the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies and to determine the role of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in that sphere during the later Abbasid caliphate. In order to resolve the questions posed by this thesis, I used critical structural analysis of various primary and secondary sources, alongside the phenomenology of religion as an approach to my research. This study used chronicles, *Ṣūfī* literature and biographical dictionaries. Also, it used modern works that discuss and explore the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies. The study is thus two pronged, focusing on the existence of public spaces in medieval Islamic societies, while analyzing and discussing different roles of *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad in the public sphere.

I argued that various kinds of public spaces existed in medieval Islamic societies. These spaces were in the form of *waqf*, non-*waqf* charity, the community organizations, the craftsmen's and traders' guilds, the *futuwwa* associations, and commanding good and forbidding evil. In these spaces, whole social strata worked for the public good. The *waqf* was the main charitable institution that played a remarkable role in the public sphere. I have discussed the *waqf*-based public sphere throughout the thesis, especially in Chapters Three and Four. In this public sphere, the ruling elite endowed various institutions such as *madara*s and *ribāṭ*s. They gave charity to the public in the form of, for example, food for daily consumption. While discussing and analyzing the institution of *waqf* and its role for the public good, my research confirms the positions of Armando Salvatore and Miriam Hoexter: *waqf* was the major instrument available to the people, particularly the elite, through which they worked for the public good.[839]

The commoners also had access to spaces which were effectively public spheres from below. These spheres consisted of community groups, craftsmen's and traders'

[839] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 153; Hoexter, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', 119-139.

guilds, and *futuwwa* associations, and within them the commoners used their agency and worked for the public good. These works were in the form of helping the poor, endowment of *madrasa*s and dissemination of ethical and spiritual values. There were also local and small public spheres in which women, craftsmen, traders and religious groups participated. Women's public spheres were significant with respect to providing social spaces to women, also for fulfilling the religious and material needs of women, particularly those who belonged to the underprivileged sections of society.

The existence of these instruments of the public good and their role in the public sphere of later Abbasid society gives credence to my argument that there was a highly vibrant public sphere in medieval Islamic societies.[840] This was a dynamic social sphere in which people could express their grievances, redress wrongs, pursue their interests, and improve their wellbeing and that of others. The medieval Islamic public sphere assisted in the wellbeing of the common people and thus helped medieval Islamic society to self-regulate. This self-regulation and the role of *Ṣūfī*s in it is analyzed and described in detail in Chapter Four and Five.

My research has demonstrated that within medieval Islamic culture, a public sphere of fundamentally selfless activity, philanthropy and spiritual solidarity thrived. My research has identified and discussed institutions such as *waqf*, community organizations, *futuwwa* groups, artisanal groups, and particularly the *waqf* and the *ribāṭ*s, as markers of the public sphere. The most obvious finding to emerge from my analysis is that charity was of paramount importance in the making of the public sphere in Baghdad. Baghdadi *Ṣūfī*s used this space remarkably well, demonstrating their agency within it. There were a series of intersecting spheres where *Ṣūfī*s' activities intersected with the work of

[840] *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levtzion (ed.).

ʿulamāʾ, officials, rulers and traders. Rulers approved of some of the work that *Ṣūfī*s did, and so there were various overlaps between elite, *Ṣūfī* and popular public sphere activities.

My thesis has argued that the public sphere in medieval Islamic societies was autonomous, where people, both elite and non-elite, worked for the public good. One of the significant aspects of the medieval Islamic public sphere was the relationship between society and the ruling authorities as discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five. As Eisenstadt and Schluchter argue, many non-Western societies had close relations between society and the state, and they influenced each other.[841] In the case of later Abbasid Baghdad, there was a close relationship between ruling authorities and the society they governed, through *waqf* when they endowed various religious institutions such as *madrasa* and *ribāṭ*s. These were not merely tools to enable the ruling authorities to gain influence over Baghdadi society, but these endowed institutions played a remarkable role in the public sphere, for example, the *ribāṭ* at the Azaj Gate, an endowed lodge which poor people, needy students and those who sought the spiritual Baraka of *shaykh* Ibn al-Mannī, regularly visited.

The Baghdadi ruling elite did not challenge the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere. Instead, they facilitated the *Ṣūfī*s through their endowment of *Ṣūfī* lodges, another clear indication of a cooperative relationship between society at large and the ruling authorities. The ruling elite incorporated *Ṣūfī*s into governmental spheres for public works. *Ṣūfī*s transformed these lodges into public spaces where various types of public need were met, including education, religion, knowledge, food and shelter.

One underlying theme throughout Chapters Four and Five is that the main agents of the process through which many public sphere activities were accomplished were the *Ṣūfī*s. They have appeared throughout the thesis, but mainly in these two chapters. These

[841] Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities' (p. 8-9)

*Ṣūfī*s attached themselves to endowed *Ṣūfī* lodges and accommodated spiritual wayfarers. However, their role went further than that of mere spiritual *shaykh* of a *ribāṭ* or a *murīd*: they also transformed these lodges into public spaces where everyone was welcome and where a range of public needs were met.

*Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad used their agency and sought out opportunities to disseminate their ideas, practices and rituals in society. This view is supported by Nathan Hofer, who discusses the *Ṣūfī*s of Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, who used their social agency as social actors in the popularization of Sufism there.[842] *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, while having a relationship with the ruling authorities, played the role of spokesperson of the community. They worked for the lessening of their grievances relating to justice, provision of food and other social services. For example, as discussed previously, ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī had good relations with the caliph al-Qāʾim, but he helped people of the lower social strata in redressing their grievances regarding the ruling authorities. *Ṣūfī*s provided spaces for social integration and social relationships between various sectors of society through working in the public sphere.

Through discussing and elaborating on a range of sources in Chapters Four and Five, this research has shown that *Ṣūfī*s played a remarkable role in ensuring a high degree of social solidarity and communal harmony. They provided social space for communication and preservation of communal values. They helped people by providing them with material support and spiritual values for daily life. While *ribāṭ*s provided food and shelter to the poor, the *Ṣūfī shaykh*s of *ribāṭ*s trained and educated people morally and ethically. The preservation of communal and social values are significant aspects of the public sphere, as argued by Armando Salvatore.[843]

[842] Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt*.
[843] Salvatore, *The Public Sphere*, 2-3.

My research has focused especially on the outstanding role of *ribāṭ*s in the public sphere in medieval Baghdad. This breadth of this role has not been previously described or analyzed by scholars of Islamic history. Daphna Ephrat undertook excellent work on the *Ṣūfī*s of medieval Palestine and their role in the public sphere through *Ṣūfī* lodges. She argues that these *Ṣūfī*s transformed their lodges into public spaces in medieval Palestine.[844] She mainly focuses on the idea that they were transformed into centres of spiritual and religious learning. But she does not discuss the way *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad transformed these lodges into public spaces for all types of discussion and to fulfill a wide variety of needs including food, shelter, and religious knowledge and education. They transformed *Ṣūfī* lodges into public spaces where ordinary people were included and had a voice.

This question of inclusion is critical, as it allows us to think about how medieval society tended to be wealth driven and class structured. This inclusive aspect of medieval Islamic society ameliorates the problem of class distinction, and ameliorates the problem of unequal wealth. Significantly, it also embodies the Quranic principle that spiritually, all are in theory and according to the religious ideal equal, even those distinguished by wealth and status.

The analysis undertaken here has extended our knowledge of the medieval public sphere, society, and the relationship between society and ruling authorities. Its significance lies also in demonstrating how ordinary people were involved in the public sphere and how medieval Islamic society created a set of norms which permitted this to occur. Ordinary people's involvement in the public sphere took place through spaces of community organization detailed earlier: the craftsmen's guilds, *futuwwa* associations, and commanding good and forbidding evil.

---

[844] Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*.

Some significant limitations in this research need to be acknowledged. First, this study does not discuss in detail the minutiae of the relationship between the *ʿulamāʾ* and *Ṣūfī*s of Baghdad, though the question of whether the *ʿulamāʾ* accepted the role of *Ṣūfī*s in the public sphere is touched upon. Therefore, more profound work on the relationship between *Ṣūfī*s and *ʿulamāʾ* during the later Abbasid period would be suitable for a further in-depth understanding of society. Second, I have only very briefly discussed the roles of Jews and Christians in the public life of medieval Islamic societies. Geniza documents show a shared cultural milieu in which different faith communities interacted for reasons of business and commerce, and occasionally due to interreligious friendships or relationships.[845] Third, the data I have gathered give us a particular picture but do not tell us about every section of the society. The sources tend to be elite, and are largely intended for the literate, written by the literate class. So my sources have their limitations. They do not focus sufficiently on the activism of women because of medieval cultural barriers to identifying women, particularly noblewomen. Further, the biographical dictionaries include many entries about the learned and well-known figures, but they do not often tell us about those who were left behind, such as the poor or the those living with illnesses or disabilities. Finally, I have focussed on *Sunnī* Muslim communities, because this reflects the orientation of my source base. Nonetheless, this research on the medieval Islamic public sphere and Sufism's role therein has key significance and relevance for a wide variety of fields of study in Islamic Studies and history, such as theology, *maṣlaḥa* (common good; public interest), the history of Sufism, and also social and political history.

Exploring and analysing how people from quite different walks of life and with huge differences in wealth, status and access to resources, came together to create these

[845] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. II, 1967, 273-380.

public spheres has been a highly illuminating and in many ways surprising journey. It has the potential to transform modern views of ‘stagnant’, rigidly hierarchical and unjust societies, and replace those views with a deeper understanding of the dynamic and inclusive social spaces created by pre-modern Muslims for the betterment of society as a whole.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Shahab, *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016)

Al-Bāʿūniyya, ʿĀʾisha, [al-Muntakhab fī uṣūl al-rutab fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf] *The Principles of Sufism*, trans. by Eh. Emil Homerin (New York and London: New York University Press, 2016)

Al-Duri, Khidr Jasmin, 'Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs (1055-1160 A.D.) with Special Reference to Baghdad' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1970)

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, trans. by Fazl-ul-Karim, 4 vols (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993)

_ _ _ _, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (Counsel for Kings), trans. by F. R. C. Bagley (New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1964)

Al-Hujwīrī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise On Sufism*, trans. by Reynold A. Nicholson (London and Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1911)

Al-Jāmi, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, trans. by Ahmad Ali (Lahore: Shabir Brothers, 2002)

Al-Jīlānī, ʿAbd al-Qādir, *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (*The Revelations of the Unseen)*, trans. by Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: M. Muhammad Ashraf, [n.d.])

_ _ _ _, *Ghuniyat-ul-talibeen* [al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq], trans. by Shamas Sadiqi (New Dehli: Arshid Brothers, [n.d.])

_ _ _ _, *Ghunya-tu-tālibīn* [al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq], trans. by Muhammad Sadiq (Lahore: Rumi printers, 1988)

Al-Kalābādhī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, *The Doctrine of the Sufis (Kitāb al-taʿrruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf)*, trans. by Arthur Johan Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)

Al-Māwardī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya w'al-wilāyāt al-dīniyya* (The Ordinances of Government), trans. by Asadullah Yate (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., [n.d.])

Al-Qushayrī, Abu 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin, *Principle of Sufism*, trans. by B. R. Von Schlegell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990)

_ _ _ _, Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism: *al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi ʿilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. by Alexander D. Knysh, rev. by Muhammad Eissa (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2007)

_ _ _ _, *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism*, trans. by Rabia Harris (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2002)

AlRudainy, Reem Saud, 'The Role of Women in the Buyid and Saljuk Periods of the Abbasid Caliphate (339-447/950 1055 & 447-547/1055-1152): The Case of Iraq' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2014)

Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad, *al-Muwāfaqāt fi usūl al-sharīʿa (The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islam)*, vol. II, trans. by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2014)

Al-Shaṭṭanawfī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan, *Bahjat al-asrār: Ahwal-o-aasar Seyedna Ghos-e-Azam Jilani*, trans. by Ahmad Ali (Lahore: Shabir Brothers, 1999)

Al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn Abu 'l-Naṣr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿyya al-kubrā*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dar ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyah, 1992)

Al-Suhrawardī, Abu 'l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qāhir, *Ādāb al-murīdīn (The Ṣūfī Rule for Novices)*, trans. by Menahem Milson (Massachusetts: Cambridge, 1975)

_ _ _ _, *Ādāb al-murīdīn*, trans. by Muhammad Abd al-Basit (Lahore: Tasawwuf Foundation, 1998)

Al-Suhrawardī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, trans. by Abu al-Hasan (Lahore: Idara-e-Islamiyat, [n.d.])

_ _ _ _, *The ʿAwārif-u'l-maʿārif*, trans. by H. Wilberforce Clarke (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 2001)

_ _ _ _, *Kitāb fi'l-futuwwa*, trans. by Lloyd Ridgeon in *Jawanmardi: A Sufi Code of Honour* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 42-99

Al-Sulamī, Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta 'abbidāt aṣ ṣūfiyyāt*, trans. by Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999)

_ _ _ _, *Kitāb al-futuwwa (The Book of Sufi Chivalry: Lessons to a son of the Moment)*, trans. by Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983)

Al-Ṭūsī, Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan Niẓām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyāsat-nāma or Siyar al-mulūk*, trans. by Hubert Darke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960)

Anderson, Perry, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (New York: Verso, 2013)

Anjum, Ovamir, 'Mystical Authority and Governmentality in Medieval Islam', in *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800*, ed. by John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 71-93

Anjum, Tanvir, 'Civil Society in Muslim Contexts: The Probelmatique and a Critique of Euro-American Perspectives', *Islamic Studies*, 51 (2012), 27-48

Anjum, Tanvir, 'Sufism in History and its Relationship with Power', *Islamic Studies*, 45 (2006), 221-68

Anjum, Tanvir, *Chishtī Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi, 1190-1400: From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Appleby, Joyce, Hunt, Lynn and Margaret C. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994)

Arjomand, Said Amir, 'Axial Civilizations, Multiple Modernities, and Islam', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 11(2011), 327-35

Arjomand, Said Amir, 'Philanthropy, the Law, and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era', in *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*, ed. by Warren F. Ilchman, Stanley N. Katz, and Edward L. Queen II (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 109-32

Arjomand, Said Amir, 'The Law, Agency, and Policy in Medieval Islamic Society: Development of the Institutions of Learning from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41 (1999), 263-93

Arjomand, Said Amir, 'Transformation of the Islamicate Civilization: A Turning-point in the Thirteenth Century', *Medieval Encounters*, 10 (2004), 213-36

Asad, Talal, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)

Beg, M.A.J., 'al-Ḵẖāṣṣa wa 'l-ʿĀmma', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4228> [accessed 21 September 2019]

Berkey, Jonathan P., 'Al-Subki and His Women', *Middle East Documentation Centre* (2010), 1-16 <https://knowledge.uchicago.edu/record/1173> [accessed 04 December 2019]

Berkey, Jonathan P., *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992)

Bora, Fozia, 'Did ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Destroy the Fatimids' Books? An Historiographical Enquiry', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2014), 21-39

Bori, Caterina, 'Religious Knowledge between Scholarly Conservatism and Commoners' Agency', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester and Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), pp. 291-309

Brooks, John L., 'On the Edges of the Public Sphere', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 62 (2005), 93-98

Bryan S. Turner, 'Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society in Islam', in *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists*, ed. by Asaf Hussain, Robert W. Olson and Jamil A. Qureshi. (Vermont: Amana Books, 1984), pp. 23-42

Burckhardt, Titus, 'Sufi Doctrine and Method', 1-20 <http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=Sufi_Doctrine_and_Method_by_Titus_Burckhardt.pdf>

Butler, Christopher, *Postmodernism: A very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Cahen, Cl. and others, 'Ḥisba', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0293> [accessed 02 November 2019]

Calhoun, Craig, 'Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 1-48

Chabbi, J., 'Ḵẖānḳāh', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0495> [accessed 24 January 2018]

Chamberlain, Michael, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Cook, Michel, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Crone, Patricia, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004)

Curtis, Michael, *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers on Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Dakake, Maria Massi, 'Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society', in *The Study Quran*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Harper One, 2015), pp. 1785-1804

Danner, Victor, 'The Early Development of Sufism', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge and & Kegan Paul, 2007), 239-64

DeWeese, Devin, 'Organizational Patterns and Developments within Sufi Communities', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester and Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), pp. 329-50

Donati, Pierpaolo, 'Religion and Democracy: The Challenge of a "Religiously Qualified" Public Sphere', *Polish Sociological Review*, 138 (2002), 147-72

Dunn, Ross E., *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)

Eickelman, Dale F. and Salvatore, Armando, 'The Public Sphere and Muslim identities', *Arch. europ. social*., I (2000), 92-115

Eickelman, Dale F., 'Foreword: The Religious Public Sphere in Early Muslim Societies', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 1-8

Eisenstadt, S. N., 'Public Spheres and Civil Society in Selected Pre-Modern Societies: Some Comparative Observations', *Comparative Sociology*, 5 (2006), 1-32

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. and Schluchter, Wolfgang, 'Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities: A Comparative View', *Daedalus*, 127 (1998), 1-18

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N., 'Civil Society and Public Spheres in a Comparative Perspective', *Polish Sociological Review*, 154 (2006), 143-66

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N., 'Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 139-60

Elias, Jamal J., *Islam* (London: Routledge, 1999)

El-Leithy, Tamer, 'Living Documents, Dying Archives: Towards a Historical Anthropology of Medieval Arabic Archives', *Al-Qantara*, XXXII (2011), 389-434

Ephrat, Daphna and Mahamid, Hatim, 'The Creation of Sufi Spheres in Medieval Damascus (mid-6th/12th to mid-8th/14th centuries)', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2015), 189-208

_ _ _ _, 'The Seljuqs and The Public Sphere in the Period of Sunni Revivalism: The View from Baghdad', in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. by Christian Lange and Songul Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 139-56

_ _ _ _, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000)

_ _ _ _, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Ephrat, Daphna, 'Religious Leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Saljuk Baghdad', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 31-48

Ernst, Carl W., 'Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism', in *Teaching Islam*, ed. by Brannon Wheeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) <https://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/islam/9780195152258.003.0007>

Ernst, Carl W., *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2011)

Etziono, Amitai, 'Common Good', in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. by Michael T. Gibbons, First edition (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2015), 1-7 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0178>

Flyvbjerg, Bent, 'Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 49 (1998), 210-33

Foucault, Michel, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-197*, ed. and trans. by Colin Gordon and others (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)

Fraser, Nancy, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56-80

Gall, Dina Le, 'Recent Thinking on Sufis and Saints in the Lives of Muslim Societies, Past and Present', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010), 673-87

Gellner, Ernest, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994)

Geoffroy, E., 'Shaykh', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6890> [accessed 21 November 2019]

Geoffroy, Eric, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. by Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010)

Gerber, Haim, 'The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 65-82

Ghabin, Ahmad, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009)

Goitein, S. D., *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza: Economic Foundations*, vol. I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967)

_ _ _ _, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, The Community*, vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967)

Goldziher I. and H. J. Kissling, 'Abdāl', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0132> [accessed 21 November 2019]

Green, Nile, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)

Griffioen, Amber and Zahedi, Mohammad Sadegh, 'Medieval Christian and Islamic Mysticism and the Problem of a "Mystical Ethics"' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. by Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 280-305

Guenon, Rene, 'Haqiqa and Sharia in Islam' <http://www.fatuma.net/text/Haqiqa_and_Sharia_in_Islam_by_Rene_Guenon.pdf> [accessed 02 December 2019]

Guenon, Rene, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. by Marco Pallis, Arthur Osborne and Richard C. Nicholson (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001)

Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger and intro. by Thomas McCarthy (Massachusetts: Cambridge, 1989)

Hallaq, Wael B., *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul Al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Hartung, Jan-Peter, 'Enacting the Rule of Islam: On Courtly Patronage of Religious Scholars in Pre- and Early Modern Times', in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 295-325

Heck, Paul L., 'Sufism - What Is It Exactly?', *Religion Compass*, 1/1 (2007), 148-64

Heck, Paul L., *Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007)

Herzog, Thomas, 'Social milieus and worldviews in Mamluk *adab*-Encyclopedias: The example of poverty and wealth', *ASK Working Paper*, 8 (2013), 1-24 <https://boris.unibe.ch/48543/>

Hinds, M., 'Miḥna', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5019> [accessed 01 November 2019]

Hirschler, Konrad, *Medieval Damascus, Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library: The Ashrafiya Library Catalogue* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2017)

_ _ _ _, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012, 2013)

Hodgson, Marshall G. S., *The Venture of Islam: Conscience of History in a World Civilization, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period*, vol.2 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974)

Hoexter, Miriam and Nehemia Levtzion, 'Introduction', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 9-16

Hoexter, Miriam, 'The Waqf and the Public Sphere', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 119-39

Hoexter, Miriam, Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. and Nehemia Levtzion, eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002)

Hofer, Nathan, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Sufi" in Egypt, 1173-1325', *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 3 (2014), 1-37

Hofer, Nathan, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)

Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York and Boston: Warner Books, 1991)

Hurvitz, Nimrod, 'The *Mihna* (Inquisition) and the Public Sphere', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 17-29

Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Aḥmad, *Talkẖīṣ majmaʿ al- ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*, ed. by Mustafa Jawad, vol. 4 (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafah wa-al-Irshad al-Qawmi, 1965)

Ibn al-Jawzī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Farash, *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, 18 vols (Bierut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1992)

_ _ _ _, *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deceptions) (Birmingham: Dar as-Sunnah, [n.d.])

Ibn al-Sāʿī, ʿAlī b. Anjab, Abū Ṭālib Tāj al-Dīn, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtasar fi ʿunwān al-tawārīkh wa-ʿuyūn al-siya*, vol. 9 (Baghdad: al-Matba'a al-Siryaniyah al-Kathulikiyah, 1934)

Ibn Iskandar, Kay Kāʾūs, *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs nāma*, trans. by Reuben Levy (London: The Cresset Press, 1951)

Ibn Jubayr, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. by R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Darf Publishers, 2003)

Ibn Kathīr, ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar, *al-Bidāya wa 'l-nihāya fi 'l-taʾrīkh*, trans. by Akhtar Fatih Puri (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1989)

Ibn Khaldūn, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. by Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958)

Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān* (Ibn khallikān's Biographical Dictionary), trans. by Mac Guckin De Slane, 4 vols (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1970)

Ibn Miskawayh, Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb, *The Refinement of Character (Tahdhīb al-akhlāq)*, trans. by Constantine K. Zurayk (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2002)

Ibn Ṣābūnī, Jamal al-Dīn Abi Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Mahmudī, *Takmilat ikmāl al-ikmāl fi al-ansāb wa al-asma wa-al-alqāb*, ed. by Mustafa Jawad, (Baghdad: Matba'a al-Majma al-Ilmi al-Iraqi, 1957)

Jacobi, Renate, 'Zumurrud Khātūn', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8209> [accessed 17 September 2018]

Jaede, Maximilian, 'The Concept of the Common Good', Working Paper, University of Edinburgh, 1-18 <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Jaede.pdf>

Jawad, Mustafa, 'Ar-Rubut al-Baghdadiyya', *Sumer*, 10 (1954), 218-49

Kadivar, Mohsen, 'An Introduction to the Public and Private Debate in Islam', *Social Research*, 70 (2003), 659-80

Kahf, Monzer, 'Waḳf.', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0844> [accessed 12 April 2011]

Kahhālah, ʿUmar Ridā, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ fī ʿālamay al-ʿarab wa'l-islām*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1991)

Kamali, Masoud, 'Civil Society and Islam: A Sociological Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, 42 (2001), 457-82

Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003)

Karamustafa, Ahmet T., 'Antinomian Sufis', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. by Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 101-24

_ _ _ _, 'Shi'is, Sufis and Popular Saints', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester and Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), pp. 159-75

_ _ _ _, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Oxford: One World, 2006)

_ _ _ _, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)

Kennedy, Hugh, *The Caliphate: A Pelican Introduction* (London: Pelican, 2016)

Khadduri, M., 'Maslaḥa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5019> [accessed 28 November 2017]

Khalil, Atif and Sheikh, Shiraz, 'Sufism in Western Historiography: A Brief Overview', *Philosophy East and West*, 66 (2016), 194-217

King, Richard, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999)

Knysh, Alexander, 'Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West', in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. by Youssef M. Choueiri (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 106-31

_ _ _ _, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill, 2000)

_ _ _ _, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017)

Kuran, Timur, 'The Provision of Public Goods under Islamic Law: Origins, Impact, and Limitations of the Waqf System', *Law & Society Review*, 35 (2001), 841-98

L. Massingnon and others, 'Taṣawwuf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1188> [accessed 26 March 2018]

Lambton, A. K. S., 'Sufis and state in Medieval Persia', Research School, Leiden (1995)

Lange, Christian and Fierro, Maribel, 'Introduction: Spatial, ritual and representational aspects of public violence in Islamic societies (7th-19th centuries CE)', in *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th-19th Centuries CE*, ed. by Christian Lange and Maribel Fierro (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-26

Lapidus, Ira M., 'The Golden Age: The Political Concepts of Islam', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 524 (1992), 13-25

Lapidus, Ira M., *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Leaman, Oliver, review of *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (1994), *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (1996), 96-97

Leiser, Gary, 'Notes on the Madrasa in Medieval Islamic Society', *The Muslim World*, 76 (1986), 16-23

Leming, Laura M., 'Sociological Explorations: What is Religious Agency?', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48 (2007), 73-92

Lev, Yaacov, 'The Ethics and Practice of Islamic Medieval Charity', *History Compass*, 5/2 (2007), 603-18

Levtzion, Nehemia, 'The Dynamics of Sufi Brotherhoods', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 109-18

Lewis, Bernard, 'The Islamic Guilds', *The Economic History Review*, 8 (1937), 20-37

Lindholm, Charles, 'Despotism and Democracy: State and Society in the Premodern Middle East', in *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, ed. by J. A. Hall and I. Jarvie (Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996). 329-56

Livingstone, Sonia and Lunt, Peter, *Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate* (Routledge: London, 1994)

Lowry, Joseph E., 'Institution' in *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, ed. Jamal Elias (London: Oneworld, 2010), pp. 200-19

Lumbard, Joseph E. B., *Aḥmad al-Ġhazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016)

MacDonald, D. B. and Calverley, E. E., ‘ḥaḳḳ’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://0-dx.doi.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei2glos_SIM_gi_01436> [accessed 01 December 2017]

Mahjub, Mohammad Ja’far, Mahjub, ‘Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism’, in *The Heritage of Sufism: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi* (700-1300), ed. Leonard Lewisohn, vol. 1 (Oxford: One World, 1999), pp. 549-82

Makdisi, George, *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (Aldershot/Brookfield: Variorum, 1990)

_ _ _ _, *Ibn Aqil: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997)

_ _ _ _, *The Rise Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981)

Malcolm, Noel, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)

Malik, Hamza, *The Grey Falcon: The Life and Teaching of Shaykhʿ Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018)

Manzano, Eduardo, ‘Why Did Islamic Medieval Institutions Become so Different from Western Medieval Institutions?’, *Medieval World*, 1 (2015), 118-37

Mardin, Şerif, ‘Civil Society and Islam’, in *Civil Society: Theory History Comparison*, ed. by John A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 278-300

Marenbon, John, ‘Self-Interest, Self-Sacrifice, and the Common Good’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. by Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 325-47

Marlow, L., *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran, The Nasīhat al-Mulūk of Pseudo-Māwardī Contexts and Themes*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017)

Masud, Muhammad Khalid, *Islamic Legal Philosophy: A Study of Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi’s Life and Thought* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1977)

Melchert, Christopher, ‘Origins and Early Sufism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. by Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 3-23

Mills, Sara, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003)

Moller, Violet, *The Map of Knowledge: How Classical Ideas Were Lost and Found: A History in Seven Cities* (London: Picador, 2019)

Morray, David, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World: Ibn al-Adam and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the city* (London: E.J. Brill, 1994)

Mottahedeh, Roy and Stilt, Kristen, ‘Public and Private as Viewed through the Work of the Muhtasib’, *Social Research*, 70 (2003), 735-48

Mottahedeh, Roy, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001)

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 2000)

_ _ _ _, ed., *The Study Quran: A New Interpretation and Commentary* (New York: Harper One, 2015)

_ _ _ _, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007)

Ohlander, Eric S., *Sufism in an Age of Transition:* ʿUmar al- al-Suhrawardī *and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008)

_ _ _ _, 'Early Sufi Rituals, Beliefs, Hermeneutics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. by Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 53-73

Opwis, F., *Maslaha and the Purpose of the Law: Islamic Discourse on Legal Change from the 4th/10th to the 8th/14th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000)

Peacock, A. C. S., *The Great Seljuk Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)

Pedersen, J. and others, 'Madrasa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0610> [accessed 02 November 2019]

Peters, R. and others, 'Waḳf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1333> [accessed 02 November 2017]

Peters, R. and ter Haar, J G. J., 'Rukhṣa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0937> [accessed 02 November 2019]

Phillips, Kendall R., 'The Spaces of Public Dissension: Reconsidering the Public Sphere', *Communication Monographs*, 63 (1996), 231-48

Rahimi, Babak and Armando Salvatore, 'The Crystallization and Expansiveness of Sufi Networks within the Urban-Rural-Nomadic Nexus of the Islamic Ecumene', in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. by Armando Salvatore (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), pp. 253-71

Rahman, Fazlur, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

Ramadan, Tariq, 'Al-Maṣlaḥa (The Common Good)' <https://tariqramadan.com/english/al-maṣlaḥa-the-common-good/>

Rankin, Mary Backus, 'Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere', *Modern China*, 19 (1993), 158-82

Raymond, A., Floor, W. and Ozdemir, Nutku, 'ṣinf', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1085> [accessed 02 November 2019]

Rāzī, Najm al-Dīn Abū Bakr, *Mirsād al-ʿibād min al-mabdaʾ ilā l-maʿād* (*Path of God's Bondsmen*), trans. by Hamid Algar (New York: Caravan Books, 1982)

Reddy, William M., 'Postmodernism and the Public Sphere: Implications for a Historical Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7 (1992), 135-68

Reid, Megan H., *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Renterghem, Vanessa Van, 'Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad during the Saldjuk Period (mid. Vth/XIth mid. VIth/XIIth c.)', *Waqf of Marmara University Faculty of Theology*, 1 (2011), 1-20 <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00732282/document>

Ridgeon, Lloyd, 'futuwwa (in Sūfism)' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, ed. by Kate Fleet and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27218> [accessed 01 November 2019]

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

Rosenthal, Erwin I. J., *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958)

Ryan, Mary P., 'Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 259-88

Sabra, Adam, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Safi, Omid, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)

Salamah-Qudsi, Arin Shawkat, 'The Idea of Tashabbuh in Sufi Communities and Literature of the Late 6th/12th and Early 7th/13th Century in Baghdad', *Al-Qantara*, XXXII (2011), 175-97 <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/alqantara.2011.v32.i1.253> [accessed 30 October 2019]

Salamah-Qudsi, Arin Shawkat, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

Salvatore, Armando and Eickelman, Dale F., 'Preface: Public Islam and the Common Good', in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. xi-xxv

Salvatore, Armando, 'Beyond the Power of Power? The Public Sphere in Islamic Societies in Comparative Perspective', *Erwagen, Wissen, Ethik*, 17 (2006), 66-68.

Salvatore, Armando, 'Eccentric Modernity? An Islamic Perspective on the Civilizing Process and the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14 (2011), 55-69

Salvatore, Armando, 'public sphere', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. by Gerhard Bowering and others (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 436-38

Salvatore, Armando, 'Sufi articulations of civility, globality, and sovereignty', *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*, 2 (2018), 156-74

Salvatore, Armando, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Salvatore, Armando, *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016)

Schimmel, Annemarie, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994)

_ _ _ _, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 2006)

Siraj Ed-Din, Abu Bakr, 'The Nature and Origin of Sufism', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2008), 223-38

Smith, Huston, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2003)

Spinks, Lee, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Routledge, 2003)

Springborg, Patricia, 'The Contractual State: Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism', *History of Political Thought*, VIII (1987), 395-433

Springborg, Patricia, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)

Sreedharan, E., *A Textbook of Historiography: 500 BC to AD 2000* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004)

Stausberg, Michael and Steven Engler, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011)

Strange, G. Le, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate: From Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924)

Taeschner, F., 'ʿAyyār', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0927> [accessed 21 November 2019]

Talmon-Heller, Daniella, 'Religion in the Public Sphere: Rulers, Scholars, and Commoners in Syria under Zangid and Ayyubid Rule (1150-1260)', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 49-63

The Annals of the Saljuk Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh of ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, trans. by D. S. Richards (London and New York: Routledge, 2002)

The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh: Part 2, the Years 514-589/1146-1193: The Age of Nur al-Din and Saladin, trans. by D. S. Richards (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007)

The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh: Part 1, the Years 491-541/1097-1146: The Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response, trans. by D. S. Richards (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007)

The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī 'l-taʾrīkh: Part 3, the Years 589-629/1193-1231: The Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace, trans. by D. S. Richards (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008)

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Guild', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/guild-trade-association>

Trimingham, J. Spencer, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)

Tucker, Kenneth H., review of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992), *Social Forces*, 71 (1993), 1081-82

Turner, Bryan S., 'Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society in Islam', in *Orientalism, Islam and Islamists*, ed. by Asaf Hussain, Robert Olson, and Jamil Qureshi (Vermont: Amana Books, 1984), pp. 23-42

Watt, David Harrington, review of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992), *Sociological Analysis*, 53 (1992), 466-68

White, Stephen K., 'Reason, Modernity, and Democracy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. by Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 3-18

Wittfogel, Karl, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957)

Ye'or, Bat, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, trans. by David Maisel, Paul Fenton and David Littman (London, Toronto: Associated University Press, 1985)

Yilmaz, Huseyin, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018)

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, 'The Caliphs, the ʿulamāʾ, and the Law: Defining the Role and Function of the Caliph in the Early Abbāsid Period', *Islamic Law and Society*, 1 (1997), 1-36.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, 'The ʿUlama of Contemporary Islam and their Conceptions of the Common Good', in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. by Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. 129-56

Zysow, A., 'Zakāt', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. by P. Bearman and others <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1377> [accessed 2 November 2019]