Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam

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Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's Theory of wilāya *and the Reenvisioning of the Sunnī Caliphate*

By

Aiyub Palmer

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bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm
for my wife Sulma

Contents

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Abbreviations

KA	Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: *Khatm al-awliyā'* (1992)
KH	Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: *Kitāb al-ḥikma* (ms.)
NU	Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: *Nawādir al-uṣūl* (2010)
IA	Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī: *'Ilm al-awliyā'* (1983)
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*
EIr	*Encyclopædia Iranica*
CS	Bernd Radtke: *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (1996)

System of Transliteration for Arabic Letters

ʾ	ء	z	ز	q	ق
b	ب	s	س	k	ك
t	ت	sh	ش	l	ل
th	ث	ṣ	ص	m	م
j	ج	ḍ	ض	n	ن
ḥ	ح	ṭ	ط	h	ه
kh	خ	ẓ	ظ	w	و
d	د	ʿ	ع	y	ي
dh	ذ	gh	غ	in construct state: t	ـة
r	ر	f	ف		

The article: al- and l- (even in front of sun letters)

Short vowels		Long vowels		Diphthongs	
u	ـُ	ū	و	aw	وَ
a	ـَ	ā	ا	ay	يَ
i	ـِ	ī	ي	iyy	ـِيّ
Nunation				uww	ـُوّ
un	ـٌ				
an	ـً				
in	ـٍ				

Introduction

0.1 The Study of Islamic Sainthood

The study of sainthood in Islam, along with exploration into Islamic *wilāya*[1], has blossomed over the past several decades, shedding light on the pivotal role of sainthood and saints in Islamicate societies.[2] Taking Weber and Gelner as their point of departure, many of these studies are grounded in sociological thought and methodology, either adopting Weber's framework for analyzing sainthood or responding to Weber in some way.[3] Others have used anthropological methods, psychoanalysis and phenomenological approaches to better understand sainthood in its lived context. The plethora of methodologies brought to bear in the study of Islamic sainthood attests to the vibrancy and multi-faceted nature of this subject. In any research project, the goal is not only to explore a lacuna in the field, but also to provide some useful study that will move the field forward. One area that clearly needs development is the study of sainthood in the early Islamic period.[4] This would provide an important reference point for studies on sainthood in later periods to help situate and provide some needed context for the work of those scholars. The point here is neither to present sainthood in Islam as a monolithic entity nor to trace a narrative of sainthood from a single point in its Islamic origins. Rather, the

1 A convention has developed within the study of Islamic sainthood to use the term *walāya* to refer to sainthood as opposed to *wilāya*, which more often refers to a political office, authority, or legal jurisdiction to initiate a judgment or legal contract. This distinction has no historical basis and obscures the important place of authority in understanding early Islamic sainthood. I use the term *wilāya* to refer to the constellation of meanings around authority, protection and sainthood, while using *wilāya*/*walāya* to indicate the transactional nature of *wilāya*.

2 For a survey of recent scholarship on sainthood and saints in Islamicate societies, see Stauth et al. *On Archaeology of Sainthood.*

3 See Brian Turner's interpretation of Weber for the study of Islam, *The Sociology of Islam*; Gellner, *Doctor and Saint*; Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood*; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*; and Singh, *Sainthood and Revelatory Discourse*. For a discussion on the interconnectedness of Sufism, sainthood and power in the Deccan and the close relationship between literary production and sainthood, see Green, *Indian Sufism since the 17th Century*. Also, Kugle (2006) looks at the motif of the juridical saint in the life and works of Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 898/1493).

4 The earliest studies of sainthood in Islam relate to the work of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (b. circa 205–215/820–830, d. circa 295–300/907–912), primarily by Bernd Radtke. Radtke views the ideas of al-Tirmidhī through the lens of a standard conception of sainthood within Islamic Studies, which was first explicated in detail by Ignàc Goldziher in his *Muhammedanische Studien Band II*, 1961. Goldziher's treatment of sainthood in the early period remains unchallenged and has represented a standard point of departure for subsequent studies of Islamic sainthood.

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goal in this study is to ground an approach to sainthood in the various understandings of *wilāya*/*walāya* as they appear in the early Islamic period in a historical and textual approach. Hence, the major purpose of this work is to provide a basis for differentiating between sainthood and *wilāya* and to elucidate the pre-Akbarian notion of *wilāya* and its integration with Sufism as well as with general notions of Islamic authority. The hope is that this study will be of benefit to those who wish to pursue further research on saints and sainthood within Islamdom. Even if Islamic notions of *wilāya* may not be central to a study on a particular aspect of sainthood or saints in Islam, it would be hoped that some reference to these foundational notions might expand the context within which the study situates *wilāya* and the *awliyā'*.

Sainthood and saints are terms that historians and phenomenologists of religion accept as categories that apply to religion generally.[5] This does not ignore the obvious problems that arise when we apply such terms without acknowledging the extent of their usefulness.[6] I view this general term 'sainthood' as a bridge that enables the reader to enter the realm of *wilāya* as a new political, social, semantic and linguistic set of relationships within a given context. In this way, I do not see the Arabic term *wilāya* as an equivalent for sainthood. The term *wilāya* in Islam is defined as the "exercise of authority," whether religious or spiritual.[7] The word saint (in Greek *hagios* and in Latin *sanctus*) would more appropriately be translated in Arabic as *qiddīs* with the root *q-d-s*, indicating a person who is holy, sacred or sanctified.[8] According to sociologists of religion, the saint is understood to be one of a number of types of religious authority, and in this sense, the saint comes closer to the function of the *walī* (one who has *wilāya*) in Islam.[9] So, while the term saint has its own semantic history that originates in pagan and then Christian notions of sanctity, it has come to be used more generally in the sociology of religion to represent an ideal type.[10] The term in this very general usage does not help us when

5 Kieckhefer and Bond, *Sainthood: its manifestations in world religions*, vii.

6 For a more involved discussion of the use of the terms saint and sainthood to discuss Islamic *wilāya/walāya* , see Chodkiewicz, "La sainteté et les saints en islam," 13. I disagree with Chodkiewicz that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī introduced *walāya* as a technical term separate from *wilāya*. While al-Tirmidhī does introduce *wilāya* in a technical sense, it is not clear that the meaning of this term took on a new semantic function in accord with the term *walāya*, which is used primarily by scholars of Islamic mysticism to describe a non-political sense within the *wilāya* paradigm.

7 Dien and Walker, "Wilāya," *EI2*.

8 Denny, "God's friends," 69.

9 Kieckhefer and Bond, *Sainthood: its manifestations in world religions*, vii.

10 Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen has a very useful article describing the differences and similarities between Christian, Jewish and Islamic notions of sainthood. Islamic and Jewish

it comes to understanding the more subtle aspects of *wilāya*, and for this reason I have chosen to use both terms together at various points throughout this study to represent complementary but not fully overlapping distributions of meaning and social significance.

In the first two centuries of Islam, the term *wilāya* was used almost exclusively to refer to political authority over the Muslim *umma* (community) or personal legal jurisdiction over an unauthorized person such as a child, slave, virgin woman, etc., by that person's legal guardian.[11] A reading of early political documents from this period, particularly the Ṣaḥīfa of Madīna, demonstrates that the term *wilāya*, as well as the active participle of the fourth form of the root *w-l-y*, *mawlā*, refers primarily to protection and authority over Muslims as opposed to the *dhimma* (protection) exacted from non-Muslims.[12] *Wilāya* in this sense refers to protection and the subsequent schema of authority that this presupposes. The relationship is cemented through the conferring of *bayʿa* (covenant) and the agreement of the willing party to provide support (*walāya* or *nuṣra*) to the protector (*walī*).[13] *Wilāya,* as a schema of authority, can be understood in distinction to *dhimma* as signifying another type of protection that results from subjugation or an imbalanced relationship of power. Intimately connected to this *wilāya* is the *bayʿa*, which plays an important role in

approaches to sainthood follow a similar structure with the important difference that Jewish notions of sanctity give special provenance to the Jewish people. Christian notions of sanctity gave saints the power of holy intercession with God. Mayeur-Jaouen, "Le saint, un modèle pour le croyant?", 637–704.

11 Dien and Walker, "Wilāya," *EI2*.

12 The Ṣaḥīfa of Madīna (The Madīna Document), often mistakenly titled, "The Constitution of Madina," is considered one of the earliest and most authentic documents, aside from the Qurʾān itself, prior to the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. Michael Lecker, "Constitution of Medina." In the Ṣaḥīfa of Madīna, the terms *mawlā* and *mawālī* refer to protection between believers (*muʾminūn*) among the nascent Muslim community that had grown in the Arab tribes of Madīna. I disagree with Fred Donner's reading of *muʾminūn* in the context of the Saḥīfa. The word *muʾminūn* is in fact used to contrast the Arab pagan tribes that had converted to Islam as opposed to the Arab Jewish tribes of Madīna. The word *dhimma* in the Saḥīfa is used to refer to God's protection, here referring to an unequal relationship of power. In other political documents, the word *dhimma* always refers to Muslim protection of non-Muslims. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Majmūʿat al-wathāʾiq al-siyāsīyya li al-ʿahd al-nabawī wa al-khilāfa al-rāshida*, 57–64.

13 Early Muslim sources describe both Abū Bakr, the first caliph in Islam, and ʿUmar, the second caliph, as exercising *wilāya* over the fledgling Muslim polity centered at Madīna. In his address to the Muslim community in Madīna after the assumption of his rule, ʿUmar likens his authority over the Muslim community to the authority of a *walī* over the child orphan (*yatīm*) whom he is charged to protect. ʿAbdallāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, 234–235.

the Prophet Muḥammad's own cementing of his authority over the new Muslim converts.[14] According to the Qur'ān, *bay'a* to the Prophet is tantamount to *bay'a* with God.[15] The Prophet and the early caliphs used pre-Islamic conventions while infusing them with a new Islamic ethos.[16]

Within the study of Islamic mysticism, there is both ambivalence and grudging acceptance of the term sainthood. Both Gerald Elmore (1999) and Vincent Cornell (1998) agree that the distribution of meanings around the Arabic word *wilāya* has few parallels to the term sainthood in English. Despite this incongruity, most scholars of Islamic sainthood, such as Michel Chodkiewicz, Denis Gril, Carl Ernst, Vincent Cornell, Gerald Elmore, Alexander Knysh, Scott Kugle et al., consider the use of the terms sainthood and saint as acceptable and necessary when discussing a phenomenon that has both universal and particular characteristics across a wide swathe of cultures and traditions.[17] Elmore, Cornell and Kugle have considerably advanced the field of Islamic sainthood by contextualizing the term *wilāya* (or *walāya*) through its various meanings within the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as well as through the use of later dictionaries of Ṣūfī terminology. Islamic mystics of the 3rd/9th century, such as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, developed their own use of the term w*ilāya.* Al-Tirmidhī's works demonstrate a new significance attached to this term by the middle to late 3rd/9th century. Notions of w*ilāya* had come to accrue a new universe of meanings within the linguistic, socio-cultural and religious climate of eastern Khurāsān and Transoxania.[18]

The terminology we use to discuss and understand sainthood in Islam is still evolving. Vincent Cornell (1998), in his important work on Moroccan

14 The Prophet accepted a number of fealty oaths from his Companions before his emigration to Madīna as well as afterward at Ḥudaybiyya and after that in the wake of the conquest of Makka. This practice was followed by the first caliphs in Islam who came after him.

15 See Qur'ān 48:10, *Inna alladhīna yubāyi'ūnaka innamā yubāyi'ūna Allāh yad Allāh fawqa aydīhim...* "Indeed those who make a covenant with you (O Muḥammad), they are in fact making a covenant with Allāh. The hand of Allāh is above their hands..."

16 H. M. T. Nagel, "Some considerations," 180.

17 Chodkiewicz, "Le sainteté et les saints en islam," 14; Denis Gril, "Le saint et le maître," 55; Carl Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism,* 58. Alexander Knysh uses the term saint ambivalently and prefers "friend of God" as does John Renard. Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,"* xxix; Gerald Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*," 109–115; Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History*, 44–47; Scott Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 30–32.

18 In Arabic, this geographic area is referred to as *mā warā' al-nahr* (what is beyond the river). This refers to the Amū Darya River, which was a common landmark that separated Iran from Central Asia. I sometimes refer to Khurāsān and Transoxania together as "Greater Khurāsān" since these two regions often came under the rule of the same governor/*sulṭān*. These regions also share a great deal of cultural and linguistic elements.

sainthood, has sought to break with the Neo-Weberian approach to Muslim sainthood that equates *baraka* with charisma and substitutes *marabout* for prophet. According to Cornell, Max Weber's paradigm of charismatic sainthood and its institutionalization through the "routinization of charisma," does not accord with Michael Gilsenan's (1982) anthropological study of Moroccan maraboutism. Cornell seeks to understand the underlying epistemological foundations of the Moroccan holy man's charisma. While Cornell does not go so far as Bryan Turner (1998) to say that we cannot use or apply the term "sainthood" to the study of Muslim saints, he does call for a terminological and methodological approach that is wedded more closely to the Islamic literary corpus and self-definition.[19] In this respect, he employs the dual terms *wilāya*/*walāya*, through which he separates two important meanings embedded in the Islamic concept of sainthood: that of power, authority and protection on the one hand, and closeness, intimacy and friendship on the other. For Cornell the *walī* functions in both of these realms simultaneously as an intermediary and patron for his clients. This places the *walī* in a hierarchal relationship between the generality of Muslims (*ʿāmma*) and God. While this approach may be useful for the study of sainthood in later periods, it does not necessarily help in the early Islamic period where there is no indication that the *awliyāʾ* were seen as intermediaries (as authority figures) with God, with the exception of Shīʿism.

Maria Dakake on the other hand discusses the use of *walāya* in the context of Shīʿism and argues that *walāya*, as opposed to *wilāya*, is more appropriately "charisma" than "sanctity" when communicating Shīʿī notions of authority and identity.[20] This is because, for Shīʿīs, only the Imāms have true *wilāya*, and this authority was removed from temporal existence with the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in the 9th-century CE. Hence, *wilāya*, in the Shīʿī context, is reflected in the representation of the spiritual authority of the Imams through Shīʿī scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*).[21] Dakake indicates another way to cast *wilāya*/*walāya* in terms of charismatic authority/support. However, as we will see, the Weberian term charisma obscures more than it clarifies the notion of *wilāya*/*walāya* in early Islam.

I believe the discussion around *wilāya* in the early Islamic period must necessarily pivot around the ideas of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī since he provides the first lengthy and complete scholarly discussion of *wilāya*. That framework laid down by al-Tirmidhī was developed and expanded upon by the famous Anda-

19 Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 61.

20 The term *walāya* has been used historically by the Shīʿīs to denote the support they give to the Imām whose religious authority is termed *wilāya*.

21 Maria Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community*, 30.

lusian mystic Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī (d. 638/1240). Neither of these figures saw themselves as addressing only Ṣūfīs or even the *awliyā'*; rather, their audience was the Islamic *umma* and their discourse was a wide one, even if those who were able to consume their ideas were of an elite learned class. That is why it is important not to restrict the discussion of *wilāya* only to sainthood or Sufism. By the 3rd/9th century, *wilāya* is a term contested by a variety of groups seeking to provide solutions to the problem of power and authority in Islamdom. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is especially important within this discourse because he is the first early mystic to provide a lengthy discursive treatment of *wilāya*.

0.2 *Wilāya/Walāya* in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth Literature

In the Qur'ān, the term *wilāya*/*walāya* appears twice.[22] According to Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), the first instance, which is in Qur'ān 18:44[23], refers to God's authority (*mulk*) and power (*sulṭān*). The second instance, in Qur'ān 8:72[24], is usually understood to denote the meaning of

22 In his article, "La notion de *walaya* dans le Coran et la Sunna," Denis Gril demonstrates the importance of taking into account the entire semantic field inhabited by words connected to the Arabic root *w-l-y*. According to Gril the root *w-l-y* appears 235 times in the Qur'ān and clearly represents an important conceptual category of which the two instances of *wilāya*/*walāya* in the Qur'ān are but one facet. Gril's article demonstrates that a number of foundational concepts related to *wilāya*/*walāya* appear in the Ḥadīth literature in addition to Qur'ānic precedents. While al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is considered the first to write discursively about *wilāya*, he is clearly drawing upon the corpus of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in attempting to fuse the various elements within this tradition into a single coherent approach.

23 Qur'ān 18:44 reads: *hunālika al-walāyatu li-llāh al-ḥaqq huwa khayrun thawāban wa-khayrun ʿuqbā*, "There, the power to protect is completely for Allāh, the Truth. He is best in reward and best in outcome."

24 Qur'ān 8:72 reads: *Inna al-ladhīna āmanū wa-hājarū wa-jāhadū bi-amwālihim wa anfusihim fī sabīl Allāh wa-alladhīna āwaw wa-naṣarū ulā'ika baʿḍuhum awliyā'u baʿḍ wa alladhīna āmanū wa lam yuhājirū mā lakum min walāyatihim min shay' ḥattā yuhājirū wa-in istanṣarūkum fī al-dīn fa-ʿalaykum al-naṣru illā ʿalā qawm baynakum wa-baynahum mīthāq wa-Allāhu bi-mā taʿmalūna baṣīr*. "Indeed those who have believed and emigrated and fought with their wealth and lives in the cause of Allāh, and those who gave shelter and aided, they are allies of one another. But those who believed and did not emigrate, for you there is no guardianship/inheritance of them until they emigrate. And if they seek help of you in the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty. And Allāh is seeing of what you do." Saḥīḥ International: <http://quran.com/8>.

inheritance (*mīrāth*), although the meaning of protection also applies.[25] In both verses, the canonical recitation of the word as both *wilāya* or *walāya* exists, with *wilāya* connoting *ṣulṭa* (power) and *walāya* connoting *nuṣra* (provision of aid or victory). In the second verse mentioned above, those who had migrated to Madīna were not allowed to inherit from believing Muslims who had remained in Makka until those remaining Muslims had also completed the migration. The severing of inheritance indicates the severing of fundamental ties of kinship upon which protection and authority were based in pre-Islamic Arab society. Subsequently, when we look at the terms *wilāya* and *walāya* in the Ḥadīth corpus, we also find meanings that are related to inheritance, political authority and patronage.[26] When looking at the term referring to the person who holds *wilāya*, i.e. the *walī* or *mawlā*, such as in Qur'ān 10:62, we find a similar focus on power, protection and authority. Those who seek to find a meaning for *wilāya* in the early Islamic sources that corresponds most closely to sainthood or saint in its conventional meaning, turn to this verse in the *surah* of Yūnus. This is the passage that reads, according to Yūsuf 'Alī's translation, as: "Behold! Verily on the *awliyā'* of Allāh, there is no fear, nor shall they grieve."[27] The meaning of *lā khawfun 'alayhim*, "there is no fear upon them," in the Arabic, is more accurately rendered as, "others shall not fear for them." That is, none need fear for the *awliyā'* on the Day of Judgement because they will be under the special protection of God. It is significant to note that this particular passage does not necessarily connote the meaning of closeness to God that is attributed to the word *wilāya* in most of the classical Arabic dictionaries.[28] The concept of God's closeness to the human being is indeed found in the Qur'ān as described in verse 50:16, "And We (God) are closer to him than his carotid artery." Yet, this description of closeness (*qurba*) in the Qur'ān is a benefit prescribed to all of mankind. It is not something that is conferred upon a special group of select individuals. Nevertheless, the concept of a typology of believers who do have a special closeness to God does exist throughout the Qur'ān in

25 The meaning of inheritance (*mīrāth*) here for *walāya* is supported by al-Suyūṭī in *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, one of the most widely recognized commentaries on the Qur'ān in the Sunnī world.

26 Ibid., "Wilāya," *EI2*. The meanings of *wilāya* in Islamic law reflect the usage of this term in the Ḥadīth corpus. *Wilāya* overwhelmingly refers to power, protection or authority over another.

27 'Abdallāh Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary (in Modern English)*, 243.

28 Closeness (*qurba*) is only one of a cluster of meanings given in these dictionaries for *wilāya*/*walāya*.

other contexts such as Qurʾān 56:11, *ulāʾika al-muqarrabūn*, "Those are the ones brought nigh." The idea that there can be a special protection from sin also exists in the Qurʾān and is found in Qurʾān 33:33. This is the verse that is most often used by Shīʿīs to support their claim of the special protection from sin for the family of the Prophet Muḥammad. So, while the meanings of the words *wilāya* and the *awliyāʾ* can indicate a meaning of closeness in certain contexts, the overwhelming use of these words is to mean power, protection and authority, while other words are used to indicate closeness or a special class of individuals. What we see in these early sources are motifs and themes that are picked up and reworked in the later tradition after having undergone transformations in meaning. At certain points in the developmental trajectory of Islamic sainthood, a doctrine emerges that combines and integrates some of these various Qurʾānic and Ḥadīth themes. We see this with figures such as Sahl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), a contemporary of al-Tirmidhī who also spoke about *wilāya*. Gerhard Böwering characterizes al-Tustarī's thought as an encounter between his mystical matrix of ideas and Qurʾānic keynotes. A similar statement can be made about al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and other mystics whose thought developed through a constant reflection on the meanings of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

The Ḥadīth literature was also significant and essential for al-Tirmidhī and other early mystics as they formulated their views on *wilāya*. In many ways, the Ḥadīth literature is where we find a treatment of *wilāya* that accords more succinctly with later interpretations of Islamic sainthood. While the Qurʾān focuses primarily on meanings of power and protection, the Ḥadīth emphasize closeness and friendship. Probably the most important *ḥadīth* in this respect is the *ḥadīth qudsī* (reported as if God is speaking) that reads:

> من عادى لي وليا فقد آذنته بالحرب وما تقرّب إليّ عبدي بشيء أحب إليّ ممّا افترضت عليه وما يزال عبدي يتقرّب إليّ بالنوافل حتّى أحبه فإذا أحببته كنت سمعه الذي يسمع به وبصره الذي يبصر به ويده التي يبطش بها ورجله التي يمشي بها وإن سألني لأعطينّه ولإن استعاذني لأعيذنّه.[29]
>
> Whoever shows enmity to a *walī* of mine, I declare war upon. My servant does not draw nearer to me in anything more beloved to me than what I have made obligatory upon him. My servant then continues to draw

29 Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm al-Bukhārī, *Al-jāmiʿ al-musnad al-saḥīḥ al-mukhtasar min umūr rasūl Allāh ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam wa sunanihi wa ayyāmihi*, 105.

> nearer to me with supererogatory works until I love him, and when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the eyesight with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks. If he asks of me I will surely give to him, and if he seeks protection in me I will surely protect him.

This *ḥadīth* is considered axial for almost any Islamic mystic who discusses *wilāya*. It brings together the important notions of power and protection that we find in the Qur'ān with notions of nearness and the replacement of God's attributes covering over human attributes in the person of the saint. Al-Tirmidhī, along with most of the other early Islamic mystics, quotes this particular *ḥadīth* in reference to *wilāya*.[30] Before al-Tirmidhī, the discourse on *wilāya* and the *awliyā'*[31] revolved primarily around distinguishing between the miracles of prophets (*mu'jizāt*) and the miracles of saints (*karāmāt*).[32] This became a point of theological doctrine for most Sunnīs because the Mu'tazilīs[33] denied the miracles of saints.

0.3 The Cult of Saints

No discussion of sainthood is complete without addressing the cult of saints.[34] What is conspicuous about the first three centuries of Islam is the absence of the phenomenon of the cult of saints or any trace that we can identify as indicative of saint veneration in a sociological sense. Even as late as al-Tirmidhī at the end of the 3rd Islamic century, we do not find a discussion of dead saints, nor does al-Tirmidhī refer to visiting the tombs or shrines of dead saints.

30 Al-Tirmidhī uses this *ḥadīth* in *NU*. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl*, 160.

31 Hereafter, I use the term *awliyā'* as the Arabic plural for 'saints.'

32 A contemporary of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899), who lived in Baghdad during the 9th-century CE, wrote about the *awliyā'*. His work could possibly represent the current theological discourse around the *awliyā'* as a special type of religious figure. His discussion focuses primarily on the miracles of the *awliyā'* and their status vis-à-vis the prophets. Radtke, B., Lory, P., Zarcone, Th., DeWeese, D., Gaborieau, M., F.M. Denny, Françoise Aubin, J.O. Hunwick and N. Mchugh, "Walī".

33 The Mu'tazilīs were a theological movement beginning in the late Umayyad period and early 'Abbāsid period. They favored rationalism in their interpretation of Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth precedents. They fell out of favor after their participation in the *miḥna* (Inquisition) (218–234/833–848/49). "Mu'tazilīs," *EI2*.

34 This is a contested term and does not apply well to Islamic sainthood, however I use it here simply because of its wide usage in the field.

Nevertheless, there is an indirect connection between al-Tirmidhī and the cult of saints in that al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of sainthood appears to provide an important theoretical basis for the perpetuation of this social phenomenon as it develops later in the Islamic world. Up to the present, saint veneration mediates certain forms of religious practice among Muslims from the United States to Indonesia and has become one of the main points of cleavage between groups who reject saint veneration and others who subscribe to its underlying ideology. This cleavage between Salafī[35] groups and Ṣūfī[36] groups, for example, has in some places superseded the traditional Sunnī/Shīʿī cleavage that has historically divided Muslims.[37] The practices that are connected to the cult of saints and saint veneration have deep popular cultural roots within the Near East and beyond. These practices also seek ideological justification and draw inspiration from Ṣūfī theorists such as al-Tirmidhī and Ibn al-ʿArabī. The famous Moroccan Ṣūfī and saint Muḥammad al-Jazūlī (d. 869/1465) was the eponymous founder of the Jazūliyya, a Shādhilī Ṣūfī order that played a significant role in the *jihād* (struggle) against the Portuguese, leading to the adoption of Sharīfian rule in Morocco. Al-Jazūlī demonstrates the dynamic potential of the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmil* (the perfected individual), which was an outgrowth of ideas championed by Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Tirmidhī. Another important Ṣūfī leader in the 18th- and 19th-centuries CE was Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1230/1815) who was the eponymous founder of a now global Ṣūfī brotherhood. He directly appealed to al-Tirmidhī's idea of the seal of sainthood (*khatm*

35 This is a term adopted by Muslim reformers beginning in the 19th century who sought to free Muslims from the accumulated 'baggage' of tradition by returning to the Qur'ān and Sunna (example of the Prophet). It is best understood as a reaction to the threat of colonization in the Ottoman Empire. It was first articulated by a group of Ṣūfīs in Damascus who were inspired by the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and others who called for an abolition of the legal and theological *madhahib* under the pretext that these schools of thought sowed partisanship and dissension. For more on the beginnings of Salafism and its relationship to Sufism, see Itzchak Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*.

36 I discuss my interpretation of this term in more detail in Chapter 4; however, in this context, I use Ṣūfī to refer to a particular Muslim identity that privileges a set of historically and socially defined authority structures. When a modern Muslim identifies as a Ṣūfī, he is not always identifying as a mystic but is acknowledging a set of assumptions about the nature and structure of Islamic authority.

37 ʿAbdurraḥmān ʿAbd al-Khāliq describes Sufism as the worst calamity to have befallen Islam throughout its entire history. One of the major tenets of Sufism that he discredits is sainthood and its ethos. ʿAbdurraḥmān ʿAbd al-Khāliq, *Al-fikr al-ṣūfī fī ḍaw' al-kitāb wa al-sunna*, 2.

al-wilāya). He claimed the same title of the sealer of saints (*khātim al-awliyā'*)[38] that al-Tirmidhī describes in his book, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*. ʿUmar al-Fūṭī[39] (d. 1280/1864) of the Tijānī ṭarīqa in West Africa records the words of Aḥmad al-Tijānī, *Anā sayyid al-awliyā' kamā kāna rasūl Allāhi ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallama sayyida al-anbiyā'*, "I am the master of the saints just as the messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, is master of the prophets."[40] This mirrors the wording of al-Tirmidhī's own writing when he describes the sealer of saints, *fahuwa fī kulli makān awwalu al-awliyā' kamā kāna Muḥammad ṣalla Allāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama awwalu al-anbiyā'*, "He is, in every way, the foremost of the saints, just as Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, is the foremost of the prophets."[41] The clear parallels between the thought of Aḥmad al-Tijānī and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī beg us to consider the archeology of sainthood within Islam and its ideological force as an instrument of authority. The cosmological significance that al-Tirmidhī gives to the living saints carries over in the later tradition to the eponyms of the various *ṭarīqas* (Ṣūfī brotherhoods), like Aḥmad al-Tijānī, whose tombs became important sites of visitation and veneration.

Al-Tirmidhī is the first Muslim mystic to describe a mystical geography that connects the unseen realm (*ghayb*) with the seen world, intersecting at the heart of the mystic. In this mystical geography, light from the unseen realm flows into the seen world through the heart of the mystic and is a means of maintaining the existence of the world. When a mystic dies, that mystical geography overlays the physical geography of the earth at the place where the saint is buried. Hence, Ṣūfīs will visit the graves of saints because these places are considered to be windows into the unseen realm and places where God's theophany is strongest. The model of sainthood we find in later Islam mirrors the structure of power and authority in early Islam in which a broker or patron creates a *ḥaram* (sanctuary), or what is called a *ḥawṭa* in modern Southern Arabia, within which tribes could safely trade, adjudicate disputes and gather for celebrations, all under the auspices and protection of a founding saint.[42]

The model of sainthood that al-Tirmidhī develops presents important questions for the study of sainthood outside of Islam as well. When addressing the

38 I discuss the difference between *khātam* (the last) as opposed to *khātim* (the sealer) in our discussion of al-Tirmidhī's use of this term in his doctrine of *wilāya* in Chapter 5.

39 ʿUmar al-Fūṭi was a student of Muḥammad al-Ghālī bū Ṭālib who was a student of Aḥmad al-Tijānī. ʿUmar al-Fūṭi spread the Tijānī ṭarīqa in West Africa.

40 ʿUmar b. Saʿīd al-Fūṭī, *Rimāḥ ḥizb al-raḥīm ʿalā nuḥūr ḥizb al-rajīm* (Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Maḥmūdiyya 1901), 260.

41 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt li-l-ḥakīm al-tirmidhī*, 45.

42 H. M. T. Nagel, "Some considerations," 178.

Jewish Polish Hasidic movement of the 18th-century CE, Gershom Scholem[43] traces the motif of the *tsaddik* (in Arabic *ṣiddīq*) from the time of Rabbi Abbahu, a 4th-century CE *amora* (rabbinic scholar), up to the modern Polish Hasidic movement. Multiple traditions that abound within the biblical and talmudic literature depict pious and just men who supported the existence of the world. However, in the late 3rd-century and early 4th-century CE, the number seems to have become fixed at thirty-six and the idea emerged that these hidden exemplars also must have a special relationship to the divine countenance. Scholem's question, however, is whether or not the motif of the thirty-six *tsaddikim* (*Lamed-vav* in Hebrew) is part of a continuous tradition from Late Antiquity or whether the motif entered Islamic sources and then filtered back into Judaism. A similar *ḥadīth* text describes forty *ṣiddīqīn* from the Syria-Levant region by whom humanity finds its sustenance. This and other similar traditions in the Ḥadīth literature form a central component of al-Tirmidhī's discourse on sainthood. While the Ḥadīth literature concerning the *ṣiddīqīn* does not seem to make a specific connection between the *ṣiddīq* and a special mystical state based on knowledge of God, al-Tirmidhī does make this connection.

0.4 Sainthood and Authority in the Age of Sanctification

Some of the impetus for looking anew at al-Tirmidhī's thought comes from recent scholarship on sainthood from the period of approximately the 13th-century CE to the beginning of the 19th-century CE. Some have dubbed this the "Age of Sanctification," in which the Muslim saint or holy man (*walī*) was an important contender for power and authority in Islamicate societies. Dina de Gall calls this period the "triumph of sainthood" and the rise of the Ṣūfī brotherhoods.[44] Tanvir Anjum discusses the important role that Ṣūfīs played in the negotiation of power between the ʿAbbāsid Caliph and the Seljukid sultans as well as their role in giving legitimacy to the Mamluks in Egypt.[45] Margaret Malamud shows how the sultans in Khurāsān actively supported Sufi *khānaqās* (Ṣūfī lodges) during the 11th-century CE.[46] Erik Ohlander documents the close relationship between Ṣūfī *shaykhs* and the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs[47] in the 12th- and 13th-centuries CE in an important era of transition when Ṣūfī brotherhoods were gaining global, economic, political and religious power.

43 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 10.
44 Dina Le Gall, "Recent thinking on Sufis," 685.
45 Tanvir Anjum, "Sufism in history," 260–262.
46 Margaret Malamud, "Sufi organizations and structures," 436.
47 Erik S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 89–112.

Blain Auer demonstrates the intriguing relationship between the development of two prominent Ṣūfī brotherhoods in Northern India and the Sultanate of Delhi.[48] While there is still a need for further research on the relationship between Ṣūfīs and political power in Islamicate societies, current research in this field has demonstrated a complex and interwoven relationship between Ṣūfī *shaykhs*, court culture and political elites. This inevitably leads us to question whether or not there was a prior theoretical basis informing this type of relationship or whether it grew organically out of the social and religious institutions of the 12th- and 13th-centuries CE. It is unlikely that a figure like Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) would have been endowed with such authority as was given him by the Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh unless that authority was supported by some type of prior justification. A Ṣūfī identity in and of itself was not enough to endow one with power and authority. Only a doctrine of *wilāya* would convince non-Ṣūfīs of the right of Ṣūfīs to religious authority. Genealogy was certainly part of this construction of authority and al-Suhrawardī, like other Ṣūfīs of his period, used genealogy to support his claims. However, genealogy is, in a sense, the last piece of the puzzle that represents the development of Ṣūfī religious authority. While claims to Islamic religious authority are often grounded in religious texts like the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth, the structure of these claims is also intimately tied to norms and social conventions that return to the social and political patterns that existed at the time of the early Arab conquests. This is also true for some of the historical and political precedents that established Arab and Islamic rule in those regions that came under the suzerainty of the Umayyad (41–132/661–750) and ʿAbbāsid (132–656/750–1258) dynasties.

In Chapter 1, I develop a basis for discussing the social foundation of *wilāya* in the early Islamic period by looking at examples from a wide range of viewpoints from proto-Sunnī to proto-Shīʿī to Muʿtazilī and Khārijī precedents. In Chapter 2, I demonstrate how al-Tirmidhī consolidates these positions and uses them to formulate a unique approach to *wilāya*. This eventually provides a theoretical framework for Ṣūfī authority patterned after early notions of *wilāya* as well as one of its most important institutions, that of clientage (*walāʾ*). This was an institution that mediated social relationships of dependence between Arab rulers and non-Arab subjects up into the early ʿAbbāsid period, especially in the province of Greater Khurāsān. While genealogy was an important component of Arab claims to superiority over non-Arab subjects, it was not a significant element of al-Tirmidhī's concept of authority. Rather, for al-Tirmidhī, the slave-freeman dichotomy, as preserved in the social institution of clientage (*walāʾ*), served as the basis for rationalizing

48 Auer Blain, "Intersections between Sufism and power," 17–33.

implicit assumptions about the right to power and authority. Al-Tirmidhī seems to transfer these structural dichotomies over to the *'āmma*/*awliyā'* (common Muslims/saints) distinction. It was later Ṣūfī advocates, such as Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), who added other elements such as genealogy and the authority of the Ṣūfī *shaykh* to reinforce more primary notions of authority first introduced by al-Tirmidhī.

0.5 Methodology

A number of experts on Islamic mysticism agree that the 3rd/9th century was a time in which Islamic mystics were developing a new notion of Islamic authority.[49] None, however, describe the nature of this authority in detail. Hamid Dabashi's work *Authority in Islam* is probably the most in depth study of authority in the 1st century of Islam. Dabashi applies a Weberian model to early Islamic authority looking primarily at Khārijī, Shī'ī and Jamā'ī Sunnī approaches to authority. For Dabashi, Shī'ī authority sought to perpetuate rather than routinize the charismatic authority of the Prophet. The Jamā'ī Sunnī[50] conception reified the Prophet's authority and followed a traditional mode of authority. Khārijīs followed none of these approaches but rather exemplified a volatile type of authority that sought to disseminate and democratize the Prophet's authority, spreading it over the entire charismatic community.[51] The primary concern I have with Dabashi's methodological approach is that Weber's model imposes a sociological framework on the movements of 1st century Islam that is foreign to the social structures of Arab/Islamic society. Marshall Hodgson has demonstrated succinctly how early Arab/Islamic society grew out of a mercantile ethos originating in the Arabian trading center of Makka.[52] This mercantile ethos surrounded by nomadic Bedouin culture differed significantly from the agrarianate societies of the Nile to Oxus Oikumene. Agrariante social structures were more hierarchical than transactional in nature.

As we discussed earlier, *wilāya* and *walāya* indicate the two faces of a relationship of dependence. *Wilāya* signifies the protection of the *walī*, and *walāya* signifies the support provided by the *mawlā*. This transactional relationship was often consecrated through an oath of allegiance or covenant (*bay'a*). In

49 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 14. See Nile Green, *Sufism: a Global History*, 4–6. Also see Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: the Formative Period*, 24.

50 Dabashi's use of Sunnī in this context is somewhat anachronistic.

51 Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*, 134–135.

52 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 154–158.

pre-Islamic Arabia we find the *wilāya*/*walāya* mode of authority functioning at the political level through the mediation of a tribal chief who is a first among equals. The authority/privilege invested in the male members of the tribe (*anfus*, sing. *nafs*) is what I call 'diffuse authority' because the authority permeates the entire group. We can see this in the way the solidarity group in Arab tribal society functions as a single social entity.[53] If the tribal chief (*sayyid*) oversees a sanctuary (*ḥaram*), such as the Makkan precinct, where various tribes come to engage in religious ritual, trade, and arbitration, then the diffuse authority of the tribe is tied to a particular location. Otherwise, this diffuse authority is held by the male members of tribe wherever they may be traveling as nomads. The *ḥaram* model is one in which other tribes and solidarity groups attach themselves to the tribe which has control over the sanctuary through a *ḥilf* (alliance). The diffuse authority of the tribe is contrasted with what Deleuze and Guattari call the *war machine* as a social structure operative outside the boundary of the state. I use this term to refer to the internecine warfare and consequent balance of power that operates outside the boundary of the solidarity group.[54] The war machine represents a stalemate of power relations between tribes that attempts to sustain a tense stasis that could at any moment break out into warfare if the balance of power shifts. The inter-tribal network attempts to bring back stasis through an economy based on honor. The pre-Islamic Arab social system in Western Arabia just before the advent of Islam could be characterized as defining authority within a power continuum

53 The word for a single individual person (*nafs*) is the same word used to indicate the male fighting members of the tribe (*anfus*). Honor (*sharaf*) is shared amongst members of the tribe such that a dishonor to a single member is shared amongst the entire tribe. The bloodwit in Arab tribal society is such that if one member of a tribe is killed by the member of another tribe then any member of the offending tribe can be killed in retaliation.

54 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus.* Deleuze and Guattari's treatise on nomadology is significant in that it clearly defines a nomadic social structure as differing fundamentally from state social structures that are hierarchical and permit a governor-governed dichotomy. According to Deleuze, nomadic social structures are rhizomatic and smooth, as opposed to the arborial and striated type of organized states. It is significant that Deleuze and Guattari choose Arab Bedouin society as their point of departure for the discussion of a nomad science. One of the reasons that I use some aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology in helping to understand early Islamic authority is that it accords well with the historiographic research in Islamic Studies on pre-Islamic Arab social structures. While Deleuze and Guattari are correct to intuit that the Prophet brought an additional layer of authority to pre-Islamic Arab society, they did not completely comprehend how that functioned or how that interaction took place, envisaging the Prophet's enterprise as the institution of a spiritual state over the entire ecumenon. This part of their theory does not accord well with the historiographical evidence. Ibid., 383.

between the power of coercion and the power of status. The following diagram illustrates this organizational structure:

Power	⟷	*Authority* (within the tribe)	⟷	*Status*
coercion: the war machine		**contractual authority** (between two individuals)		**honor/dishonor**
		diffuse authority (shared among the male members of the tribe)		

The authority structure initiated by the Prophet Muḥammad provided an additional layer to this basic structure. The authority of the Prophet as the head of a religious movement cut across all tribal lines. When the new prophetic authority of the Prophet was centered in the *ḥaram* sanctuary of Madīna, it subsumed the contractual and diffuse authority structures of the tribe. This produced a dispersive social structure as more and more groups attached themselves through alliances to the Prophet, became Muslim and carried the teachings of Islam to others.

At the micro level, authority in pre-Islamic Arab society was governed by the rules of clientage (*walā'*). In *walā'*, the *walī* provides protection to his freed slave (*mawlā*) in exchange for support. *Walā'* provided a means for expanding the solidarity group and was an agreement that could be negotiated between free individuals. I call this 'contractual authority' because it is produced through a reflexive relationship between two individuals and is reciprocal in nature.

According to my methodological approach, contractual and diffuse modes of authority are the primary modes of authority that govern early Arab/Islamic social structures at the political and individual levels. Added to this is the new authority initiated by the Prophet, which may be called prophetic authority. Both the contractual and diffuse authority structures are mediated by the *wilāya*/*walāya* dynamic of protection/support that forms the underlying transactional nature of authority for both modes. In Chapter 1, I demonstrate how the contractual and diffuse modes of authority in early Islam can help us better understand how Ṣūfī authority and the *wilāya* model of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī developed and interacted with one another. This approach provides a better

insight into authority and sainthood in early Islam than a Weberian paradigm, because Islamicate society gives more preference to maintenance of stability than to the development of power.

Another sociological model that explores the important interconnection between the values of power, knowledge and civility is that discussed by Armando Salvatore in *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility*. Salvatore explores how these values came to produce such socially dynamic and civilizationally important social artifacts as the *waqf* system, the Ṣūfī *ṭarīqa* and Sharīʿa/Ḥadīth modes of knowledge dissemination. Salvatore argues that during the pre-modern era, these artifacts created nodes of social organization and civility in Islamicate societies that successfully cut across numerous cultural, linguistic and social barriers from Europe to China. This view accords strongly with Marshall Hodgson's contention that the three most important formative factors in the development of Islamic civilization were the militarization of agrarian-based political authority, the Sharīʿa legal code and its social implications, and finally Ṣūfī experience and teaching.[55] In the field of Islamic studies, discussions around power and authority tend to focus on "exoteric" *ʿulamāʾ* in opposition to other political powers-that-be, such as the *khalīfa*, *amīr* and *sulṭān*.[56] This tendency is apparent in Hodgson's portrayal of Sufism as a non-kerygmatic movement in early Islam, which he juxtaposes with Piety-Minded opposition to the Marwanids.[57] This approach tends to view Sufism as a-historical in its early development and takes as pivotal the inner mystical experiences of its forbearers. Hodgson's approach is quite Weberian in sentiment and ignores the extent to which asceticism and mystical discourse have been a means of both protest and subversion in the face of political authority since classical times.[58] The nature of this ascetic/mystical protest takes on very real implications when it is couched in the language of Sharīʿa-based knowledge-types and Quranic terminology. For Salvatore, the use of civility reorients us away from a focus on modern state-like formations that give preference to civic space or civil society. While Salvatore does not discuss the *ḥaram* space per se, we should note that his approach supports the idea that the sacred

55 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 395. The militarization of agrarian-based political authority took place primarily through the *iqṭāʿ* system of rewarding army officers with temporary land grants with the permission to tax the land directly. The proliferation of *waqf* properties was a way of protecting lands from usurpation by the military elites. E. Hooglund, "Amlāk," 973–976.

56 Afsaruddin only mentions Ṣūfī authority as a "subversive" type of authority and makes no mention of the *awliyāʾ* or *wilāya*/*walāya*. Asma Afsaruddin, "Authority, religious."

57 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 392–393.

58 James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue,* xiii-xviii.

precinct could be understood as a civic space that was intimately tied to notions of political and religious authority in pre-Islamic Arab society. Civility can exist at both a micro- and macro-level and lends itself to patterning and modes of conduct that cut across boundaries. Salvatore rightly connects his idea of civility with *adab*; however, civility is more correctly understood in terms of the Qurʾānic term *maʿrūf* (that which is known and accepted socially to be good).[59] *Adab* develops out of a court culture that comes into full development several hundred years after the advent of Islam. The Qurʾānic concept of *maʿrūf* brings into its orbit knowledge, power and authority in relation to virtue. A famous statement attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad demonstrates this relationship based on the concept of *maʿrūf*. In a *ḥadīth* on the authority of al-Bukharī, the Prophet is reported to have said, *Innamā al-ṭāʿatu fī al-maʿrūf*, "Obedience is only in accordance with what is well-known to be good." If power is the ability to coerce, and authority is the sanction of that coercion and the willingness to obey among those who are ruled, then power and authority are clearly limited by knowledge and socially accepted patterns of virtue in a *maʿrūf*-based understanding of authority. With the advent of Islam knowledge (*ʿilm*) becomes the primary basis for establishing modes of religious authority. This basis is later institutionalized with the rise of the ʿAbbāsids. While Salvatore rightly gives knowledge a primary role, he does not show how knowledge systems interact with the social bases of *wilāya*/*walāya* to produce various models of Islamic authority.

Franz Rosenthal argues that the Ṣūfīs tried strenuously to present their knowledge (*ʿilm*) as a 'science' in order to keep up with the views of knowledge that were current.[60] Al-Tirmidhī was certainly one of those who advocated that Islamic mysticism[61] should be given a position of authority in relation to other Islamic disciplines.[62] In order to understand the progenitors of Sufism, as well as Ṣūfīs of all types, including those like al-Tirmidhī who stretch our definition of the term Ṣūfī itself, we need to contextualize their epistemological discourse within the larger discourse of knowledge and authority that was taking place

59 Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2014.

60 Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 177.

61 I do not use the term Sufism here because Radtke and others have argued that al-Tirmidhī was not himself a Ṣūfī but represented a different, rather indigenous, form of Islamic mystical doctrine. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5 where, in essence, I somewhat agree with this formulation. The appellation Ṣūfī changes its meaning in the 4th- and 5th-centuries CE and so I would agree that al-Tirmidhī was not a Ṣūfī as it was understood in the 9th-century CE. However, he was a Ṣūfī in the meaning that this term takes on in the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE especially when the major figures of Sufism in the later period considered him to be so.

62 Or we could say, it should supersede those disciplines.

during the 3rd/9th century. Rosenthal provides us with a thorough and well-documented study on knowledge in Islamic disciplines. He discusses six types of knowledge that appear in the first four centuries of Islamic civilization: knowledge as revelation (*waḥy*), knowledge as Ḥadīth, knowledge as theology (Kalām), knowledge as light (*nūr*), knowledge as thought (*tafakkur*), and knowledge as *adab* (education – *paideia*).[63] All of these approaches to knowledge existed in Muslim societies by the middle of the 9th-century CE when al-Tirmidhī was writing his works. Rosenthal's broad discussion of knowledge-types helps us appreciate al-Tirmidhī's focus on *ḥikma* (wisdom), since this knowledge-type was virtually ignored by the early tradition. It represented a potential gap in the field to be explored and actualized. Al-Tirmidhī's discussion of wisdom (*ḥikma*) and how it factors into his doctrine of *wilāya/walāya* is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

While unraveling the trajectory of *wilāya* in the early Islamic period, I employ two tests by which we can measure the level of integration of modes of *wilāya* into Islamic religious thought. The first is an internal test which measures the extent to which *wilāya* is integrated into the creedal/theological discourse. These early creedal texts are primarily Ḥanafī and Eastern, from Khurasan and Transoxania. The second is an external test which juxtaposes *wilāya* to notions of authority in the early Syriac Church of the 7th–9th-centuries CE in Syria and Iraq. The development of monastic authority structures provides a point of comparison that helps to reveal the social structures that underlie *wilāya*, beyond the simple theoretical and semantic formulations of the term.

The 9th–10th-centuries CE witnessed the development of a plethora of religious factions and schools within Islamdom, from the schools of law (*madhāhib*) to various theological schools, to various Shīʿī groups.[64] These schools and factions represent discourses that coalesced into corporate identities as these groups developed bodies of literature to represent their particular viewpoints and interests. I prefer to use the term 'discourse stream' rather than *madhhab*

63 One should note how Rosenthal excludes *ḥikma* (wisdom) as a primary knowledge-type because he effectively states that in the Islamic tradition knowledge (*ʿilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) were synonymous. Ibid., 38.

64 Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law*, xxvi. Melchert argues that the first school of law to develop was the Shafiʿī school in Baghdād at the end of the 9th century. The other schools developed later in the 10th-century CE Melchert's thesis returns primarily to his definition of *madhhab*, which he views as a corporate entity comprised of three major elements: a chief scholar in a particular location, the existence of commentaries on standard legal epitomes and the regular transmission of legal knowledge in which a student is recognized to have studied under a prominent jurist of that school. Devin J. Steward, "Review of the formation of the Sunnī schools of law," 276.

(school) to capture the more or less fluid network of social relationships and connections among Muslim scholars during the period just prior to and consonant with the formation of the schools of law. For example, we can call al-Tirmidhī a 'Ḥanafī' in the sense that he partakes in a discourse stream that involves a culture of law and theology intimately tied to the network of scholars in Khurāsān and Transoxania who identified with Abū Ḥanīfa Nuʿmān b. Thābit (d. 150/772) and his legacy. On the other hand, we can clearly say that al-Tirmidhī did not belong to a corporate entity similar to what would become the Ḥanafī *madhhab* (school of law). He had no problem criticizing some of the basic premises of Ḥanafī doctrine and felt free to offer his own alternative legal and theological methodologies. Furthermore, al-Tirmidhī conceives of the transmission of knowledge through the analogy of water flowing in a river and a stream. So, not only does 'discourse stream' capture the fluid network of connections among scholars prior to the *madhhab* (school), but it also captures a sense of how al-Tirmidhī conceived of this process. I explain al-Tirmidhī's relationship to the Ḥanafī 'School' in more detail in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, I connect the thought of al-Tirmidhi to the synthesizers of the Ṣūfī movement in Nīshāpūr during the 11th-century CE. More importantly though, I show how the "hierarchy of the saints" (*dīwān al-awliyā'*) was not in fact a hierarchy but rather served as a vehicle of social stability. It developed as a result of transformations in the Islamic discourse on power and authority connecting back to the thought of al-Tirmidhī. Chapter 5 traces some of these important transformations, demonstrating how the synthesizers of Sufism were actively constructing new social apparatuses that embodied Arabo-Islamic authority structures at both the micro and macro levels of Islamic society. This allows us to better appreciate their contributions rather than simply envisioning them as popularizers of and apologists for Sufism.

0.6 Sources

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is considered one of the most prolific authors to hail from Khurāsān up through the early 10th-century CE. Fuat Sezgin numbers his extant works, both published and in manuscript, at eighty.[65] Khālid Zahrī numbers al-Tirmidhī's available works at one hundred and thirty-two; however, this number includes several instances of the same work under different

65 Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen schrifttums*, 653–659.

names. When I counted all of the works in both published and manuscript form mentioned by Zahrī, without repetitions, I found one hundred total: fifty-three published and forty-seven in manuscript form.[66] These works range from full-length treatises of several hundred pages to short topical pieces that number only a few pages. While al-Tirmidhī's works touch upon a wide range of fields from Ḥadīth and Qur'ānic commentary to jurisprudence and mysticism, his works also display a high degree of repetition in terms of themes and topical layout. This creates several challenges when attempting to categorize these works. The first is that al-Tirmidhī's use of a particular genre does not conform to the typical conventions of the genres of his period. Al-Tirmidhī seems to bend the genre to accommodate his own purposes and then uses it as a vehicle to expound his ideas. For example, *Nawādir al-uṣūl* is al-Tirmidhī's commentary on close to three hundred *aḥadīth* (prophetic traditions, pl. of *ḥadīth*) where he provides his unique explanation of each *ḥadīth* from an esoteric perspective, i.e., *ab intra*.[67] This commentary provides a point of departure for al-Tirmidhī to expound upon a variety of topics, from sainthood to theology, that are important to his schematization of the world. This seminal work in Ḥadīth is the first of its kind, and both traditionists and Ṣūfīs benefited from it. Another challenge we face in this regard is that al-Tirmidhī clearly did not conceive of the conventional genres of traditional Islamic disciplines in the same forms that we have received today. For example, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) meant something very different to al-Tirmidhī than it came to be understood within the classical Islamic tradition. This makes it highly problematic to use modern schemas to categorize his works. Al-Tirmidhī lived in a period of intellectual flux in the Muslim world, in which many conceptual categories had not yet become reified. One of the few scholars to present a schematization of the works of al-Tirmidhī is Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī who divides al-Tirmidhī's works into seven general groups: Qur'ānic Exegesis (Tafsīr), prophetic reports (Ḥadīth), theology (Kalām), jurisprudence (Fiqh), legal philosophy (*falsafat al-tashrīʿ*), Ṣūfī history (*tārīkh al-ṣūfiyya*) and Ṣūfī ideology (*ārā' al-ṣūfiyya*).[68] The titles chosen for these categories, as well as their division,

66 Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 57–286.

67 For the purposes of this book, I have used Tawfīq Maḥmūd Taklah's critical edition of *Nawādir al-uṣūl* published in 2010. I use this edition because it includes the *asānīd* (chains of narrators) of the Ḥadīth that al-Tirmidhī cites in his spiritual commentary. The absence of *asānīd* in previous editions of *Nawādir al-uṣūl* is a problem mentioned by Khālid Zahrī. A valuable study of the narrators of al-Tirmidhi's *Nawādir al-uṣūl* and a critical edition of a number of his *uṣūl* can be found in the dissertation by Abdurrahman Aliy, *Nawādir al-Uṣūl des al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmiḏī*.

68 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Juyūshī, *Al-ḥakīm al-tirmidhī muḥammad b. ʿalī al-tirmidhī*, 68. Khālid Zahrī lists al-Tirmidhi's major works in the various disciplines of the Islamic

seem to obscure rather than shed light on the contours of al-Tirmidhī's corpus. The use of the term "Ṣūfī" itself is somewhat of an anachronism given that al-Tirmidhī never used the term. Prominent scholars of al-Tirmidhī such as Bernd Radtke do not consider his thought to be characterized as Ṣūfī, but rather as the product of a separate ascetic-mystical movement. Others, however, such as Khālid Zahrī, do position him within the Ṣūfī tradition.[69] Another reason that al-Tirmidhī's works are so difficult to organize around particular genres is that al-Tirmidhī was often attempting to redefine or recast received terminology as well as challenge the boundaries of the conceptual landscape developed by his predecessors. Al-Tirmidhī's works cut across received genres and amalgamate topics and themes in unique ways. This means that any one particular text could fit into multiple categories according to a normative schematization. Further complicating our understanding of al-Tirmidhī's corpus is the oral nature of the composition of certain texts. Some of al-Tirmidhī's works resemble notes of a student copying the questions and answers from a teacher who is speaking extemporaneously.[70] *Khatm al-Awliyā'* is a case in point in this regard and the presence of orality is one possible reason for the repetition of themes within the text. We should note that the oral composition of early texts of this period under discussion often defies modern notions of authorship. Though I do not specifically address the orality of al-Tirmidhī's works in this book, oral composition should be considered in terms of the way the text itself communicates the social and corporate nature of authorship. Oral modes of knowledge in this period are primarily transferred through a more human-centric rather than text-centric approach to knowledge transmission. This social underpinning to knowledge transmission is the premise upon which I base the concept of the discourse stream. The discourse stream implies that knowledge is socially transmitted and socially constructed within networks

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sciences but does not provide larger categories that organize his works into genres. Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 44.

69 This debate returns to a definition of how we understand the Ṣūfiyya. Radtke prefers a narrow definition specific to the Baghdad School, while Khālid Zahrī agrees in principle with Radtke but places al-Tirmidhī within the larger discipline of Taṣawwuf. Ibid., 50. Scholars of Islamic mysticism see al-Tirmidhī as belonging to an indigenous ascetic/mystical movement from greater Khurāsān that was originally superseded by ʿIrāqī Sufism. See Alexander Knysh's discussion of eastern Islamic mystical movements in *Islamic Mysticism*, 88–99.

70 Radtke considers this to be a style of writing developed by al-Tirmidhī rather than the style indicating the oral development of the text. Khālid Zahrī disagrees though and considers other factors related to the transmission of al-Tirmidhī's works that point to orality as being primary. Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 113–114.

and discourses that include seekers of knowledge (*ṭullāb al-ʿilm*) as well as bona fide scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*).[71]

Al-Tirmidhī's more substantial works number about fifty depending on the size one chooses as a point of demarcation.[72] These works are in both published and manuscript form. About half of his works are published, while the other half remain as manuscripts scattered in libraries throughout the world. I have attempted my own classification and discussion of these works according to the manner in which they relate to important themes in al-Tirmidhī's thought. This classification provides a sense for the breadth and depth of al-Tirmidhī's works and thought. I have only mentioned his larger works and do not consider this classification to be exhaustive.

0.7 Thematic Classification of al-Tirmidhī's Works

1. *Wilāya*
2. Disciplining the Lower Self
3. Esoteric Vocabulary
4. Esoteric Interpretation
5. Polemical Works
6. Knowledge and Men of Learning
7. Moral and Ethical Teachings
8. Correspondence
9. Autobiography

0.7.1 Wilāya

Al-Tirmidhī is probably best known for his works on *wilāya*, and many consider him the first Sunnī Muslim outside of the Shīʿī tradition to address the nature of *wilāya* and its function in Muslim beliefs about God and the world. For al-Tirmidhī, the *walī* is the nexus of *al-ẓāhir* (the outward) and *al-bāṭin* (the inward). The *bāṭin*, for al-Tirmidhī, includes what is termed as the unseen world (*al-ghayb*). Al-Tirmidhī sets the stage for Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111) in his attempt to redefine true knowledge as *maʿrifa*, or the knowledge that comes to the saint (*walī*) from the realm of the *bāṭin*. The true *walī* is not dependent upon exoteric knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir*), but, through direct

71 I use the term 'scholarly class' interchangeably with the Arabic term *ʿulamāʾ* from here onwards.

72 For the most in-depth presentation of al-Tirmidhī's works, both published and in manuscript form, see Khālid Zahrī's invaluable work *Ḥakīm khurāsān wa anīs al-zamān*.

inspiration, he becomes the personification of the proof (*ḥujja*) of God on earth. This approach is reminiscent of what has commonly come to be understood as a primarily Shīʿī epistemology, or we could say, gnoseology. The difference between al-Tirmidhī's understanding of *wilāya* and Shīʿī *wilāya* is explicated in more detail in Chapter 2. Al-Tirmidhī's structure of *wilāya* is a tri-partite one with the highest of the *awliyāʾ* (saints) being the *kubarāʾ* (the great ones) or *siddīqūn* (the truthful ones). His hierarchy is a nested one in which the *awliyāʾ* sit within the larger category of *ḥukamāʾ* (sages) and both of those within the still larger category of *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars). Al-Tirmidhī's works on *wilāya* in this category are ones that deal with this highest level of the *awliyāʾ*, i.e., the *kubarāʾ* (the great ones).

Almost all of al-Tirmidhī's works revolve in some way around the notion of *wilāya*.[73] However, we could say that the two most studied works of al-Tirmidhī in this area are *Khatm al-awliyāʾ* (*KA*)[74] (also known as *Sīrat al-awliyāʾ*) and *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ* (*IA*).[75] Among his other works that provide important information about *wilāya* is *Nawādir al-uṣūl* (*NU*)[76] (mostly considered a Ḥadīth work by those who study al-Tirmidhī). *Nawādir al-uṣūl* has not been studied extensively by specialists of al-Tirmidhī, yet it contains many important contributions for our understanding of al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya* and his gnoseology. In this book, I focus in particular on *NU* to provide clarification on several aspects of al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of sainthood and gnoseology that may not be apparent in his more studied works such as *KA*.

0.7.2 *Disciplining the Lower Self*

Al-Tirmidhī has numerous works that touch upon the subject of disciplining and refining the soul/lower self (*nafs*). These works, such as *Riyāḍat al-nafs*[77] (*Kitāb al-riyāḍa*) and *Adab al-nafs*[78], set out to identify the various components of the spiritual body and connect them to corresponding aspects of the

73 Ibid., 49.

74 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt li-l-ḥakīm al-tirmidhī: kitāb sirāt al-awlīyāʾ, jawāb al-masāʾil allatī saʾalahu ahl sarakhs ʿanhā, jawāb kitāb min al-rayy*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992).

75 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥurrīya al-Ḥadīthah, 1983.

76 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī maʿrifat aḥādith al-rasūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Nawādir, 2010).

77 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Riyāḍat al-nafs* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005).

78 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-riyāḍah wa, adab al-nafs*, ed. A. J. Arberry and ʿAlī Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Qādir (Cairo: Sharikat Maktabat wa-Maṭbaʿa Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduh, 1947).

physical body.[79] By developing a spiritual topography that is mapped onto the physical body, al-Tirmidhī provides his reader with a heuristic for personal self-purification. Al-Tirmidhī directs the reader to the subtle, almost ineffable, spiritual organs that function together either to give free rein to carnal desire (*shahawāt*) or to unfetter the soul so that it can experience freedom in beholding God.

0.7.3 *Esoteric Vocabulary*

A favorite topic of al-Tirmidhī is the sources and meanings of words and the way they are used in a particular text, such as the Qurʾān. Al-Tirmidhī was also fascinated by mystical vocabulary and was committed to being true to the original meanings of words. Al-Tirmidhī is very clear about his approach to semantics. He posits and adheres faithfully to the idea that every word indicates a unique reality. Hence, if the word for soul/lower self (*nafs*) is used in the Qurʾān as a particular term, then according to al-Tirmidhī, it cannot refer to the same reality as the spirit (*rūḥ*). In other words, these must be distinct entities and cannot represent different aspects of a single entity. Al-Tirmidhī's most well-known work in this regard is *Kitāb al-furūq wa manʿ al-tarāduf*[80], which primarily argues against the existence of synonyms. Another work in this genre is *Taḥṣīl naẓāʾir al-qurʾān*[81], which clarifies the meanings of some eighty Qurʾānic terms and shows that one lexical term cannot have multiple meanings.[82]

0.7.4 *Esoteric Interpretation*

A large number of lesser works attributed to al-Tirmidhī provide esoteric interpretations of the meanings behind various acts of worship, specifically focusing on the main pillars of Islam (testification of faith, prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage) while also including related acts of worship that might come under these five. This category overlaps with Uṣūl al-Fiqh and the Maqāsid al-Sharīʿa (Philosophy of Islamic Law). Khālid Zahrī has noted that al-Tirmidhī provides us with some of the earliest examples of writing in the field of Maqāsid al-Sharīʿa.[83] Some of al-Tirmidhī's works that are representative of this group

79 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, *Al-tirmidhī: dirāsa li-āthārihi wa-afkārih*, 74, 96.

80 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Furūq wa-manʿ al-tarāduf*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī (Cairo: al-Nahār, 1998).

81 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl naẓāʾir al-qurʾān*.

82 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, *Al-tirmidhī: dirāsa li-āthārihi wa-afkārih*, 87.

83 Khāid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 162.

are *ʿIlal al-sharīʿa*[84] and *Sharḥ al-salā wa-maqāṣiduhā*[85]. Here, al-Tirmidhī demonstrates his notion of *ḥikma* by providing what he considers to be the esoteric meaning behind outward acts of worship. In recognition of his status as a sage (*ḥakīm*) and as one of the *awliyāʾ*, al-Tirmidhī claims to have had access to knowledge of the inner realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of things that were revealed to him from God Himself. However, probably the most important work in this category is *Kitāb al-ḥikma* (*KH*)[86], which discusses the knowledge of the second level of al-Tirmidhī's tripartite structure of *wilāya*. This is the level of the sages (*ḥukamāʾ*). To date, no one has published an edition of *KH* and the one extant witness to this text has gone unstudied. *KH* is crucial, however, to understanding al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of sainthood and gnoseology because it is the fullest explication of al-Tirmidhī's concept of wisdom (*ḥikma*) among his many works. In Chapters 3 and 4, I explore the way in which *ḥikma* serves to frame al-Tirmidhī's notion of *wilāya*. I intend to publish a critical edition of *KH* with a translation in a forthcoming publication.

0.7.5 *Polemical and Theological Works*

As a scholar in the Ḥanafī theological tradition, al-Tirmidhī wrote works against movements that he saw as heretical. Two works in this regard are *Al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*[87] and *Al-radd ʿalā al-muʿaṭṭila*[88], both of which argue against the positions of the proto-Shīʿīs and the Muʿtazilīs. Another work that was polemical in al-Tirmidhī's time was *Bayān al-kasb*[89], which clarifies the importance and legality of earning a livelihood. This work was most probably oriented toward refuting the Karrāmiyya who were active during al-Tirmidhī's time, especially in eastern Khurāsān.

0.7.6 *Knowledge and Men of Learning*

The nature and character of knowledge was of critical importance to al-Tirmidhī's conceptual system. Al-Tirmidhī was seeking to redefine religious

84 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb ithbāt al-ʿilal*, ed. Khālid Zahrī (Rabat: Manshūrāt Kullīyat Al-Ādāb Wa-al-ʿUlūm al-Insānīya, 1998).

85 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb sharh al-ṣalā wa maqāsiduhā*, ed. Ḥusnī Naṣr Zaydān (Cairo: Maṭābiʿ Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1965).

86 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, Bursa 806 Inebey Library, fol. 1–19.

87 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*, ed. A.S. Turat in *Sharkiyat Mecmuasi* 6, 1966 pp. 37–46.

88 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Al-radd ʿalā al-muʿaṭṭila*, Alexandria 3585 Maktaba Baladiyya al-Iskandariyya.

89 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Ādāb al-murīdīn wa bayān al-kasb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿAbdallāh Baraka (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1998).

knowledge as well as upset the prevailing hierarchy of prestige assigned to different types of religious knowledge in Khurāsān and Transoxania in his time. Changing the priority of knowledge-types understandably had important implications for how religious men of learning were valued. In this category of works we have *Anwāʿ al-ʿilm*[90], which addresses outward religious knowledge in juxtaposition to gnosis (*maʿrifa*).[91] Al-Tirmidhī also discusses the different types and levels of servanthood in his book *Manāzil al-ʿibād*[92], which details seven dwelling stations (*manāzil*) that characterize different stages on the spiritual path (*ṭarīq*).

0.7.7 *Moral and Ethical Teachings*

Al-Tirmidhī was a teacher and orator as well as a writer and mystic. He was concerned with the moral and spiritual welfare of his students as well as those who came to hear him lecture. One book that indicates this aspect of his life and teaching is *Al-munājāt*[93], a series of prayers and supplications that express the dire helplessness of the servant who seeks God.[94] Also written by al-Tirmidhī is *Al-jumal al-lāzim maʿrifatuhā*[95], a collection of sermons (*waʿẓ*) that admonish the listener to refrain from acts of disobedience and then, in turn, motivate him to strive toward embracing acts of obedience. In this vein we also have *Al-iḥtiyāṭāt*[96], a compilation of advice for the spiritual traveler.[97]

0.7.8 *Correspondence*

Al-Tirmidhī was not a reclusive mystic. He participated in both teaching and the active scholarly debates of his time concerning matters related to spiritual development and mystical theory. For example, he was in letter correspondence with mystics in Rayy as well as Sarakhs[98], and this correspondence is

90 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Anwāʿ al-ʿilm*, fol. 27–33.

91 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, *Al-tirmidhī: dirāsa li-āthārihi wa-afkārih*, 81.

92 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Manāzil al-ʿibād min al-ʿibāda*, ed. Ibrahim al-Jeyoushi (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1977).

93 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Munājā*, Cairo 236, majāmīʿ 5789, fol. 101–130.

94 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, *Al-tirmidhī: dirāsa li-āthārihi wa-afkārih*, 144.

95 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Al-jumal al-lāzim maʿrifatuhā*, Paris 5018 al-ʿArabī, fol. 31–32.

96 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-iḥtiyāṭāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid Jahdānī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2011).

97 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī, *Al-tirmidhī: dirāsa li-āthārihi wa-afkārih*, 73–74.

98 Rayy is an important city in Khurāsān along the Silk Route. Sarakhs is also in Khurāsān but lies adjacent to the Silk Route.

recorded in two collections, *Jawāb kitāb min al-rayy*[99] and *Jawāb al-masā'il allatī sa'alahu ahl sarakhs ʿanhā*[100]. Al-Tirmidhī was also in correspondence with prominent figures within the Malāmatī movement in Khurāsān.

0.7.9 *Autobiography*

Autobiography is included as a category even though there is only one work that is purely autobiographical in al-Tirmidhī's corpus. *Buduww sha'n*[101] is a short work that is the earliest example of spiritual autobiography in the Islamic literary tradition. Al-Tirmidhī appears to have written about his life in order to establish the credentials of his spiritual rank and to support the authority with which he speaks. A brief description of his early years and spiritual conversion are followed by a series of dreams that are related on behalf of his wife and several male companions. These dreams speak for al-Tirmidhī without him having to claim sainthood himself. Al-Tirmidhī's autobiography provides us with a rare glimpse into the spiritual aspirations and struggles of an early mystic.

0.8 Secondary Sources

The study of sainthood in Khurāsān and Transoxania under the Samānids (204–395/819–1005) and Ghaznavids (366–582/977–1186) is an area that has received scant attention in the secondary literature, especially when we compare the scholarship on this period with the groundbreaking work of Vincent Cornell who discusses Moroccan sainthood and its typology during the Moroccan Mārinid (642–870/1244–1465) dynasty. Clearly, the pivotal figure for the study of sainthood in the East under the Saffārids (247–393/861–1003) and then the Samānids is al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. Most studies of al-Tirmidhī seek to place him in relation to the larger framework of Sufism, focusing on his nonconformist approach as somewhat of an outsider. However, by approaching al-Tirmidhī from the standpoint of his gnoseology and discourse streams we are pushed to look beyond Sufism to better understand why he might be considered an outlier. *Wilāya* is a *topos* that is not restricted to Islamic mysticism or Sufism, per se, but cuts across a diverse set of Islamic movements, from Ahl al-Ḥadīth to Khārijīs to Shīʿīs. While all of these groups exhibit various aspects

99 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 171–174.

100 Ibid., 137–168.

101 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb khatm al-awliyā'*, ed. Othman Yahya (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1965), 14–32.

of *wilāya*, none of them presents a formal discursive doctrine of *walāya* before al-Tirmidhī's time. The problem in the field of Islamic mysticism is two-fold. Firstly, the discussion of al-Tirmidhī and his thought in the current literature, even his discussion on *wilāya*, is often siloed within the field of Islamic mysticism. Secondly, specialists on al-Tirmidhī, such as Bernd Radtke, have focused on al-Tirmidhī's works from a highly textual perspective, treating al-Tirmidhī's writings almost as a system of its own.This does not address the more intricate relationship of al-Tirmidhī's concept of *wilāya* to its use in other discourse streams current in al-Tirmidhī's time such as the Ḥanafī theological tradition.

Radtke and John O'Kane (1996) have provided us with the best work to date on al-Tirmidhī and his ideas in *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (*CS*). This work is a translation of *KA* into English with an introduction and explanatory notes. Radtke's work appears to focus primarily on the two books most associated with al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya*: *KA* and *IA*. As mentioned above, another very important but overlooked resource for details of al-Tirmidhī's approach to *wilāya* is his *NU*. In *CS*, Radtke expresses the need for a systematic study of *NU*.[102] Not only is *NU* al-Tirmidhī's longest work but it is also relatively unstructured, which leads the author to confess aspects of his thought that might otherwise go unarticulated in his other works.

Another important scholar of al-Tirmidhī is Geneviève Gobillot, whose work has focused not only on important conceptual categories in al-Tirmidhī's writings, but also the non-Islamic sources that may have influenced al-Tirmidhī's thought.[103] Gobillot is the first to shed light on the important step al-Tirmidhī takes when he talks about the Rightly Guided Caliphs as examples of the *awliyā'*. While Radtke is more textual and systematic in his approach to al-Tirmidhī, Gobillot is more theoretical and comparative. Probably most interesting in this respect is Gobillot's work on the comparison of al-Tirmidhī's thought to the writings of early Christian theologians.

A prominent scholar of al-Tirmidhī's corpus is Khālid Zahrī, who provides the most complete and comprehensive treatment of published and manuscript copies of al-Tirmidhī's works. Zahrī completes and extends work in this respect that was begun by al-Juyūshī and Radtke. Zahrī's relatively recent book *Ḥakīm khurāsān wa anīs al-zamān* corrects a number of statements by Radtke concerning the attribution of certain works to al-Tirmidhī. Not only has Zahrī

102 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *The Concept of Sainthood*, 3.

103 Geneviève Gobillot, "La première mystique musulmane," 189–235; Geneviève Gobillot, "Quelques stéréotypes cosmologiques", 54–89; Ibid., 161–192; Geneviève Gobillot, "Une solution au problème de la prédestination en islam," 333–360; Ibid., 555–589.

dealt broadly with al-Tirmidhī's corpus but he has also published numerous small treatises of al-Tirmidhī that were previously only in manuscript form. Of particular note here is *Manāzil al-qurba*[104], which is not only an important contribution to the field but also sets a high bar for textual criticism in the field of Tirmidhī studies.

Another scholar who sought to seriously address the work of al-Tirmidhī is Yves Marquet, whose dissertation, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et neplatonisme de son temps*, compares the cosmology of al-Tirmidhī with that of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā.[105] The comparison is useful in elucidating the way in which al-Tirmidhī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā both draw upon a similar corpus of material while differing significantly in approach. For example, Marquet compares the hierarchy of spiritual degrees, light cosmogony and select stories, such as that of Adam and Eve, in both al-Tirmidhī and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā. While this is an important contribution to the study of al-Tirmidhī, it does not address specifically the subject of *wilāya*. Furthermore, much of Marquet's work is based upon the seminal work of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿAbdallāh Baraka. However, neither Radtke, Gobillot, Zahrī, Marquet, nor Baraka deal with al-Tirmidhī's *KH*.

Sara Sviri has written several important articles on various aspects of al-Tirmidhī's thought. Her article "Hakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī movement in early Sufism" addresses the relationship of al-Tirmidhī to ascetic-mystical movements in Khurāsān during the 9th-century CE. Another article, "Words of power and the power of words: mystical linguistics in the works of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī," helps us understand the similar 'letter-mysticism' that is shared by both the Rabbinic sages and al-Tirmidhī.

Both Chodkiewicz (1993) in *Seal of the Saints* and Elmore (1999) in *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*, have written extensively on the subject of sainthood in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī. In doing so, they both look upon al-Tirmidhī as an important predecessor to Ibn al-ʿArabī, paving the way for the latter's ideas on *wilāya*. Still, Ibn al-ʿArabī's debt to al-Tirmidhī's thought deserves much more attention and scholarship than it has thus far received. I am hopeful this book will pave the way for a closer look at the many parallels that exist between the two mystics. These parallels can be apparent only once al-Tirmidhī's approach to *wilāya* is better understood.

104 The full reference is: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Manāzil al-qurba*, ed. Khālid Zahrī. Rabat: Kulliyyat al-Ādāb wa al-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya bi al-Rabāṭ, 2002.

105 The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā are a group of Ismāʿīlī Shīʿīs in Iraq during the 10th-century CE who integrated Islamic mysticism with a number of other esoteric, philosophical and scientific approaches that existed in their time.

CHAPTER 1

Wilāya/Walāya and the Basis of Authority in Early Islam

1.1 Introduction

Some twenty-four years prior to the Battle of Qādisiyya[1] (636 CE), a Christian martyr during the late Sassanian period, Mihr-Mah-Gushnasp (George), was crucified in 612 CE by order of Shah Chosroes II for converting to Christianity from Zoroastrianism. The martyrdom of George was enshrined in a hagiographical work by Babai the Great[2] titled, *The Life of George*.[3] Not only is this work critical to understanding the East Syrian Church at the end of the Sassanian period,[4] but it is also an important reference point for understanding the extent and development of sainthood within Islamdom as the Muslim Arabs reasserted Semitic dominance within the Nile to Oxus Oikumene. Babai portrays George as a martyr for Diaphysite orthodoxy and not simply for Christianity. In his *martyrion*, the life and ultimately the death of the saint help to establish the authority of the Church and Church doctrine. Sainthood in this context is a highly developed social, religious and political construct. The sainthood of George is immortalized by the abbot of a monastery in a political climate that is charged with religious polemics and tensions between the Sassanian and Byzantine empires and that eventually breaks into a devastating war lasting seventeen years.[5] Several characteristics of this type of sainthood are absent in early Islam. Within the first two centuries of Islam, we do not find an agreed upon orthodox creed and hence no established institution of

1 This was one of the decisive battles signaling the defeat of the Sassanian Empire by the Arab Muslims and the control of Iraq by the caliphate centered at Madīna.

2 Babai was the fellow monk and later abbot of George at the monastery of Izla. He had sent George to the court of Chosroes II to represent the Diaphysite doctrine of the East Syrian Church after they heard that Chosroes might appoint a representative for the Christian community who adhered to the Monophysite creed. The Nestorians feared that the Sassanian court physician Gabriel of Sinjar would use his influence to promote the Monophysite doctrine in the Sassanian Empire. It was hoped that George would be able to influence the shah through his connections at the court. Instead, Gabriel of Sinjar convinced Chosroes to invoke the law of apostasy and crucify George for converting to Christianity. Babai wrote his hagiography of George some six years before he died sometime between 621 and 628 CE.

3 G. J. Reinink, "Babai the Great's *Life of George*," 174–176.

4 Ibid., 172.

5 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 188–189.

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orthodoxy. Sainthood in Christianity is intimately connected with religious institutions and the power to confer sainthood. The connection between martyrdom and sainthood in early Christianity is also clearly established.[6] The death of the martyr for his or her belief was the ultimate proof of the superiority of Christianity over paganism for early Christians. Early Islam develops under very different circumstances than early Christianity with political success tied to Islamic self-conception from the very beginning.[7] Therefore, if we were to address sainthood in Islam, we would ask how the charisma of *virtuosi* is articulated and who channels their power and authority.[8] However, we do not find any particular institution in the early Islamic period that is connected directly with these *virtuosi*. Ṣūfī institutions appear much later in the 11th-century CE, which is in fact when the lives of these *virtuosi* are compiled and written down. If we speak in terms of *wilāya* rather than sainthood and apply it to the case of George the martyr, we could say that both George and Babai the Great have *wilāya*. The *wilāya* of Babai the Great would not be a function of his being the abbot of the monastery of Izla, but rather as a function of the protection and concern he could give to the monks under his care in addition to the sincerity of his efforts to promote his Christian faith.[9] This points to a general difference attested to by scholars of sainthood in Christianity and Islam, which is that the saint in Islam is conceived of in familial terms, while the saint in Christianity is conceived of in terms of purity connecting to celibacy and chastity.[10] Sainthood in the East Syrian Church upon the eve of Islam is the product

6 For a comparison of martyrdom in Islam, Judaism and Christianity see David Cook's *Martyrdom in Islam* (2007).

7 David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*, 30.

8 To some extent, this is the approach of Alexander Knysh in his important work on the history of Sufism titled, *Islamic Mysticism, a Short History*. Al-Sulamī in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* provides entries on the early Muslim *virtuosi* such as Ibrāhim b. al-Adham and Bishr al-Ḥāfī, among others.

9 If we are looking for a point of similarity between Christianity and Islam in terms of *wilāya*, the monastery abbot and the monks under his care mirror most closely the function of *wilāya* as it develops among Sufis and as it is expressed in the social institution of the *tarīqa* and the Sufi *shaykh*. However the important difference is that the monastery is defined spatially and is organized hierarchically as a unified body. It may be significant that monasticism in Christianity develops in the Nile to Oxus region and then spreads westward and eastward from Egypt and Palestine. By the 6th-century CE it was said that the Lord required the "sacrifice of obedience" from the monks of the monastery more than the sacrifice of victims of the artifices of song. The abbot of a monastery had almost complete control both in terms of secular and religious authority over his monks up to the 12th-century CE. Eventually the power and authority of abbots was reined in by the bishops. Giles Constable, "The authority of superiors in religious communities," 191–192.

10 Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, "Le saint musulmanen en père de famille," 149.

of an agrarianate society. This is because sainthood was closely wedded to the Church and was used to support its orthodox creed. As we will see, this differs structurally from the way *wilāya*/*walāya* functions in early Islam.

Ignaz Goldziher, the father of Islamic Studies in the West, sought to place the veneration of sainthood in Islam, as it appeared in the 5th/11th century, as a negotiation between pre-Islamic Arab pagan traditions and Islam's pure and unforgiving monotheism. Goldziher's initial premise remains unchallenged by later scholars of Islam who seem to have shifted the discourse by focusing on *wilāya* (as opposed to sainthood) in its more differentiated form as it was used in the 3rd/9th-century CE.[11] *Wilāya* at this time came to contrast with *nubuwwa* (prophethood). Goldziher and Radtke represent two very different approaches to the study of sainthood/*wilāya*. Goldziher notes certain resemblances between the appearance of a cult of saints in the 4th/10th-century CE in the Muslim world, applies the term sainthood to that social institution, and then constructs a narrative that traces the roots of this cult of saints to the beginnings of Islam. Radtke's approach is more nuanced in that he focuses on *wilāya* as a standalone concept and is content to study its contours from the point when it becomes a distinct term within Islamic mysticism. Radtke, however, tends to silo Islamic mysticism and only considers significant those discussions of *wilāya* that fall within Islamic mystical discourse after the 3rd/9th-century CE. In this study, I begin with a broader discussion of *wilāya* (rather than sainthood) as it functioned within Arab and Islamic political, social and religious spheres and then use that framework to interpret the way it is used by later mystical writers such as al-Tirmidhī, al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī.

1.2 The Language of Authority

In "Religious authority in Islam" from the *Encyclopedia of Islam III*, Asma Afsaruddin restricts the term *wilāya* to the *awliyā'* in the context of Sufism.[12] She refers to a number of Qur'ānic terms such as *amr* (command), *ḥukm* (judgement), *quwwa* (strength), *sulṭān* (power), and *mulk* (ownership). She

11 Bern Radtke in his article chapter "The concept of *wilāya* in early sufism," does not address *wilāya* prior to the 3rd/9th century CE. He discusses the earliest extant work in the Islamic tradition on *wilāya* by the Baghdadī Ṣūfī Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, who discusses three main points on the nature of *wilāya* in relation to *nubuwwa*. The main thrust of the article is to introduce al-Tirmidhī as the first mystic to discuss *wilāya* in a structured and conceptual way. In the Introduction here we discussed several recent studies on sainthood that give primacy to the study of *wilāya* over sainthood in Islamic Mysticism.

12 Asma Afsaruddin, "Authority, religious," in *EI3*.

states that no single one of these terms has the meaning of authority. Authority in Islam for both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, according to Afsarrudin, is predicated upon knowledge. The importance of knowledge to authority in Islam is clear. However, the social basis for authority within Islamicate societies since early times has been consistently communicated through the *wilāya*/*walāya* construct forged in the wake of the Qurʾānic challenge. We are looking here at the language of power and authority molded by the Qurʾānic ethos. Ultimately, those who were able to wield this language of power and authority effectively would come to be known as the inheritors of the Prophet's charisma. Patricia Crone, following the trend in historical studies of examining the patronate in Roman history, studied *wilāya* in early Islamic history in a similar manner. While her conclusions are highly debatable and have been the subject of much rancor within the field, she was the first to look systematically at *wilāya* and *walāʾ* as modes of expressing authority and dependence at various levels of Arab/Islamic society.[13] Crone's discussion of Umayyad authority most clearly demonstrates that the Umayyads had sought to harness the language of Islamic authority but were ultimately unsuccessful in doing so. At times Umayyad caliphs styled themselves as the caliphs of God[14], at times as the caliphs of the Prophet, at times as Roman-style emperors[15], and at other times as firsts among tribal equals. The primary identity of those who inhabited the Arab garrisons during the Umayyad period was as much Arab as it was Muslim.[16] The Umayyads held fiercely to Arab privilege and saw the *mawālī* not as participants but as inferiors. The ʿAbbāsids were successful in deposing the Umayyads in so much as they were able to incorporate the *mawālī* more inclusively under the banner of Islam.

13 In her monograph *Roman, Provincial and Islamic law* (1987), 77, Crone argues that *walāʾ* (patronage) in the Sharīʿa derives primarily from Roman law rather than Syrian provincial law as it was practiced under the Umayyads. Wael Hallaq (1990: 79–81) demonstrates numerous flaws in Crone's thesis. Hallaq shows that *walāʾ* has a strong social basis in Arab society prior to Islam and that Arab *walāʾ* differs in significant ways from the Roman patronate.

14 Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 80–81.

15 Early Umayyad Numismata depict ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwan (d. 86/705) at the beginning of his reign standing in the fashion of the Roman emperor on the Roman solidus. However, later in his reign, ʿAbd al-Malik is credited for removing this image from the coin and islamicizing Umayyad coinage. Nasser Rabbat, "The dialogic dimension of Umayyad art," 78–94.

16 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 229. Arab Christian tribes who participated in the conquest were considered primarily Arabs and not considered *dhimmī* Christians.

1.3 *Wilāya/walāya* as a Socio-political Construct in Early Islam

In the Introduction, we discussed a few meanings related to *wilāya/walāya* at the advent of Islam and in reference to the Qur'ānic ethos. These meanings mostly revolve around protection, support and authority and indicate social relationships between individuals as well as between an individual and his or her solidarity group. The term *wilāya* and *walāya* are used interchangeably in some of the classical sources such as in Qur'ān 18:44. Aside from the Qur'ān, classical Arabic sources do not provide vowels by which to distinguish which term is being used. In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, the term *wilāya* is defined as a noun indicating protection and governance (*sulṭān*) whereas, *walāya* is a verbal noun indicating the act of support and aid.[17] Just as *walī* and *mawlā* can be used interchangeably[18] and indicate possibly different facets of the client/patron social relationship, so too can *wilāya* and *walāya* indicate aspects of governance and support that are part and parcel of the larger social dynamics of the old Arab pattern of tribal and clan relations.

The *sharʿī* consensus by the 9th-century CE had documented that the *wilāya* of the Prophet was supreme and incontestable.[19] In the Qur'ān, the believers are commanded to obey God and the Prophet. The attestation of the prophethood of Muḥammad is connected to the attestation of *tawḥīd* and the witnessing of God's sole supremacy and right to be worshipped alone. This *wilāya* is doctrinal and is undeniably a part of the Islamic *Weltanschauung* from the earliest period. The recognition of the Prophet's *wilāya* among Arabs within the Arabian Peninsula by the time of the Prophet's death was something hard won and was tenuous at times, as the events of the Ridda Wars showed clearly. The political, social and economic aspects of this *wilāya* were built on norms embedded within pre-Islamic Arab society. When the Prophet emigrated to Yathrib, he entered a city that was torn by intertribal conflict. In pre-Islamic Arabian society tribal groups could form a confederation (*umma*) attached to a *ḥaram* (sacred enclave) within which killing was forbidden and where negotiations and trade could take place.[20] A holy man would function as the primary broker between tribes, and his progeny would carry forward the task of performing this function. This was the structure that had prevailed in Makka from where the Prophet originally hailed. We should not forget that the antagonism between the Banū Hāshim and the Banū Umayya in Makka prior to

17 Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. ʿAlī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 15, 406–407.

18 Hermann Landolt, "Walāyah," 9656.

19 The consensus referred to here is the Sunnī consensus that coincides with the ascendancy of Ḥadīth dominance in the 9th-century CE. Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*, 4.

20 H. M. T. Nagel, "Some considerations," 178.

and after the advent of Islam returned to a dispute over the right to carry out the function of tribal leader and broker within the *ḥaram* of Makka.[21] The Prophet Muḥammad's grandfather performed this role, but, after his death the authority of his progeny to lead Makka was diminished and usurped by the Banū Umayya, a faction of the Quraysh.[22] The Prophet's relatives on his mother's side in Madīna, the Banū Najjār, must have seen the Prophet as a rightful heir to his grandfather's legacy, thus clarifying why he was readily accepted as a broker by the various Muslim and non-Muslim tribes of Madīna. The Prophet initiated a pact among the various tribes of Madina upon his arrival there and this pact displays clearly the structure of the *ḥaram* concept. This same structure is still evident among some Arab tribes of Southern Arabia.[23]

After the death of the Prophet, the question over the right to the religious authority of the Prophet was left unresolved. The first Rāshidūn caliphs did not assume the full charismatic authority that had been vested in Muḥammad by the Qurʾānic revelation. This did not, however, mean that others did not wish to perpetuate this authority as we find among the early Shīʿa. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, after the Prophet's death, seem to have fallen back on the old Arabian *ḥaram* conception of authority since neither would vest themselves with the same prophetic authority as the Prophet. This seems to be why Abū Bakr and ʿUmar both insist that the caliphate should remain among the Quraysh since, according to them, the other tribes of Arabia would not recognize someone from other than Quraysh as an authority. That is also why it seems that the right of ʿAlī to the caliphate was supported by a faction of the early Muslim community, because it was only ʿAlī from the clan of Banū Hāshim who could claim both the right of Muḥammad's legacy through a common agnate while also carrying the requisite Islamic credentials. The caliphate of Abū Bakr was confirmed through a *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance)[24] at the portico of Banū Sāʿida and then was further formalized through a *bayʿa* at the Prophet's mosque.[25] The Qurʾān provides references to all the requisite aspects of this *ḥaram* concept and the *wilāya* of the caliph as leader of the new Muslim community and broker and judge among tribes within the Madīnan orbit. While pre-Islamic

21 For more on the lineage of the Prophet through Hāshim and the origin of the dispute between Hāshim and Umayya, see Muḥammad Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, vol. 2, 251–253.

22 Ibid., *Authority in Islam*, 21.

23 H. M. T. Nagel, "Some considerations," 177–178.

24 The oath of allegiance comprised of a hand-clasp signifying support and protection within the old Arab system of solidarity. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 40.

25 For more on the context of the *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) and the politics of succession to the Prophet, see ibid., 40–41.

Arab society provided the important social and cultural motifs that Islam would build upon, it would be inaccurate to think that the advent of Islam did not modify this authority structure as well. While the Qur'ān provides clear references to Arab tribal structures, it also radically cuts through the tribal social nexus to create an *umma* (community) of believers who are considered not simply an amalgamation of Muslim tribes, but a *jamāʿa* (social polity) and a single party of God (*ḥizb Allāh*).[26] The caliph was the leader of this new social reality that cut across tribal lines and social stratifications inherent in the old Arab system. This is born out by the practice of the first caliphs of requiring tribes who wanted to join the conquest expeditions to come first to Madīna. There, the caliph would organize units out of a number of different Arab tribes and put as a leader over them someone from the Quraysh.[27] The Caliph ʿUmar maintained the classic model of Islamic *wilāya*; however, he imbued it more clearly with Qur'ānic principles.[28] ʿUmar described the *bayʿa* to Abū Bakr as a *falṭa* (preemptive action) and was clear to improve this by appointing a council to engage in *shūra* to choose the next caliph upon his death.[29] The caliph would be chosen by a council of elders similar to the old Arabian system found in Makka at the *nadwa* (council). It is significant that each of those chosen by ʿUmar represented important clans among the Quraysh.[30]

The assassination of the third caliph ʿUthmān demonstrates the breakdown of this system under the weight of the expansion of the new empire as well as the inability of the caliph to function any longer according to the old Arabian model. The agitators who besieged ʿUthmān in his house were primarily upset over grazing rights and the *dīwān* system that favored early converts over later ones. The agitators represent a new generation which had reached adulthood after the death of the Prophet and had never known him

26 H. M. T. Nagel, "Some considerations," 181.

27 Fred M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 223–224.

28 ʿUmar was particularly adept at balancing tribal groups against each other to maintain political stability within the old Arab tribal system. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 58–61.

29 Ibid., 68.

30 It is related that ʿUmar counseled the various members of the *shūra* not to give free reign to their clan if they were elected caliph. Ibid., 71. Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbaydullāh belonged to the Taym clan of Quraysh. Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām belonged to the Asad clan of Quraysh. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf belonged to the Zuhra clan of Quraysh. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was a kinsman of the Prophet and belonged to the Banū Hāshim. ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, the one eventually chosen as the successor to ʿUmar, was from the Banū Umayya clan of Quraysh. There were five members of the *shura* but Ṭalḥa was not present and Saʿd b. Abī Waqqās stood in as his proxy.

personally.[31] The veneration due to Quraysh was no longer a viable source of authority in an empire that stretched from Egypt to the Amu Darya River. The complex balance of tribal affiliation and loyalty was not enough to maintain the prestige of a tribal broker. The Islamic identity of the new converts was not strong enough to inculcate respect for the caliph as head of the Muslim *umma*. Thus, the powerful blend of old Arabian authority structures with Islamic egalitarian and universalist principles that had been developed under Abū Bakr and ʿUmar reached its breaking point with ʿUthmān.[32] After ʿUthmān's assassination, ʿAlī attempted unsuccessfully to perpetuate the same model.[33] Muʿāwiya's contestation of ʿAlī's claim to the caliphate led him into uncharted territory. Muʿāwiya lacked the Islamic credentials of the earlier caliphs and had to procure the caliphate through a deal with ʿAlī's son, Ḥasan, who was chosen by the people of Iraq after ʿAlī's death.[34] The *bayʿa* of Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd I was then secured before Muʿāwiya's death. Henceforward, the caliph would procure *bayʿa* from important ministers and officials in the court. The caliph in waiting would be given the title *walī al-ʿahd* (guardian of the covenant). While it was often the case that the next caliph in line would be a son of the current caliph, this was not a requirement. The authority inherent in the *wilāya* of the caliph was transferred through the *bayʿa* and any number of people within the caliph's family could be a possible candidate. The *bayʿa* as it was understood in the context of old Arab solidarity had become a reified and symbolic act. The social cohesiveness and authoritative power that the *bayʿa* was supposed to represent in the consecration of *wilāya* was broken. Agitation against this reification of the *bayʿa* can be seen in the plethora of revolts during the Umayyad period that sought to depose the Umayyad state. These revolts made use of the *bayʿa* to consecrate their allegiance to the new rebel leader. These oaths were taken even to the extent of making *bayʿa* to an absent leader.

31 Ibid., 77.

32 The wording of ʿUthmān's letter to Muʿāwiya in Damascus reads, *…inna ahl al-madīna qad kafarū wa akhlafū al-ṭāʿa wa nakathū al-bayʿa…* "…the people of Madina have disbelieved and gone back on their obedience and have violated their oath of allegiance…" Muḥammad Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, 402.

33 ʿAlī was not able to procure Muʿāwiya's *bayʿa* and thus the Muslim polity was split into two parts. Al-Ṭabarī describes this split with the phrase *tafarraqa al-ḥukmān*. Ibid., vol. 5, 324.

34 According to al-Ṭabarī, the people of Iraq, i.e. Kūfa, placed Ḥasan in authority as their leader after the death of ʿAlī and gave him the *bayʿa*. In his words *istakhlafla ahl al-ʿirāq al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī ʿalā al-khilāfa*. Ibid., vol. 5, 158.

The Khawārij[35] represent an old pre-Islamic tribal ethos informed by highly egalitarian Islamic ideals. According to the Khawārij, any believer could be given leadership over the community but could be removed if he committed even a minor sin.[36] Al-Ṭabarī uses the language of *wilāya* that we find in the Qurʿānic ethos to describe a Khārijī election of their leader.[37] The Khawārij put the balance of authority more on the side of *walāya* and thus diffuse authority in which the believers (*muʾminūn*) altogether have the prerogative to appoint and remove a leader at will and for any offense. The Khawārij inhabited the fringes of the Islamic Oikumene raiding Muslim cities from their desert enclaves.[38] While the Khawārij represented a major thorn in the side of the Umayyads, the most significant opposition to the Umayyads came from the Makkan aristocracy still based in the Ḥijāz. ʿAbdallah b. al-Zubayr was given the *bayʿa* at Makka by the people of Ḥijāz in year 64 AH. Ibn al-Zubayr had refused to give *bayʿa* to Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd I and had taken refuge in Makka. His caliphate lasted until 692 CE when the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik sent Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf to besiege Makka. Ibn al-Zubayr was killed in the fighting and Makka returned to Umayyad rule. Ibn al-Zubayr was a cousin of ʿAlī and the Prophet from his mother's side.

The ʿAlid revolts of the Umayyad period provide an important viewpoint on the nature of early Islamic authority because they were often carried out in the name of a descendent of ʿAlī who did not himself participate in the revolt. This dynamic highlights an important aspect of the *wilāya* system of authority among Arab tribes under the Umayyads. The primary way to project power in a tribal society was to aggregate tribal groups into larger super-tribal entities. The Prophet and the first two Rāshidūn Caliphs were particularly successful in effecting a trans-tribal *umma* that integrated and amalgamated tribal groups. The person of the leader was not so important here as the office itself.[39] The

35 Called the "seceders" because they withdrew from the camp of ʿAlī when he made an agreement with Muʿāwiya at the battle of Siffin. They insisted that fate should decide who was the victorious party. Eventually, ʿAlī was assassinated by a *khārijī* as he entered the masjid of Kūfa. For more on the nature of Khārijī authority see Hamid Dabashi's *Authority in Islam*. Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*, 138–139.

36 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 221.

37 Al-Ṭabarī describes the Khawārij as having gathered for *shūra* (*tashāwarū*) in the house of Ḥayyān b. Zabyān al-Sulamī to choose a leader. They argue about who is most suitable and the discussion revolves around who is most fit for the office (*yaṣluḥu li-hādha al-amr*). The biggest impediment seems to have been age. Eventually, al-Mustawrid b. ʿAlfah al-Tamīmī was asked to put his hand out and the other two chiefs gave him their *bayʿa*. Muḥammad Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, 175.

38 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 222.

39 Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*, 90–91.

leader in this case represented a linchpin around which various tribal entities would coalesce. This is also why *sharaf* (eminence) was so important within the old Arab system. The super-tribal leader did not rule in so much by his own merits as he did by the respect and deference he could expect from his supporters. During the Second Civil War (60–72/680–91), Mukhtār al-Thaqafī (d. 687 CE) initiated a revolt based in Kūfa against the Umayyads seeking revenge for the death of al-Ḥusayn. This revolt quickly escalated into a call for *jihād* against the tyrannical Umayyads in the name of al-Ḥusayn's half brother Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d. c. 99/717) who would rise as the awaited Mahdī to bring justice back to the world. Mukhtār's revolt was put down by Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, but the remnants of his group of Kūfan co-conspiritors eventually gave rise to a number of pro-ʿAlid *ghulāt* (extremists) such as the Saba'iyya, Khashabiyya and, most famously, the Kaysāniyya.[40] These groups fused various disaffected elements from the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods such as non-Arab converts and freedmen (*mawālī*) from Iraq and the Iranian plateau. The fomenters of these ʿAlid revolts expressed their chiliastic hopes and political ambitions in a message that appealed to the disenfranchised *mawālī* who were becoming more and more numerous as the number of non-Arab converts continued to rise. The final expression of this discontent was the ʿAbbāsid Revolution, which would lay bare the newfound power wielded by the *mawālī*. The ʿAbbāsid Revolution is a point at which the *wilāya* balance of power in its political and social dimensions would come together in a spectacular and hitherto unforeseen way.

1.4 *Walā'* as a Pattern of Social Relations in the Umayyad Period

Before we discuss the intersection of *wilāya*/*walāya* and its role in the ʿAbbāsid Revolution, we need to examine *wilāya*/*walāya* at the social level as it is expressed in the institution of *walā'* (clientage). Protection, authority and relations of power are expressed by several words in Arabic that return to the root letters *w-l-y*. These words represent a semantic field whose meanings are closely interrelated. Elizabeth Urban calls the field of social bonds that are mediated through the various terms related to this root as WLY-bonds.[41] WLY-bonds in the Qur'ān are predicated upon bonds of common belief and consistently contrast with the kinship bonds that are the basic foundation of pre-Islamic

40 Sean W. Anthony, "Ghulāt (extremist Shīʿīs)," in *EI3*.
41 Elizabeth Urban, *The Early Islamic Mawālī*, 27.

Arabian social organization.[42] In the Pact of Madīna, the believers being *mawālī* to one another indicates their newly formed allegiance to each other and to the Prophet over and above their previous loyalties to their kinship groups.[43] In this sense, the *wilāya*/*walāya* of the new Muslim community in Madīna represents a transfer of political loyalty to the Prophet and the transfer of mutual bonds of loyalty to the commonality of fellow believers at the social level. The *mawlā* in pre-Islamic Arab society meant one side of an unequal relationship of power between a former master and freed slave or an unprotected free person and the head of a clan-group. In the Qur'ān, however, this term is applied to both sides of the social bond while predicated upon common belief. In 7th-century CE Arabia, this represents a radical transformation and reorganization of social relations. Yet, as Urban demonstrates, the Qur'ānic view of WLY-bonds is more nuanced than simply effecting a transformation of these social relations. The Qur'ān also leaves some room for the expression of dependence and mutual support based on kinship bonds. This takes place within the context of the believers. The believers are *mawālī* to one another but relations of kin, if they occur among believers, are *awlā* (more deserving of support).[44]

The Umayyad period saw the continuation and diffusion of the social institution of clientage (*walā'*) as the Arabs sought to deal with the large numbers of converts to Islam that increased rapidly during the Marwanid period.[45] Throughout this period, the only mechanism for newcomers to take part in the conquest society was through *walā'* (clientage).[46] Clientage was not only a social institution that bound a freed slave to his or her master, but could also be a social contract between two individuals known as *walā' al-muwālāt* (voluntary commendation) taking on a number of terms in the sources such as *tibā'a*, *luzūm*, *inqiṭā'* and *khidma*.[47] Converts to Islam became clients at the hands of those under whom they had converted. Clientage did not require conversion though, and clearly there was an incentive on the part of patrons to have large numbers of clients since it increased the number and prestige of their solidarity group. Most clients in the Sufyanid and Marwanid periods were likely due to converts who had been taken as prisoners-of-war and were subsequently manumitted. They took on important roles within Umayyad Arab society as

42 Ibid., 22.
43 Ibid., 23.
44 Ibid., 34.
45 Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 49.
46 Ibid., 49.
47 Ibid., 49.

scholars, scribes, tutors and poets.[48] As the the Umayyads imposed ever stricter fiscal policies on the rural agrarian populace, more and more peasants flocked to the cities to escape the harsh taxes imposed upon them. Newcomers to the cities, however, could be returned to the countryside from whence they came as is described in early chronicles from the Marwanid period. The clear solution for both Persian nobility and peasantry was to become clients of the wealthy mercantile families of the Arab garrison cities.[49] *Mawālī* also played a role in Umayyad infantry units that at times numbered in the tens of thousands. Sometimes these *mawālī* would fight without pay or rations simply on the promise of remittance from their taxes by a more caring and protective patron.[50] Clients who rose to prominence did so as kinsmen of their patrons and not as clients per se. They and their progeny took on the name of their patron, adopted Arabic as a language, and often converted to Islam.[51] Non-Arab clients in the Umayyad period found protection in their patrons from an unforgiving and overbearing state that privileged the Arab Muslim elite. Eventually, the Umayyad state could not quell the rising tide of discontent and increasing power of non-Arab converts who could be seen everywhere in the Iraqi demilitarized garrison towns, in the new armies, and in the caliphal bureaucracy. The ʿAbbāsid revolution would not only upend the *wilāya*/*walāya* system that characterized Arab Umayyad rule, but would lead to its transformation and propagation through new social and religious forms.

1.5 The ʿAbbāsid Revolution: *Wilāya* and *Walāya* in Action

The events leading up to the ʿAbbāsid revolution and its execution exemplify well the *wilāya*/*walāya* system at work. It was the fusion of both the political and social aspects of this system that brought about such dynamic change. In c. 745 CE the ʿAbbāsid *imām* Ibrāhīm b. al-ʿAbbās (d. 131/749) sent his freed slave (*mawlā*), Abū Muslim, to Khurāsān to agitate against Umayyad rule in the name of a member of the house of Muḥammad (the Hāshimites).[52] Abū Muslim kept the specific name of the Hāshimite unknown in order to gain the widest possible acceptance among the piety minded opposition, foremost amongst whom were the Alids.[53] Abū Muslim and his army swept westward

48 Ibid., 50.
49 Ibid., 52.
50 Ibid., 53–54.
51 Ibid., 56.
52 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 273.
53 Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran*, 77.

carrying black banners probably as a sign of mourning for the death of various members of the Prophet's family, killed at the hands of the Umayyads. Abū Muslim was a brilliant statesman and general, and as he neared Kūfa, he and his men proclaimed publicly that their revolution was in the name of Abū al-ʿAbbās, the brother of his patron Ibrāhīm, and any hopes among the revolutionaries that an ʿAlid leader would be chosen were dashed.[54] One of the fascinating aspects to this revolution is that the *wilāya/walāya* bond at both the political and the individual levels fused. Abū Muslim fomented a rebellion on behalf of his patron and was then successful in installing someone unilaterally from the ʿAbbāsid house to the caliphate; hence the client had become more powerful that his patron. The second ʿAbbāsid caliph, al-Mansūr, had Abū Muslim killed when relations between them turned acrimonious and it was clear that Abū Muslim could no longer be controlled.[55] The ascension of the ʿAbbāsids and the elevated status of the Khurāsānīs in Iraq led to the demise of the social institution of clientage (*walāʾ*) among the general populace.[56] The ʿAbbāsids had removed from public view this important and pressing demand from the Umayyad opposition.[57] From this point of view the ʿAbbāsid Revolution was a watershed moment in Islamic history. The political instability of this transition led to new forms of social and religious authority that would be modeled after the client-patron relationship as it had existed under the Umayyads.

The general perception among historians has been that the power and prestige of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate declined after al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861) as more and more lands fell away from direct ʿAbbāsid control.[58] When we look at ʿAbbāsid authority through the lens of the two modes of contractual and diffuse authority mediated through *wilāya* and *walāya*, we can see that the Sassanian style of authority adopted by the early ʿAbbāsid caliphs gave way to a diffuse structure that is closer to the old Arabian model. Hence, the loss of political authority resulted in a return to a diffuse structure in which the ʿAbbāsid house became the center around which numerous political entities coalesced. This helps to understand a conundrum faced by historians, which is how the ʿAbbāsid house was able to maintain its longevity past the middle of

54 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 274.

55 *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 138.

56 While *walāʾ* was no longer practiced among the general populace, it continued in the caliphal bureaucracy and army. Consonant with the demise of *walāʾ* in the public sphere we see the rise of slave armies. For more on this transition see Crone's *Slaves on Horses*, 83.

57 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 275.

58 Ibid., vol. 1, 476.

the 10th-century CE given its inherent political weakness.[59] It was under the Buyids (945–1055 CE) that we find the symbolism and importance of the *bay'a* return with the caliph bestowing robes of honor upon the sultans who often showed deference to his symbolic authority.[60]

1.6 Legal Authority and the Development of the Schools of Law

Another application of the *wilāya*/*walāya* approach to Islamic authority is in understanding the development of the Schools of Law. The study of Islamic legal authority and the development of Islamic legal schools in Western scholarship began in earnest with Joseph Schatt.[61] Schatt described a transition beginning in the 8th-century CE from regional schools of law to schools organized around the methodologies of particular legal scholars such as Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Wael Hallaq reframed Schatt's thesis to show that regional schools never in fact existed, but rather the significant transformation in the development of Islamic legal schools was from individual jurists to corporate bodies. These bodies organized their doctrines around an eponym sometimes a century after the eponymous founder, as in the case of Abū Ḥanīfa and his students.[62] The study of Islamic law, as is the case with other specializations within Islamic studies, can at times suffer from a silo effect. Therefore, I propose to connect Islamic legal authority with other types of authority in Islam and connect that to a general discussion about Islamicate authority. The *wilāya*/*walāya* approach to Islamic authority provides some important insights into the social structure of Islamic legal schools and

59 Patricia Crone describes the 'Abbāsid fragmentation as a failure of the Islamic empire. Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses,* 71. Crone wonders why the 'Abbāsids simply ceded their territories to their governors and allowed themselves to come under the control of the *mawālī* over whom they once ruled. The answer may be in the fact that the 'Abbāsids found the extent of their authority continually restricted by the *'ulamā'*. As a result, they could maintain their position by bestowing authority rather than attempting to conserve it. In other words, falling back on a diffuse model of authority allowed the 'Abbāsid house to preserve its position through the dissipation of its authority to states on the frontier who in turn used this authority to expand the boundaries of Islamdom through conquest.

60 The 'Abbāsid caliph spent considerable effort extracting the *bay'a* from the *sulṭāns*. Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate*, 162.

61 Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, 2.

62 Wael B. Hallaq, "From regional to personal schools of law," 2.

also provides reasons why we could argue that the social structure of these schools of law began to develop in the 8th-century CE.

Both Schatt and Hallaq agree that a transformation occurred in Islamic legal culture during the 8th- and 9th- centuries CE, Schatt places the beginnings of this transformation in the 8th-century CE, while Hallaq places it in the 9th-century CE. However, when we look more broadly at the ʿAbbāsid Revolution (132/750) we know that it represented the establishment of a new political authority and resulted in the dropping of clientage as a substantive social institution that regulated the authoritative position of Arabs vis-à-vis non-Arabs. We can assume that instead of simply disappearing, this institution may have undergone a social transformation such that new social structures would come to mediate relationships of authority. At the political level, the caliphate continued to reify and institutionalize the *wilāya*/*walāya* model of political authority under the ʿAbbāsids. Like the Umayyads, the ʿAbbāsids carried on the practice of securing the *bayʿa* to the heir apparent before the death of the sitting caliph. This occurred all the while the ʿAbbāsid caliphs ruled more and more like Sassanid monarchs than Arabian tribal chieftans. This did not mean that the ideal of the *wilāya*/*walāya* mode of political authority had died out. The ʿAlids criticized the ʿAbbāsid seizure of the caliphate by claiming that there was no *shūra* to appoint the new caliph after the success of the revolution that deposed the Umayyads.[63] We can also see this ideal play out in the aborted revolt of Muḥammad Nafs al-Zakiyya (d. 145/762) who challenged ʿAbbāsid claims from Madīna.[64] In the wake of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution, the two centers of authority with claims to the caliphate were Kūfa and Madīna.[65] These two centers of the Islamicate world had also produced new social institutions during this time. It is generally accepted that Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) in Madīna is credited with establishing the main elements of what later becomes Shīʿī doctrine and law. The main divisions within Shīʿism diverge after Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[66] He is the first Shīʿī Imām to develop a rationale for the authoritative position of

63 Ḡ. Ḥ. Yūsofī, "Abu Moslem Korasani," 341–344. The slogan of Abū Muslim, *al-reżā men āl Moḥammad*, was ambiguous in that it did not mention on whose behalf Abū Muslim was fighting, whether it was an ʿAlid or an ʿAbbāsid. The term also contained an implicit idea that the caliph would be someone upon whom the community agreed, indicating the assumption of a *shūra* process.

64 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 276.

65 Syria did not play a key role in the development of Islamic authority in the wake of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution primarly because it was the seat of the defeated Umayyad caliphate.

66 The three major Shīʿī groups that diverge from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq are the Zaydīs, the Ismāʿīlīs and the Imāmī Twelver Shīʿīs. For more on the three major groups of Shiʿa see ibid., vol. 1, 372–384.

the Shīʿī Imāms.[67] In Kūfa, another important figure, in this case to Sunnī Islam, emerged during and after the ʿAbbāsid Revolution. This was Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān, the descendant of Arabized *mawālī* living in Kūfa. Abū Ḥanīfa is the first Imām of Sunnī law and someone who produced works not simply in law but also in creed. In a sense, Abū Hanīfa is the first to conceptualize the major tenets of Sunnī Islam in its entirety.[68] The students of Abū Hanīfa, Abū Yusuf (d. 181/798) and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805), carried forward both his legal and theological positions while at the same time extending and changing many of his positions. Hallaq argues that neither Abū Yusuf nor Muḥammad al-Shaybānī could have belonged to a school of Abū Hanīfa because they differed with him on so many points of legal doctrine, even at the level of methodology.[69] This argument by Hallaq assumes that the glue that holds a particular legal school together is a shared legal methodology. Clearly, in the case of Abū Hanīfa, the legal methodology of the school developed almost a century after the famous eponym. The bonds that connected teacher to student at this time were bonds that mirrored patron-client bonds based on a *wilāya*/*walāya* conception of loyalty, debt and allegiance. The ʿAbbāsid Revolution was a time of turmoil and social upheaval in the centers of Islamic power and authority. It is at this time that we see Muslims articulating their legal and theological positions in terms of loyalty to a particular individual teacher.[70] In this sense, both Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and Abū Hanīfa were much more to their students than simply legal scholars. Rather, they were figures representing authoritative Islam. Their students were attached to them with a sense of admiration, debt and identity that is closer to a patron-client relationship than a student-teacher relationship which we are more accustomed to in modern pedagogical settings.

67 Ibid., vol. 1, 260.

68 Hodgson points out that the term Sunnī is problematic because of how it has been used for polemical reasons, and because it is used to contrast with Shīʿī Islam, as if to say that Shīʿīs do not adhere to Ḥadīth or the Sunna of the Prophet. Hodgson prefers Jamāʿī as opposed to Sunnī; however, the latter term is so entrenched that there is no way to completely get around it. The followers of Abū Ḥanīfa were originially called Ahl al-Raʾy and Murjiʾa by their detractors among the Ḥadīth folk and are considered as such by al-Shahrastānī. Nevertheless, the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa in creed develop a clear notion of *jamāʿa* early on and are some of the earliest to use this term. Eventually, the creed of Abū Ḥanīfa becomes the precursor to Māturīdī theology in Sunnī Islam. In this sense we can say that Abū Ḥanīfa was one of the first to espouse a *Jamāʿī-Sunnī* approach in both law and theology. Ibid., vol. 1, 276–279.

69 Wael Hallaq, "From regional to personal schools," 8.

70 Hallaq agrees that Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, for example, while differing with his teacher on certain points of law, still demonstrated loyalty. Ibid., p. 7.

The 'Abbāsid Revolution changed the basis of privilege from one predicated upon Arab descent and tribal affiliation to one predicated more or less upon Islamic credentials.[71] So, while the core basis of privilege was forced to change under the pressures of demographic change and shifting religious norms, the social pattern of the client-patron relationship continued under a new guise. This new pattern spread quickly from the central heartlands to outlying regions of Islamdom. While the *'ulamā'* had been important since early times, it is in the wake of the 'Abbāsid Revolution that we find a more conscious attachment by ordinary Muslims to learned individuals who sought to absorb their understanding of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunna and pass it on to others after them.[72] In this process, they often took on the name of the original patron for whom this process commenced. Thus, they were known as Ḥanafiyya, Mālikiyya, Thawriyya, Shāfi'iyya, etc., taking on the name of the original patron signified the debt owed to that eponymous teacher. Eventually, these social networks developed into coherent schools depending on the expertise and knowledge-focus of the eponym. Hence, as Hallaq acknowledges, students of an eponym were sometimes greater in breadth and understanding than the eponym himself; however, this did not prevent those students from acknowledging their debt to their teacher nor from sublimating their sense of identity through the adoption of the eponym's name.[73]

1.7 The Ḥanābila as a Solidarity Group

The new solidarity group that defines social and religious life in the 9th-century CE in the central lands of Islamdom is the solidarity group based on affiliation to an eponym whose authority binds social relations among adherents and is characterized by inherited knowledge. Nowhere do we see this play out more clearly than among the Ḥanbalīs of 9th-century CE Baghdād. The Ḥanbalī

71 Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 275.

72 This phenomenon finds a parallel in the Jewish community under Muslim rule. From the Geniza documents, we find that there are few Geonic responsa that date to before the 'Abbāsid Revolution. In the wake of the 'Abbāsid Revolution, the Jewish diaspora begins to look towards the Rabbis of Sura and Pumbedita for authoritative answers to their questions about Jewish law. Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 185.

73 The adoption of a *nisba* (ascription) has been a marker of group solidarity since pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. Al-Shāfi'ī has a chapter on *walā'* and *ḥilf* (ally), which attempts to regulate the use of *nisba*, mentioning that two *nisbas* should be used, one indicating the geneology of the person and the second indicating his affiliation with the tribe or solidarity group to which he has attached himself. Ella Landau-Tasseron, "The status of allies," 15–19.

madhhab was a relative late-comer among legal schools.[74] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is celebrated among Traditionists and Muslim posterity in general, for the role he played in the *miḥna*[75] and its aftermath, as someone who stood up to caliphal authority and refused to acquiesce to al-Maʾmūn's position on the created nature of the Qurʾān.[76] Without concerning ourselves with the details of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's actual position vis-à-vis the caliph, it is clear that he was remembered particularly among his supporters as someone who defended the Sunna against the encroachment of caliphal meddling in an area that the *ʿulamāʾ* saw as within to their sphere of authority. The Ḥanābila of the 9th- and 10th- centuries CE often resorted to imposing control over their opponents by threat of mob attack. Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) had to hide for his life because he seems to have acquired the ire of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal for the theological terminology he employed in his psycho-spiritual meditations on the soul.[77] Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī was relegated to house arrest and, when he died, had to be buried at night for fear that the Ḥanābila would attack his funeral procession because of his contrary views.[78] On the other hand, such controversial figures as al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) found support among the Ḥanābila due to the common bond of their solidarity group.[79] We find in the actions of the Ḥanābila the signature elements of the *wilāya*/*walāya* characteristics displayed by adherents of the *madhhab*. This was also characteristic of the other major schools who supported and protected their members against persecution from political authorities.[80]

74 Al-Ṭabarī at the beginning of the 10th-century CE did not consider the Ḥanābila to be a *madhhab* at all because he considered them to be devoid of a legal methodology. Christoper Melchert, "Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Quran," 27.

75 The *miḥna* (833–848 CE) was the inquisition instituted by the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Maʾmūn in a struggle between the Caliph and the *ʿulamāʾ* (scholarly class) over religious authority in Islam. Al-Maʾmūn sought to impose a Muʿtazilī theological viewpoint on scholars appointed as judges within the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. John Nawas argues that the *miḥna* was primarily instituted by al-Maʾmūn to recover the spiritual authority of the caliphate. John A. Nawas, *Al-Maʾmūn, the Inquisition*, 75.

76 Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, 389.

77 Christopher Melchert, "The adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," 243.

78 Muhammad Q. Zaman, "Death, funeral processions," 52.

79 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 76.

80 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was protected by the Ḥanafī faction when he was brought to court under charges that he was discoursing on love.

1.8 *Wilāya/Walāya* and the Rise of the Ṣūfiyya

It is with the backdrop of this new landscape of solidarity groups that we can better understand the development of the Ṣūfiyya as a movement. There are no references to Ṣūfīs prior to the ʿAbbāsid Revolution.[81] In the early 9th century, the references to Ṣūfīs are limited to those characterized by actions that challenge political authorities and uphold the ideal of "ordering the good and prohibiting evil."[82] Most studies on the origins of the term Ṣūfī agree that "Ṣūfī" refers to the wearing of wool.[83] While the wearing of wool was a marker of asceticism and renunciation among Christians before the rise of Islam,[84] the term Ṣūfī develops connotations that carried particular significance within Arab/Islamic culture.[85] It was association with slaves and the poor that made the Ṣūfīs particulary dynamic as a movement. The association with the poor often meant an association with the nomadic Bedouin who herded sheep and wore the coarse kind of woolen cloaks (*jilbāb*) that became associated with the Ṣūfīs. Some of the early ascetics in Baṣra held the Bedouin to be the standard of purity. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Qays al-Anbarī would not eat milk or meat unless it was produced by the Bedouin because that was irreproachable, i.e. free from injustice.[86] The wearing of wool in this sense stoked sentiments not only of withdrawal from the world but of criticism of the worldliness of city life and the position of caliphal authority that was challenged so vehemently by the Khawārij.[87] Since we know that there were many types of wearers of wool in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods, the question is what distinguished the Ṣūfiyya in their donning of wool. Abū al-ʿAtāhiya (d. 215/828), for example, is mentioned as a *zāhid* who dons wool to take on the life of a reunciant but is

81 Ibid., 15.

82 Christopher Melchert, "Basran origins of classical Sufism," 223. Also, for a nuanced discussion of the term Ṣūfī and its multivalent usage in early Islam see Sara Sviri, "Sufism, reconsidering terms," 17–34.

83 Nile Green, *Sufism, a Global History*, 18.

84 It is related from ʿAbdalla b. ʿUmar (d. 74/693) that when the companions of the Prophet entered Jerusalem, they found the Christians there wearing hair shirts and woolen cloaks.

85 According to Van Ess, the wearing of a hair shirt indicated asceticism while the wearing of wool, at least in Baṣra during Umayyad times, indicated poverty, because only the poor wore wool. Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 88.

86 Ibid., vol. 2, 87–88.

87 The Khawārij represent pre-Islamic Arab sentiments dressed in Islamic garb. All the leaders of the early Khawārij were of Bedouin origin. Hamid Dabashi, *Authority in Islam*, 138. Ibn al-Athīr mentions that the Khārijī Muḥammad b. Kharzād in the 9th-century CE used to wear wool and sew patches on his garments. ʿAlī ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr al-Jazarī, *Al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, 306.

not considered a Ṣūfī.[88] Similarly, a slave girl of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd clad herself in wool to become a renunciant and was punished for doing so; however, she is not called a Ṣūfī.[89] The term "Ṣūfiyya" also cuts across the usual sectarian lines such that we have both followers of Ḥadīth and the Muʿtazila being given this name.[90] One common denominator among those who were given the name Ṣūfiyya is that they espoused a critical view of the prevailing political leadership, either explicity or through their actions. We should understand the Ṣūfiyya as a diffuse movement that developed in the wake of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution and held Islamic authorities to standards of justice and equity in line with Islam, as a new basis for replacing Arab identity. The Ṣūfiyya were, in a sense, the element within proto-Sunnism that developed a subversive position of authority vis-à-vis caliphal authority just as the Shīʿīs had developed their own subversive stance. What we learn from al-Jāḥiẓ is that the *Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿtazila*, or, as he also calls them, the *juhhāl* al-Ṣūfiyya (the foolish of the Ṣūfiyya), were Muʿtazilīs who held to a doctrine akin to pan-psychism in which everything in the world, even solid objects, were sentient and thus could be harmed and oppressed.[91] This view, while theological in nature, could have important political ramifications, particularly for the Islamic authorities who were charged with usurping (*ghaṣb*) the lands of the Muslims. The *Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿtazila* are listed by Pseudo-Nāshiʾ as a sect, and he records that their loathing of worldly things in the Abode of Islam led them to deny the legitimation of the authorities.[92] The *Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿtazila* regarded the *imām* to simply be a person of religious guidance, and as long as the people follow the norms of Islām, then the *imām* is superfluous. The *imām* is akin to the leader of the obligatory prayer and would not be needed at all if one prayed alone. If a punishment were required for some offense, then the Muslims would elect authorities to carry out the prescribed punishments.[93] The *Ṣūfiyyat al-Muʿtazila* abhorred kingship (*mulkiyya*) and believed that while other nations had kings, Islam had no place for them since the religion of Islam was founded by a

88 ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol. 1, 354.

89 Abū al-Faraj al-Muʿāfī, *Al-jalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfī wa al-anīs al-nāṣiḥ al-shāfī*, 331.

90 The Ṣūfiyya of the Baghdād School of Sufism are considered to come from the fold of the Ḥadīth Folk. Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret*, 2. The Ḥadīth Folk were diametrically opposed to the Muʿtazila ever since the failure of the *miḥna*. From this time, the Muʿtazila became a straw horse for heretical doctrines by Traditionalists and Semi-Rationalists. The fact that the term Ṣūfiyya came to be applied to both groups points to a fundamental underlying connection between elements of these two groups which I hold is a particular posture towards the caliphal authority.

91 Patricia Crone, "Al-Jāḥiẓ on *Aṣḥāb al-Jahālāt* and the Jahmiyya," 208–209.

92 Joseph van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 132–133.

93 Ibid., 132–133.

prophet.[94] The term *Ṣūfiyyat* here does not simply indicate asceticism as it is often rendered; rather, the term signifies a subversive criticism of the caliphal system under the ʿAbbāsids. Asceticism was not an end in itself, but rather a means of claiming moral authority and remonstrance of the political authorities. The Ṣūfiyya carefully distinguished themselves from the Khawārij who sought to topple the caliph through outright rebellion. According to some of the Ṣūfīyya, outright rebellion leads to bloodshed, which is detrimental to religion; therefore, the best path is simply to eschew politics altogether.[95] Wearing wool could also signify rebellion (*khurūj*) against the political authorities as was the case with the Ṭālibid Shīʿī Imām ʿAbdallah b. Muʿāwiya (d. 128–9/746–7), who donned a woolen garment when he commenced his rebellion against the Umayyads in 744 CE; however, he was not called a Ṣūfī.[96] Generally, those who were called Ṣūfīyya did not engage in outright rebellion but could still run afoul of the authorities as was the case with al-ʿAbbās b. Muʿammal al-Ṣūfī, who was imprisoned by Hārūn al-Rashīd for "ordering the good." Continuing on to the reign of al-Maʾmūn in 200/815–816, Ṣūfīyya were indicted as rabble-rousers in Egypt who "ordered the good" and rejected the governor's authority.[97]

We find a consistent connection between the Ṣūfiyya and subversive authority up until the inquisition (*miḥna*) of Ghulām Khalīl. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī represents the pivot around which Ṣūfī doctrine and practice begins to change.[98] Even up to the time of al-Junayd, Ṣūfīs were known for their role in commanding the good and prohibiting evil. A semi-legendary story of one of the contemporaries of al-Junayd in Baghdād, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), illustrates the extent to which commanding the good was still perceived to be operative at the end of the 9th-century CE though the story most likely developed in the 10th-century CE. Al-Nūrī is said to have come across a barge carrying the Caliph's hidden wine jars. When al-Nūrī asks about what is in the jars, the driver shews him away calling him a pesky Ṣūfī. As the story goes, al-Nūrī, overcome by a spiritual state, smashes all the jars except one, which he left after he regained his senses. When the Caliph asks al-Nūrī

94 Luca Patrizi discusses the complicated use of the term *malik* (king), *mulūk* (kings), in Islamic thought given the sometimes frought relationship between early Islamic notions of authority grounded in Arab culture and continued Sassanid notions of authority that were important in early ʿAbbāsid history. Patrizi explains how these terms for kingship came to be used by Ṣūfīs to refer to their own spiritual elite in contradistinction to the temporal rulers of the time. Luca Patrizi, "*Adab al-mulūk*," 198–219.

95 Joseph van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 132.

96 Christopher Melchert, "Basran origins," 233.

97 Christopher Melchert, "The Hanābila and the early Sufis," 354.

98 Christopher Merlchert, "Basran origins," 240.

why he smashed the wine jars, he replies that he did so because he was acting as the *muḥtasib* (an official responsible for overseeing that Sharīʿa is implemented in the marketplace). The Caliph then asks al-Nūrī who appointed him *muḥtasib*, to which he replies that it is the same one who appointed the Caliph to be caliph, i.e. God.[99] There are a number of significant aspects to this story despite the fact that it most certainly originates much later in the Ṣūfī tradition. The term Ṣūfī is connected not with the identity of al-Nūrī being a mystic, but rather with his action of "commanding the good and prohibiting evil". Al-Nūrī is placed in direct contrast to the caliph himself, whose authority is brought into question because of his laxity in upholding Islamic religious norms. While it is the caliph who is supposed to appoint the *muḥtasib*, al-Nūrī goes around the caliph and derives his authority directly from God.

The subversive authority of the Ṣūfiyya prior to al-Junayd is seen as inherently unstable if placed within the framework of authority that we have been discussing. The Ṣūfiyya of this period are not characterized as a solidarity group. They do not exhibit a particular lineage, nor did they have a single doctrine of religious knowledge that they would pass down to represent the perpetuation of a particular founder.[100] The Ṣūfiyya prior to al-Junayd were voluntary outcasts of the political order and their approach was to hold the political authorities to task while also criticizing the insincere purveyors of religious knowledge who sought worldly gain.[101] It was a radical movement that attracted followers of many different backgrounds and held both political and religious authorities to a high and exacting standard. However, when the *miḥna* of Ghulām Khalīl[102] commenced, it becomes clear how unstable the Ṣūfiyya

99 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 61.

100 Many of the Ṣūfī shaykhs prior to al-Junayd who are mentioned in the later Ṣūfī lineages dating from the time of al-Sulamī do not carry the title of Ṣūfī. Hence, we need to separate the early Ṣūfiyya from the *awliyāʾ* who were products of pious communities and celebrated for *ḥikma* (wisdom) from God. Lineage becomes important among Muslim mystics after al-Junayd.

101 Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 227/850) is an important figure in highlighting the way in which the Ṣūfiyya were distinguishing themselves from the Ahl al-Ḥadīth. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is often contrasted with Bishr in the sources as the archetypal Traditionalist. When asked to speak about *waraʿ* (scrupulousness), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is said to have refused, pointing to the fact that he was the recipient of state funds taken from the land tax (*kharāj*). He would point to Bishr as the person to ask about *waraʿ* because Bishr refused to take anything from the state. Bishr was also known to command the good and prohibit evil. ʿAziz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Mutaṣawwifa baghdād* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfi al-ʿArabī, 1997), 79–80.

102 Ghulām Khalīl, the instigator of the *miḥna*, is described as being a Ḥanbalī ascetic. Alexaner Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 57. This is why looking at the Ṣūfiyya through the lense of asceticism/mysticism obscures the underlying power dynamics at play. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal produced a *musnad* particulary on *zuhd* (asceticism); however, this did not result

were as a subversive movement. Under al-Junayd, the Ṣūfiyya transition to a *wilāya/walāya* model of traditional Islamic authority. Al-Junayd himself escapes the *miḥna* by claiming to be a jurist (*faqīh*).[103] Al-Nūrī, who was banished from Baghdād during the *miḥna*, spent some fourteen years in Raqqa and notes upon his return that he cannot understand what the Ṣūfiyya are saying in their *majālis* (meetings).[104] It is in this period that al-Junayd develops a terminology that becomes foundational for all of Sufism after him. In a sense, this is where the Ṣūfī lineage begins because it is where Sufism enters the traditional authority structures of *wilāya/walāya*. Sufism under al-Junayd sheds its focus on commanding the good and prohibiting evil particularly in the political sphere and begins to take the shape of an Islamic discipline with a doctrine that helps give itself an identity as a solidarity group. In this way, al-Junayd can be credited as the most important figure in Islamic Mysticism for bringing Sufism into the fullness of Islamic normativity.[105]

1.9 The Appearance of the *Awliyā'*

The term *walī* and its plural *awliyā* has had a political significance since early Umayyad times. When the Khawārij captured al-Muḥallab's[106] troops, they asked them, "What do you say about Muṣ'ab? Is he your leader (*walī*) in this world and the next?… Are you his followers (*awliyā'*) in life and death…?"[107] The term *awliyā'* as the special "friends of God" was used by the Qadariyya in Baṣra during the early 8th-century CE.[108] The term *awliyā'*, like the term

in his being a Ṣūfī. Rather, the point of difference relates to a position vis-à-vis the state. Because the early Ḥanābila developed out of the Abnā' al-Dawla, they were psychologically and monetarily wedded to the state. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, when asked about commanding the good and prohibiting evil, counseled against doing so because the caliph would respond with undue force. The Ṣūfiyya, on the other hand, developed their identity in opposition to the corruption that they saw in the practices of the caliphal state.

103 Ibid., 62.

104 Ibid., 62–63.

105 Many would argue that this status belongs to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. However, I would argue that al-Ghazālī functioned more to popularize Sufism among the learned classes (*'ulamā'*) and put it in a form that was understandable. Sufism was already widely accepted among the Muslim populace and political elites as we see with 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166).

106 Al-Muḥallab b. Abī Ṣufra (d. 83/702) was an Azdī Arab warrior and general who participated in the conquest campaigns under Mu'āwiya and sided with 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr in the 2nd Civil War.

107 Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 41.

108 Joseph van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 88.

Ṣūfiyya, is used among many Islamic sects throughout the 8th- and 9th- centuries CE. During the 8th- century CE, the Ḥāzimiyya[109], or followers of Ḥāzim b. ʿAlī, held that God loved his *awliyāʾ* from pre-eternity, even if they disbelieved most of their lives, and God also hated his enemies (*aʿdāʾ*) from pre-eternity.[110] For the Khawārij, the term *wilāya* (support, protection, authority) contrasted to *barāʾa* (withdrawl of support) and was used to refer to support for various factions of the *ṣaḥāba* (companions of the Prophet). The status of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was usually the point of contention. We see also that the Shīʿa used the term *wilāya* to refer to the support that rightfully belongs to ʿAlī and the ʿAlid Imāms. Another group of the Khawārij, the companions of Shabīb al-Najrānī (d. 77/696), considered someone a Muslim if they made the testification of faith and also if they supported the *awliyāʾ* of God and showed enmity to the enemies (*aʿdāʾ*) of God.[111] The followers of the the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. c. 227/841) held that there will always exist in the world *awliyāʾ* who are protected from sin (*maʿṣūmūn*) and do not lie. They do not commit enormities and they are the *ḥujja* (the proof) of God in their time against the people. According to the followers of al-Hudhayl, *tawātur* (proof through multiple isolated chains of transmission) is only a requirement in the absence of a single sinless individual, whom he defines as a *walī*.[112] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, in referring to Walīd II's sacred history, states that God's religion is upheld by "his prophets, deputies and friends on Earth," (*anbiyāʾuhu wa khulafāʾuhu wa awliyāʾuhu fī arḍihi*).[113] Among Traditionists, Ibn Abī Dunyā (d. 281/894) is credited with a compilation of prophetic Ḥadīth concerning the *awliyāʾ*.

The term *awliyāʾ Allāh* differs in important ways from the way the term Ṣūfiyya was used in the 9th-century CE. The theologians weighed in on the meaning of the term because, in the singular, *walī* is used as one of the names of God in the Qurʾān. The term carried with it strong connotations of religious authority and privilege in ways that the term Ṣūfiyya did not. In the later theological tradition, the *awliyāʾ* are strongly associated with miracles (*karāmāt*).[114]

109 The Ḥāzimiyya were a sect of the Khawārij and belonged to the ʿAjārida of Sistān.

110 Ibid., 580.

111 ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ḥifnī, *Mawsūʿat al-firaq wa-al-jamāʿāt wa-al-madhāhib wa-al-aḥzāb wa-al-ḥarakāt al-islāmīyya,* 57.

112 Joseph van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, 292.

113 Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 82.

114 The belief in the miracles of the *awliyāʾ* appears in creedal texts at the end of the 9th-century CE Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, fol. 39–40. Also see Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥāwī, *The Creed of Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī, al-ʿaqīdah al-ṭaḥāwiyyah*, 78.

It is in the middle of the 9th century that we find theologians insisting that the *awliyā'* are not greater than the *anbiyā'*. This is usually in response to an unnamed group of Ṣūfīs who seem to have claimed this status. The response of theologians to these claims may have been preemptive though, especially since there was a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet recorded by Traditionists stating that there are persons (clarified later in the Ḥadīth as *awliyā'*) who are neither prophets nor martyrs but will be envied by them on the Day of Judgement.[115] Some early sects claimed that the *awliyā'* were greater than the *anbiyā'* because, according to them, the *awliyā'* receive divine inspiration without any intermediary, while the prophets require an intermediary.[116] The existence of the claim is further validated by a treatise on the subject by Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or earlier), an associate of al-Junayd who developed the terminology of *fanā'* (passing away) and *baqā'* (subsistence).[117] This treatise by al-Kharrāz provides an important connection between the Ṣūfiyya and the language of power and authority in 9th-century Baghdād. We can also deduce from it that the Ṣūfiyya were not an organized group with a coherent doctrine prior to the ascendancy of al-Junayd. Al-Kharrāz is critical of one of the groups of the Ṣūfīyya whom he claims erred by exalting the station of the *awliyā'* over the station of the *anbiyā'*.[118] The subversive authority of the early Ṣūfī movement not only criticized the political establishment, but elements of the Ṣūfiyya seem to have upended the established authority of the prophets over ordinary believers. While al-Kharrāz attacks these Ṣūfīs for their heretical beliefs, he maintains the position of the *awliyā'* as the representatives of the *anbiyā'* and thus the inheritors of prophetic authority.[119] For the class of proto-Sunnī religious scholars, the title "inheritors of the prophets" was conferred upon scholars through the knowledge of Ḥadīth and Fiqh as preserved in their genealogies of learned individuals. It is the Ṣūfīs and other mystics such as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in Transoxania during the 9th-century CE who positioned the *awliyā'* as the inheritors of the prophets. They did this in the context of outward religious knowledge, such that *maʿrifa* (gnosis of God) becomes the perfection of religious knowledge and its pinnacle. However, the term *awliyā'*

115 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *kitāb al-buyūʿ*, *bāb fī al-rahn*, *ḥadīth* 3527.

116 ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ḥifnī, *Mawsūʿat al-firaq*, 91.

117 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 57.

118 Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, *Rasā'il al-kharrāz*, 186.

119 Ibid., 192. Michael Cooperson discusses the four main movements contesting prophetic authority in 9th-century CE Baghdād. These were the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Ma'mūn, the Shīʿī Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā, the Imām of Ḥadīth Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and the Ṣūfī Bishr al-Ḥāfī. Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, xi-xiv.

moreso than *'ulamā'* contains an implicit meaning of authority as well as social obligation to provide protection to and support to others.

1.10 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Early *Awliyā'*

The majority of authorities that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī quotes throughout his works are figures from the first three generations of Islam. Probably the most oft-quoted of the early authorities is the *tābi'ī* (follower) al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Beyond that, al-Tirmidhī mostly quotes the early proto-Ṣūfī figures mentioned by al-Sulamī in his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. These are Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ[120] (d. 187/803), Mālik b. Dīnār[121] (d. 128/745), Ibrāhīm b. Adham[122] (d. 161/778), and Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī[123] (d. 165/781). However, the quotes that he provides from these figures are not found in either al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* or Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*. Both Mālik b. Dīnār and Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī are counted as coming from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.[124] Both Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ represent the following generation of mystics and between them and al-Tirmidhī was only one generation. It would be incorrect to label these figures as ascetics in the traditional sense of this term, as is exemplified by Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ who counsels his followers to earn a gainful living and follow a moderate lifestyle. They also removed themselves from the ranks of the professional men of learning.[125] Their moderate approach to asceticism and their stance vis-à-vis professional learning is echoed by al-Tirmidhī in many of his treatises but especially in his *Kitāb bayān al-kasb* (*Book on the Clarification of Earning a Living*).

In his autobiography, al-Tirmidhī mentions that he traveled first to Baṣra when he set off for the pilgrimage to Makka.[126] There is no indication that he went to Baghdād, and if he did not, then he most likely did not meet the Ṣūfiyya of Baghdad. Probably most significant to scholars of Islamic Mysticism is that al-Tirmidhī never uses the term Ṣūfī, yet he exhibits many of the foundational concepts that come to be associated with Sufism. For al-Tirmidhī, Fuḍayl

120 Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī ma'rifat aḥādith al-rasūl,* vol. 1, 233.
121 Ibid., vol. 1, 374.
122 Ibid., vol. 2, 449.
123 Ibid., vol. 3, 245.
124 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticim*, 13.
125 Ibid., 24.
126 Al-Tirmidhī's pilgrimage most probably took place around 860 CE Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 15–16.

b. 'Iyāḍ and Ibrāhīm b. Adham are examples of *awliyā'* and *ḥukamā'* and are the true heirs of the prophets. We see in Chapter 4 how this contrasts to the way he speaks about the legal scholars and particularly the students of Abū Ḥanīfa. As Melchert has remarked, it is significant that many of the early proto-Ṣūfīs never carried the title Ṣūfī.[127] This is because we are dealing with two separate movements that espoused unique but subversive visions of authority and that overlapped and fused at various points in time.[128] Al-Tirmidhī clearly shows us that he saw the early *awliyā'*/*ḥukamā'* from Baṣra as authorities. They represent a new type of authority based on wisdom that was developing outside of the mainstream schools of jurisprudence. Sufism was a diffuse movement of subversive authority among mostly proto-Sunnī movements. These movements fused in Baghdād at the end of the 9th-century CE, and then again in Nīshāpūr in Khurasan in the 11th-century CE in what I term the great mystical synthesis of the 11th-century CE. I discuss the main elements of this synthesis in detail in Chapter 6.

127 Christopher Melchert, "Basran Origins," 221.

128 Sviri discusses two competing notions connected to the Ṣūfīs (wearers of wool) in the early 'Abbāsid period. These two notions are ascetic and elite notions. The ascetic notion connects to local traditions of asceticism that trace back to the pre-Islamic era. The elite notion of wool wearers is connected to ideas of purity that have their roots in Biblical representations. Sara Sviri, "Sufism, reconsidering terms," 27–30.

CHAPTER 2

The Historical and Social Context of Al-Tirmidhī's Life and Times

2.1 Introduction

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was born during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 218/833) in the city of Tirmidh.[1] For its day, Tirmidh was a medium-sized city that contained a citadel (*qahunduz*) outside the city walls. Its larger buildings were composed of mud brick rather than stone.[2] Tirmidh was under the administrative jurisdiction of Balkh during the rule of the Ṭāhirids

1 The city of Tirmidh (Termez) is located in the southern tip of present day Uzbekistan just north of Afghanistan. Al-Muqaddasī (d. 990 CE) describes the city of Tirmidh less than a century after the death of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. It is the largest city situated on the Amū Daryā River, a river considered since ancient times to be the dividing line between Greater Iran (Khurāsān) and Tūrān (Transoxania). According to al-Muqaddasī, Tirmidh was a port city on the Amū Daryā with accessibility to the river from both sides. The city had three gates with a central mosque inside the gates of the city. Connected to the city were suburbs with their own set of walls as a well as a commercial port (*sarādeqāt*) that formed a special quarter of the city. Homes would sometimes have outside patios that were paved with burnt brick and open-air areas were sometimes covered with canopies. Al-Muqaddasī describes Tirmidh as 'clean' (*naẓīfa*) and 'healthy' (*ṭayyiba*). We might judge from these remarks that Tirmidh, unlike many other cities of the Iranian plateau during the 9th-and 10th-centuries CE, did not experience a population explosion that led to dense numbers of immigrants settling outside its city walls. For more on urbanization in early Islamic Iran see Richard Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 73. Tirmidh today is one of the hottest cities in Central Asia with temperatures as high as 122 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer months. Being a port city, Tirmidh was an important trade link between Khurāsān and Transoxania. Along with goods, ideas traveled these routes and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was no doubt exposed to a wealth of culture and thought. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Kitāb aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 291.

2 The city of Tirmidh included several smaller cities and rural villages that fell under its jurisdiction and that supported its urban life. These were Ṣarmanjī, Hāshim Jard, Nawdaz and al-Qawādhiyān (a city much smaller than Tirmidh but still supporting its own farming villages). Tirmidh was still smaller than the main metropolitan center of Samarqand whose population may have been as high as 120,000 inhabitants in the 9th-century CE. This estimate is based on the archeological evidence suggesting that the city (*shahrestān*) of Samarqand reached close to seven and a half square miles. G. A. Pugachenkova and E. V. Rtveladze, "Archeology vii. Islamic Central Asia," 322–326. This city was a little larger than Nīshāpūr, at close to the same time period, whose city measured approximately six and a half square miles. Richard Bulliet modestly estimates that Nīshāpūr's population was approximately 100,000 inhabitants. We might guess the population of Tirmidh to be somewhere close to 30–40,000 inhabitants at the end of the 9th-century CE. Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, 9.

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(205–78/821–91). It was to Balkh that al-Tirmidhī was taken for prosecution when the local scholars of Tirmidh accused him of discoursing on the topic of love (*ḥubb*). The Ṭāhirids were the governors of Khurāsān and Transoxania for much of al-Tirmidhī's life. They were briefly followed by the Saffārids[3] and then the Samānids (204–395/819–1005) after them. Al-Tirmidhī references the brief interlude of the Saffārids in his autobiography (*Buduww sha'n*) when he states that "there arose in our land discord and insurrection."[4] Al-Tirmidhī is referring to the event in which Dāwūd b. al-ʿAbbās al-Bānijūrī, the Ṭāhirid governor in Balkh, was forced to flee in 870 CE when the Saffārid Yaʿqūb b. Layth laid siege to that city.

Al-Tirmidhī came from a family whose ancestral roots return to the original Arabs who settled in the region soon after the early Arab/Islamic conquests. His family was composed of wealthy landholders who cultivated religious learning and belonged to the local aristocracy[5] of Tirmidh. Their status was similar in nature to the patrician families of Nīshāpūr, which was a city larger than Tirmidh but still in its same cultural orbit. Al-Tirmidhī's father was a scholar who was known to have visited Baghdād and related Ḥadīth there[6] and, as we discuss in Chapter 4, al-Tirmidhī continued this scholarly tradition as part of the Ḥanafī jurisprudential and theological tradition that was widespread in the eastern provinces during his time. Nevertheless, al-Tirmidhī's desire to expand beyond the confines of previous modes of thought is clear in the manner in which he exhibits an unflinching insistence on following his own intuitions rather than bowing to the dictates of the various factions and schools in his city.[7] As part of this process, he retreated to the private space of his home where he established what we may call a 'salon' (*mujālasa*). There, he conducted semi-private meetings of like-minded individuals who met to discuss spiritual matters and to

3 While the Saffārid line continued until the beginning of the 11th-century CE in the region of Sistān, the Saffārids lost Khurāsān and Transoxiana to the Samānids when Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl (I) (279–95/892–907) captured the Saffārid ʿAmr b. al-Layth in 287/900, after which the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid appointed him governor of both Transoxania and Khurāsān. "Sāmānids," *EI2*.

4 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 20–23.

5 We would consider al-Tirmidhī to belong to what Bulliet calls "the Patriciate" in early Islamic Iranian cities. These were a group of families who consistently held much of the power in the cities of Khurāsān and Transoxiana, excluding the transient governors and imperial agents who came and went. These families were usually of three types, either landholding, trading or religious families. Richard Bulliet, *Patricians*, 20–21.

6 Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmiḏī*, 12.

7 In his autobiography, al-Tirmidhī explains how he was regaled by the local scholars of his city for his ascetic and anti-social behavior that was a result of his endeavor to grow closer to God. Al-Tirmidhī explains that he cared nothing for what they said and continued with his spiritual exercises until he was called before the governor at Balkh to stand trial for heresy. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 20.

engage in the invocation of God (*dhikr*).[8] Not only does al-Tirmidhī turn to close friends who share his interests in mysticism, but he also includes his wife in these discourses and relates a number of her dreams, which signifies not only his own spiritual rank, but her exalted status as a *walīyya* (female saint of God).[9] It must be noted that al-Tirmidhī was not merely a renegade who wanted to break free of the social and intellectual mores of his time. He was also an accomplished scholar in all the major disciplines of Islamic scholarship as his many books and short treatises attest. We can describe him as an encyclopedist of sorts who sought to unify Islamic thought under one single approach. Like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī after him, al-Tirmidhī was scathing in his criticism of a scholarly class whom he considered to have lost the original prophetic vision of Islam. In this way, he was also a social critic who wished to reform the social class that he represented. His goal was an ethical one just as much as it was mystical. For example, al-Tirmidhī expounds on the importance of ethics when he discusses the three stages of good character. The first is to have good character with respect to God's commands and prohibitions. This is at the level of law. The second stage is to have good character with all created things (*khalq*, which also can mean all human beings). The third is to have good character with God's pre-ordainment.[10] This is an example of al-Tirmidhī's consistent

8 While this may seem benign and rather ordinary to modern sensibilities, it clearly was not so in al-Tirmidhī's 9th-century CE, Transoxania. Religious learning was accessible and usually conducted in public places such as the local *jāmiʿ masjid* or congregational mosque. In contrast, the gatherings of the early mystics in Iraq, Khurāsān and Transoxiana were semi-private events that were often conducted in the homes of participants or wealthy patrons. These gatherings were characterized by an informal discourse on mystical topics between like-minded individuals, a very different scene than is found several centuries later in Nīshāpūr, where Ṣūfī culture and lore are organized by highly formal structures that mediate teacher-student roles. The early Islamic mystics followed a pattern already in practice in the large urban centers of Islam during the 9th-century CE, where the *mujālasāt* of *adab* or edifying circles of humanistic knowledge was en vogue. For more on early salons in the Islamic world see Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons*, 13. Al-Tirmidhī was not alone in his desire to converse with like-minded mystics about the love of God and mystical states. The inquisition of Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888) targeted those discoursing on love (*ḥubb*). The problem was not that these mystics were experiencing the love of God. This theme had been in circulation for quite some time in Islamic societies, at least since the 2nd/8th century with the early love poetry of the likes of Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawīyya. I would venture to posit that the strong reaction on the part of the ʾAbbāsid authorities was the fact that these discourses on love were happening in new social structures outside of the purview of the recently ascendant *ʿulamāʾ* (scholarly class).

9 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 24–36.

10 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 5, 215. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī distinguishes between "natural" good character shared by all human beings and the highest forms of good character brought by the Prophet. Ibid., vol. 4, 341–356.

attempt to extend Islamic values beyond the boundaries of Islam as a faith. This sense of ethics led him to defend the weaker elements of his society by, for example, calling for the good treatment of slaves.[11] Yet, al-Tirmidhī was not an egalitarian nor could he be considered a social revolutionary. While he called for the good treatment of slaves, he also recognized the slave-owner's right to discipline within measure. His views on women were typical if not slightly more advanced than his time. He upheld the notion that women should not be taught to write because writing was a type of communication that exceeded speech, which could lead to temptation (*fitna*).[12] According to al-Tirmidhī, women are inferior to men because the woman comes from a part of the man (i.e., from Adam's rib).[13] He also viewed women as a source of temptation for men as well as some of the prophets.[14] Despite these views, it is clear that he had a deep and meaningful relationship with his wife that was respectful and collegial in nature. His autobiography indicates that they used to share their spiritual dreams with one another such as a dream in which they were both lying in bed and the Prophet entered their sleeping area with them.[15] For al-Tirmidhī, these dreams are highly significant because they represent a means of communication from the divine to the human being.[16]

Al-Tirmidhī spoke both Arabic and Persian fluently. We often find Persian words peppered throughout his many works for clarifying the meaning of an

11 Ibid., vol. 1, 121–122.

12 Ibid., vol. 5, 183–185.

13 Ibid., vol. 3, 362.

14 Al-Tirmidhī highlights the lore surrounding the stories of three prophets who were tempted by women in order to indicate the station of each of these in the way he dealt with this temptation. The first was the Prophet Dāwūd (David) who was tempted by Bathsheba and sent her husband to his death in order to marry her. His kingdom goes to ruin until he repents. The second was Yūsuf (Joseph) who was tempted by Potiphar's wife and, according to al-Tirmidhī, almost commits the grave sin but turns away at the last minute and is imprisoned as a result. This is an example of a higher station. Finally, he gives the example of the Prophet Muḥammad who is tempted by Zaynab and his reaction is to go into seclusion. The result is that she is married to him by God. Ibid., 248–252.

15 Al-Tirmidhī clearly saw this as an auspicious omen. Dreams are interpreted symbolically in the Arab/Islamic tradition of dream interpretation such as with the likes of Ibn Sīrīn whose book *Tafsīr al-aḥlam* of dream interpretation provides meanings for stock symbols within dreams.

16 Al-Tirmidhī quotes a prophetic tradition to the effect that true dreams are a part of prophecy. Dreams that contain the Prophet are considered to always be true dreams, but nevertheless must still be interpreted symbolically. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 9.

Arabic word.[17] It is not clear whether al-Tirmidhī's wife spoke Arabic or not, but she clearly spoke Persian. In many respects, we can think of al-Tirmidhī as a gentrified Persian landholder (*dihqān*)[18] if it were not for his vehement defense of Arabic as the greatest and most important of languages and of the Arabs as the best of peoples.[19] Al-Tirmidhī's remarks remind us of the Shuʿūbī and anti-Shuʿūbī movements during the 2nd- and 3rd- Islamic centuries (8th- and 9th-centuries CE) in which non-Arabs (*ʿajam*) wrote literature that claimed superiority over Arab culture. Arab writers (often of non-Arab origin themselves, such as Ibn Qutayba) wrote in defense of Arab superiority and lineage.[20] According to al-Tirmidhī, the Arabs were superior to the Persians (*ʿajam*) not because of the superiority of the Arabic language but because the Arabs held more noble qualities and higher character traits than the Persians, particularly, generosity.[21] While noble Arab descent, for al-Tirmidhī, was a source of privilege in the larger Islamic community (*umma*), it was only applicable if the Arabs actually displayed those noble character traits.[22] While al-Tirmidhī's views of Arab superiority are tempered by his ethical standards, he elevates the Arabic language to cosmological significance in his gnoseology. One of the highest forms of knowledge, the highest wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-ʿulyā*), is the knowledge of the letters (Arabic letters).[23] Al-Tirmidhī upheld and justified the social hierarchy of his society that placed him in a position of power and authority, but he considered this privilege to be predicated on virtue and not lineage. This is one of the reasons that he strongly opposed the Shīʿī position on the imamate.

2.2 Al-Tirmidhī's Clash with the Local *'Ulamā'*

Al-Tirmidhī began teaching his mystical ideas from his home rather than from the local *jāmiʿ masjid* (congregational mosque). However, the numbers of

17 See Radtke's list of Persian words compiled from al-Tirmidhī's writings. Bernd Radtke, *Ein islamischer Theosoph*, 137.

18 This term came to change over time referring, in the Sasanid period, to a village chief and member of the Sasanid landed aristocracy. With the development of the *iqṭāʿ* land system, this important class lost much of its status and the term came to designate later in the ʿAbbāsid period little more than a peasant. Ann Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, 3–4, n 3.

19 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 309.

20 Roy P. Mottahedeh, "The Shuʿūbiyah controversy," 161–182.

21 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 310.

22 Ibid., 107.

23 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 83.

those who came to his circle (*majlis*) grew so numerous that his house could no longer accommodate them. Eventually, the lane near his house filled up and then his students took him to the local *masjid*. Finally, he began teaching at a larger *masjid*, probably the central congregational *masjid* of Tirmidh.[24] In his autobiography, al-Tirmidhī describes how it was a group of his original detractors who attempted to approach him in private about his ideas. When he finally agreed to speak to them, they were mesmerized by his speech and became his students. After he had become well known and had attracted many students, his other detractors among the scholars of the city could not sustain their criticism of him. Al-Tirmidhī's trials and eventual triumph over his detractors among the scholars (*'ulamā'*) of Tirmidh exemplify Richard Bulliet's thesis about the structure of the Patriciate in Nīshāpūr during the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE. According to Bulliet, the patricians were a set of landowning, merchant and religious families, often combining all three groups, who controlled the city of Nīshāpūr from generation to generation for over a hundred and fifty years. It was the delicate balance of power between these families and their various factions that preserved harmony in Nīshāpūr. When this balance of power was lost, the city descended into intra-urban warfare and the city was eventually destroyed.

Al-Tirmidhī was clearly a member of such a class in his city of Tirmidh, coming from a landholding scholarly family of Arab descent. When the faction that opposed al-Tirmidhī was successful in bringing him before the governor's court in Balkh on charges of heresy, it was the Ḥanafīs who protected him and enabled him to return to his city. This is why the content and nature of what al-Tirmidhī was teaching, as well as the space in which he was teaching, is significant. By teaching from his home, al-Tirmidhī was easily subject to labels of heresy because his teachings were not being overseen by the establishment of religious notables. If he had not been from the Patrician class himself, he probably would not have been considered such a threat to the established order. Bulliet (1997), in *Islam: the View from the Edge*, argues that Islam during the 9th–11th-centuries CE looks different when viewed from the edge rather than the center (i.e., Baghdād). When we turn our attention away from the centers of power (specifically in Khurasān and Transoxiana) during this period, we find a pattern in which non-Arab converts are seeking answers to their questions about Islam.[25] Al-Tirmidhī's book, *Khatm al-awliyā'* (*The Seal of the*

24 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 23.

25 Bulliet follows the life of a Persian soldier Abū Ṭayba whose great grandfather converted to Islam and who settles in Jurjān seeking and finding religious guidance. The 9th-century CE witnessed some of the highest rates of urbanization in the history of Persia. This also coincided with the fastest period of conversion to Islam. It is during this period that the

Saints), is structured in a question and answer format as a dialog between al-Tirmidhī and one or more of his students.[26] At one point, al-Tirmidhī became exasperated by a question from one of his students and he exclaims, "*Yā ʿajam*!" This literally means, "You Persians!" Radtke posits that al-Tirmidhī must be using this phrase to mean something like, "You fools!" Even if this was the intended meaning, it reveals important information about al-Tirmidhī's sense of privilege and his critical view of those who were not versed in the Arabic language.[27] In other instances, al-Tirmidhī shows a caring and concerned attitude toward his students.[28] In both cases, he assumes a position of authority and distinction above his questioner. His wisdom and knowledge were also sought by non-Muslims and non-Arabs who were seeking guidance and answers to life questions that would help them to make sense of their world.[29]

2.3 The Scholarly Class or the *ʿUlamāʾ*

Al-Tirmidhī hailed from a family of *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars) and belonged to this class himself yet was highly critical of them. He called them *ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir* (scholars of the outward), or scholars who were well versed in legal and theological doctrines but whose inward character traits belied their knowledge. He militated against the idea that Fiqh (jurisprudence) and Kalām (theology) were the totality of what God meant when he referred to knowledge (*ʿilm*) in the Qurʾān.[30] In order to better situate al-Tirmidhī, we need to understand this religious class and how it related to other social groups in the

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function of the *faqīh* develops as someone who is consulted about religious legal matters. Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 93.

26 This dialogue is not Socratic in nature in that it does not aim at taking the student through a logical argument but is more al-Tirmidhī answering the questions about sainthood that were common in his time such as whether or not a saint can be greater than a prophet.

27 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 125.

28 Ibid., 48. Al-Tirmidhī shows concern for the student who asks a question for which he is not ready to hear the answer.

29 This was a similar phenomenon that took place with the development of Rabbinic Judaism. According to Seth Schwartz (2001) the Rabbis, not just as a class of legal experts but as leaders of the Jewish community, came into their position of authority when Jews from various diaspora communities began turning to them for answers to their questions about how to live a Jewish life.

30 Al-Tirmidhī anticipated Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 504/1111) criticism of the *ʿulamāʾ* in his *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* by almost two hundred years. Al-Tirmidhī describes the true *faqīh* (not jurisprudent here but "man of understanding") as someone who "…the veil has been lifted from the eye of his heart," and not someone who "…associates himself with the discipline of *fiqh*." Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ*, 138.

9th-century CE. During this time we first start to see the term *faqīh* (jurisprudent) being used in biographical dictionaries, but it is not until the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE in Khurāsān and Transoxania that this term begins to gain wide use.[31] We have already explained how, if we take a view from the edge, the *'ulamā'* families constitute one of the pillars of urban social life in the early 'Abbāsid period. However, it is also important to go back to the center to see how the struggle for power and authority in Islam was shaping the development of this important social class as it affected developments on the edge. Most historians of early Islam consider the *miḥna*[32] to have been the decisive struggle for religious authority in Islam between the caliph and the *'ulamā'*.[33] Muhammad Qasim Zaman shows, with some success, that such a break was not as complete as once thought and the 'Abbāsid caliphs continued to exercise a role in juridical and theological debates even after the *miḥna*. Despite Zaman's evidence, it is clear that after the reign of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861) and with the ending of the *miḥna*, the 'Abbāsid caliphs could not steer the religious discourse in the same way as al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) and al-Mutawakkil had done.[34] The 'Abbāsid Empire by the end of the 9th-century CE was beginning the transition from a Sassanid imperial model back to a diffuse model of authority more akin to the rule of the Rāshidūn caliphs. Like any political transition, this led to uncertainty and an initial stage of instability. What the caliphs lost in this transition was control of the religious discourse (and thus religious authority). It is the *'ulamā'* who step in to assume this authority. John Turner (2001), building on the work of Josef van Ess, demonstrates that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the archetypal Sunnī hero, was actually quite low in profile and apolitical in his stance toward the caliphs. The early evidence points to him as acquiescing to the caliph's order to affirm the createdness of the Qur'ān rather than refusing to do so. Turner's thesis is that a 'showdown' between the Caliph and Ibn Ḥanbal was the product of a later rewriting of the narrative and was a tool used by the Ḥanbalīs to assert their authoritative position among the *madhhabs*.[35] By the time of the reign of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–925), the caliph was no longer seen as the source of religious doctrine, and the climate

31 Richard Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge*, 93.

32 The *miḥna* was the inquisition instituted by the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn in a struggle between the caliph and the *'ulamā'* (scholarly class) over religious authority in Islam. Al-Ma'mūn sought to impose a Mu'tazilī theological viewpoint on scholars appointed as judges within the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.

33 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 70.

34 Hugh Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliphs*, 294–295.

35 John Persons Turner, *Inquisition and the Definition of Identity*, 271–273.

at the caliphal court had become antagonistic to religious learning.[36] The attempt by caliphs such as al-Maʾmūn and al-Mutawakkil to engage directly in religious doctrine was bound to fail since the *ʿulamāʾ* gave no place to caliphs, viziers, assemblies of notables, or even the people, to produce laws, commandments, prohibitions or statutes of their own accord.[37] Rather, without caliphal guidance in the religious discourse after al-Mutawakkil, we find a vacuum of religious authority that initiates a contest among the various legal *madhāhib* and various Islamic sects for the supremacy of their particular viewpoint. From the late 9th-century through the 11th-century CE a consistent method for mediating conflicting religious viewpoints was through mob rioting in the streets.[38] Even if the caliph was not a legislator, the caliph saw his role as a mediator between various proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī factions. After al-Mutawakkil, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs were no longer able to play this role and the intense factionalism that resulted created the background against which Sunnism and Shīʿism developed.[39] Back in the city of Tirmidh, al-Tirmidhī voices his frustration at the factionalism of his time, *innamā ṣārū hāʾulāʾi firaqan li-annahum fāraqū dīnahum fa-bi-mufāraqati al-dīn tashattatat ahwāʾuhum fa-iftaraqū*, "These

36 Maaike van Berkel, *Crisis and Continuity*, 210–211.

37 Jacob Lassner and Michael David Bonner, *Islam in the Middle Ages*, 238. As early as al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and even before him we find that the four sources of Islamic law (Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, *ijmāʿ* and *qiyās*) leave no place for caliphal intervention.

38 Popular violence began to play an important role in the way the Ḥanbalīs dealt with their adversaries such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). John Persons Turner, *Inquisition*, 270. The same type of popular violence plays a role in the late 11th century when Ibn al-Qushayrī comes to Baghdād to teach at the Niẓāmiyya. These riots between the Ashʿarīs and Ḥanbalīs were symptomatic of the decentralized nature of religious authority. Eric J. Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, 120–121. Baghdād was not the only place where rioting took place between various legal and theological factions. Bulliet documents the sectarian violence between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs in Nīshāpūr and other cities of Khurasān and Transoxiana that led to the eventual demise of some of these cities even before the Mongol invasions. Richard Bulliet, *Patricians*, 31.

39 I look at Sunnism here as an identity that resulted from a détente between the various *madhhāhib* (schools of law and jurisprudence) that take their inspiration from the major collections of Ḥadīth literature (the six books of Hadith). This approach is best summarized by al-Ghazālī in his *Fayṣal al-tafriqa* in which he seeks to demonstrate that the various schools of jurisprudence and theology differ in their interpretations only as the result of the different existential planes upon which they base their thinking. Al-Ghazālī's underlying message is that these various schools should accept each other as equally valid. We should move away from an orthodoxy/heresy dichotomy when discussing Sunnism and Shīʾism because we find in Islamic 'heresiographical' works, such as *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936–936), whose approach prefers more of a 'distance from an assumed norm' than a clear label of heresy applied to various 'Islamic' groups.

people have only become various sects because they have separated themselves from their religion, and through their separation from the true religion, their vain opinions have diverged, and so they became sectarian."[40]

2.4 The Shīʿīs and the Ṣūfī Alternative

The development of Shīʿism and Sunnīsm as distinct viewpoints in Islam can be traced to the breakdown of ʿAbbāsid religious authority that occurred in the second half of the 9th-century CE. It is no doubt that proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī viewpoints had existed since early Islam. However, the need for a 'real' *khalīfa* for the Shīʿīs appeared in the form of ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī Billāh, supported by the Ismāʿīlī missionary (*dāʿī*) Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī, who proclaimed ʿUbayd Allāh as Amīr al-Muʾminīn, or Leader of the Faithful, at the Aghlabid capital of Raqqāda in 910 CE.[41] The Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* started spreading his message among the Kutāma Berbers from 280/893 onwards. At the same time, the Twelver Shīʿīs were working out their doctrine of the lesser and greater occultation (*ghayba*). The doctrine of occultation served to preserve the *imām*/*khalīfa* at first as a hidden and then as a transcendental figure. The Ismāʿīlīs and the Twelver or Imāmī Shīʿīs represent attempts to find alternative modes of religious authority in a period of upheaval when the ʿAbbāsid caliph was no longer able to engage in the role of religious arbiter. It was not until the end of the 9th-century CE and the first part of the 10th century that these groups became explicit in the formulation of their respective doctrines.[42] Thus, when we examine the various Shīʿī responses to this period of instability and loss of re-

40 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, 183–184. Al-Tirmidhī uses the word *iftaraqū* (to become sectarian) in opposition to the word *ikhtalafū* (to differ in opinion). According to him, the true scholars (*al-ʿulamāʾ*) are those whose beliefs do not cause them to separate themselves from the majority (*al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, literally "the great multitude").

41 Marius Canard, "Fāṭimids," EI2.

42 Shīʿī and pro-ʿAlid sentiments were widespread among what we would call proto-Sunnīs as well since early Islam. The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, for example, came to power amid a wave of pro-ʿAlid sentiment. The Caliph al-Maʾmūn played with the idea of naming the Shīʿī Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 202/818) as his successor to the caliphate. The polemical term *rāfiḍī* (denier) was used by many proto-Sunnīs to indicate someone who denied the caliphates of *al-shaykhayn* (the two *shaykhs*), i.e. Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) and ʿUmar (d. 23/644). The term does not refer to the Shīʿīs as a particular sect with a set of separate theological beliefs distinctly different than Sunnīs. It is at the end of the 9th-century CE that we see a separate Shīʿī identity with the appearance of the first Shīʿī "heresiography" by al-Ḥasan b. Mūsa al-Nawbakhtī titled *Firaq al-shīʿa*. For more on this alternative view of the development of Shīʿīsm see Marshall Hodgson, "How did the Early Shīʿa become Sectarian?" 1–13.

ligious authority, we must also look at what the various Sunnī responses were. By the 9th-century CE proto-Sunnī legal scholars such as Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) had established the view that the prophetic *sunna* overrode other forms of *sunna* and a general consensus developed over the sources of Islamic law.[43] However, the legal scholar alone did not have enough authority to stem the tide of the factionalism. Inter-*madhhab* rivalry and conflict had continued to gain momentum after al-Mutawakkil until the ascendancy of the Seljuks (1037–1194 CE), who imposed uniformity and their own form of orthodoxy on the fragmented religious landscape that they inherited.[44] Clearly there was a movement among the proto-Sunnīs who still saw the legal scholar as an arbiter of religious authority. The Ḥadīth text oft-cited by Sunnī scholars to this effect is the *ḥadīth* narrated by Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī[45] that states, *al-ʿulamāʾ warathat al-anbiyāʾ*, "The learned are the inheritors of the prophets." In some versions of this *ḥadīth* the term *khulafāʾ* (caliphs) is used instead of *al-ʿulamāʾ*, as a term indicating authority.[46] The legal scholar (*faqīh*) was not in a position, though, to claim full religious authority among Sunnīs because he was only an 'interpreter' of the Sharīʿa; he could not claim direct knowledge from God, as the Shīʿī imām could do. This was because the caliph still reserved the right to appoint judges (*ḥukkām*) and in this capacity controlled who it was that would assume the role of arbiter of religious law. The *faqīh* could answer legal questions and provide legal opinions, but he had no power to impose his particular viewpoint on others. The struggle for religious authority between the caliph and the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) left both of these groups compromised in terms of their ultimate religious authority. The Ḥadīth scholar (*muḥaddith*) and the theologian (*mutakallim*) were similarly bound by their particular school and could not impose their doctrines for the advancement of their causes, except by appealing to others in power, such as the political rulers of the day.

It is in this climate of competing notions of authority from the late 9th century to the beginning of the 11th-century CE that we find a new type of identity and religious authority developing among the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* in the form

43 Liyakatali Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet*, 23.

44 Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 9.

45 This is a different al-Tirmidhī than the one we have been studying thus far. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, (d. 279/892) is the Ḥadīth scholar, whose collection of Ḥadīth is considered one of the six authentic collections of Sunnī Ḥadīth.

46 The term *khalīfa*, (plural *khulafāʾ*), is used to refer to the successor of Muḥammad, the final prophet of Islam. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds (1986) demonstrate that both the term *khalīfat al-rasūl* (successor to the Messenger) as well as *khalīfat Allāh* (successor of God) were used by various groups to make claims of religious authority in early Islam.

of the Ṣūfī *shaykh*. The Ṣūfī *shaykh* obtains his authority through his *maʿrifa* (divine knowledge directly from God) and holds a position of authority above that of the outward religious scholar (*al-ʿālim al-ẓāhir*). We must remember that Ṣūfīs in the eastern Islamic lands evolved out of a movement of subversive authority rooted in the class of religious scholars and so, rather than contesting the authority of the *ʿulamāʾ*, they made religious learning an important part of their identity. This structure is clearly proposed in the first Ṣūfī manual *Kitāb al-lumaʿ*, by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988). Al-Sarrāj claims that the *fuqahāʾ* (legal scholars) are above the Ahl al-Ḥadīth (Traditionalists)[47] who only understand the outward purport of the Ḥadīth.[48] He then places the Ṣūfīs above the *fuqahāʾ*, as long as they have gained the same outward knowledge as the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and the *fuqahāʾ*. Otherwise, the Ṣūfī must follow these scholars of outward knowledge.[49] According to al-Sarrāj, the Ṣūfī is on a higher level than the lower two categories because he can choose between the various *madhāhib* (schools of law and theology) for what he considers to be most cautious in religious matters.[50] In this view, the ideal Ṣūfī should hail from the *ʿulamāʾ* in order to represent the highest level of attainment, which combines both outward religious knowledge and inward spiritual knowledge from God (*maʿrifa*). It is this inward spiritual knowledge from God that bestows religious authority upon the Ṣūfī, and as a result, the Ṣūfīs can solve, through their *maʿrifa,* legal and theological conundrums that would stymie the scholars of outward knowledge.[51] Al-Sarrāj states that the *fuqahāʾ* are those who should be followed in religious matters. They do constitute a type of religious authority in his estimation; however, he places the Ṣūfī *faqīh* above the non-Ṣūfī *faqīh*. Thus, within the scholarly class the Ṣūfī *shaykh* is elevated above the scholar of jurisprudence (*faqīh*).[52] We are not claiming that Sufism overrode juridical identities, but that Sufism incorporated and reconfigured juridical identities within the larger framework of Sufism as a meta-*madhhab*. Eventually, as Sufism developed into a formal Muslim identity, there were attempts to incorporate the juridical identity into the Ṣūfī identity as reflected in the work of Ibn al-ʿArabī

47 'Traditionists' are those who specialize in narrating Ḥadīth whereas 'Traditionalists' represent a conservative school of thought that eschews theological speculation and practices *bi-lā kayf* (not asking how) with respect to Qurʾānic verses and Ḥadīth about God that are not clearly understandable. Some Traditionalists take these verses and prophetic traditions literally.

48 Abū Naṣr ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *The kitāb al-lumaʿ*, 8.

49 Ibid., 10–11.

50 Ibid., 11.

51 Ibid., 15.

52 Ibid., 10.

and other Ṣūfīs who sought to unify the juridical *madhāhib* under a single mystical framework. Therefore we can see Sufism in its mature form as one of the Sunnī responses to the restructuring of religious authority from the end of the 9th-century CE to the end of the 11th-century CE, positing the *'ulamā'* as custodians of this authority in the form of the Ṣūfī *shuyūkh*.[53] This was because a group of these *'ulamā'* realized that the *fuqahā'* (legal scholars), the *mutakallimūn* (theologians) and the more conservative elements of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth could not rise above their factionalism. An originally diffuse movement that transformed at the end of the 9th-century CE into a *madhhab* in its own right, the Ṣūfīs of Baghdad provided a solution to the dilemma of inter-*madhhab* rivalry by proffering a Sunnī identity that could successfully rise above the factionalism.[54] Sunnī *'ulamā'* such as al-Sarrāj were inspired by the Baghdād Ṣūfīs and sought to promote their vision of Islam; however, the Ṣūfīs of Baghdād themselves did not have a strong claim to religious authority despite the attempts of those like al-Sarrāj to place them in the highest rung of the *'ulamā'*.[55] It was al-Tirmidhī's concept of *wilāya* and religious authority that would provide the needed theoretical basis for the claim of Ṣūfī authority, as the true inheritor of prophetic charisma, to supersede the waning authority of the 'Abbāsid caliphs as well as the compromised authority of the *'ulamā'*. We demonstrate in Chapter 6 how al-Sulamī combined these two trends to create the synthesis that would become the basic pattern for normative Sufism.

53 Liyakatali Takim, *Heirs of the Prophet*, 181–182.

54 Ahmed Karamustafa characterizes the early Ṣūfīs of Baghdād as an avant-garde, hip movement that sought to challenge the interpretive authority of the more conservative element of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth community. Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: the Formative Period*, 7. The Ṣūfīs of Baghdād at the end of the 9th-century CE and beginning of the 10th-century CE came from many different legal and theological backgrounds. The Ṣūfīs of Baghdād demonstrated that the different strands of the larger Ahl al-Ḥadīth community, including the various legal and theological schools, could be unified under a common identity. This new identity was harnessed by later Sunnī *'ulamā'* who were looking for a way to unify the various Sunnī *madhāhib* (schools).

55 The Ṣūfīs of Baghdād claimed special knowledge from God (*ma'rifa*) but did not seek to contest the political and religious authorities of their time. Rather, al-Junayd remained apolitical and low profile on social issues and points of religious doctrine as the events of the *miḥna* demonstrated. Alexander D. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 55–56.

2.5 Al-Tirmidhī and the Shīʿī Challenge

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, like Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) and many of the early Ṣūfīs of Baghdād during the 9th-century CE, belonged to the class of proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*.[56] These *ʿulamāʾ* recognized the Ḥadīth traditions of the *ṣaḥāba* (companions) of the Prophet as authoritative, whereas the Shīʿīs were developing their own corpus of *akhbār* (oral traditions) of both the Prophet and the Shīʿī imāms. At the end of the 9th-century CE, al-Tirmidhī was writing polemical works against the *rāfiḍa*[57] (the Shīʿīs) and the Shīʿī challenge is palpable throughout his works.[58] For proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* like al-Tirmidhī, the Shīʿī challenge was real, and the political events of the following century proved how real it was. By 945 CE, a Zaydī Shīʿī dynasty from Dailam in Northern Iran had captured Bahgdad and had become the de facto ruler of the

56 I call these the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* because, while they ascribe to a similar Ḥadith corpus, the various "Sunnī" factions had not yet come to fully accept one another as valid representations of the Prophet's *sunna*. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) uses the term *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa* (The Party of Sunna and Majority) to indicate the beliefs of the school of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767); however, the theological school of Abū Ḥanīfa was by no means accepted by other "Sunnī" schools. The Ashʿarī School of theology traces its core teachings back to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935–936).

57 This is a pejorative term Sunnīs use for Shīʿīs, referring to their refusing to acknowledge the first three caliphs of Islam.

58 I disagree with Michael Ebstein's thesis that al-Tirmidhī was incorporating essentially Shīʾī ideas into a Sunnī discourse and that al-Tirmidhī's debt to Shīʾī thought is not fully acknowledged. Al-Tirmidhī was clearly in conversation with Shīʾīs, as he was with ʿAbbāsids and the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*. Ebstein's argument is based on an overlap in some terminology between al-Tirmidhī and early Shīʾī notions. However resemblances have been shown to be deceiving, such as between Christian ascetics and Muslim ascetics/mystics of the 9th-century CE. We must look beyond resemblances to structural isomorphisms and direct evidence of contact in order to establish a sound argument in this regard. Many of the resemblances we find can be explained more easily if we consider that the language of authority represented a shared koine that both proto-Shīʾī and proto-Sunnī groups drew upon. Furthermore, al-Tirmidhī was conscious of his attempt to distinguish himself from Shīʾī notions. One of the central points in Ebstein's thesis is that al-Tirmidhī develops a hitherto unknown term in the "sealer of saints" (*khātim al-awliyāʾ*). Al-Tirmidhī further states that the person who comes at the end of time is the *qāʾim bi-l-ḥujja* (the one who establishes the proof [of God]), a term used by Shīʾīs but also used in various forms by the ʿAbbāsid caliphs and early proto-Sunnī mystics such as Sahl al-Tustarī. Structually, however the *khātim al-awliyāʾ* is very different than al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar (The Twelfth Imam) of the Twelver Shīʾīs. The *khātim al-awliyāʾ* requires no lineage and no familial descent from the Prophet to support his credentials. If anything, al-Tirmidhī is trying to redefine terms and develop his own terminology even if used by other competing groups. His terms are decidedly his own and radically "Sunnī" in structure. Michael Ebstein, "Spiritual descendants of the Prophet," 543–545.

ʿAbbāsid Empire while maintaining the ʿAbbāsid caliph in power as a unifying force for the *umma*. In 969 CE the Fatimids, an Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī movement, set up a counter caliphate based in Cairo, Egypt. Momentum had been growing since the latter part of the 9th-century CE for a solution to the religio-political crisis in authority that was occurring under the ʿAbbāsids.[59] It was not only the Shīʿīs who were contesting ʿAbbāsid religious authority, but there were elements among the Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* who were doing so. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī participated in this discourse on power and religious authority and spoke directly to the Shīʿī challenge. Al-Tirmidhī is credited with a short treatise titled *Al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa* (*The Refutation of the Shīʿīs*), in which he responds to the claim of the Shīʿīs that the *khilāfa* (caliphate) of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was obligatory upon all Muslims to follow just as prayer and *zakāt* were obligatory. Interestingly, this treatise does not address the idea of *naṣṣ* (designation) of a Shīʿī Imām or the claims of various groups of Shīʿīs about the validity or supremacy of their Imām, which could indicate the still nascent level of Shīʿī doctrine even at the end of the 9th-century CE.[60] Al-Tirmidhī speaks directly to Shīʿī claims throughout his works and focuses on the legitimacy and authority of *ahl al-bayt* as specifically referring to the ʿAlid line. Al-Tirmidhī explains the Qurʾānic verse cited by Shīʿīs to support their position that the *ahl al-bayt* are *maʿṣūm* (divinely protected from sin), saying that the *ahl al-bayt* cannot be infallible since infallibility applies only to prophets. His position is not antagonistic to

59 The earliest Ismāʿīlī mission in Iraq is dated to between 875 and 878 CE at Salamya. It hailed from this small town on the western edge of the Syrian steppe (*bādiya*), thirty kilometers southeast of the present day Syrian city of Ḥamā. From this city, the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* (proselytization) spread to Yemen and North Africa, eventually leading to the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate based in Egypt. Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi*, 11–14. It is not clear why this movement began when it did. Over half a century separates the death of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl and the leader of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* that begins with ʿAbd Allāh the Elder in Salamya. ʿAbdallāh the Elder sets himself up as the representative of the Imām in hiding and his forebears spread the message of his awaited coming and the true religion (*dīn al-ḥaqq*) that represents their esoteric doctrine. We find a similar pattern here with Twelver (Imāmī) Shīʿism, in which, individuals claim to represent an awaited redeemer (*al-qāʾim bi al-ḥujja*) from the ʿAlid line. We have to remember that the ʿAbbāsids also claimed their religious authority based on their coming from the prophetic household (*ahl al-bayt*). There was only one option for those who wanted to espouse an alternative to ʿAbbāsid authority, and that was to champion the ʿAlid line. ʿAlid pretensions to power and authority had existed since the very beginnings of the ʿAbbāsid revolution (750 CE); however, the ʿAlid imāms had usually kept a low profile and had abstained from challenging the ʿAbbāsids. For some reason, during the latter part of the 9th-century CE, several groups in the ʿAbbāsid realm began contesting ʿAbbāsid religious and political authority, acting on behalf of ʿAlid imāms who either had disappeared or were killed by the ʿAbbāsid.

60 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Tirmidhī, "*Al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*," 37–46.

the *ahl al-bayt* because he goes on to clarify that those among them who are *'ulamā'* and *fuqahā'* (legal scholars) are to be followed.[61] Al-Tirmidhī's argument appeals to reason. He argues that the Prophet's order to follow the *ahl al-bayt* cannot be a general pronouncement because some of them have been shown to be of disrepute.[62] Al-Tirmidhī even seeks to redefine the word *bayt* in the phrase *ahl al-bayt* by using an etymological argument. He says that *ahl al-bayt* really means the *ṣiddīqūn* (the truthful ones) and the *abdāl* (substitutes).[63] He argues that the word *bayt* comes from the *maṣdar* of the tri-literal root *b-w-'* in Arabic, which is *tabwi'a*, meaning 'to settle.'[64] His argument is that the Prophet came to this earth in order that the *dhikr* (remembrance of God) should 'settle' in the land and that any of those who migrated to this *dhikr* were called *ahl al-bayt* (the people of this settlement).[65] Al-Tirmidhī not only criticizes the 'Alid line but also directs his criticism toward the 'Abbāsid claim to the term *ahl al-bayt.*[66] This is further justification that there were those among

61 Al-Tirmidhī clearly demonstrates here that he sees the *'ulamā'* as custodians of religious authority. He says in the same discussion in *NU* about the place of *ahl al-bayt*: *wa idhā kāna hādhā al-'ilm wa-al-fiqh mawjūd*^{an} *fī ghayri 'unṣurihim lazimanā al-iqtida' bihim*, "…and if this knowledge and legal understanding had been present in other than them (the *ahl al-bayt*) it would be incumbent upon us to follow them." Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 101.

62 Ibid., 101.

63 These 'substitutes' in al-Tirmidhī's schema of saints are the forty individuals chosen by God who are replaced by another saint if any one of their number dies. These forty individuals protect the earth through their special connection to God. This idea of the *abdāl* or 'substitutes' is much more basic than the later more sophisticated schematization of the saints that we find in 'Alī al-Hujwīrī's (d. 469/1077) work *Kashf al-maḥjūb* in which he describes there being one *qutb* (pole), three *nuqabā'* (leaders), four *awtād* (pillars), seven *abrār* (pious ones), forty *abdāl* (substitutes) and three hundred *akhyār* (chosen ones). In this later more complex organizational schema there is a clear ordering of prominence in the spiritual kingdom with multiple levels, which we find absent in al-Tirimidhī's schema.

64 Ibid., 263.

65 This argument is problematic for several reasons. The first is that the root of the word *bayt* is considered by most grammarians to be from the root *b-y-t* meaning "to spend the night." Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) in his *Lisān al-'Arab*, one of the most comprehensive dictionaries of the Arabic language, records the root of *bayt* as *b-y-t*. Abū-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab al-mujallad*, 14. The second problem with this argument is that it assumes that the meaning of 'settling' applies to the *dhikr*. This is an arbitrary relationship. Al-Tirmidhī relies here on the assumption that such relationships constitute *ḥikma*, which is a divinely gifted knowledge. Since this knowledge is inaccessible to others, it can only be accepted based on al-Tirmidhī's own claims to have access to divine knowledge.

66 The 'Abbāsids claimed that *ahl al-bayt* included not only the Prophet's immediate household but also the larger paternal family, with anyone from the clan of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib

the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* who felt that the ʿAbbāsids had forfeited their religious authority. Al-Tirmidhī criticizes the Shīʿīs for fabricating Ḥadīth about the family of the Prophet, specifically the cousin of the Prophet, ʿAlī (d. 40/661), the daughter of the Prophet, Fāṭima (d. 11/632), and their two sons, Ḥasan (d. 50/670) and Ḥusayn (d. 61/680). He claims that they fabricated Ḥadīth in order to elevate the status of those figures, and he claims that these Ḥadīth are denied by those who have correct judgment (*al-muḥiqqūn*).[67] Al-Tirmidhī also provides a scathing critique of Shīʿism in a short treatise on the *ḥadīth* of the *ʿitra* (close relatives) of the Prophet.[68] Al-Tirmidhī's attempts to refute Shīʿī claims are numerous throughout his works, and he addresses various aspects of their beliefs.[69] It makes sense that al-Tirmidhī would directly confront Shīʿī claims to authority because the Shīʿīs represented the only viable alternative to the ʿAbbāsids and the *ʿulamāʾ* in terms of expressing and exercising religious authority (*wilāya dīniyya*). If al-Tirmidhī was going to advance a proto-Sunnī doctrine of *wilāya*/*walāya* as he did, he would clearly have had to respond to the Shīʿīs. As we see later, *wilāya* was a relatively undeveloped concept in Sunnī Islam outside of Shīʿī circles. *Wilāya*, supported by a gnoseology that was based on the rather underdeveloped concept of *ḥikma* (wisdom) among Muslim religious scholars during the 3rd/9th century, resulted in creating a new field of opportunity for expressing claims to religious authority that could compete with the Shīʿī challenge.

2.6 Clientage (*walāʾ*) as a Social basis for Understanding Sunnī Authority

We have discussed how the Muslim world experienced a contest between several groups for political and religious authority from the latter part of the 9th-century CE to the end of the 10th-century CE. The Shīʿīs presented a potent challenge to the ʿAbbāsid caliphs as well as the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* who had codified legal methodologies in the form of nascent schools (*madhāhib*) and had come to generally accept a canon of Ḥadīth as representative of the words and actions of the Prophet.[70] The ʿAbbāsid caliphs were losing their grip on

(the grandfather of the Prophet) and Banū Hāshim (the descendants of the Prophet's great grandfather) coming under this designation. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 5, 140.

67 Ibid., vol. 2, 56.

68 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Manāzil al-qurba*, 93–98.

69 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ A. Baraka, *Al-ḥakīm al-tirmidhī wa-nadhariyyatuhu fī al-wilāya*, 170.

70 We are still talking about a formative period in the development of Sunnī legal schools. It is not until the middle of the 4th/10th century that Islamic legal schools come to contain

power even though they still held immense charismatic authority. At the turn of the 4th/10th century, the Ṣūfīs of Baghdād began a movement among the *'ulamā'* that successfully brought together adherents of various competing schools of thought into one movement among this proto-Sunnī urban scholarly community; however, this movement did not claim religious authority, although it did claim Ṣūfī superiority over the scholars of outward knowledge (*'ulamā' al-ẓāhir*).[71] It is on the eastern edge of the Islamic world at this same time that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was contemplating and creating a vision of Sunnī religious authority that went far beyond the claims of other Sunnī *'ulamā'* of his time. His vision grounded religious authority in an elect group of the *'ulamā'* whom he called the *awliyā' Allāh* (saints of God). In Chapter 4, we discuss al-Tirmidhī's theory of *walāya* in further detail in terms of its internal consistency. Here, we look at how the social and political milieu of Khurāsān and Transoxiana clearly played a role in forming al-Tirmidhī's concept of sainthood and possibly his motivations for using it as a model to advance the claims to authority of the proto-Sunnī *'ulamā'*. The proto-Sunnī *'ulamā'* represent a large discourse stream in the 3rd/9th century.[72] This discourse stream is generally understood separately from the social institutions of Arab privilege that are assumed to have lost their efficacy after the 'Abbāsid Revolution (132/750). While this is generally true, we see how this was not yet the case in Khurāsān.

As mentioned earlier, al-Tirmidhī lived for much of his early life under Ṭāhirid rule in Transoxania in the city of Tirmidh. The Ṭāhirids were 'Abbāsid *mawālī*, that is, clients of the 'Abbāsid house.[73] Clientage (*walā'*) was a contractual bond of obligation between a free Arab Muslim and, often times, a manumitted slave. This social institution has its roots in Arab tribal society and was a means of integrating Arabs from one tribe into another. This allowed *mawālī* (pl. of *mawlā*) to obtain access to tribal privilege and protection. The system of *walā'* characterized Arab and non-Arab relationships during much of the Umayyad period (41–132/661–750). During the 'Abbāsid period, the institution no longer served to functionally organize contractual systems of authority that existed between Arab Muslims and non-Arab converts to Islam; however,

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all the elements that give it an identifiable shape. However, by the middle of the 9th century, the major collections of Sunnī Ḥadīth were produced and the elements of a Sunnī 'approach' was evident even if the various elements had not yet been worked into a full system. Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, 2–3.

71 Nile Green, *Sufism: a Global History*, 42.

72 Muḥammad Qāsim Zamān's work supports the thesis that a proto-Sunnī scholarly elite existed in the 8th- and 9th-centuries CE. Muḥammad Qāsim Zamān, *Religion and Politics*. Christopher Melchert counters this thesis; however, my research on al-Tirmidhī supports Zamān's claims, and I therefore consider his findings to be generally sound.

73 Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Ṭāhirids," *EI2*.

the institution was still perpetuated by the ruling ʿAbbāsid house, especially in its army and with the governors of its provinces.[74] In particular, the province of greater Khurāsān (including Transoxania) was the most important province to the ʿAbbāsid caliphs and represented its largest source of revenue. The ʿAbbāsid caliphs preferred their *mawālī* as governors because they felt that the bond of loyalty among these clients was stronger than Arab or free Muslim subjects.[75] The word for governor in Arabic is *wālī* and his governing function is called *wilāya*. All of these words, *mawlā* (plural *mawālī*), *wālī* and *wilāya* come from the same Arabic root *w-l-y*, meaning, 'to be close to power, authority' or 'to hold power, govern, be in charge of some office.'[76] It is significant that throughout the Umayyad period and into the ʿAbbāsid period, words formed from the Arabic root *w-l-y* are used to describe relations of power and dependence, specifically between Arabs and non-Arabs. These particular relations of dependence frame al-Tirmidhī's position as one of the *ʿulamāʾ* who is a descendant of the early Arab settlers/conquerors of the region. As a free Muslim of Arab descent, al-Tirmidhī had a higher social status, technically speaking, than the Ṭāhirid rulers of greater Khurāsān who were *mawālī* ruling on behalf of the ʿAbbāsids. Al-Tirmidhī must have felt the humiliation acutely when he was summoned by the *wālī* of Balkh at the behest of some of the scholars of his city to be publically admonished in front of the governor and ordered to cease his discourse on love.[77] In *NU*, al-Tirmidhī devotes a section to the characteristics of 'just governors' (*wulāt al-umūr al-ʿādilīn*). Al-Tirmidhī only gives these rulers *sulṭān* (temporal power), which can be revoked by God if they are not just (*ʿādilīn*) to their subjects. For al-Tirmidhī, these temporal rulers are not *khulafāʾ* (successors, caliphs) of the Prophet like the *awliyāʾ* (saints), and they thus have no religious authority in his eyes. Al-Tirmidhī includes not only the governors of his region in this category, but also the 'Abbāsid 'caliphs' in Baghdād, as mentioned

74 Patricia Crone, "Mawlā," *EI*2.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 20–21. Al-Tirmidhī considered this trial at Balkh a means of God purifying his heart, and he draws a parallel between himself facing persecution at the hands of his detractors and the Prophet David facing persecutions because of his mistakes. He describes this parallel in the passage directly following his description of the trial at Balkh. In this ordeal, al-Tirmidhī is maligned by the scholars of outward religious knowledge (*ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir*) whom he sees as inferior because they do not have inward knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-bāṭin*). Furthermore, he is ordered not to teach about love of God by the non-Arab governor who is a *mawlā*. The parallel between himself and the Prophet David is important because in *NU* we find that David was humiliated by his son who sought to take his throne from him. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 5, 45–92.

earlier.[78] This was a transformative period for al-Tirmidhī, and it is evident that he had begun to reassess the relationships of social dependence that had developed over time as well as the impact they had on legal and spiritual matters. The choice of al-Tirmidhī's language is highly significant because his concept of *wilāya* may be understood as patterned off of the social institution of clientage (*walā'*) that mediated relationships between the *khalīfa* (successor to the Prophet in the form of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph) and his *mawālī* upon whom he bestowed his *wilāya* (authority) to carry out his orders as his governors (*wulāt*). This is how we see the contractual nature of this authority. The *mawlā* becomes an extension of the authority of his *walī*. Al-Tirmidhī restructures the basic elements of clientage (*walā'*) such that the *awliyā'* (saints) are now the *khulafā'* (pl. *khalīfa*, successors of the Prophet) and are the truly 'free' ones (*aḥrār*).[79] The term *awliyā'* was also used as a synonym for *mawālī* in al-Tirmidhī's time.[80] Hence, for al-Tirmidhī, just as the caliph frees the slave and then enters into a bond of allegiance known as *walā'* (clientage), it is God who frees the believing servant from the bondage of his lower self to make him his *walī*. In this scheme, it is now God's *awliyā'* (saints) who govern the world in a spiritual sense. As *khulafā'* (caliphs) they are religious authorities just as the *mawālī* (also termed *awliyā'*) of the caliph govern his subjects as *wulāt* (governors).

Al-Tirmidhī uses language that relates to the existing social institution of slavery and clientage to explain the process of becoming one of the *awliyā'*. This is ultimately a language describing the relationship of dependence between the owner and the owned. In al-Tirmidhī's most important book on the nature of *wilāya*, he answers a question from one of his students about what happens in the event that thoughts which contradict the Qur'ān occur to the

78 This is an early articulation by al-Tirmidhī of the division between political authority (*sulṭān*) and religious authority (*khilāfa*). Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī about two hundred years later articulates a similar division between *wilāya* (authority of the caliph) and *shawka* (force). Al-Ghazālī is describing the phenomenon in which the Seljuq *mawālī* came to control the Caliph and according to him, *wilāya* follows *shawka*. Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 114.

79 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 1, 150; vol. 3, 120.

80 When the ʿAbbāsid Caliph became alarmed at al-Layth b. ʿAlī b. al-Layth's (d. 316/928) military activities in Fars and his threat to Khūzistān in 910 CE, he had his vizier send 5,000 slave troops (*awliyā'* and *ghilmān*) under Mu'nis al-Khādim to recapture Fars. The *awliyā'* here represent freed slaves or *mawālī*, and the *ghilmān* are Turkish slave soldiers who are still slaves and have not yet been freed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan*, 261.

heart of the *walī*. In his answer, al-Tirmidhī draws a parallel to the Prophet himself and explains that God will protect such an individual from error, as the Prophet was protected from the spurious verses related to the story of the *gharāniq*.[81] However, this protection is not given to one who has not become completely free of his lower self and who is still a slave to his desires. The following quote from al-Tirmidhī's *KA* is provided *in extenso* because of its importance in explaining the master-slave dynamic that underlies al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya*:

> قال له قائل: فإن ورد على قلبه شيء لا يوافق الكتاب؟ قال: إن ولاية الله له تغيثه كما أغاث الله رسوله صلى الله عليه وسلم في رسالته حتى ينسخ عن قلبه وحي الشيطان ومحال أن يكون قلب موصوف بهذا بأن يترك مخذولا ولو جاز هذا أن يدوم إذا لبطلت الولاية وإنّما يجوز هذا التخليط ودوام مثل هذه الأشياء لمثل هؤلاء المريدين اللذين هم في هذا الطريق ومن وصل إلى المرتبة ونفسه معه مشحونة بتلك المكامن بدهاء النفس فيلزم المرتبة على شريطة اللزوم ليهذّب فهو كالمكاتب الذي يعتق على المال فهو عبد ما بقي عليه درهم فأمّا من يعتق جودا ورحمة عليه قد صار حرّا لا تبعة عليه لمن كان يملكه فكذلك هذا أعتق على شريطة لزوم المرتبة هو كالمكاتب فهو عبد ما بقي عليه خلق من أخلاق النفس والمجذوب أعتقه الله من رق النفس حين جذبه فقد صار حرّا وألزم المرتبة حين هذّب وأدّب وطهّر فأعتقه الله من رق النفس بجوده بلا تبعة لم يبق للنفس فيه مطالبة خلق من أخلاقه فهو أيضا مجذوب من المرتبة وقد بيّن الله ذلك في تنزيله فقال: الله يجتبي إليه من يشاء ويهدي إليه من ينيب فالمجتبى من جباه الله فجذبه فهو من أهل جبايته من المشيئة والآخر من هداه الله الوصول إليه بالإنابة فالأول من أهل مشيئته والثاني من أهل هدايته ولا تخلو الدنيا من هذه الأمة من قائم بحجة كما قال علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنه: اللهم لا تخل الأرض من قائم بحجة كي لا تبطل حجج الله وبيّناته وقال في تنزيله: قل هذه سبيلي أدعو إلى الله على بصيرة أنا ومن اتبعني ولم يجعلها إلا لتابعيه فتابعه من تابعه على جميع ما جاء به من عند الله قلبا وقولا وفعلا.[82]

81 Al-Tirmidhī does not claim that the *awliyā'* are infallible (*maʿṣūm*) as the Shīʿīs do of their Imāms. Rather, he explains in *NU* that only prophets are infallible and that all other human beings are tested (*umtuḥinū – in the passive voice*), except that the *awliyā'* have been lifted out of these tests (*miḥan*).

82 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften des Theosophen von Tirmiḏ*, 55–57.

The student asked him: "But what if something arrives in his heart which doesn't agree with the Book?" He replied: "Indeed, he possesses Friendship with God which will assist him the way God assisted the Messenger with regard to his mission, namely God expunged from his heart Satan's revelations. It is impossible that a heart endowed with these qualities be abandoned and forsaken by God. If such a state were allowed to continue, then [the person's] stature (*wilāya*) with God would be abolished. Indeed, such a state of adulteration and the persistence of such things are only possible in the case of those who are still striving on this path. The person who has reached the rank [of divine closeness] but whose carnal soul, in its secret corners, is still filled with the carnal soul's cunning wiles, is unconditionally obliged to remain in his rank in order to become refined. Thus, he is like a self-ransomed slave who is freed for money. He is a slave as long as one *dirham* is still owed. On the other hand, the slave who was set free out of generosity (*jūd*) and mercy (*raḥma*) becomes a free man (*ḥurr*), without the one who formerly possessed him retaining any claim on him. And so is the manner of the man striving to reach God, [he] is set free on the condition that he remain in his rank, like a self-ransomed slave. Indeed, he is a slave as long as one moral trait from among the moral traits of the carnal soul remains with him. Only the man drawn unto God is set free immediately by God from slavery to the carnal soul when God draws him unto himself. And thus he becomes a free man. The other one adheres to his rank while he is being refined, educated and cleansed, and then God, in his generosity, sets him free from slavery to the carnal soul without responsibility. The carnal soul can no longer demand from him any one of its moral traits. Then he also becomes drawn from his rank [unto divine closeness]. God has made this clear in his revelation where he says [42/13]: "God chooses for it [the faith] whom he will, and he guides to it those that repent." The chosen person is the one God appropriates and then draws unto himself. And this person belongs to the people whom God has appropriated (*ahl jibāyatihi*) because he so wills. The other person is one of those to whom God gives guidance, and they reach him through repentance. The first is one of the people of God's act of willing (*ahl mashī'atihi*), and the second is one of the people of his guidance (*ahl hidāyatihi*). Nor is the world of this religious community ever devoid of someone who presents proof [against them] (*qā'im bi-l-ḥujja*), as accords with what ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib said, "Oh Lord God, may the earth not be without someone who presents proof [against mankind] so that God's proofs and clear evidence are not nullified." And God in his revelation has declared [to Muḥammad]

> [12/108]: "Say: 'This is my path. I call [you] unto God with discernment (*baṣīra*), I and all my followers.'" And God only bestows this discernment upon those who follow Muḥammad, and his followers are those who follow him with regard to everything he brought from God – in their hearts, in their words and in their actions.[83]

This selection from al-Tirmidhī's *KA* distinguishes between two types of *walī* (saint). The first is the one who aspires to be a *walī* and is on the path of disciplining his lower self (*nafs*) but has not yet succeeded completely. This person is like the slave who is paying off his debt to his master. He has entered into an agreement with his master to pay off a set sum of money through his labor. He is known as the *mukātab*, and even after he pays off this amount, he still retains a debt of allegiance and service to his master. Once the *mukātab* is freed, he becomes a *mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*) and remains connected to his master through ties of loyalty and contractual obligation. This type of *walī* must remain in his rank and is not completely free because the fact that he freed himself always compromises the nature of his *wilāya*. The second type of *walī* in al-Tirmidhī's schema is the *walī* who is freed from the slavery to his lower self by God's pure favor (*jūd*) and mercy (*raḥma*). This is the *walī* who becomes completely free (*ḥurr*, plural *aḥrār*) and is the true saint. Both types of *awliyā'* are distinguished from the general populace who are all slaves (*'abīd*) to their lower desires whether they are aware or not. As we discuss later in Chapter 4, according to al-Tirmidhī, traveling the path of *wilāya* is a condition but not a guarantee that one will attain the highest levels of *wilāya*. The parallels in this concept of sainthood to the social bond of *walā'* (clientage) and the social institution of slavery are quite striking. The true *awliyā'* can be seen as parallel to the free Arabs who were given a position of power and authority by historical circumstance (or, in al-Tirmidhī's understanding, through a divine gift). They came to rule over large numbers of non-Arabs who were also non-Muslim and the only way to rise in the new Arab polity during the Umayyad era was through clientage (*walā'*).[84] These were free (*aḥrār*) Arabs who, like the true saints (*awliyā'*), did not earn their privilege but received it as a pure gift. The clients (*mawālī*) in this system could never become Arab but could rise socially by entering into a pact of clientage (*walā'*) with an Arab tribe or influential family. Theoretically

83 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 123–124.

84 A non-Arab convert could enter into a client-patron relationship from manumission or through voluntary commendation, this latter path being known by the terms *tibā'a*, *luzūm*, *inqitā'*, *khidma* and more generally *muwālāt*. However, the vast majority of *mawālī* during Umayyad times came into this relationship through manumission as slaves. Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 49–50.

speaking, this pact would extend in perpetuity to their offspring. This indicates one aspect of the contractual nature of the authority transferred through *walā'*. Like kinship, the authority inherent in the *walī* gets transferred to the heir, who then can transfer it to his offspring by carrying the *nisba* of the patron. The *walī* who is *mukātab* also does not become Arab but is connected to his former master through ties of loyalty and support. He never becomes a true *walī* such as the *aḥrār*, but once he is freed from his lower self, he must remain in his rank even after having freed himself. On the other hand, al-Tirmidhī explains that the one who is freed out of God's mercy is freed "without the one who formerly possessed him retaining any claim on him." This 'claim' (*tibā'a*) is another term for *walā'*, and al-Tirmidhī uses this same term in a slightly different form to mean that there is no bond of clientage, *lā tabi'ata 'alayhi*, for the truly free *walī*.[85]

The social bond of clientage, which characterized the relationship of Arabs and non-Arabs since the beginnings of Muslim rule in Khurāsān and Transoxiana, provides a framework for articulating al-Tirmidhī's positioning of the *walī* as the rightful heir to the Prophet's religious and charismatic authority. Al-Tirmidhī uses this language of clientage and social dependence to describe the true *walī*, thereby translating the power differential inherent in this social institution into a plane of virtual relationships between *awliya'* and those who are not *awliya'* or have not attained *wilāya*. This raises a few questions, such as: Why would al-Tirmidhī do this? Who benefits from this realignment of social dependence in the virtual sphere? To answer these, we must come back to al-Tirmidhī's identity as a member of the scholarly class (*'ulamā'*) and as a Muslim of Arab descent in a largely non-Arab, and to some degree non-Muslim context.

Al-Tirmidhī conceives of the *awliyā'* as originating from the social class of the *'ulamā'*. At the same time, he is very critical of the *'ulamā'*, and so it is not all *'ulamā'* who are liable to be *awliya'* but rather selected ones who are able to penetrate beyond the outward form of religious knowledge to its hidden esoteric meanings. In *NU*, al-Tirmidhī clearly places the *'ulamā'* above the general populace (*'āmma*) and below the *anbiyā'* (prophets). The point of distinction between these groups is knowledge (*'ilm*). According to al-Tirmidhī, knowledge is like a sea (*baḥr*) that flows into a river valley (*wādī*), then from a river valley to a river (*nahr*), then from a river to a creek (*jadwal*), and then from a creek to a rivulet (*saqiya*).[86] If the river valley were to flow directly into the creek, it would overrun it (*gharaqahu*) and ruin it (*afsadahu*), and if the sea

85 Ibid., 49.

86 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 30–31.

were to tilt (*māla*) into the river valley it would ruin it (*afsadahu*).[87] The general populace (*ʿāmma*) here refers to free men who, in turn, educate their wives, children and slaves with the knowledge they have taken from the *ʿulamāʾ*. Hence, al-Tirmidhī's schema places the *ʿulamāʾ* as the authoritative representatives of the prophets above the general populace who are ignorant of the revelation. Al-Tirmidhī then provides three levels within the *ʿulamāʾ* class. These three are the *ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir* (scholars of outward learning, i.e., *fuqahāʾ*), the *ḥukamāʾ* (sages) and the *awliyāʾ* (saints).[88] The *fuqahāʾ* are scholars of outward knowledge and al-Tirmidhī likens their knowledge to a grammatical sentence. Outward knowledge (*ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) of Islam is the sentence itself, and the inward knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*) or gnosis (*maʿrifa*) is the comprehension (*tamyīz*) of that sentence. Outward knowledge, according to al-Tirmidhī, is also known as the knowledge of the tongue (*ʿilm al-lisān*) and is God's proof against humanity.[89] Al-Tirmidhī sees the Islamic sciences (Fiqh, Kalām, Ḥadīth, Tafsīr, Qawāʿid al-Naḥw) as the basis for esoteric interpretation *ab intra* as understood by the *ḥukamāʾ* (sages). The *awliyāʾ* go beyond the esoteric interpretation of texts and engage in direct speech with God (*muḥādatha*) and receive direct knowledge from him.[90] While al-Tirmidhī is highly critical of the *ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir,* he is critical of them only because they stop at the outward significance of their knowledge and do not go beyond it.[91] This amounts to ruining (*ifsād*) the knowledge that they are supposed to represent. What al-Tirmidhī is attempting to do is to reform the social class to which he belongs. He is not only seeking reform but at the same time affirming the importance of this social class as the true religious authorities and successors (*khulafāʾ*) of the Prophet. As mentioned before with regard to the Shīʿī *imāms*, religious authority that claims direct contact with God is more powerful than a claim to mere interpretation of religious texts. The fact that al-Tirmidhī does not designate

87 Ibid.

88 The *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars of outward knowledge) are those who answer questions about the *ḥalāl* (permissible) and the *ḥarām* (forbidden). The *ḥukamāʾ* (sages) drop words of knowledge about God's management (*tadbīr*) of the world, and by sitting with them, one benefits from their wisdom. The *kubarāʾ* (great ones – synonymous with *awliyāʾ* in al-Tirmidhī's terminology) speak about the knowledge of God's blessings (*ālāʾ*), and simply to behold them is a medicine, and their speech (*kalām*) is a healing. Ibid., vol. 3, 23.

89 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ*, 160–161.

90 The saints (*awliyāʾ*) are no longer in need of texts for their knowledge. Al-Tirmidhī implies this in *NU* when he says, *wa ammā al-ʿāmma fa innahum yaḥtājūn ilā al-nuṣūṣ wa al-āthār ʿalā alsinat ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir*, "…and as for the general populace, they need texts and traditions upon the tongues of the outward scholars." Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 43.

91 Ibid, *Nawādir*, vol. 4, 72–73.

specific markers for identifying the *awliyā'* serves to sanctify the entire class of *'ulamā'*. So, while we know that the *awliyā'* will originate from their ranks, we do not have specific outward markers to indicate who they are according to al-Tirmidhī's doctrine.[92]

We have discussed how al-Tirmidhī uses the language of clientage that, in his time, served to mediate relationships between free men and slaves, Arabs and non-Arabs, and caliph and subject. For al-Tirmidhī, this language becomes a template for projecting the self-imposed (internalized) notions of obligation, loyalty, and commitment into a virtual realm. The social institution of *walā'* (clientage) was disappearing during al-Tirmidhī's lifetime. The ʿAbbāsid revolution (750 CE) uprooted and replaced the old system of *walā'* for a more equitable relationship that used Islam as a common denominator between both Arab and non-Arab subjects. The old system did not disappear overnight though, and *walā'* continued, especially in the caliph's army and administration and in the all-important province of greater Khurāsān. Al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya* freezes the social relationships of power in his time and incorporates them into a virtual space. We say virtual here because real power had already been transferred to the non-Arabs who were ruling greater Khurāsān with practical autonomy in the name of the caliph. The reality of this shift in real power became openly clear in the Ṣaffārid rebellion, in which greater Khurāsān was ruled for a brief period of time in the second half of the 9th-century CE by Yaʿqūb al-Ṣaffār (d. 265/879), a Persian of humble origins who had dismissed the authority of the 'caliphal fiction.' We say 'fiction' because the ʿAbbāsid caliphate was in a period of transition in which centralized power was giving way to a system of diffuse authority. The practical sphere of direct control was diminishing for the ʿAbbāsid caliphs but the benefits of attaching oneself even symbolically to the caliph could produce numerous benefits.[93] The occurrence of the Ṣaffārid rebellion is one of the few historical events that al-Tirmidhī records in his writings. So, while the social institution of *walā'* was disappearing in his time, al-Tirmidhī was calling for the preservation of social dependence as it was represented in that institution through his doctrine of *wilāya*. He envisioned the *'ulamā'* as those who would become the

92 Al-Tirmidhī does claim that there are ways to uncover who the *awliyā' Allāh* are, but ultimately these are subjective despite his claim they are *ẓāhira* (outward). For example, he says that one can know the existence of *wilāya* in an individual by looking into the face of such a person, and if one sees the light of God's majesty and feels the awe of God's greatness, one knows that such a person is one of God's *awliyā'*. Al-Tirmidhī lists seven signs to indicate the true *walī*. Like the first of these signs just previously mentioned, none of them are verifiable. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 57.

93 C.E. Bosworth, "Yaʿḳūb b. al-Layṯ." *EI*2.

guardians of religious authority, with certain individuals among them who could become the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and who would receive direct knowledge from God (*maʿrifa*). Even though local Persians had taken effective control of their political destinies in greater Khurāsān, according to al-Tirmidhī's framework of *wilāya*, they were still slaves (*ʿabīd*) and clients (*mawālī*) in a religious and spiritual system that required them to follow the *ʿulamāʾ* for their ultimate salvation. The *ʿulamāʾ* were not only custodians of Islamic traditions and lore, but the elect (*khāṣṣa*) among them, according to al-Tirmidhī, were in direct contact with God.[94] In an important passage in al-Tirmidhī's *IA*, he describes the *awliyāʾ* as the *khulafāʾ* of the Messenger who must be obeyed by the *ʿāmma* (general populace):

فلمّا رفعه الله تعالى إليه جعل له في أمته خلفاء كرامة ففارقهم ظل الهوى وأعتق نفوسهم من خيالها فكما جعل طاعة هؤلاء الخلفاء واجبة على الأمة فضيلة لهم على غيرهم من الأولياء وهم خواص الأولياء و رجال الله في أرضه الذين يغبطهم النبيّون والشهداء يوم القيامة لمكانهم وقربهم من الله عز وجل وتعالى.[95]

> So, when Allāh most high took him (the Prophet) unto himself, he made successors to him from among his community. He (God) removed from them the shadow of vain desire and freed their souls from its fantasies. And so, in the same way, he made obedience to those successors (*khulafāʾ*) obligatory upon the Muslim community as a special privilege for them over and above others of the *awliyāʾ*. They are the elite of the *awliyāʾ* and God's men in his earth—those who the prophets and the martyrs will envy on the Day of Judgment because of their rank and their nearness to Allāh, glorified and majestic and most high.

The conflation of the term *khulafāʾ* (successors) with *awliyāʾ* unambiguously assigns religious authority to the *awliyāʾ*. While the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) often claimed to be *warathat al-anbiyāʾ* (heirs of the prophet), they almost never claimed to be *khulafāʾ* (caliphs).[96] Similarly, the majority of Shīʿīs

94 Ethnicity was not the most important factor in identity formation in this period as has been discussed around the topic of the Shuʿūbiyya controversy. Susanne Enderwitz, *Al-Shuʿūbiyya*, *EI2*.

95 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ*, 140.

96 While the term caliph (*khalīfa*) has a much broader signification than simply the temporal caliphs of the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids, al-Tirmidhī uses the term specifically to refer to

adopted the term Imām to indicate their religious and spiritual authority figure. The term *khalīfa* (successor or caliph) was the prerogative of the ʿAbbāsids and the Umayyads before them. Claiming *khilāfa* could be seen as a direct challenge to ʿAbbāsid claims to political and religious authority over the *umma* (community of Muslims).[97] Al-Tirmidhī's language is brazen in both its dismissal of the ʿAbbāsids as religious authorities and in its direct rebuttal of Shīʿī claims. Identifying al-Tirmidhī as belonging to the discourse stream of the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* is important to understanding why al-Tirmidhī proffers a doctrine of *wilāya* when he does. The social and political context of this discourse stream should then play an important role in defining the way al-Tirmidhī structures his doctrine of *wilāya*. We find this to be true, since it is the social institution of clientage that provides an underlying framework by which al-Tirmidhī situates the *awliyāʾ* with respect to other elements in his society.

2.7 The *Wilāya*-authority Paradigm

The fact that al-Tirmidhī defines *wilāya* in terms of clientage and in contrast to slavery demonstrates that *wilāya* is functioning in his thought as a notion of authority. In our methodological framework based on early Arabo-Islamic social structures, authority existed on a continuum between the war machine (power) and status (honor/dishonor). This was at the level of the solidarity group in terms of diffuse authority. Al-Tirmidhī shows us that the same basic continuum exists at the level of the individual in terms of contractual authority. Slavery represents a relationship of pure power in which one person owns another. The bond of *walāʾ* is a contractual bond outside of, but related to, the institution of slavery. However, between free men it was status (honor/dishonor) that mediated social relationships. In this paradigm *wilāya*/*walāya* does not simply denote a closeness to God, but rather it indicates a type of authority mediated by Arabo-Islamic social constructs.

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religious authority that requires obedience to what he terms the real *khulafāʾ* (caliphs) who are the *awliyāʾ* in his schematization of the term. It is significant that those groups who sought to claim religious authority did so by appropriating this specific term.

97 Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds (1986) trace the use of the word *khalīfa* (successor, Caliph) from the Rāshidūn caliphs up through the ʿAbbāsid era. They conclude that this term was used by both Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid rulers to claim not just successorship (*khilāfa*) to the Prophet but also to mean the successor appointed by God. The Umayyads established a counter caliphate in Spain while the Fatimids established a caliphate in North Africa. Both of these movements represent direct challenges to ʿAbbāsid authority.

CHAPTER 3

Wisdom Mediates the Terrestrial and Celestial: Pythagorean Wisdom and the Non-duality of Sainthood

3.1 The Importance of *Ḥikma*

In this chapter we intend to show how al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's use of *ḥikma* is critical to understanding his doctrine of *wilāya*. As was previously discussed in the Introduction, al-Tirmidhī's mysticism can be considered a gnoseology, or a mystical doctrine based on a special kind of knowledge with special access to that knowledge. It is for this reason that a discussion of al-Tirmidhī's epistemology is critical to understanding his concept of *wilāya*. In other words, if the *walī* is one who is distinguished by a special kind of knowledge, then the definition and character of that knowledge will affect whom we understand the saint to be. Franz Rosenthal appears to misinterpret al-Tirmidhī's concept of wisdom and incorrectly conflates *ḥikma* (wisdom) and *ʿilm* (knowledge), which is something al-Tirmidhī would never have accepted given his rejection of the existence of synonyms.[1] The fullest treatment of *ḥikma* in the early Islamic scholarly tradition as well as in Sufism is a recent study by Hikmet Yaman. Yaman discusses the way *ḥikma* develops uniquely as a concept touching upon myriad disciplines among the Islamic learned elite. According to Yaman, *ḥikma* is an open and somewhat relative concept that can only be understood within a semantic field of competing terms.[2] Yaman considers *ḥikma* within the discourse of Sufism to be primarily indigenous to Islam. Dimitri Gutas on the other hand, discusses *ḥikma* as a literary genre in both Arabic and non-Arabic sources. For Gutas, *ḥikma* in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods most closely accords to pithy maxims, and the *ḥakīm* is the one who is able to produce such maxims. This is generally the way *ḥikma* is presented in both the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth literature.[3] Most other discussions concerning the topic tend to define *ḥikma* as it is used among the *falāsifa* (Islamic philosophers) in

1 For a more in-depth treatment of how al-Tirmidhī conceives of the relationship of words to meanings see al-Tirmidhī's *Kitāb al-furūq*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Geneviève Gobillot, *Le livre des nuance*s.

2 Hikmet Yaman, *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City*, 104.

3 Dimitri Gutas, "Classical Arabic wisdom literature", 52.

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its Aristotelian and Neoplatonic forms.[4] We should be wary of this tendency since it may project an Aristotelian and Neoplatonic view of *ḥikma*, as it was conceived in the 10th-century CE, anachronistically onto the 8th- and 9th-centuries CE when al-Tirmidhī was active. There were also many indigenous forms of *ḥikma* that took on their own significances within particular communities in the Near East since the Hellenistic period. Using Rosenthal's categories of knowledge mentioned in the introduction, we can gain a larger picture of al-Tirmidhī's basic knowledge schema. *Ḥikma* is not one of Rosenthal's categories of Islamic knowledge-types. However, *ḥikma* certainly was an important category among eastern Christians and Jewish Rabbanites. Furthermore, *ḥikma* (wisdom) is mentioned in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth literature despite its secondary importance to *ʿilm* (knowledge) in later Islamic scholarship. All of these factors provided an opportunity for al-Tirmidhī to focus on *ḥikma* (wisdom) as a frame for *maʿrifa* (gnosis).

It is in the 10th-century CE that we begin to see a shift in categories that eventually equates *ḥikma* (wisdom) with philosophy in its Neoplatonic and Aristotelian forms. It is assumed that a discussion about *ḥikma* must necessarily include a discussion of the *ḥukamāʾ* (the sages or the purveyors of *ḥikma*) to the extent that we can identify the *ḥukamāʾ* as particular individuals, as in the case of al-Tirmidhī, or as those who represented an ideal-type who possessed a special vouchsafed knowledge from God, such as al-Junayd. The extent to which *ḥikma* (wisdom) is embodied as *ḥukamāʾ* (sages) will help us to understand the way this type of knowledge was conceived and valued during this period. We are concerned with the extent to which the concept of *ḥikma* during this period differs from its understanding in the context of Hellenistic philosophy in its more mature form in the mid to latter part of the 10th-century CE. *Ḥikma* came to signify a particular set of meanings for particular segments of the learned class during the 8th- and 9th-centuries CE before it subsequently took on a more specific technical usage with the full bloom of *falsafa*. Hence, our goal is to survey the uses of *ḥikma* amongst these groups beginning with the Christian ascetic Isaac of Nineveh (d. 700 CE) and ending with al-Tirmidhī himself. What we propose is that a variety of concepts of *ḥikma* existed side-by-side during this period until, eventually, a particularly 'philosophical' or Neoplatonic meaning of *ḥikma* became dominant by the middle of the 10th-century CE. While al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* had Hellenistic elements, it was not the philosophical form that became widespread in the 10th-century CE.[5] Al-Tirmidhī uses the relatively undeveloped term of *ḥikma* within the

4 A.M. Goichon, "Hikma".

5 In this respect, we are countering Bernd Radtke's thesis that al-Tirmidhī's thought is only tangentially and superficially Hellenistic. That is, it was not learned but unconsciously ap-

early Islamic knowledge discourse to propose something quite novel in his approach to *wilāya*.

3.2 Ḥikma and the *Ḥakīm* in the Near East

The sage (*ḥakīm*, pl. *ḥukamā'*) is a motif that has persisted for millennia throughout the Near East whether it is in extra-biblical texts such as *The Words of Aḥiqār* or from the Biblical tradition (Esther and the Song of Songs) or even the New Testament.[6] Furthermore, the sage motif takes on new and varied forms during Late Antiquity amongst the Rabbis (*hakhamīm* or wise ones) as well as Nestorian Christians who discussed the sage (*ḥkemā*) and his wisdom (*ḥkemūtā*). Geographically, the sage motif in the pre-Islamic period spans from Egypt to Persia[7] (Ancient Iran), India and China in the East, as well as from Greece (*Sophia*, i.e. the writings of the pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle) to Yemen[8] in the South.[9] Thus, it is not surprising to find *ḥikma* and the motif of the *ḥakīm* prominent in the works of the 9th-century CE Muslim mystic from Transoxania al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. This wide use of the term *ḥikma* indicates that we are dealing with a koine, making any generalizations about the meaning of *ḥikma* (wisdom) meaningless without looking at particular contexts.

3.3 *Ḥikma* and the *Ḥakīm* in Jewish and Christian Thought (7th- through 10th-centuries CE)

We now look at how various Christian and Jewish writers living in Muslim lands used *ḥikma* and the sage motif to indicate a special type of knowledge as well as the knowledgeable individual. The Nestorian mystic and ascetic Isaac

propriated. We do not go as far as Yves Marquet though in saying that it was purely Neoplatonic. A. M. Goichon concludes that the scientific aspect of *ḥikma* remains unbroken from the Greeks to the Arabs. We find this to be true with al-Tirmidhī in which a mystical/scientific view of *ḥikma* is used rather than a philosophical/scientific usage. A. M. Goichon, "Ḥikma," *EI2*.

6 J. G. Gammie et al, *The Sage in Israel*, xi.

7 Ibid., 144–146.

8 Dimitri Gutas, "Classical Arabic wisdom literature," 78. There is no consensus on the origin of Luqmān, whose name is associated with maxims (*ḥikma*) in pre-Islamic Arabia. The Islamic tradition and most early Arabic sources associate Luqmān with South Arabia and the tribe of ʿĀd in particular.

9 *Ḥikma* can be distinguished from Greek *paideia*. *Paideia* transfers over in Arabic to the word *adab* (arts) and *ta'dīb* (education in the arts). Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 284.

of Nineveh wrote a series of ascetical homilies that have become classics in both the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Isaac was consecrated bishop of the Nestorian Church by the Patriarch George (660–680 CE) after having been a monk at the monastery of Bethabe in Kurdistan. However, after only five months in the bishopric, he abdicated and moved to the monastery of Bar Shāpur where he died in the mountains of Kūzistan in western Iran.[10] Isaac of Nineveh is significant to our discussion of al-Tirmidhī because his writings demonstrate how developed the motif of the *ḥakīm* had become in the Syriac Christian literature of the early Islamic period. Isaac of Ninevah lived during the Muslim/Arab conquests of the 1st Islamic century (7th-century CE). During this period, Muslims were mostly segregated in garrison towns in Kufa and Basra in Iraq, so it is almost certain that they had no impact on Isaac's thought. We can therefore assume that Isaac is providing us with an insight into *ḥikma* as it was understood just prior to the Muslim/Arab conquests.

Isaac of Nineveh refers to the *ḥukamā'* both as those who had attained religious authority as well as a motif or prototype of the ideal ascetic. In a fascinating set of passages in the *Homilies*, Isaac refers to the pagan philosophers (ܦܠܣܦܐ) as "external" sages (ܚܟܡܐ). He provides a story of one philosopher who attempts to control his will at all cost lest his 'wisdom' be sullied, even if it should mean death at the hands of the 'Greek king' Alexander.[11] Isaac's argument is that if these pagan philosophers are able to control their lower passions without the reward of Paradise, then the Christian ascetic who has God's help and the incentive of Paradise should have an increased sense of motivation and the ability to achieve such control.[12] The reference here is clearly to some type of Stoic philosophy; however, it should be noted that these 'philosophers' are presented as indigenous sages who confront Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king who is credited with the introduction of Hellenism into the East.[13] Isaac also uses the term ܚܟܡܐ (*ḥkemā*) to refer to a biblical sage who says, "Haughtiness comes before ruin." Arent Jan Wensinck indicates that Isaac may be paraphrasing Proverbs 16:19 in this quote; however, we should note that Isaac's quote does not convey the same meaning as the biblical statement. Another important passage concerning the sage in Isaac's work juxtaposes the humble servant of God to the philosopher and sage. The

10 J. Arendzen, "Isaac of Nineveh".

11 Isaac, *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh*, 272–273.

12 Ibid., 274.

13 The beginning of Stoicism follows after the great conquests of Alexander the Great. It is possible that the cultural and intellectual exchange brought upon by these conquests facilitated the borrowing of what became Stoicism by Zeno of Citium from Persia, rather than the other way around.

sages are forced to remain silent before the one who is truly humble. They listen to his words with awe and his words seem like words from God himself.[14] We can see that Isaac of Nineveh who lived approximately 150–200 years before al-Tirmidhī in western Khurāsān saw the sages as pagan philosophers and indigenous wise men who practiced what came to be known as a form of Stoicism. These sages must have held authority in the eyes of Isaac's audience since he uses the sages as a backdrop to elevate the Christian ascetic who is supposedly greater than the sage, not only in his ascetic discipline, but also in his words of wisdom. It is important to note that the sages mentioned by Isaac are noted for their asceticism and not for their theoretical knowledge. For Isaac, the *ḥkemā* (sage) is quite distinct from the Christian ascetic. His knowledge is worldly in juxtaposition to the Christian ascetic whose knowledge is otherworldly.

We also have a rich tradition of wisdom literature by the Jewish sages who have been credited by Rabbinic tradition as the saviors of Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple. The Rabbinic sages (*ḥākāmīm*) became a class of learned specialists in the Torah and *halakhā* (Jewish religious law) during the period of Late Antiquity. It was the *ḥākāmīm* from the Levant and Babylon who eventually became the spokesmen for the majority of Jews. This process took almost five centuries beginning after 70 CE and culminated in the collection and redaction of the Mishnah and Talmud.[15] The Rabbinic sage came to be associated with the development of a particular brand of Jewish law (generally referred to as *Halakhā*) and biblical exegesis. This intellectual and spiritual 'study of the Torah,' in addition to prayer, came to replace the centrality of sacrifice as a means of communicating with God.[16] By the 8th-century CE, we find that a split developed in the Jewish community between the Rabbanites and the Karaites. The latter group arose in conscious opposition to the rabbinic sages. The Karaites accepted only the Tanakh as a source

14 Ibid., 388.

15 There are two main approaches in modern Jewish scholarship over the origin of the rabbinic sages. One view holds that a class of Torah specialists arose in the 3rd-century BCE to oppose the worldly priesthood that came to control the Temple. This class of Torah specialists was the precursor to the Pharisees, who were considered the precursors to the rabbinic sages. This view does not stand up well against the current literary and archaeological record. The second view holds that the rabbinic sages were independent learned scholars of Torah who gradually developed a legal and exegetical tradition over the four to five hundred years from the fall of the Second Temple to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud. Steven D. Fraade, "The Early Rabbinic Sage."

16 Ibid., 436.

for Jewish law and rejected rabbinic scholarship and exegesis, which the Rabbis and growing circles in Jewish society had gradually come to refer to as the Oral Torah.[17] Both the Rabbanites and the Karaites used the term sage (*ḥākām*) to refer to legal authorities within their respective communities; however, the Rabbanites preferred to use the term as a collective when they referred to their scholarly ancestors who were, in their mind, an important link between the Rabbanites of the Amoraic period and Moses. Over time, the Karaites came to use the term *ḥākām* as a title to refer to their scholars. Let us turn to two important Jewish scholars from the 10th-century CE, one a Rabbanite, Saʿādia Gaon (d. 942 CE), and the other a Karaite, Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī (d. second half of 10th-century CE).

In his work *Kitāb al-amānāt wa al-iʿtiqādāt* (*Book of Beliefs and Opinions*), Saʿādia Gaon seeks to defend the Rabbinate against its Karaite detractors. An important theme that has generally been overlooked in the study of Saʿādia's work is his discussion around the nature of the *ḥakīm* (in Arabic) or *ḥākām* (in Hebrew). Saʿādia includes a chapter on *ḥikma* (wisdom) in his book *Al-amānāt* and distinguishes between what he considers to be the true *ḥakīm* modeled after Solomon as opposed to the *ḥukamāʾ* of his time whom he accuses of extremism and perversion of religion. Saʿādia writes concerning the *ḥukamāʾ*:

> من تلامذة الحكماء من زعم أنه ليس ينبغي أن يشتغل أحد في دار الدنيا بشيء سوى طلب الحكمة وقالوا لأنّ بها يوصل إلى معرفة كل ما في الأرض من الطبائع والأمزجة وإلى علم كثير مما في السماء من الكواكب والأفلاك.[18]
>
> Of the followers of the sages are those who claim that it is unnecessary for anyone to busy himself in this world with anything other than seeking wisdom, and they say that this is because through it (wisdom), the knowledge of everything in the earth of natures and temperaments is attained, [as well as] the immense knowledge of that which is in the heavens of both planets and heavenly orbs.

After Saʿādia mentions the claims of those whom he says follow the sages, he explains how their approach runs counter to religion:

17 Daniel J. Lasker, Joel Beinin, "Karaism," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*.

18 Saʿādia b. Joseph, *Kitāb al-amānāt wa al-iʿtiqādāt*, 309.

ولو أطبق الناس على ما قال هؤلاء لبطلت الحكمة بانقطاع النسل بترك التزويج ولو تشاغلوا بحكمة الدنيا وحدها تركوا حكمة الدين والشريعة التي إنّما حبّبت إليهم هذه لتعضد تلك فتحسن جملتهما.[19]

> Had the people applied what those people have said, wisdom would cease to be operative as a result of the cutting-off of progeny through the leaving of marriage. And had they busied one another with the wisdom of this world exclusively, they would have neglected the wisdom of religion and law for which this (lesser worldly wisdom) was only made beloved to them, in order that it should support that (greater religious wisdom), such that both could be made perfect."

For Saʿādia, the sages, who are his interlocutors, are not the ideal sages of the Bible. King Solomon is rather conspicuously given the title *al-ḥakīm* as if to lay to rest any doubt about who the true *ḥakīm* really is.[20] Saʿādia is not against wisdom, per se, but rather is against the idea that temporal wisdom should become an end in itself. His use of the term *talāmidha* (students) indicates that there may have been a real movement in his time to return to the ideals of the earlier sages; however, these sages are clearly those who are engaged in Hellenistic wisdom. As with Isaac of Nineveh, we see a tension in the work of Saʿādia between two types of sages, one representing a 'pagan' ideal and the other representing a biblical ideal. For Saʿādia, the sages are not only engaged in worldly knowledge, but they are also ascetics. One of his main criticisms of these ascetic sages, from a Jewish perspective, is that they are celibate. It is also significant to note that for both Saʿādia and Isaac, the sages go unnamed. This is also true for al-Tirmidhī's use of the term. Saʿādia lived the first part of his life in Egypt, which was a traditional center of Greek philosophy during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Both Saʿādia and Isaac use the motif of the sage as a platform from which to communicate their ideas, indicating a Hellenistic movement that was still active well into the Islamic period. Another possibility is that the reactions of these two figures represent something of a resurgence of interest in Hellenistic thought in their times. Saʿādia and Isaac both attempt to use a pagan sage motif in order to position the ideal Christian and Jewish religious virtuoso. The sage is a conduit of divine speech in the case of Isaac, but a scholar of the Torah and religious law in the case of Saʿādia.

19 Ibid., 310–311.
20 Ibid., 284.

Another Jewish scholar who lived at the same time as Saʿādia was the Karaite Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī. His work *Kitāb al-anwār wa al-marāqib* is a voluminous work on theology and heresiography. For al-Qirqisānī, the philosophers are clearly Aristotelian and Neoplatonic. He specifically mentions Alexander of Aphrodisias[21], John of Caesarea[22] and Porphyry[23] as philosophers who wrote commentaries on Aristotle. Al-Qirqisānī mentions these three philosophers in order to argue that the prophets who brought revelation from God are more worthy to have their revelations be the subject of commentary than Aristotle.[24] The title *ḥakīm,* according to al-Qirqisānī, is a more general term used to refer to these philosophers and indicates their pagan origin. Al-Qirqisānī mentions that the *ḥakīm* is one who would reject circumcision on logical grounds.[25] For al-Qirqisānī, *ḥikma* relates to what can be seen, and he refers to it as *mushāhad* (that which can be witnessed and thus that which is created). For example, he argues that God can be described as having a heart because he is called *ḥakīm* and, according to al-Qirqisānī, *ḥikma* resides in the heart and is *mushāhad,* i.e. created.[26] In one sense, *ḥikma* is a type of knowledge that resides in the heart but, on the other hand, it is a term that al-Qirqisānī uses to indicate a meaning that approximates 'reason.' An example of this is when he describes a heretical group of Jews who deny that God can punish individuals because punishment does not accord with *ḥikma* (wisdom) and *ṣalāḥ* (reason and benefit). The double meaning of *ḥikma* in al-Qirqisānī's writings indicates the ambivalence that often accompanies the use of this term. On one hand, *ḥikma* is knowledge bequeathed by God, but on the other, it can also refer to the wisdom of pagan philosophers and sages.

21 Alexander of Aphrodisias is a peripatetic philosopher of the 2nd- and 3-centuries CE known for his commentaries on Aristotle. Dorothea Frede, "Alexander of Aphrodisias."

22 John of Caesarea was also known as John the Grammarian. He was a priest and theologian who lived during the late 6th-century CE before the rise of Islam. He was one of the first Neo-Chalcedonians. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.

23 Porphyry (d. circa 305 CE) was a Neoplatonist philosopher from Tyre in Phoenicia,who studied with Plotinus in Rome. He was a promulgator of Plotinus' version of Platonism and sought to harmonize Neoplatonic thought with Aristotle's metaphysics. Eyjólfur Emilsson, "Porphyry," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

24 A. Yūsuf Ya-qūb al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-anwār wa al-marāqib*, vol. 1, 223.

25 Ibid., vol. 3, 214.

26 Ibid., vol. 2, 172.

3.4 *Ḥikma* and the *Ḥakīm* in 9th- and 10th-Century CE Khurāsān and Transoxania

We now turn to a discussion of the *ḥakīm* and *ḥikma* among Muslim authors who were generally contemporaneous with al-Tirmidhī, with a focus on the Ṣūfīs, Shīʿīs and Falāsifa. I begin with a general survey of the current discussion in the literature around the *ḥukamāʾ* and their origins according to the early Ṣūfīs. This discussion is rather limited given that Ṣūfī studies sometimes suffers from a silo effect in which themes and motifs are restricted to those dealing with only Ṣūfīs themselves. This is problematic when dealing with a widely diffuse motif such as the *ḥukamāʾ* and their *ḥikma*.

Annemarie Schimmel and Suzanne Diwald present a hypothesis that the *ḥukamāʾ* of Balkh (of which al-Tirmidhī was associated) represent a Neoplatonic mystical 'school' whose origin returns to the 'master' Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810) and his student Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d.237/852).[27] This hypothesis was rejected by Bernd Radtke who claims that al-Tirmidhī's education did not include non-Islamic sciences such as Greek natural science and philosophy.[28] In Radtke's view, the possible Hellenistic influence on al-Tirmidhī is due to diffuse elements that had permeated Near Eastern culture and society. For Radtke, the *ḥukamāʾ* were a group of learned Muslim mystics based in Khurāsān and Transoxania. Furthermore, for Radtke, the *ḥakīm* was not a Ṣūfī, and he quotes al-Sulamī[29] in this regard by relating a comment made by a student of al-Tirmidhī, Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (d.280/893), "Er hat die thora, die Evangelien, die Psalmen, und die himmlischen Bücher gelesen und einen Diwan verfasst… Er war ein gotterkennender Hākīm (ḥakīmī ʿārif), kein Ṣūfī, der ṣūfī ist etwas anderes."[30] Radtke considers the title *ḥakīm* to have been given to al-Tirmidhī by others, and not a title that he ascribed to himself, since the *ḥakīm* represents a lower rung on the spiritual *hierarchy* beneath that of *walī* (saint).[31] For Jacqueline Chabbi, the *ḥakīm* simply has didactic value during this period, representing a teacher who has knowledge of the human soul.[32] These various viewpoints about the social and didactic role of the *ḥakīm* in the world of al-Tirmidhī provide an outline for better understanding why al-Tirmidhī would

27 Geneviève Gobillot, *Le livre de la profondeur*, 79.

28 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 15.

29 Radtke mentions this as recorded by ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089); however, the original quote is by al-Sulamī and was copied by al-Anṣārī.

30 Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm ein Islamischer*, 95.

31 Ibid., 95.

32 Geneviève Gobillot, *Profondeur*, 80.

be given such a title. These definitions tend to privilege a mystical aspect to the role of the *ḥakīm*; however, we should note that the title *ḥakīm* in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the 9th- and 10th-centuries CE may not necessarily indicate a mystic per se. We find this title given to the likes of al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī (d. 342/953), whose early life overlapped that of al-Tirmidhī[33] and who was known for his work on Ḥanafī theology, including his famous creed *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*. While al-Samarqandī was also known to have an interest in mysticism, it is not clear that this was a reason for his being titled *ḥakīm*. Also in the 10th-century CE, we have another Ḥanafī scholar, al-Ḥakīm al-Zandāwistī (d. 382/992), who wrote *Al-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya*, a work in the eastern Ḥanafī *ḥikma* tradition, which does not seem to have mystical propensities.[34] Based on the previous discussion, it remains difficult to tie the title of *ḥakīm* during the 9th- and 10th-centuries CE in Khurāsān and Transoxania to mysticism. Rather, the *ḥakīm* seems to be a title referring to a learned individual who has attained a position of legal or pedagogical authority. Such an individual was assumed to be well-versed, not only in Islamic religious texts, but also in biblical and New Testament traditions, with the ability to draw causal relationships between various aspects of these traditions.

The social use of the title *ḥakīm* in the 9th- and 10th-centuries CE only gives us partial insight into how al-Tirmidhī may have understood this term. It seems clear that this title was still applied to knowledgeable individuals as a term of respect up through the end of the 10th-century CE. These individuals tend to be Ḥanafī scholars from Khurāsān and Transoxania. It may be that the title, while at one time having been applied to a pagan philosopher or learned

33 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī wrote *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* at the behest of the Samānid ruler of Khurāsān, Aḥmad Ismāʿīl, in 902. The fact that al-Samarqandī was chosen to pen such an important work in Ḥanafī theology indicates that he could have at least been in his late thirties or early forties when given this task. If he died in 953 CE, then he must have lived to a very old age, and his life should have overlapped with that of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī by at least forty or fifty years. Bosworth et al. assumes that the title *ḥakīm* must have indicated his mystical propensities. This claim is not clearly substantiated.

34 Zandawistī's work, *Al-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya,* represents a series of questions and answers concerning the *ḥikma* of various mundane, religious and theological issues. For example, a question is posed as to the *ḥikma* of Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) being the first Caliph in Islam. The *ḥikma* according to Zandāwistī is that Abū Bakr never faltered when given the choice to follow the Prophet. ʿAlī, on the other hand, is said to have sought permission from his father; however, after having taken four steps he repented and took allegiance with the Prophet. These four steps indicate his being four degrees away from the Prophet and thus the fourth Caliph. This type of *ḥikma* literature cannot in any way be understood in a philosophical sense. It represents the ability of the *ḥakīm* to call upon a vast array of biblical and Islamic literature and to make seemingly insightful connections between various details in these traditions.

individual, had changed its semantic use with the adoption of Arabic as the language of learning and the replacement of local elites by Arabs with the arrival of Islam. It should be noted that Aramaic was the language of communication in the Sassanid Empire prior to Arabic, and as we have seen in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the Arabic root for *ḥakīm*, *ḥ-k-m*, transfers quite easily across Semitic languages.

3.5 *Ḥikma* and the *Ḥakīm* among the Ṣūfīs

In *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* by al-Sulamī we find that *ḥikma* is closely coupled with gnosis (*maʿrifa*). The term *maʿrifa* is often presented as divinely gifted knowledge, while *ḥikma* may represent the words that articulate that knowledge. Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 165/782) is credited to have quoted Jesus as saying, "Do not give wisdom (*ḥikma*) to those who do not deserve it for they will squander it, and do not keep it from those who do deserve it for you will oppress them."[35] Here, *ḥikma* is a special kind of knowledge that should only be given to those to whom it belongs, i.e. *ahlahā* (its people). However, *ḥikma* is not purely esoteric here since it is also coupled with *maʿrifa* which, while often being translated as gnosis, refers to God-given knowledge and not a lore or mode of exegetical interpretation. Manṣur b. ʿAmmār (d. 225/839) states this connection between *ḥikma* and *maʿrifa* when he says, "Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) is articulated in the hearts of the knowers of God (*al-ʿārifīn*) with the tongue of true belief…"[36] Al-Sulamī also indicates a connection between *maʿrifa* and *ḥikma* when he describes Abū ʿAlī Al-Jūzajānī (d. 10th-century CE) as someone who "perhaps also spoke something concerning the disciplines of gnosis (*maʿārif*) and wisdom (*ḥikam*)."[37] These two 'disciplines' are, in fact, never explicitly distinguished. Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) seems to conflate the two terms when he says, "God made knowledge (*ʿilm*) a guide to himself so that he could be known, and he made wisdom (*ḥikma*) a mercy from him to them so that he could show compassion. So, knowledge is a guide to God, and *maʿrifa* (gnosis) is an indication of God…"[38] Shāh al-Kirmānī (d. 299/911) also reiterates this connection between *ḥikma* and *maʿrifa* when he says, "the sign

35 Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya,* 38.
36 Ibid., 117.
37 Ibid., 196.
38 Ibid., 184.

of wisdom (*ḥikma*) is knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the relative values of people."[39] In the *Ṭabaqāt* we find either a conflation of wisdom (*ḥikma*) with gnosis (*maʿrifa*) or a sense in which *ḥikma* is the outward spoken form of an inward gifted knowledge. We do find several other meanings of *ḥikma*; however, they do not follow this general trend. For example, Ruwaym b. Aḥmad (d. 303/915) states, "Of the wisdom (*ḥikam*) of the sage (*ḥakīm*) is that he shows latitude for his brothers in outward rulings."[40] Here *ḥikma* demonstrates an approach to the application of legal rulings to others, such that the individual is restrictive with himself but shows leniency to others. Another approach is represented in the words of Yūsuf b. al-Ḥusayn of Rayy (d. 304/916) who links *ḥikma* to action, or the implementation of knowledge. He says, "Through proper dealing (*adab*), you will understand knowledge; and through knowledge, actions will become correct; and through action, you will arrive at wisdom (*ḥikma*); and through wisdom (*ḥikma*), you will understand renunciation of the world (*al-zuhd*) …"[41]

Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) is an important figure in the development of proto-Sufism. Alexander Knysh, along with Josef van Ess, asserts that al-Muḥāsibī may not have been a Ṣūfī but more of a 'moralizing theologian' who took early Islamic theology and developed it into a sophisticated psychology and cardiology.[42] Unlike later mystics such as al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī, al-Muḥāsibī does not develop a gnoseology that would clarify the ambiguous space between prophecy and human knowledge based on experience. For example, al-Muḥāsibī does not discuss the nature of *ḥikma* even though he makes frequent mention of the purveyors of that *ḥikma,* i.e. the *ḥukamāʾ*. He certainly sees the *ḥukamāʾ* as a source of authority since several of his works begin with quotations from as yet unknown 'sages.'[43] However, al-Muḥāsibī does not leave us completely in the dark. In one of the quotes that he ascribes to the *ḥukamāʾ*, we find an accurate and complete, if not slightly modified, rendition of the "Parable of the Sower" from the New Testament. Al-Muḥāsibī's rendition does not closely follow any particular version in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Nor does al-Muḥāsibī's rendition follow particularly closely the Syriac New Testament or the Arabic translation of the *Diatessaron*. Nevertheless,

39 Ibid., 158.

40 Ibid., 148.

41 Ibid., 154.

42 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 45. Josef Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, 195, 197.

43 We find specific mention of the *ḥukamāʾ* in al-Muḥāsibī's *Al-riʿāya fī ḥuqūq Allāh* and *Adab al-nufūs*, which in fact begins with a quote from one of the *ḥukamāʾ* who advises others to fear God.

all of the main elements of the parable are there. Al-Muḥāsibī's use of the parable is significant because he uses it to explain the function of the *ḥakīm*. For al-Muḥāsibī, the sower is like the *ḥakīm*, and the seed is like the words that the *ḥakīm* speaks, i.e. *ḥikma*.[44] So, the Parable of the Sower from the New Testament changes from being a parable used by Jesus to elucidate the types of individuals who have an ability to hear God's Word, to a focus on the *ḥakīm* as a conduit for this divine knowledge. The degree to which al-Muḥāsibī was aware of the source of this parable is not clear. The fact that such a parable was put into the mouths of the *ḥukamā'* is significant in that it connects, even if only tenuously, the *ḥukamā'* to scriptural knowledge. This does have some parallel to al-Tirmidhī's use of the term *ḥukamā'*, since he claims that the *ḥukamā'* who are mentioned in the *Injīl* (Gospels) are, actually, the Muslims.[45] We must conclude that al-Muḥāsibī referenced this from the traditions attributed to Jesus in the Ḥadīth literature.

Al-Junayd is considered one of the most celebrated orthodox exponents of the sober school of Sufism and is often credited with a reconciliation of mystical experience to the legal and theological norms of his time.[46] In his *Rasā'il*, we consistently find a gnoseology more similar to the mysticism of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, whose approach we address later. Al-Junayd places *ḥikma* in direct contrast to outward knowledge (*'ilm*) and elevates the *ḥakīm* above the doctor of law (*'ālim*). The *Letters of al-Junayd* begin with a letter from al-Junayd to 'Amr b. 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903 or 297/909) whom he praises as one who was given, "of knowledge and wisdom (*ḥikma*) the highest of its levels." The letter proceeds to warn against the deluding nature of outward knowledge and the inability of those who are specialists in the normative Islamic disciplines to speak cogently about 'inner realities.'[47] What follows is a dialog between a scholar of the outward (*'ālim*) and a sage (*ḥakīm*) who brings the *'ālim* to tears and facilitates the "dawning of the sun of *ḥikma* and the attainment of the limpidity of its light."[48] The *ḥakīm* is stylized as a 'physician of the heart' who can cure the 'disorders' of the scholar. The scholar pleads with the *ḥakīm*, "Please give me more of this medicine of yours, for my wound has become severe."[49] At this point the scholar is broken and concedes that the *ḥakīm* is "more knowledgeable about what is hidden in my innermost secret."[50]

44 Al-Muḥāsibī does not use the term *ḥikma* here but rather *ṣawāb al-kalām* or correct speech.

45 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 288.

46 A. J. Arberry, "al-Djunayd." *EI2*.

47 Ibid., 8–9.

48 Abū al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Junayd, *Rasā'il al-junayd*, 9.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

Al-Junayd invokes an analogy that likens the physician of the outward body to the sincere, refined *ḥakīm* who, like the physician, treats the often subtle and hidden diseases within the body. Likewise, the *ḥakīm* is knowledgeable of the inner maladies of the soul.[51] For al-Junayd, the *ḥakīm* is someone sanctioned by God to speak wisdom (*ḥikma*), which is a type of personal revelatory knowledge. He says, "With that, know that the speakers of *ḥikma* don't speak except after they are permitted to do so, but when they do, great benefit descends upon those who are given to hear it."[52] *Ḥikma* in al-Junayd's mystical thought is something that runs, or streams (*jāriya*), and is associated closely with light (*nūr*).[53] A consistent motif in his *Rasā'il* is that of the ordinary believer immersed in heedlessness (*ghafla*) who comes into contact with someone whose words are characteristic of *ḥikma*, wisdom from God. This wisdom pours over the soul of the listener who becomes perplexed and disoriented. This state is the first stage of awakening and occurs at the hands of the *ḥakīm* and not the Ṣūfī as we might have expected. In fact, the word Ṣūfī is not used anywhere in al-Junayd's letters.

Another Ṣūfī and one of al-Junayd's associates in Baghdād was Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899), a student of Sarī al-Saqatī (d. 253/867). We also find that the *ḥukamā'* are a significant motif in his *Kitāb al-ṣidq*. Al-Kharrāz does not contrast between the *ḥukamā'* and the *ʿulamā'* as does al-Junayd. For al-Kharrāz, the *ḥukamā'* seem to be a distinct and well known group since he mentions in *Kitāb al-ṣidq* that "the insightful of the *ḥukamā'* have agreed that this world is the self and what it desires," and "the *ḥukamā'* have come to consensus that it (love) results from the constant mention of blessings." For al-Kharrāz to mention that the *ḥukamā'* have "agreed" or "found consensus" on a particular subject suggests that the literature of this group was accessible or that their general views were known to his audience. We also find in *Kitāb al-ṣidq* that a student of al-Kharrāz asks for him to explain the saying of "the *ḥakīm*" about the nature of contentment as being a state of happiness and joyfulness in the face of calamities.[54] Al-Kharrāz explains that the presence of God fills the heart of the servant such that it becomes greater than the calamities that beset that individual.[55] The familiar theme of balance through opposing states is also attributed to the *ḥukamā'*. Al-Kharrāz states, *man ūtiya min al-maḥabbati shayʾan fa lam yuʿṭa mithlahu min al khashya fahuwa makhdūʿ*,

51 Ibid., 11.

52 Ibid., 9.

53 Ibid., 3, 5, 36.

54 This definition of contentment fits Stoic values of restraint in the face of external difficulties.

55 Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-ṣidq aw al-ṭarīq al-sālima*, 88.

"Whoever is given some love but is not given its equivalent amount in terms of fear, then he is deceived."[56] Most of the other references to the *ḥukamāʾ* in *Kitāb al-ṣidq* involve general statements about abstinence from the world and closeness to God, and they fit a general ascetic/mystical model.

None of the Ṣūfīs and proto-Ṣūfīs mentioned above clearly state who the *ḥukamāʾ* are or what *ḥikma* is in well-defined terms. The closest definition we find is with al-Junayd, who likens the *ḥakīm* to a *ṭabīb* (physician), which fits a Hellenistic model since medicine (*ṭibb*) and philosophy (*ḥikma*) are often mentioned together as a genre well into the Islamic period.[57] Al-Junayd sees the *ḥakīm* as a recipient of divine knowledge, of a type that can cure the soul just as the physician is able to cure bodies. We might suggest that the dichotomy between physician and philosopher, which was prominent in the Hellenistic culture of Late Antiquity, may have been transposed into an Islamic milieu as the doctor of the law (*ʿālim*) and the sage (*ḥakīm*), such as we find in the writing of al-Junayd. For both Christian and Muslim ascetics and mystics, the Hellenistic motif of the philosopher/physician provides a backdrop upon which they promote their various notions of religious and spiritual authority.

3.6 *Ḥikma* and the *Ḥakīm* among the Early Ismāʿīlī Shīʿīs

We find the closest connection to al-Tirmidhī's concept of the *ḥakīm* and the nature of his wisdom (*ḥikma*) in the writings of early Ismāʿīlīs of the early 10th-century CE. According to Yves Marquet, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā often apply the sobriquet *ḥakīm* to the Imām of the age, or a great prophet, or to a successor of that prophet.[58] However, the term *ḥakīm* can also designate the Imām in contradistinction to the Prophet of the time.[59] While the term generally applies to prophets, Imāms and their successors, such as the forty *abdāl* (substitutes), it can also apply to ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and

56 Ibid., 84.

57 We have the work *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ* by Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. Ḥassān al-Andalūsī written in 377/987. This work, however, seems to have only relied on western sources as opposed to the eastern Greek sources that informed works of the same genre mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385–8/995–8). Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* also mentions several other books of the same genre from the 9th-century CE by Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 298/911) titled *Tārīkh al-aṭibbāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ*. Al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897) includes stories of *aṭibbāʾ* and *ḥukamāʾ* in his writings, as does Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/873) in his book *Nawādir al-falāsifa*. It is clear that Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq relied heavily on the work of John of Caesarea mentioned earlier.

58 Yves Marquet, *La philosophie des ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*, 461.

59 Ibid., 462.

Pythagoras.[60] Even astrologers, alchemists and magicians receive the title of *ḥukamā'* (sages) in the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*.[61] Here we can see a general application of the term *ḥakīm* to the Imām of the time who takes his knowledge from a great prophet. This is balanced by the fact that the term is offered loosely to include other types of learned individuals who, in the mind of the Ikhwān, also received their knowledge originally from a prophet. Here the Ikhwān follow the Ismā'īlī approach mentioned by Paul Walker,[62] which creates a narrative for the origins of philosophical and hermetic sciences in the persons of prophets. For the Ikhwān, the *ḥukamā'* represent any knowledge or wisdom that has a divine origin of some kind. Marquet shows how the *ḥukamā',* as purveyors of "good philosophy," are contrasted to those whom the Ikhwān call the "anti-prophets," or those characterized as materialists and atheists.[63] They are referred to as *frères des dèmons* who practice illicit magic and lead people astray. Here we find that the *ḥukamā'* offer a convenient catch-all to set up the main dichotomy between divine knowledge, which is inspired and therefore has a divine source relating to the soul, as opposed to purely human-based knowledge, which is materialistic and the purview of the anti-prophets.

The Ikhwān are very close to other early Isma'īlis of the 10th-century CE such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/933–34), who is known to have engaged in a famous polemical debate with the renowned physician and philosopher Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or d. 323/935) as summarized in the former's triumphalist work *A'lām al-nubuwwa*. It is Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī who comes closest to identifying *ḥikma* and the *ḥakīm* in terms that mimic al-Tirmidhī's concept of these terms. In his *Kitāb al-zīna*, al-Rāzī describes God as *ḥakīm* because he separates between opposites by placing medial properties between them, such as the separation of hot and cold through the mediation of wet and dry. This separation and maintenance of the opposites is exemplary of God's wisdom and the balance he maintains in the world. This is similar to a Pythagorean concept of opposites; however, the opposites (hot, cold, wet and dry) mentioned by Abū Ḥātim are not represented in the ten primary opposites that govern the world according to later Pythagoreans.[64] It may be that the allusion here is to Greek

60 Ibid.

61 'Alī b. Zayd al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimma ṣiwān al-ḥikma: Texts and Studies*.

62 Paul Ernest Walker, *Early philosophical Shī'ism: the Ismā'īlī Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī*.

63 Ibid., 462.

64 Aristotle describes Pythagorean doctrine as having ten primary opposites in his *Metaphysics* (986a). It seems that this doctrine was not the original Pythagorean doctrine which was only composed of two original sets of opposites. See J. A. Philip, "Aristotle's Sources," 252. Aristotle makes the distinction between 'definite opposites' (ἐναντιότητας), such as the limited and the unlimited, and "chance opposites," such as white and black, and large and small.

Galenic medicine that uses hot, cold, wet and dry as a heuristic for understanding balance and imbalance in the body.

The *ḥukamāʾ* represent a motif of learned individuals that dates prior to the Islamic conquests and continues through the 10th-century CE. In Christian, Jewish, Ṣūfī and Shīʿī sources, the *ḥukamāʾ* function as a backdrop to accentuate the various ideals of these disparate religious viewpoints. The *ḥukamāʾ* are useful as a motif during this period particularly because they are not well defined as a category of learned specialists, yet they still convey a sense of authority. All the groups surveyed here tend to be outliers with respect to the dominant discourse of the proto-Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*. So, while *ḥikma* is not a major knowledge-type in Rosenthal's schematization of knowledge in Islam, it clearly was important for more marginal groups. In a sense, al-Tirmidhī's development of *ḥikma* and stylization of the *ḥukamāʾ* brings this marginal discourse stream into the circle of more mainstream proto-Sunnī thought. The consistent reference in both Muslim and non-Muslim sources to a Hellenistic precedent for the *ḥukamāʾ* indicates that it is a Greek model that most likely serves for this motif.[65] Also, the important connections to biblical and New Testament literature for the *ḥukamāʾ* indicates that this Hellenistic motif filtered down to the Muslims from eastern Christians who were steeped in this lore for centuries before the Arab/Muslim conquests of the 7th-century CE.

3.7 *Ḥikma* and the *Ḥakīm* in the Theosophy of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's contribution to the development of what became normative Sufism sometime in the late 10th- and early 11th-centuries CE has not been sufficiently acknowledged, nor has his contribution to later Ṣūfī metaphysics been understood in its entirety. One factor that has led to this lack of development in the study of al-Tirmidhī and his mystical theosophy is that current theories differ widely on the core elements of his doctrine as well as the sources of his inspiration. Yves Marquet considers al-Tirmidhī to have been the first mystic to introduce Neoplatonic doctrines into Islamic mysticism as a prelude to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[66] Bernd Radtke, on the other hand, acknowledges that al-Tirmidhī was influenced by Neoplatonic and Hermetic elements, yet

65 This runs counter to the conclusion of Hikmet Yaman, who considers *ḥikma* to be of primarily Islamic origin. The difference in my approach is that I have focused not only on *ḥikma* as a concept but the use of the term *ḥakīm* and *ḥukamāʾ* as those who are purveyors of *ḥikma*. When we look at the mode in which the *ḥukamāʾ* embody *ḥikma*, we find that they characterize a motif that is Hellenistic in origin.

66 Yves Marquet, "Al-Tirmidhī," *EI2*.

counters by proposing that these were merely diffuse and amorphous elements within al-Tirmidhī's educational milieu. According to Radtke, these diffuse elements were picked up by al-Tirmidhī and merged by him into a synthesis that combined theology, jurisprudence, Ḥadīth speculation and various aspects of Gnosticism.[67] Radtke has gone the farthest in contextualizing al-Tirmidhī's thought through contrasting and differentiating his *ḥikma* (wisdom) from what was known later as illuminationist wisdom (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*), propounded by the famous Suhrawardī al-Maqṭūl (d. 587/1191), who was executed for heresy.[68] Radtke's argument that al-Tirmidhī's *ḥikma* (wisdom) is fundamentally different than Suhrawardī's *ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (wisdom of illumination) is convincing. However, Radtke's discussion of *ḥikma* in "Theologie und Philosophie" does not facilitate our understanding of al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma*, primarily because he does not provide a methodology for interpreting *ḥikma* within al-Tirmidhī's own context. Geneviève Gobillot provides the most detailed attempt to connect al-Tirmidhī's ideas with early Christian theologians, showing how continuities and discontinuities present a very complex picture of Tirmidhi's thought. Nevertheless, the connection still requires more research and remains somewhat tenuous as Gobillot acedes.[69] I depart from both Radtke and Gobillot in that I do not support the idea that al-Tirmidhī's use of Hellenistic thought is simply acquired through diffuse elements, nor do I see a direct causal connection between al-Tirmidhī and Christian writers. My study of al-Tirmidhī's *Kitāb al-ḥikma* indicates that al-Tirmidhī's use of Hellenistic elements is both intentional and selective.

In addition to Marquet and Radtke, Franz Rosenthal discusses the place of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) as it relates to al-Tirmidhī. Rosenthal's discussion tends to favor an overly philological approach to the word *ʿilm*, and he draws a distinction between Islam, a tradition he says focuses on *ʿilm*, and Christianity, a tradition that he claims favors *ḥikma*. This approach ignores the nuances in meaning that are characteristic of the way knowledge was categorized by al-Tirmidhī and others during the period under discussion. As mentioned earlier, Rosenthal mistakenly assumes that al-Tirmidhī considers *ʿilm* and *ḥikma* to be synonymous.[70] According to my reading of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, he does not use the term *ḥikma* haphazardly. He clearly delineates

67 Bernd Radtke, "Ḥakīm Termedī," *EIr*.

68 Bernd Radtke, "Theosophie (Ḥikma) und Philosophie (Falsafa)," 57–158.

69 The structural divergences between al-Tirmidhī and Pythagorean notions are so dramatic that it would seem that al-Tirmidhī is in fact consciously rejecting the Pythagorean paradigm. Genevieve Gobillot, "Quelques stéréotypes cosmologiques," 174.

70 Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 38.

ḥikma as a special type of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and is consistent in his use of the term.

It is not possible, though, to gain a complete view of al-Tirmidhī's understanding of *ḥikma* without a wide reading of his works, which are varied and complex. Al-Tirmidhī's *KḤ* provides us with probably the most concise and elaborate explanation of *ḥikma* and its place in his mystical theosophy. Nevertheless, references to *ḥikma* abound in his other works such as *Nawādir al-uṣūl*, *ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ* and *Khatm al-awliyāʾ* among others. Al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* has largely been unexplored partly due to the limited accessibility of *KḤ*, of which only one manuscript is extant and whose script is difficult to decipher due to the absence of diacritic points on many of the letters. *KḤ* is mentioned by Sezgin in *Geschichte des Arabischen Schriftums* among the eighty works he attributes to al-Tirmidhī ranging from large books to small essays of only a few pages.[71] *KḤ* closely follows al-Tirmidhī's style and use of terminology suggesting that it can be authentically attributed to al-Tirmidhī. Bernd Radtke, considered the foremost expert on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, also lists *KḤ* amongst al-Tirmidhī's works but does not discuss the contents of the work in detail or its implications for al-Tirmidhī's thought. Hence, the combination of the complexity of al-Tirmidhī's style, coupled with his voluminous literary output and the relative inaccessibility of *KḤ*, have conspired to leave al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* largely unexplored. The implications of this for al-Tirmidhī's rather widely discussed doctrine of *wilāya* are highly significant because al-Tirmidhī uses *ḥikma* to frame his doctrine of *wilāya*.

One of the key passages on the relationship between *ʿilm* and *ḥikma* by al-Tirmidhī is found in *NU*. In his commentary on a *ḥadīth* concerning the nature of the *awliyāʾ*, al-Tirmidhī divides the people of knowledge into three categories. The first category is, the scholars of God's commandments concerning the permissible and impermissible. These are the scholars of sacred law who specialize in jurisprudence. Al-Tirmidhī describes them as identifiable through the signs of knowledge. The second category is the scholars of God's management (*tadbīr*) of the world, and they have upon them the sign of *ḥikma* and are known by their wisdom. Finally, the third category of "men of knowledge" discusses those knowledgeable through God (*ʿulamāʾ bi-Allāh*), and they have upon them the sign of God's light and his awe-inspiring presence (*hayba*), and they are known through God himself. This final category, according to al-Tirmidhī, represents the highest level of the *awliyāʾ*.[72] This tri-partite division is reinforced in another place in the *NU* where al-Tirmidhī describes the three

71 Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schriftums*, vol. 1, 653–659.

72 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 3, 152–153.

groups who bear God's knowledge as the doctors of the law (*'ulamā'*), the sages (*ḥukamā'*), and the great ones (*kubarā'*), who are considered the greatest of the *awliyā'*.[73] Here we can see a clear distinction between three groups that all bear a different kind of knowledge. The *ḥukamā'* are clearly a level distinct from the *awliyā'* and inferior to them.[74] This distinction between *ḥukamā'* and *awliyā'* is further supported in *KḤ* where the functions of the *ḥukamā'* and the *awliyā'* are delineated in juxtaposition to one another.[75] Prior scholarship conflates the *ḥukamā'* and *awliyā'*, assuming the terms to be synonymous. As we will see, such a hypothesis does not stand up to scrutiny through a close reading of al-Tirmidhī's works.

In the opening of *KḤ*, al-Tirmidhī defines *ḥikma* as "… the precise execution of matters, in light of their various harmful qualities, with respect to the way they function, the movement [of these matters] from the lord to the servant, and from the servant to the lord in terms of their causes and means."[76] This definition falls directly in line with Neopythagorean definitions of wisdom (*sophia*) as knowledge of things both divine and human.[77] In his definition of *ḥikma*, al-Tirmidhī joins two opposites,[78] the inward (*bāṭin*) and outward (*ẓāhir*). The *ḥikma* of the *ḥakīm* is knowledge that encompasses inward (*bāṭin*) causes and effects, i.e., those that proceed from the Lord to his servant and outward (*ẓāhir*) causes and effects, i.e., those that proceed from the servant to his Lord. This passage is critical to our understanding of al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* because al-Tirmidhī is the first to provide a full and coherent definition

73 Ibid., 23.

74 In al-Tirmidhī's works the *awliyā'* are frequently mentioned alongside the *anbiyā'* but the *ḥukamā'* are never mentioned in this way. The ḥukamā' are also a type of *awliyā'* to the extent that they are Muslim. However, they are not the bonified saints who hold the title awliyā' Allāh.

75 Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 7v. In this passage the *walī* is juxtaposed to the *ḥakīm*. The *walī* is like the shepherd whose dog watches the sheep. The sheep are like the common people, and the dog is like the *ḥakīm*. The sheep and the dog are two different species, as al-Tirmidhī mentions earlier. The dog originally comes from the class of predators, but his ferocious nature is turned on itself so that it is used to defend the sheep rather than feed on them. The *ḥakīm* is also like a king who rules with justice over his subjects. The shepherd, who is the *walī*, is likened to Moses who is one of the *anbiyā'*. Again, the association between *awliyā'* and *anbiyā'* is made. According to al-Tirmidhī, the *ḥakīm* is a *malik* (king), and the *walī* is one who is a *faqīr* (destitute).

76 Ibid., fol. 1v.

77 Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, p. 36.

78 I use the word opposite here for the Arabic word *ḍidd* (plural *aḍdād*). I use the term opposite in contrast to 'contrary' as used by W. D. Ross in his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Henry Corbin uses the Latin term *coincidentia oppisotorum* in a different sense than contrary. For Corbin, *coincidentia oppisotorum* is a term that refers to contrary terms that are joined in a single phrase such as 'spiritual body.'

of *ḥikma* among all of the figures we have discussed thus far. This definition is neither purely metaphysical nor wholly cosmological. It treats *ḥikma* as cosmological in that it is concerned with causes and effects, but then characterizes it as metaphysical when described as a light-knowledge that proceeds from God. In this way, al-Tirmidhī's definition somewhat resembles al-Fārābī's statement that wisdom is the knowledge of remote causes.[79]

The knowledge of opposites is the function par excellence of the *ḥakīm* in al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma*. Al-Tirmidhī goes on to state in *KḤ* that the *ḥakīm* is indispensable to the knowledge of good and evil. For example, he states, "There is nothing closer to good than evil, nor anything farther. Ignorance joins them together in one place [i.e. conflates them] and wisdom separates between them so that they are farther apart than the heaven and the earth, because wisdom makes evil the lowest of the low and good the highest of the high." We can see that according to al-Tirmidhī, the knowledge of the *ḥakīm* is that which distinguishes between opposites and keeps them separate in an ethical sense. We can see here that al-Tirmidhī is closest to Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī in terms of his discussion on *ḥikma*, who provides a similar yet much simpler definition of *ḥikma* in terms of hot, cold, wet and dry. What is significant in al-Tirmdhī's discussion is the types of opposites that he uses. As mentioned previously, Aristotle describes the later Pythagoreans as proposing ten pairs of opposites that are the bases of the universe. These are limited-unlimited, odd-even, one-many, right-left, male-female, immobile-mobile, straight-curved, light-dark, good-evil and square-rectangle. We do not find this exact list of opposites in *KḤ*, but we find some of these among the many opposites al-Tirmidhī uses throughout the book. The three most prominent are *khayr* and *sharr* (good and evil),[80] *mutaḥarrik* and *sākin* (mobile and immobile),[81] and *ḍaw'* and *ẓulma* (light and darkness).[82] We find possible indirect references to some of the other Pythagorean opposites such as *lā maḥdūd* (unlimited);[83] however, its contrary *maḥdūd* (limited) is not mentioned specifically. Al-Tirmidhī mentions male and female pairs such as *ikhwānika wa akhawātika* (your brothers and sisters)[84] but does not mention male and female as a specific set of opposites. He also mentions right and left, but in the Qur'ānic context of the people of the right hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) and the people of the left hand (*aṣḥāb al-*

79 Ibid, *Knowledge Triumphant*, p. 36.
80 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 6r.
81 Ibid., fol. 3v.
82 Ibid., fol. 4v.
83 Ibid., fol. 5v.
84 Ibid., fol. 3v.

shimāl).[85] This does not prove that al-Tirmidhī was a Pythagorean, but rather it demonstrates that his concept of *ḥikma* incorporates more elements of Pythagoreanism than other figures we have studied thus far. It is not a complete form of Pythagoreanism but one that seems to be filtered through a study of Greek medicine. Al-Tirmidhī's gnoseology is neither Neoplatonic nor gnostic in its structure. Rather than proposing a series of emanations from an abstract One such as the Neoplatonists do, al-Tirmidhī sees the world as an interplay of opposites that indicate the existence of a hidden metaphysical realm, or *ghayb*. Thus, we see that the *ḥakīm* is the one who is knowledgeable of these opposites and functions as a means of maintaining the harmony of opposites in nature.

Like al-Junayd, al-Tirmidhī draws on the analogy of the physician (*ṭabīb*) to explain who the *ḥakīm* is and how he functions in the world. Just as the *ṭabīb* is the physician of the physical body, the *ḥakīm* is the physician of the metaphysical body, or the soul. Al-Tirmidhī accurately details the four humours and their corresponding qualities and seasons in *KḤ*.[86] This clearly demonstrates that al-Tirmidhī must have studied Greek medicine and this was probably how he came into contact with elements of Hellenistic philosophy such as Pythagoreanism and Stoicism. For al-Tirmidhī, *ḥikma* has an ethical value in that it helps one to make decisions about what is right and wrong in any particular moment. This has within it a veiled criticism of the *'ulamā'* (the scholarly class) who, according to al-Tirmidhī, do not have the sufficient tools for making ethical judgments from their textual knowledge alone.

Al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* not only functions to explain ethics, but it helps to define his notion of *wilāya*. In *NU* al-Tirmidhī differentiates the *walī* from the *ḥakīm* by juxtaposing the first rightly guided caliph, Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), to 'Umar (d. 23/644), the second rightly guided caliph.[87] Al-Tirmidhī relates a story about a time when Abū Bakr comes from Yemen with three swords. When his son sees him upon his return, his son asks for one of the swords and Abū Bakr gives it to him directly. The sword was decorated with gilding. 'Umar saw what happened and approached Abū Bakr, stating that he himself had a stronger claim to the sword. Abū Bakr agreed and 'Umar took the sword from Abū Bakr's son. Then, 'Umar went home and separated the gilding from the blade. He then gave the blade back to Abū Bakr's son and returned the gilding to Abū Bakr, the caliph at the time. Al-Tirmidhī explains that Abū Bakr represents the *walī* and exemplifies more closely the state of the Prophet

85 Ibid., fol. 2v.

86 Ibid., fol. 5v. The only authority mentioned in *KḤ* with respect to *ḥikma* is someone he titles, *al-ḥakīm* or 'the Sage,' i.e., the early traditionist Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114/732). Ibn Munabbih is credited with introducing into the Ḥadīth corpus many Jewish and Christian traditions, which came to be known later as Isrā'īliyyāt in Qur'ānic exegesis.

87 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 3, 127–132.

Muḥammad, while ʿUmar represents the *ḥakīm*. Abū Bakr gives freely without any concern for the value of the sword. He sees the need in the moment and addresses it as inspiration from God. ʿUmar, on the other hand, wants to do what is right. He is the *ḥakīm* who differentiates right from wrong. He takes the blade and gives it to Abū Bakr's son, who had asked for the sword, and therefore still receives it in the end. However, ʿUmar gives the gilding to Abū Bakr whom he believes to have a greater need for it as the leader of the fledgling Muslim community. Abū Bakr follows ʿUmar's suggestion when he presents this argument for what is right but, according to al-Tirmidhī, Abū Bakr's first action was the inspired action, whereas ʿUmar's was filtered through an abstract process or evaluation. One significant aspect of this story related by al-Tirmidhī is that both the motifs of *walī* and *ḥakīm* are embodied as Muslim historical figures. The ideal *walī* is Abū Bakr, and the ideal *ḥakīm* is ʿUmar. Abū Bakr is higher in rank than ʿUmar, but both are correct according to al-Tirmidhī within their own levels of *ḥikma* (wisdom) and *maʿrifa* (gnosis). This, and other stories told by al-Tirmidhī, explains how the *ḥakīm* and the *walī* represent separate levels of spiritual attainment and gnosis, although it is significant to note that the *walī* encompasses the *ḥakīm*, but the *ḥakīm* does not encompass the *walī*. The level of the *ḥakīm* frames the level of the *walī* since the *walī* transcends the dualism of right and wrong, but that is only perceptible in the context of those opposites. Al-Tirmidhī is clearly recasting an ancient motif in Islamic terms.

The *ḥakīm* and his *ḥikma* function at the level of opposites. This is a level of knowledge above the rules of permissibility and impermissibility represented by jurisprudence, or Fiqh. *Ḥikma* is an ethical, situational type of knowledge that requires judgments of right and wrong. Essentially, al-Tirmidhī is saying that knowledge of the law is not sufficient to make ethical judgments. If we understand al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī background, the role of the *ḥakīm* as someone who makes ethical judgments is more clearly understood. In the next chapter, I explain in more detail al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī credentials. The Ḥanafī School of law includes a legal procedure called *istiḥsān* (juristic preference). This is the process by which the judge uses juristic preference to rule outside the legal requirements on a matter, if he deems that a legal ruling does not serve the aims of the law. While Ḥanafī *uṣūl* (legal methodology) was systematized in the 4th/10th century, it is obvious from al-Tirmidhī's own works that the main points of Ḥanafī legal methodology were under discussion in the 3rd/9th century. Hence, the motif of the *ḥakīm* is a complex one in al-Tirmidhī's thought, and it is not clear whether current ideas in his time were informing his concept of the sage more than ancient ones were. Both of these influences seem to have

played an important role and the product was al-Tirmidhī's own unique concept of wisdom.

If al-Tirmidhi developed a distinct concept of wisdom for the sage based on Hellenistic and Islamic precedents, then the next question is how this relates to the knowledge of the *walī*. The *walī,* in al-Tirmidhī's gnoseology, rises even above the *ḥikma* of the *ḥakīm*. He or she (since al-Tirmidhī demonstrates that women can also be *awliyā'*) is not bound by opposites, but just like Abū Bakr in his giving of the sword to his son, they take no heed of what is particularly right or wrong in a given situation. Rather, they act according to what God wants in the moment and are thus inspired. The *walī* in al-Tirmidhī's epistemology characterizes the *maqām* (station) of *fardāniyya* (singularity, nonduality) precisely because he goes beyond the dualities that are characteristic of the world of the *ḥakīm*. The *walī* looks at the world in terms of one source and then becomes a conduit for the effusion of benefit from that source into a world of dualities. In *KḤ*, the *ḥakīm* himself has an opposite which is often the *safīh* (or the imbecile), while the *walī* has no opposite since he is the inheritor of the prophets and receives divine knowledge directly from God. This is in contrast to the conventional usage of *walī* as being the opposite of *'aduww* (enemy). The *walī* can also be a *muḥaddath*, or one 'spoken to by God' (for those at the highest levels of *wilāya*), and he is thus a conduit for God's mercy to enter into the world. Al-Tirmidhī's tri-partite division of knowledge into *'ilm*, *ḥikma* and *ma'rifa* provides a strong basis for understanding *ḥikma* in relation to both *'ilm* and *ma'rifa*. Not only does this help in understanding how al-Tirmidhī formed his concept of *wilāya*, but it emphasizes its unique structure among early Islamic mystics. Al-Tirmidhī positions *ḥikma* in relation to *wilāya* because the latter is a normative mode of authority in Arabo-Islamic civilization.[88] The *ḥakīm* is someone whose knowledge of the world connects with knowledge of religious texts in order to make those texts relevant and meaningful. Al-Tirmidhī is opening up the possibility of a third type of authority beyond the diffuse and contractual modes in his proposing an authoritative function for the *ḥukamā'*. However, the authority of *ḥakīm* was not a stable form of authority because it was predicated on knowledge of the world, which could theoretically be open to anyone. It also clearly had foreign roots, drawing upon Hellenistic and biblical precedents. It is not strange then to find that later Ṣūfī authorities such as al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī chose not to pick up on al-Tirmidhī's placing of the *ḥukamā'* as authority figures, just as they did not pick up on al-Junayd's use of this authority type, despite his being one of the eponyms of the Ṣūfiyya. We will see in Chapter 4 how al-Tirmidhī's impact was

88 This is the contractual mode that we have discussed previously.

felt beyond the boundaries of Islamic mysticism as his thought played an important role in the development of the Ḥanafī/Mātūrīdī theological tradition. It is in this tradition that we see the *awliyā'* take on a formal place of authority in the normative discourse through creedal texts. It is also in this genre that we see al-Tirmidhī's notion of *ḥikma* play a significant role.

3.8 The *Uṣūlī* Roots of *Ḥikma*

While looking for the intellectual roots of *ḥikma*, we have travelled long distances in time, space and genre. One aspect of *ḥikma* that has not been discussed up to this point is the use of *ḥikma* in early Islamic legal methodology. Khalid Zahrī states that al-Tirmidhī was one of the earliest proponents of *uṣūl* (legal methodology).[89] Interestingly, *ḥikma* was a term used amongst Ḥanafīs to denote the use of a lesser *'illa* (legal cause) when practicing *istinbāṭ* (derivation) of a legal ruling. This lesser *'illa* was used when the standard legal cause did not serve the greater aims of the law.[90] Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī has numerous books related to Uṣūl al-Fiqh, among them *Ithbāt al-'ilal*,[91] in which he derives the underlying legal cause for approximately seventy rulings in the Sharī'a. Given that Ḥanafī Uṣūl was not formalized for almost a century after by Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/942), we can see that al-Tirmidhī would represent a very early stage in the articulation of *uṣūl* within the Ḥanafī discourse stream. One thing that we know is that al-Tirmidhī connects *ḥikma* directly to knowledge (*'ilm*) and considers *ḥikma* to be the inward (*bāṭin*) aspect to outward knowledge (*'ilm*).[92] This outward knowledge was primarily understood to be knowledge of the Sharī'a. In terms of structure, it seems that al-Tirmidhī extends his use of *ḥikma* in the legal realm by applying a similar use of *ḥikma* to the spiritual realm, by interpreting the underlying causes of actions in the world. Since the macrocosm was understood to be governed by certain relationships between opposites, a knowledge of those opposites would be key to understanding the world as text, or, we could say, the world as God's action.

89 Khalid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 162.

90 Ra'id Naṣrī Abū Mu'nas, *Minhaj al-ta'līl bi al-ḥikma wa atharuhu fī al-tashrī' al-Islāmī*, 46.

91 This is one of the books for which al-Tirmidhī faced persecution from the local scholars of his city.

92 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 7, 13. Al-Tirmidhī mentions the same basic point about the relationship of knowledge (*'ilm*) to wisdom (*ḥikma*) in *Shifā' al-'ilal*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb ithbāt al-'ilal*, 36.

CHAPTER 4

The Theological Significance of *Wilāya*

4.1 Al-Tirmidhī's Scholarly Background

The current research on al-Tirmidhī (Bernd Radtke, Yves Marquet, Sara Sviri, Geneviève Gobillot, ʿAbdallāh Barakat, et al.) still leaves open the question of his audience. As was stated in the previous chapter, al-Tirmidhī is often portrayed as an outlier, someone whose ideas were unique and ahead of his time, and who may have spawned a movement, the Ḥakīmiyya.[1] This perception of al-Tirmidhī depicts him primarily as a mystic. Since Islamic mysticism found its systematization under scholars such as al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī in the 11th-century CE, historians have frequently used the biographical dictionary of al-Sulamī as a point of departure in order to understand the early figures of many proto-Ṣūfī mystical movements such as the Baghdād School, the Baṣran School and the Khurāsānian School.[2] Mystical movements of the 9th-century CE had not yet developed an identity that was socially accepted; hence, both al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī escape persecution primarily because they can claim juristic credentials and hence the *wilāya* of their solidarity group.[3] If

1 Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Hujwīrī (d. 465–469/1072–1077) mentions the Ḥakīmiyya in his treatise on Sufism, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, along with eleven other Ṣūfī sects. Only the Malāmatiyya (The People of Blame) are found in other supporting texts, giving the impression that Hujwīrī's discussion around these 'sects' may be more of an attempt to classify various trends in Sufism during his time, according to what he sees as ideological viewpoints, rather than the presence of actual 'schools.' This may also be an example of a later trend that projects schools (*madhāhib*) back onto the major figures of early Islam who are styled as eponyms. For more on al-Hujwīrī, see Hosain's article "Hujwīrī" in *EI2*.

2 See Chapter 6 of Knysh's (2010) *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* titled, "The Systematization of the Ṣūfī tradition," for further discussion of the period of systematization of Sufism in Khurāsān during the 4th and 5th Islamic centuries.

3 According to Gramlich and van Ess, al-Junayd escaped the *miḥna* of Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888) by claiming to be a jurisprudent (*faqīh*). For more on al-Junayd and the effect of the *miḥna* on the Ṣūfīs of Baghdād in the 9th-century CE, see Knysh's (2010) *Islamic Mysticism*, 62. During the same general time period, al-Tirmidhī faced persecution from certain local scholars in his town of Tirmidh for discoursing on the topic of love, nearly the same accusation leveled at the Ṣūfī mystics of Baghdād during the *miḥna* of Ghulām Khalīl. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) relates from al-Sulamī that when al-Tirmidhī was summoned to Balkh on account of these accusations of heresy, he escaped persecution on account of his conformance to the *madhhab* of the scholars of that city. Al-Subkī's words are *fa-jāʾa ilā balkh fa-qabilūhu bi-sabab muwāfaqatihi iyyāhum ʿalā al-madhhab*, "He went to Balkh and they accepted him because of

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such mystical movements were indeed too nascent to expect a larger audience of mystics whom their writings were targeting, it may be that we need to look elsewhere to situate them historically. The issue of audience is critical for us to situate al-Tirmidhī and to interpret his ideas. In Chapter 3 we showed that *ḥikma* represented a broadly accepted approach to knowledge and a discourse in which al-Tirmidhī was an active participant. We also saw how the term *ḥikma* represented a widely accepted gnoseology from the 8th- to the early 10th-century CE, after which time the same term became associated with Greek knowledge in its Aristotelian and Neoplatonic forms. While *ḥikma* was not represented in the basic knowledge-types outlined by Rosenthal, theology (Kalām) certainly is one of his categories. It makes sense then to look at the discourse stream that supports this knowledge-type in al-Tirmidhī's context. In Khurāsān and Transoxania, Ḥanafism had become widespread by the middle of the 9th-century CE in both legal and theological discourses among the scholarly elite.[4] Muʿtazilī theology was more widely represented than Traditionalism among Ḥanafīs in Khurāsān at this time. Thus, it is important to emphasize that when we refer to Ḥanafī theology, we mean the discourse stream that was connected to works such as *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* and other texts that we address later in this chapter.

When reading entries on al-Tirmidhī in *EIr* and Brill's *EI2* one may question whether we are even dealing with the same individual. Marquet classifies al-Tirmidhī as a traditionalist who is against philosophy and Kalām,[5] while Radtke, on the other hand, classifies him rather ambiguously as a theosophist, borrowing ideas from both Shīʿī and gnostic speculation.[6] Zahrī considers him to be a *mujtahid* of his own school.[7] None of these views fully situates al-Tirmidhī within his scholarly milieu nor addresses the audience for whom al-

his conformance to them with regards to their school." We know that al-Tirmidhī was a Ḥanafī (see Radtke and O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, 15), and it is likely that the Ḥanafīs of Balkh supported him against his detractors. Thus, we can see that like al-Junayd, al-Tirmidhī escapes persecution through his ability to claim a relation to a particular school of law. For al-Junayd it was the school of Abū Thawr, and for al-Tirmidhī it was the school of Abū Ḥanīfa. Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī records two periods of persecution for al-Tirmidhī. It is after the second period of persecution that al-Tirmidhī is exonerated and many of his former enemies become his students. Al-Juyūshī posits that those who may have supported al-Tirmidhī in Balkh were the Malāmatīs, however, there is no particular evidence to support this supposition. Ibrahim al-Juyushi, "Al-Tirmidhī, his works and thought," 173–174.

4 For more on Ḥanafism in eastern Khurāsān, see Wilferd Madelung, "The early Murji'a in Khurāsān and Transoxania," 32–39.

5 Bernd Radtke, "Ḥakīm Termedī," *EIr*.

6 Yves Marquet, "al-Tirmidhī," *EI2*.

7 Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 54–55.

Tirmidhī was writing. In his dissertation on al-Tirmidhī, Radtke provides more detail on al-Tirmidhī's background. He acknowledges that al-Tirmidhī's early background was Ḥanafī; however, he denies that Ḥanafī jurisprudence or theology had any serious effect on his thought.[8] For Radtke, al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī background is only one of many sources that al-Tirmidhī used to develop a unique synthesis that became his own. While there is some credence to this approach, it does not explore the extent to which al-Tirmidhī is indebted to the Ḥanafī theological tradition. Radtke's approach to Ḥanafī theology perceives tradition in rather static terms, similar to the way he portrays other theological movements such as the Muʿtazilīs and Ashʿarīs.[9] Part of the challenge in dealing with Ḥanafī theology is that it has generally been overshadowed by Ashʿarism in the study of Islamic theology.[10] The study of Ḥanafī theology has mostly focused on the early texts of the school such as *Al-fiqh al-akbar I*, *Al-fiqh al-absaṭ* and *Al-ʿālim wa al-mutaʿallim*.[11] Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 332–336/943–947), after whom the Ḥanafī theological school was later

8 Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmiḏī*, 80.

9 Citing Madelung and Gardet, Radtke makes the relation of works (*aʿmāl*) to belief (*imān*) an important point of distinction between the Ḥanafis and the Muʿtazilīs. However, when we look at Ḥanafī theological works of the 3rd/9th-centuries CE, we find that this distinction breaks down, with Ḥanafīs adopting the view that belief itself is a type of "work." Abū Muṭīʿ al-Nasafī (d. 318/930), the main spokesman of Hanafī theology prior to al-Māturīdī, claims that belief itself is a "work" in his *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-bidaʿ*. See Marie Bernand, "Le kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-bidaʿ d'Abū Muṭīʿ Makḥūl al-Nasafī," 118. It is understandable that Radtke would generalize about the positions of particular schools; however to say that al-Tirmidhī was following the Muʿtazilīs in particular on this point of doctrine is not accurate given that al-Tirmidhī's position is more nuanced than would initially appear.

10 Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering*, 102.

11 Schacht discusses an early Murjiʾī text *Al-ʿālim wa l-mutaʿallim* attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa through the *riwāya* of Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī (d. 208/823) although Schacht argues that Abū Muqātil was the original author of the text. According to Schacht, this text reflects the theological milieu of the 8th-century CE. Schacht's discussion of early Murjiʾī and Ḥanafī Kalām does not go beyond al-Māturīdī. In *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, Wilferd Madelung discusses the historical importance of the early Ḥanafī theological school up to Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī as it appears in the eastern Islamic lands; however, his discussion is more historical and does not touch upon the positions of the later school. Gardet (1956) discusses faith amongst the various early sects of Islam distinguishing between early Murjiʾism and the Ḥanafī-Maturidī school; however he does not discuss Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) or the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī scholars after him such as Maḥmūd b. Zayd al-Lāmishī (d. 539/1144). Claude Gilliot goes the furthest in outlining some of the positions of the later Māturīdī School but is still very general, giving preference to authors of the Ashʿarī School after al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), a contemporary of Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī.

named, has recently been studied closely by Rudolph Ulrich and Mustafa Ceriç.[12] Nevertheless, a more nuanced discussion of al-Māturīdī and his relationship to the later Ḥanafī theological school that bears his name has yet to be elucidated.

4.2 Major Texts of the Ḥanafī Theological Tradition

Most studies of Ḥanafī theology begin with Arent Jan Wensinck's *Muslim Creed*. Wensinck evaluated three foundational texts in Ḥanafī theology, *Al-Fiqh al-akbar I*, *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* and *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*. The first of these texts is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa[13] while the second is narrated as if it is from Abū Ḥanīfa but, according to Wensinck, probably originated sometime between the time of Abū Ḥanīfa and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[14] The third is often attributed to Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, though Joseph Schacht prefers Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983). According to Wensinck, the first two texts, which represent an earlier stage within the school, are polemical and primarily attempt to refute the positions of other movements. Both *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* and the *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* are thought to have originated around the latter half of the 8th-century CE. *Al-fiqh al-akbar II* discusses more advanced aspects of Kalām and follows a format that resembles an organized creed, with two sections devoted to the two parts of the Muslim testification of faith (*shahāda*). Wensinck does not follow the development of the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī School in its fullest extent since he does not show how the creed continued to develop in the Ḥanafī School after the 3rd Islamic century (9th-century CE); rather, he moves on to discuss al-Ashʿarī, al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Ghazālī in their development of Muslim *Kalām*.[15] While there is some overlap between the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools of theology, this overlap primarily occurs much later in the 14th-century CE with Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1390). The Māturīdī School is often portrayed as a pale shadow of the Ashʿarī School. This is unfortunate because the premises and points of doctrine of the Māturīdī

12 Ulrich Rudolph, *Al-Maturidi und die Sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand*.

13 Both Wensinck and Schacht demonstrate that *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* represents most closely what we can assume to be some of the original creedal teachings of Abū Ḥanīfa. See Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 187.

14 Ibid.

15 The general trend in studies of early Islamic theology is to focus on theologians from the central Islamic lands after al-Ashʿarī, leaving the later Ḥanafī-Māturīdī school almost completely neglected.

School represent a middle ground between Muʿtazilī *Kalām* and Ashʿarī *Kalām*. One of the main authors of the later Māturīdī School, Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1115), shows an elevated level of sophistication in his argumentation in his *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, but does not follow al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarī model in adopting a framework that incorporates Aristotelian logic.[16] While Wensinck's model for the early development of the creed is accurate for the early Murjiʾī-Ḥanafī School, it is not precise enough to help us situate al-Tirmidhī within this tradition. We propose filling out Wensinck's model by adding an additional stage between the *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* and *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*.

Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī is considered the eponym of the Māturīdī School but his thought clearly builds upon earlier texts in the eastern Ḥanafī tradition.[17] By the early 11th-century CE, the Māturīdī School had produced texts of depth and sophistication far exceeding that of *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*. Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī's *Tabṣirat al-adilla* was a monumental work establishing the position of the Ḥanafī School within the larger context of philosophy and theology.[18] His student Maḥmūd b. Zayd al-Lāmishī (d. 539/1144) wrote a mid-sized work, *al-Tamhīd,* which demonstrated the extent of that sophistication. One probable reason that al-Tirmidhī's connection to the Ḥanafī School has not been thoroughly explored is because most studies in Ḥanafī theology either deal with early texts attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa or to later texts by al-Māturīdī and post-Māturīdī scholars. Two Ḥanafī theological works that date just prior to al-Māturīdī that are coterminous with the life of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī are *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*[19] by al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī[20] and *Kitab al-radd ʿalā al-bidaʿ* by Abū Muṭīʿ al-Nasafī (d. 318/930), both dating approximately toward the end of the 9th-century CE and possibly the very early part of the 10th-century CE.[21]

16 Claude Gilliot only briefly mentions Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī in his treatment of the Ḥanafī theological tradition.

17 Claude Gilliot, "La théologie musulmane," 154.

18 Abū Muʿīn an-Nasafī is also responding to Ashʿarism in his *Tabṣirat al-adilla*. Ibid., 161.

19 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī's *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* is also found under the title *Al-radd ʿalā aṣḥāb al-ahwā'* and was translated at an early period into Persian. The copies that have reached us contain a high degree of variation in wording. The manuscript of *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* that I obtained from the British Museum Or. 12781 differs significantly in wording from the printed 1837 Bulaq edition.

20 Despite the current death date of al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī (d. 342/953), we have an approximate date for the authoring of his work *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* since we know that it was commissioned by the Samānid ruler Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad (279–295/892–907) at the end of the 9th-century CE. Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 30.

21 Claude Gilliot, "La théologie musulmane," 154. Keith Lewinstein provides the date of 290/902 for the authorship of *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam.* Keith Lewinstein, "Notes on Eastern Ḥanafite Heresiography," 588. Both Sezgin and Schacht assume that *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*

While Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*[22] appears about the same time or just after the works of al-Samarqandī and al-Nasafī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* represents a new departure for Ḥanafī theology as described in the words of Claude Gilliot, "avec lui (al-Māturīdī) commence la théologie dialectique en Transoxiane." The works of both al-Samarqandī and al-Nasafī summarize and codify ideas that had developed over the previous century within the school and thus are representative of ideas that were formed prior to the 9th-century CE. Not only was al-Tirmidhī an heir to these ideas, but, as we will show, was an important figure in the transition from the creedal stage of Ḥanafī theology to the dialectical stage that has become associated with al-Māturīdī.

4.3 The Development of Ḥanafī Theology

As was stated previously, the first Ḥanafī theological texts such as *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* and *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* deal mainly with interfaith polemics. Hence, the beginning words of *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* are, *al-īmān iqrārᵘⁿ bi-l-lisān wa-taṣdīqᵘⁿ bi-l-janān*, that is, "Belief is confessing with the tongue and attesting with the heart."[23] This creedal statement addresses Khārijī notions that equate actions with belief.[24] The definition of belief just mentioned eventually becomes foundational to the Ḥanafī School, but, as we will see, is not left uncontested. Most of the creedal statements in *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* attempt to take a

was authored after al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, and that it was the first work in that tradition; however, *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* shows no signs of al-Māturīdī's influence. There is no mention of *ḥikma* as an overarching principle, nor does *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* align to the new creedal structure that al-Māturīdī inaugurates that distinguished between *ilāhiyyāt*, points of doctrine on Godhood, and *nubuwwāt*, doctrines relating to prophecy. If *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* was indeed part of al-Māturīdī's School, it would surely have incorporated at least some of these elements. Finally, the date of authorship of *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* suggested by Lewinstein makes it more probably that it was authored either before or at nearly the same time as al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. It seems that the motivation to place *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* after *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* may derive from the death date of al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī falling after that of al-Māturīdī; however, death dates are notoriously difficult to prove accurately, especially when dealing with contemporaries or near contemporaries in this time period.

22 Despite there being some discussion by Michel Allard (1967) and J. Meric Passagno (1984) over the authenticity of the sole surviving manuscript of *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* as belonging to al-Māturīdī, both Gimaret (1980) and Özervarlı (1997) consider *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* to be authentic after a comparison of the book with various passages quoted from it in Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī's *Tabṣirat al-adilla*.

23 Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125

24 See also Madelung's discussion of early Ḥanafī theological polemics and their relation to politics in *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, 15.

medial position with respect to some point of theological controversy in the first part of the 8th-century CE. For example, one article in *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* states that belief neither increases nor decreases. This again becomes a basic element of the Ḥanafī creed. This follows from the Murji'ī doctrine of faith that sought to close the door on accusations of unbelief (*takfīr*) that were associated with various movements such as the Khārijīs and the extremist (*ghulāt*) Shī'īs.[25] The various statements of these early creeds do not have any logical ordering, but rather stake out positions in relation to Khārijī, Murji'ī, Qadarī, Jabrī, Jahmī, Shī'ī and Mu'tazilī sympathies.[26] If we compare the contents of *Waṣiyyat abī ḥanīfa* and *Al-fiqh al-akbar I*, representing the early stage up to the end of the 8th-century CE, to those of *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*, representing the creed at the end of the 10th-century CE, we find many of the same creedal elements with some important new additions. *Al-fiqh al-akbar II* discusses four new elements beyond what we find in *Al-fiqh al-akbar I*: saints and their relation to prophets; the controversy of love and its relation to antinomianism; the division between attributes and essence with respect to the Godhead; and finally, the Aristotelian concept of body, essence and accident.[27] When we look at the two texts that we claim represent a medial stage in the development of early Ḥanafī theology, *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* and *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-bidaʿ*, as it was expressed in the 9th-century CE in Khurāsān and Transoxania, we find mention of only the first three of the four elements that distinguish *Al-fiqh al-akbar II* from the earlier Ḥanafī texts. The Aristotelian body-essence-accident concept appears to enter Ḥanafī theology with the arrival of al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. When looking at al-Tirmidhī's works, we also find discussions on the role of love, the position of saints vis-à-vis prophets and the role of attributes in describing the Godhead. We do not, however, find the Aristotelian notion of body-essence-accident that appears in al-Māturīdī's work. The Greek Hellenic elements found in al-Tirmidhī's works emanate from the remnants of the Hellenistic mystical and philosophical heritage that permeated the scholarly culture in Khurāsān and Transoxania at that time.[28] Within a scholarly and

25 For more on the Murji'ī roots of Sunnīsm see Khalid Blankenship's article "The early creed" in the *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, 42–45.

26 Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 131. These are examples of early religious and political movements in Islam that were eventually considered heretical by the majority Sunnī heresiographical tradition.

27 Ibid., 188–197.

28 For more on the relationship between Al-Tirmidhī and Greek philosophy, see Chapter 2. Radtke posits that al-Tirmidhī's thought represents an old Islamic theosophy, very different than the new Islamic theosophy of Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). According to Radtke, it was not until al-Farābī (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīna (d. 428/1037) that

cultural milieu such as this, it is unlikely that al-Tirmidhī was not aware of Aristotle as Radtke assumes. It is probable that al-Tirmidhī consciously chose to avoid some aspects of Aristotelianism while giving preference to elements of Pythagoreanism and Lettrism.[29] Throughout the translation movement in Baghdād during the first part of the 9th-century CE, Arab Muslims consciously chose to translate scientific and philosophical works, but eschewed Greek literature such as the plays of Aristophanes and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. This may have been because ʿAbbāsid culture already prided itself in its own literary tradition. Regardless, we can assume that al-Tirmidhī was making a conscious choice with respect to the various elements he wanted to include in his many works. For al-Tirmidhī, such decisions were often dictated by inspiration, as he records in his autobiography that he ceased his study of the Zodiac because he received inspiration from God that this was unbecoming of his spiritual level.

4.4 Al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī Credentials

Al-Tirmidhī's works lead us to look more closely at the Ḥanafī theological tradition. The study of this discourse stream has uncovered several texts that correspond closely to al-Tirmidhī's time period and the topics of his thought. Now we will more closely examine how al-Tirmidhī's theological views correspond to ideas within *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* and *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-bidaʿ*. Before that,

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Aristotelian philosophy and Neoplatonism made its mark on Islamic mystical thought. See Radtke's *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, 7. If we look, however, at contemporaries of al-Tirmidhī such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/933–934) and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/923 or 323/935), we find individuals for whom Aristotelian thought and Neoplatonic ideas were not unknown. *Kitāb al-ḥikma* also demonstrates that al-Tirmidhī was closely aware of Galenic humorism. In Chapter 2, we showed how al-Tirmidhī's thought corresponds closely to various aspects of Pythagorean cosmology. We also showed how the juxtaposition of the *ḥakīm* to the *ṭabīb* (physician) in al-Tirmidhī's *Kitāb al-ḥikma* relates to the Pythagorean notion of macrocosm versus microcosm. The *ḥakīm* understands the macrocosm through his understanding of the opposites in the world just as the physician understands the human body or the microcosm through the four opposites of hot, cold, wet and dry.

29 Lettrism is a cosmological movement in Islam and Jewish Kabala that views the world as originally composed of letters spoken by God in the creation of the universe. For al-Tirmidhī, the Arabic letters represent the key to understanding the roots of words and thus the sources of created things.

however, we will review al-Tirmidhī's educational background and what others have said about his relationship to the Ḥanafī tradition.

Al-Ḥujwīrī relates in *Kashf al-maḥjūb* that al-Tirmidhī had studied Fiqh (*'ilm al-ra'y*) with one of the close companions of Abū Ḥanīfa.[30] While this is improbable given the distance in time between the death of Abū Ḥanīfa and the birth of al-Tirmidhī, it is not impossible that he could have studied Fiqh with one of the students of Abū Ḥanīfa's students. Radtke mentions that al-Tirmidhī was born to a "theological" family, [31] sometime between 220 and 230 A.H. (835 and 845 CE) in the city of Tirmidh. He studied *'ilm al-ra'y* and *'ilm al-āthār* from a young age.[32] According to Radtke, the reference to *'ilm al-ra'y* in his autobiography clearly indicates his relationship to Ḥanafī Fiqh, which was prevalent in the eastern Islamic lands at the time.[33] In a passage from *Al-masā'il al-maknūna*, al-Tirmidhī harshly criticizes the students of Abū Ḥanīfa while remaining respectfully silent about Abū Ḥanīfa himself.[34] Despite his scathing criticism, the passage belies al-Tirmidhī's intimate knowledge of early Ḥanafī jurisprudence and its major proponents:

فانظر إلى علمهم الذي قيّده في كتبهم من علوم الأحكام أحسبه يقع في أكثر من ألف جلد لأبي حنيفة رحمه الله وأما لأبي يوسف وكتب زفر وأسد واللؤلؤ ومحمد بن الحسن فهل ترى في شيء منها ذكر الميعاد وصفات الجنة والنار . . . فأهل الرأي في خلو من هذا العلم كله إنما استماعهم بالأذان وفكرهم بالقلوب في خصومات النفوس وشرّهم ومكرهم وخدعهم وخيانتهم ما يوجب الحكم عليهم في ذلك وما يحلّ لهم وما يحرم عليهم.[35]

Look at their knowledge, the rulings of which they have written down in their books. I would estimate it to be found in over a thousand volumes attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa, God have mercy on him. As for Abū Yūsuf and

30 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 14.

31 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 1. Also, Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 1.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 15.

34 Elsewhere, al-Tirmidhī considers Abū Ḥanīfa to be a scholar of the outward (*'ulamā' al-ẓāhir*) and not a scholar of the inward (*'ulamā' al-bāṭin*). 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Baraka, *Al-Ḥakīm al-tirmidhī wa-naẓariyyatuhu*, 90.

35 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Al-masā'il al-maknūna*, 95.

> the books of Zufar, Asad, al-Lu'lu' and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, do you see in any of them mention of the Next Life or the description of Paradise and Hell? .... So, *Ahl al-Ra'y* (the Ḥanafīs) are devoid of all of this. Their hearing is only with their ears, their thinking with their hearts is only the bickering of souls, and their evil, devising, deceit and treachery require a judgment against them in all those things as well as in what is permissible for them and what is forbidden for them.

It is evident that al-Tirmidhī's early education was Ḥanafī and that later in his career, he would respond to what he saw as deficiencies in the approach of Ḥanafī jurisprudence. Al-Tirmidhī not only criticized scholars of Ḥanafī law but also Ḥanafī/Murji'ī theology as well. In the beginning of al-Tirmidhī's *Khatm al-awliyā'* (*Khatm al-awliyā'*), he addresses his audience directly. Speaking as if to a student asking a question, al-Tirmidhī responds:

> وذكرت أن ناسا يقولون إن الولاية مجهولة عند أهلها ومن حسب نفسه وليا فهو بعيد منها فاعلم أن هؤلاء الذين يخوضون في هذا الكلام ليسوا من هذا الأمر في شيء إنما هو قوم يعتبرون شأن الولاية من طريق العلم ويتكلّمون بالمقاييس والظنون وبالتوهّم من أنفسهم.[36]

> You mentioned there are some people who say that *wilāya* is unknown to its people and whoever considers himself to be a *walī* is far from being so. Know that those who delve into this discourse are not a party to this affair. They are a people who consider *wilāya* to be from a type of outward knowledge and they discuss it through methods and guesswork and through delusion from themselves.

Wilāya was a topic consistently addressed by the Ḥanafī theologians as we will see in more detail later. Al-Tirmidhī's use of the word "*kalām*" here and "*yatakallamūna*" indicates an address towards theologians. This is based on al-Tirmidhī's use of the same wording to warn the traveler on the path of *ma'rifa* about the "*mutakallim*" in his *KḤ*. There, al-Tirmidhī uses an analogy to describe the true reality of the human being's dependence upon God, inwardly and outwardly. Al-Tirmidhī likens the reliance of the human being on God to someone held dangling in the air by a hand. Were the hand to let go for an

36 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften*, vol. 1, 1.

instant, the one being held would perish.[37] In this way, the world, like the air, does not support the person. In truth, only God is the real support. He uses this analogy to emphasize a disposition he sees lacking in the theologian. For al-Tirmidhī, the theologian suffers from arrogance because he thinks he can describe God in his own terms. After this parable, al-Tirmidhī uses the following words to warn his reader about the pitfalls of Kalām:

> ثم أن يخلص من آفات الكلام فإنّ المتكلّم مقدر لما يفتي بها الملك ومقتدر لتقدير أموره وتدبير أعماله فكيف يجتري أن يقدّر أو يهتدي أو يدبّر من أعماله على مقدار أعظمته وملكه وكيف يرى نفسه يصلح لذلك.[38]
>
> Then he must desist from the pitfalls of *kalām*, for the *mutakallim* (theologian) estimates what the king himself decrees and estimates in order to assess his affairs and consider his actions – so how is it that he should presume to estimate or be correct, or think about any of his (the king's) actions to the extent of what is due to him (the king), in terms of his (the king's) greatness and his dominion? And how should he (the theologian) see himself capable of that?

Despite al-Tirmidhī's harsh criticism of the theologian (*mutakallim*), his works demonstrate that he is not completely opposed to Kalām. On the following page of his *KḤ* he counsels the "*mutakallim*" (theologian) to take his "*kalām*" from God and to consider what God manifests on his tongue before he begins to speak about matters related to God.[39] For al-Tirmidhī, Kalām spoils *ḥikma* because it circumvents the process of 'knowing God through spirituality' through its emphasis on 'knowing God through the intellect.' However, as we shall see later in this chapter, not all Kalām is problematic for al-Tirmidhī, but mainly the aspect of it that speculates abstractly about the nature of God. Other aspects of Kalām are upheld by al-Tirmidhī, such as the idea of God having a particular number of attributes, discussion about the nature of belief and its relationship to acts, as well as the discipline of heresiography. Also, when we look at al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya*/*walāya*, it is deeply colored by his theological background. This can only be the case for someone who at a very young age studied traditional Ḥanafī Fiqh and Kalām by rote memorization as al-Tirmidhī has indicated in his autobiography.

37 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 7r.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.

Al-Tirmidhī's criticism of the practitioners of Fiqh and Kalām in his time points to his sense of independence and to the still fluid nature of the discourse stream around legal and theological doctrines in his milieu. It would be incorrect, however, to state that al-Tirmidhī was a Traditionalist, as Marquet claims, or that he adopted Muʿtazilī views, as Radtke claims, since he condemns both of these groups in line with the standard Ḥanafī theological position of his time.[40] Rather, al-Tirmidhī is better cast as a reformer who is reacting to the way knowledge was understood and conveyed in a particular religious context, which was predominately Ḥanafī. Because we have designated al-Tirmidhī as someone who belonged to the Ḥanafī theological milieu, then we can expect his ideas to conform generally to the texts of that school both before him and after him, and he should be in conversation with its basic precepts. Furthermore, the later Ḥanafī tradition should claim him in some way. We now demonstrate how both of these hypotheses can be verified.

4.5 Al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī Theology

Radtke states that al-Tirmidhī follows the Muʿtazilī position with respect to particular aspects of belief (*īmān*) since al-Tirmidhī stresses throughout his various works that belief (*īmān*) must include actions (*aʿmāl*). Radtke writes, "Glaube ist daher für Tirmidhī nicht nur, wie nach hanafitischer lehre, reiner bekenntnisakt, sondern, als im menshcen zure wirkung kommend, immer gleichzeitig auch äusseres tun: īmān ist zugleich auch werk (*ʿamal*). Hierin folgt Tirmidhī den muʿtaziliten."[41] There are several problems with this analysis of al-Tirmidhī's theological views on belief. The first is that it does not consider al-Tirmidhī's views on language, that is, his insistence on the non-existence of true synonyms (*mutarādifāt*). It also does not account for his audience, nor does it reflect the nuanced approach of al-Tirmidhī toward mystical discourse and teaching. On first impression, one would wonder how al-Tirmidhī could be called a Ḥanafī while contravening one of the primary precepts of the school. We must remember again that al-Tirmidhī preceded the period of formalization of the schools of law and theology, and that is why I prefer to use the term 'discourse stream' to identify a less formal and more fluid period. The Ḥanafī School of theology did not become a formal school of thought until sometime in the mid to late 10th-century CE with the advent of al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. Before al-Māturīdī, we have a great deal of diversity among Ḥanafīs in

40 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Baraka, *Naẓariyyatuhu fī al-wilāya*, 79–80.

41 Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmiḏī: ein islamischer Theosoph*, 81.

terms of their theological viewpoints. One of the reasons al-Tirmidhī insists that belief must include works (*aʿmāl*) is that he seeks to differentiate the word belief (*īmān*) from submission (*islām*). Since there are no true synonyms according to al-Tirmidhī, belief (*īmān*) and submission (*islām*) cannot be the same thing.[42] In a sense, al-Tirmidhī is trying to elevate the use of the word belief (*īmān*) above its formal use in theological discourse to conform to what he sees as the true use of this word as it is articulated in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

Furthermore, al-Tirmidhī has a specific audience in mind for certain of his works. In his *Kitāb khatm al-awliyā*ʾ al-Tirmidhī writes as if he is engaging in a conversation with one of his students and the book is organized in terms of a dialog.[43] For example, an unnamed speaker asks the question, "What is the firmest handhold?" Al-Tirmidhī responds, "It is fitter for me to speak about it when I find the right situation because it is *ḥikmat al-ḥikma*!" The student replies, "Give us a chance; consider [the matter] out of concern [for us]!" Al-Tirmidhī answers, "Yes, ask out of your poverty to your Lord!" The student then asks again, "What is the firmest handhold?" At this point, al-Tirmidhī relents and proceeds to answer the question.[44] Since al-Tirmidhī's works often have a pedagogical value for those whom he considered his students, he emphasizes a more rigorous definition of belief than that accorded by the theologians who are defining belief for a wider audience. In other words, to be a really 'true believer' (as an aspirant to the path of *maʿrifa*, or gnosis) one must demonstrate one's beliefs through action. Al-Tirmidhī does not give ordinary Muslims the title *muʾminūn* (believers); rather, he employs a term used in Ḥanafī theological texts to refer to ordinary believers, which is, *muwaḥḥidūn* (those who have testified to God's unity).[45] Hence, al-Tirmidhī does consider such persons (*muwaḥḥidūn*) to be Muslims and in that respect, does not contravene the Ḥanafī theological position, which states that a Muslim is anyone who simply confesses to the faith on the tongue (*iqrārᵘⁿ bi al-lisān*) and testifies in the heart (*taṣdīqᵘⁿ bi al-qalb*). Al-Tirmidhī does, however, depart from the Ḥanafīs

42 Al-Tirmidhī's work, *Al-furūq wa-manʿ al-tarāduf*, sets out to demonstrate how various terms that are thought to be synonymous are actually different in meaning. The idea of the non-existence of true synonyms is an idea that later becomes a part of Ḥanafī Uṣūl (legal methodology).

43 It is unclear whether or not this is actually a recorded dialog or whether it is a rhetorical stratagem by al-Tirmidhī. Most scholars of al-Tirmidhī consider it to be a rhetorical stratagem; however, Khālid Zahrī thinks that it may in fact reflect the true oral nature of al-Tirmidhī's teaching style. Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 113.

44 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften*, 72.

45 This is to be distinguished from the use of *muwaḥḥidūn* in the central lands of Islamdom during the 9th-century CE, which used the term to refer to a high rank of believer.

of his time when he describes belief (*īmān*) to be a higher stage than *islām* (submission and entrance into the faith). The normative Ḥanafī tradition of his time equates belief (*īmān*) with submission (*islām*). The *muwaḥḥidūn* are those who profess outwardly with their tongues and believe inwardly in their hearts, they but do not necessarily do anything else that would distinguish themselves as Muslims.[46] According to al-Tirmidhī, these *muwaḥḥidūn* are the ones who will enter Hell and then eventually leave it to enter Paradise, in contradistinction to the *mu'minūn* (believers). This position necessitates a response by al-Tirmidhī to the prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) that states that the *shahāda* (statement of confession) is itself weighty enough to enter someone into Paradise. Al-Tirmidhī interprets this *ḥadīth* by saying that the statement of confession referred to in this *ḥadīth* is the confession that happens just before death, since at death, a person's heart is not connected to worldly matters and is thus able to make a sincere and pure confession.[47] It is evident here that al-Tirmidhī's positions with respect to belief (*īmān*) are in conversation with the theological tradition of his time. Although some of his positions on theological and creedal matters differ from the main positions of what came to be the Māturīdī School, this can be credited to his having preceded al-Māturīdī at a time when the Ḥanafī School of theology was still quite diverse and in a state of flux.

Al-Tirmidhī directly discusses another major creedal point in the Ḥanafī School, which is the controversy over whether or not belief increases or decreases. As stated earlier, all the early Ḥanafī creeds that can be attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa and his direct students negate the idea that belief increases or decreases. This point of doctrine appears to conflict directly with a verse in Chapter Eight (*Al-anfāl*) of the Qur'ān, which reads, "They only are the believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited unto them they increase in their faith, and who trust in their Lord," Qur'ān [8:2].[48] In response to this, al-Tirmidhī's words are quite precise and

46 The term *muwaḥḥid*, in this sense, is used by the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theologians of Khurāsān and Transoxania during from the 9th- to 11th-centuries CE. See Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī's use of this term in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 102. Also see Abū Mu'īn al-Nasafī's (d. 508/1114) use of this term in *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, 24. The Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theologians used the term *muwaḥḥidūn* to denote a believer who merely professed the statement of confession but who was generally ignorant of the legal and theological particulars of Islam.

47 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 1, 62–63.

48 Marmaduke William Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Dorset Press, 1988).

indicate his knowledge of the Ḥanafī position and his need to reconcile it with the Qur'ānic text. He states:

ومن ههنا استجاز من قال الإيمان يزيد وكما يزيد فإنّه ينقص سمّي الزائد من النور في صدره إيمانا وما نقص فمنه ينقص والأصل الذي منه بدأ التوحيد قائم فبأقلّ النور يصير موحّدا فاطمأنّ به.[49]

> And from this, it is permissible for one to say that belief increases and just as it increases, it decreases. The light which increases in his chest is called belief, and what decreases, decreases from it (that light), but the original bit with which he started his belief in the oneness of God remains. Thus, it is with this smallest bit of light that he becomes a *muwaḥḥid* (one who confesses to God's unity) and his heart finds repose in it.

Here, al-Tirmidhī attempts to reconcile two positions that seem contradictory.[50] From what we have seen so far, the outlines of al-Tirmidhī's concept of belief have become clear. The *muwaḥḥid* is the one who confesses belief with his tongue and believes in *tawḥīd* (God's unity) with his heart. That original 'belief' is a light that God casts into the heart of the *muwaḥḥid*. As that point of light expands, belief also expands until one becomes, as al-Tirmidhī states, *al-mu'min al-bāligh* (a mature believer).[51] Any actual decrease in belief is a decrease from the amount of belief that exceeded that original point of light. However, that point of light itself cannot increase or decrease; it is either present or disappears completely, in which case one is no longer a Muslim. Al-Tirmidhī's use of the word "*istajāza*" (to be permissible), in reference to those who consider belief to increase and decrease, indicates that he gave preference to the Ḥanafī position that belief does not increase or decrease. Hence, we find that al-Tirmidhī's definition of belief upholds the Ḥanafī position but modifies it in a unique and creative way. Al-Tirmidhī's attempt to reconcile two contradictory theological positions betrays his own active involvement in developing a theological doctrine of belief that rationalizes various points of doctrine in Islam. On the one hand, he criticizes speculative theology for what he considers to be its excesses, yet he also takes very specific theological positions in relation to the theological tradition in which he was schooled. Reconciling

49 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 124.

50 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Baraka, *Naẓariyyatuhu*, 119.

51 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 2, 126.

seemingly contradictory statements in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth literature is, in fact, one of the functions of the *ḥukamāʾ* according to al-Tirmidhī's approach to *ḥikma*. What disturbs al-Tirmidhī is the discourse that surrounds God's attributes and actions and how they connect with or are separate from God's essence. For al-Tirmidhī, this is the blameworthy aspect of theology.

One of the reasons that it has been difficult to reconcile al-Tirmidhī's approach to theology is because Kalām has come to mean Islamic theology in a more general sense. When al-Tirmidhī refers to Kalām and the rational theologians (*mutakallimūn*), he does not have theology in the general sense in mind. Rather, he is addressing groups that he sees as heretical (*ahl al-bidʿa*) who were associated with Kalām, namely the Muʿtazilīs or their early forebears. In *Nawādir al-uṣūl*, al-Tirmidhī lists the groups who he considers to be *ahl al-bidʿa*, and these accord exactly with the main groups anathematized by the Ḥanafī School, namely the Mushabbiha, Qadariyya, Jabriyya and Jahmiyya. For al-Tirmidhī, *dīn* (religion) is something that the soul must submit to. Always taking opportunities to make linguistic connections, he relates *dīn* to the verb *dāna,* which has the meaning of abasement. Al-Tirmidhī connects the idea that *dīn* (religion) presumes that the *nafs* (soul) abases itself. He then explains that God sent down a clear revelation that would leave no room for other than submission. He uses the word "*kalām*" for revelation, possibly hinting that the true "*kalām*" is God's speech and not the theological speculations of the groups he mentions. He says, *fa anzala kalām*^{an} *furqān*^{an} *yufarriqu bayna al-haqqi wa l-bāṭil*, meaning, "So he (God) sent down a clarifying speech which divides between truth and falsehood."[52] Al-Tirmidhī does not consider the Ḥanafī theologians to come under the rubric of Kalām. The Ḥanafī theological school is what he considers to be the 'alternative' to the Kalām of heretical groups that he considers to have delved into matters they do not understand and who accused others of unbelief thereby. For al-Tirmidhī, the *mutakallimūn* refer primarily to the Muʿtazilī theologians.[53] In the same passage, al-Tirmidhī all but identifies the Muʿtazilīs by name. He says:

52 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, 210. I used the 1972 edition of *Nawādir al-uṣūl* here because the reference in the 2010 edition could not be located.

53 From the middle of the 8th-century CE to the middle of the 9th-century CE the appellation *mutakallim* was applied almost exclusively to Muʿtazilī theologians. Henrik Lagerlund. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 666. Also see, Adang et. al, *A Common Rationality*.

فالزائغون . . . تركوا الخضوع لله وتسليم النفس إلى الله . . . سد عليهم باب القدر فاشتدّوا وتعمّقوا في طلبه حتّى هلكوا وأدّاهم ذلك إلى أن برّؤوا الله من قدرته وشاركوه في مشيئته إفكا وافتراء.[54]

> Hence, those who are astray … have left abasement to God most high and submitting the soul to God … the door of ability (*qadar*) was closed to them so they became extreme, and they delved deeply in searching for it until they perished. And this led them to divest God of His true ability, and they co-shared with Him in His will as a lie and a fabrication…"

The word "*qadar*" here, in the sense of *ahl al-qadar* (the people of *qadar*), is a term often applied to the Muʿtazilīs because it refers to their considering humans as able to freely create their own actions. Al-Tirmidhī is almost sarcastic here by saying that the door of *qadar* was closed upon them because they sought to be people of *qadar*. In other words, they were left spiritually impotent because they insisted on their own ability to create their own actions. Al-Tirmidhī is against Muʿtazilī theology because it attempts to understand and describe God in ways that, according to al-Tirmidhī, God does not describe himself. Ḥanafī theology in this period was creedal in nature and sought above all to find a middle position in relation to various early sects within Islam. This is how al-Tirmidhī approached theology in contrast to the speculative approach of the Muʿtazilīs of his time; although it should be noted that his incorporation of Ḥanafī theology is very subtle and easy to miss. This is because he was not primarily concerned with theology or heresiography. He was more concerned with presenting what he saw as the viable alternatives to speculative theology, which are *ḥikma* (wisdom) and *maʿrifa* (gnosis). As we discussed in the previous chapter, *ḥikma* entails 'reading' (or seeing and intuiting) the world through its opposites.[55] In this respect, al-Tirmidhī is saying that the mystic is one who must strive to understand God through the world as another type of 'revelation.'

In another place in the same passage, al-Tirmidhī distinguishes between *ikhtilāf* and *iftirāq*. He uses the term *ikhtilāf* to indicate differing in a respectful

54 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 4, 180.

55 Umberto Eco describes the Hermetic approach to reading the world as 'text' in *The Limits of Interpretation*. Eco argues that Renaissance attempts to interpret the world were based on seeing order in the world as a product of resemblances between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This approach is similar to al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma* and further points to an underlying source in Greek Hermetic thought that informed both traditions. Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 23–26.

manner based on *ijtihād al-raʾy* (independent reasoning). According to al-Tirmidhī, this type of scholarly differing is a mercy.[56] True scholars, al-Tirmidhī says are, *ahlu mawadda wa ʿatf* or, "people of love and affection." In contrast to this, he describes the groups who instigate separation (*iftirāq*) as those who cause disharmony, which results in accusations of unbelief (*kufr*).[57] The groups that al-Tirmidhī accuses of *iftirāq* are the same groups that Abū Muṭīʿ al-Nasafī accuses of heresy in his Ḥanafī heresiographical work mentioned earlier, *Al-radd ʿalā ahl al-bidaʿ wa l-ahwāʾ*. In this book, Abū Muṭīʿ al-Nasafī targets six major heresies, each of which he then breaks down into twelve sub-heresies, to make a total of seventy-two heresies, a symbolic number mentioned in a report attributed to the Prophet about the number of heretical sects in Islam. These six major heretical groups are: al-Ḥarūriyya, al-Rawāfiḍa, al-Qadariyya, al-Jabriyya, al-Jahmiyya and al-Murjiʾa.[58] Al-Tirmidhī mentions all of these groups in the same passage mentioned above except for the last group, al-Murjiʾa.[59] One group, al-Ḥarūriyya, does not appear in the passage just mentioned from *NU*; nevertheless, this group does appear as a heretical sect in another passage in *NU*.[60] The groups al-Tirmidhī lists in *NU* are al-Mushabbiha,

56 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 4, 183.

57 Ibid., vol. 4, 186.

58 Marie Bernand, "Le kitāb al-radd ʿalā ahl al-bidaʿ wa-l-ahwāʾ," 60. The Ḥanafīs are often themselves accused of being Murjiʾa. See Joseph Schacht's *New Sources for Muḥammadan Theology* and Wilferd Madelung's *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*. The Ḥarūriyya were a sect of the Khawārij during the Umayyad period. The Rawāfiḍa is a derogatory term for the Shīʿīs. The Qadariyya refer to an early theological trend that favored human agency with respect to human actions, and they were a precursor to the Muʿtazilīs. The Jabriyya opposed the Qadariyya and favored divine predestination over human agency for human actions. This group was the precursor to the Traditionalists. The Jahmiyya was a sect that followed the teachings of Jahm b. Safwān and negated the existence of attributes for God. The Murjiʾa is the name of a sect that was known for denying the punishment in the Hellfire of anyone who professed the testification of faith. It was also used as a label for the early Ḥanafiyya who, as Wilferd Madelung states, accepted as Muslim anyone who made the testification of faith. This had political and economic significance because the Umayyad governors in the eastern provinces sought to discourage conversion to Islam because of loss of revenue from the poll tax (*jizya*) on non-Muslims.

59 If al-Tirmidhī had wanted to attack the Ḥanafī theologians, he could have easily included the Murjiʾa among the sects he labeled as heretical since non-Ḥanafīs often used the term Murjiʾa as a derogatory term for the Ḥanafīs. However, Zahrī does mention that there is a work attributed to al-Tirmidhī titled *Al-radd ʿalā al-murjiʾa*. Khālid Zahrī, *Ḥakīm khurāsān*, 301.

60 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 1, 390. The Ḥarūriyya are a type of Khawārij. Al-Tirmidhī mentions another subgrouping of the Khawārij, the Azāriqa, which are also mentioned by Abū Muṭīʾ al-Nasafī.

al-Qadariyya, al-Jabriyya, al-Jahmiyya and al-Rāfiḍa. It is clear that al-Tirmidhī is pulling from the same heresiographical tradition as Abū Muṭīʿ al-Nasafī. Al-Tirmidhī even uses the same descriptors to identify these heretical groups using phrases such as, those who speak *min al-ahwāʾ*, or "from their caprice," a term used in the title of al-Nasafī's heresiography. We can see from the previous discussion that Kalām for al-Tirmidhī is not what the Ḥanafī theologians were engaged in. Al-Tirmidhī describes Kalām as *masāʾil al-fitna*, or "topics of discord." The following are some of the issues that he claims are the focus of heretical groups: *jabr* (being compelled), *qadar* (agency), *istiṭāʿa qabl al-fiʿl wa-maʿahu* (ability before the act and with the act), *ṭalab kayfiyyat ṣifāt Allāh* (seeking to understand the nature of God's attributes), *al-īmān hal huwa makhlūqᵘⁿ am lā* (whether or not belief is created), *al-qurʾān wa mā huwa* (the Qurʾān and its nature), and *al-imāma wa man istaḥaqqahā baʿd al-rasūl* (leadership and who deserves it after the Prophet).[61] These are all topics that are central to the polemics of Ḥanafī creedal and heresiographical treatises of the 9th-century CE, such as *Kitāb al-sawād al-aʿẓam* by al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī. The *Kitāb al-sawād* not only presents creedal topics but also provides arguments to support these topics of creed.[62] Hence, the existence of theological arguments attached to diverse topics that do not follow a particular organization indicates, again, a medial stage between the early creedal texts of the 8th- and early 9th-centuries CE and the highly structured theological texts inaugurated by al-Māturīdī.

There are many points of similarity between the theological positions in *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* and the various positions al-Tirmidhī takes in his works. We focus here, however, on one topic that demonstrates the connection between al-Tirmidhī and Ḥanafī theology of the late 9th-century CE. The issue of *kasb* (acquiring a livelihood) is a point discussed by both al-Tirmidhī and al-Samarqandī. *Kasb* was an especially important topic for Ṣūfīs because it dealt with the question of how to balance spiritual pursuits with the need to procure a mundane livelihood.[63] Al-Samarqandī is very precise about the Ḥanafī position on *kasb*. He states:

61 Ibid., 187.

62 We should also note that al-Tirmidhī has a short treatise reflecting on the *ḥadīth* containing *al-sawād al-aʿẓam* (the great masses). Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Manāzil al-qurba*, 113.

63 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 33, 46, 95. Al-Shaqīq al-Balkhī looked down on earning a livelihood while al-Muḥāsibī wrote a treatise defending its importance. The Malāmatiyya were proponents of earning a living while the Karrāmiyya eschewed ordinary livelihood and practiced begging.

ينبغي أن يعلم أن الكسب يفترض في بعض الأوقات لأنّ الله تعالى قال وهزي إليك بجذع النخلة وقال عزّ وجلّ وجعل النهار معاشا وإذا لم يكن الكسب واجبا لا يحتاج الإنسان إلى الكسب فحينئذ يكون الكسب سنّة واعلم أنّ ترك الكسب رخصة وإنكار الكسب بدعة و رؤية الرزق من الكسب كفر واعلم أنّ من لم يرى الكسب واجبا و رآه بدعة فهو كرّاميّ مبتدع ومن رأى الرزق من الكسب فهو كافر وينبغي أن يكون الكسب تحت اليقين والتوكّل على اليقين فمتى لم يكن الكسب تحت اليقين والتوكّل في اليقين كان ذلك كفرا.[64]

> He must know that earning a livelihood (*kasb*) is mandatory in some instances because Allah most high says, "Shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree," and he, mighty and majestic, says "and we made the day a time for livelihood." However, when earning a livelihood is not mandatory then the human being does not have to earn a living and, in that instance, earning a living becomes a *sunna* (supererogatory work). Know that leaving earning a living is an exception (permitted in certain circumstances), and the prohibition of earning a living is an innovation (*bidʿa*), and seeing one's apportioned sustenance from God as coming from one's earning is unbelief. Know that whoever does not consider *kasb* to be mandatory but sees it as an innovation is a heretical Karrāmī, and whoever sees one's apportioned sustenance from God as coming from one's own earning – he is an unbeliever. Earning a livelihood must be below certainty and reliance with certainty. So when earning a livelihood is not below certainty and reliance with certainty, then that is unbelief.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī treads a fine line between several positions on *kasb*. He addresses the Karrāmiyya who were accused of begging rather than earning a livelihood and who were prevalent in Khurāsān and Transoxania at the end of the 9th-century CE.[65] One significant point, though, in al-Samarqandī's discussion of *kasb* is that he provides the possibility that there are exceptional

64 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, fol. 58–59.

65 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 95. Al-Tirmidhī doesn't mention the Karrāmiyya by name but possibly alludes to them when he includes the 'Mushabbiha' (The Anthropomorphists) in his list of heretical groups. The Karrāmiyya were accused of being anthropomorphists. Al-Samarqandī uses *mushabbih* (anthropomorphist) as a virtual synonym for Karrāmī. This, along with al-Tirmidhī's notion of *kasb*, makes it impossible that al-Tirmidhī could have been a Karrāmī as Goldziher claims.

circumstances in which *kasb* is not required. This is exactly al-Tirmidhī's position; however, al-Tirmidhī is more specific since he devotes a whole treatise to this issue in *Kitāb bayān al-kasb*. For al-Tirmidhī, earning a livelihood is required of most individuals because their lower souls are attached to the things of this world. He includes the *zuhhād* (renunciants) in this category because, while they have renounced the world, they still harbor within themselves a secret longing for it.[66] Renunciation (*zuhd*) is understood in a dialectical relationship to the world and thus, while it claims separation from the world, it is secretly wedded to it. Again, al-Tirmidhī could be obliquely referring to the Karrāmiyya who were known for their renunciation of the world as well as their negative attitude toward earning a livelihood. For al-Tirmidhī, *kasb* is not required of the people of *maʿrifa* and the *ṣiddīqūn* because their lower souls have died (*mātat*) and they no longer desire the things of this world. Rather, they seek a livelihood because it was a practice of the prophets. However, if they did not seek a livelihood, their sustenance would come to them from God without any hardship.[67] Both al-Tirmidhī and al-Samarqandī use the example of Mary to illustrate the nature of *rizq*. Al-Tirmidhī describes how Mary would be given food in her prayer niche directly from God but would also spin wool to clothe herself and her son.[68] Al-Samarqandī uses a different story of Mary to illustrate the same principle, citing that at certain times taking means is required, but at other times it may not be required for certain elect individuals. He uses the story of Mary when she leans up next to a palm tree in the pangs of her childbirth, and is told to shake the palm trunk so that dates will fall for her to eat. For al-Samarqandī, this story explains both the need to take advantage of the means that are available for provision, while also realizing that one's reliance and true sustenance must be with God. It was impossible for her to shake the palm trunk, but being ordered to do so demonstrates the *adab* (propriety) of taking means, even for someone of her rank. Hence, the dates fell from the palm and she ate from them as a miracle. Mary proactively did her part whether or not it would have any real world effect.

Both al-Tirmidhī and al-Samarqandī place *kasb* under the larger umbrella of *tawakkul*. In structural terms it is unlikely that this could be accidental. As is mentioned above in the quote from *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, al-Samarqandī explicitly states that *kasb* must come under (*taḥt*) both *yaqīn* (certainty) and *tawakkul*

66 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Baraka, *Naẓariyyatuhu*, 244.
67 Ibid., 244–245.
68 Ibid., 245.

(reliance upon God). Al-Tirmidhī, in *Al-furūq wa-manʿal-tarāduf,* explains *kasb* in terms of the difference between *tawakkul* and *ittikāl. Tawakkul* means seeking the provision that God has already destined for one, while knowing that it will come according to his planning. On the other hand, *ittikāl* means to sit idly and wait for one's provision to come to one out of laziness. His response to such a person who refuses to expend effort for his sustenance is that such a person does not know whether God had ordained that sustenance to come through his own effort or not. If so, that sustenance would be withheld until the requisite effort is spent.[69] For al-Tirmidhī, only the *ʿārifūn* (gnostics) can have true reliance upon God, which requires knowing when God wants one to seek one's livelihood by taking means (*asbāb*), or when he wants them to desist from taking means and to rely completely upon Him. We can see here that al-Tirmidhī's notion of *kasb* fits neatly into al-Samarqandī's rubric.

4.6 Al-Tirmidhī's Relationship to Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī

In the previous discussion, we demonstrated that al-Tirmidhī was working within the framework of the Ḥanafī theological tradition, both in terms of the earliest creedal texts of the tradition, as well as two Ḥanafī texts that date to al-Tirmidhī's general time period. Thus, we can say that Ḥanafī theology represents one of al-Tirmidhī's discourse streams. We have every reason to believe that al-Tirmidhī saw himself as a reformer and defender of what he considered to be an orthodox understanding of Islam. That is why he wrote two specific heresiographical works that reflect positions in the Ḥanafī tradition, namely *Al-radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa* (*Refutation of the Shīʿīs*) and *Al-radd ʿalā al-muʿaṭṭila* (*Refutation of Those who Deny Attributes*, i.e., the Muʿtazilīs). Both texts are considered authentic by Sezgin, Radtke and Zahrī. Al-Tirmidhī's reformist approach was not limited to theology but focused also on Ḥanafī Uṣūl (Legal Methodology). Even before the work of al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/980),[70] which Marie Bernand considers to be the earliest extant attempt to codify Ḥanafī Uṣūl, al-Tirmidhī had written several lengthy works that revised basic tenets of

69 Ibid, *Naẓariyyatuhu*, 249–250.

70 Al-Jaṣṣāṣ was the chief representative of *aṣḥāb al-raʾy* in Baghdād during his time. He studied Ḥanafī law under ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī. His work *Al-fuṣūl fī al-uṣūl* is one of the earliest formulations of Ḥanafī legal theory. Otto Spies, "al-D̲jaṣṣāṣ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*

Ḥanafī Uṣūl almost a hundred years earlier.[71] Despite this, most scholars of al-Tirmidhī do not see him as having had much of an impact within the Ḥanafī School. This lack of attention towards al-Tirmidhī has been exacerbated by siloing him as a mystic. It is my contention that al-Māturīdī, who is credited as the systematizer of Ḥanafī theology, received important inspiration for his monumental work *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* from al-Tirmidhī. Al-Māturīdī lived in the same general area as al-Tirmidhī and was in the next generation of Ḥanafī theologians after al-Tirmidhī. Al-Māturīdī's ideas, while consistent with Ḥanafī teachings before and after him, include some elements that would seem to come out of a vacuum had we not had access to al-Tirmidhī's works.[72] The idea that al-Māturīdī is a Ḥanafī reaction to al-Ashʿarī does not adequately explain the existence of these elements given the context of al-Māturīdī in the larger Ḥanafī theological tradition. Furthermore, neither Ulrich Rudolph nor Claude Gilliot support such a thesis. Not only is al-Māturīdī's thought in many ways more advanced than al-Ashʿarī, but al-Māturīdī's contribution to Ḥanafī theology is not in any way in conversation with al-Ashʿarī's teachings.

In the last chapter we discussed al-Tirmidhī's concept of *ḥikma*, its Arab and Pythagorean roots, and the way in which *ḥikma* functions to maintain the viability of opposites and, in turn, confers order onto the universe. We also discussed the way al-Tirmidhī uses *ḥikma* to set up his discussion of *wilāya* and indicate its non-dual nature. This use of *ḥikma* is signature to al-Tirmidhī and only appears in detail in his *KḤ*. Al-Tirmidhī's use of *ḥikma* is not found anywhere in the pre-Maturidī Ḥanafī texts yet appears distinctly in al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. It is highly probable that al-Māturīdī read al-Tirmidhī's works since they both belonged to the same theological tradition and both lived in the same general locale, only one generation apart. Ulrich Rudolph considers al-Māturīdī's use of *ḥikma* to be due to Muʿtazilī influence. The assumption throughout al-Māturīdī's work is that God is always wise (*ḥakīm*) and just (*ʿadl*) and according to Rudolph, this means that al-Māturīdī is applying rational standards to God.[73] While this is plausible given that al-Māturīdī spends a great deal of effort attempting to refute the Muʿtazilīs, this does not actually represent al-Māturīdī's use of *ḥikma*. Al-Māturīdī states:

71 Al-Tirmidhī attacks the Ḥanafī notion of *qiyās* that is handed down from Abū Ḥanīfa. In *Al-furūq wa-manʿ al-tarāduf* al-Tirmidhī calls Ḥanafī *qiyās* "*mushākila*" (resemblancing) rather than true *qiyās*. For al-Tirmidhī, true *qiyās* can only be achieved by returning to a legal cause (*ʿilla*) that is based, not on the particular new item at hand and its relationship to something in the Sharīʿa that it resembles, but rather an *ʿilla* that is based on principles derived directly from the Qurʾān and Sunna.

72 Rudolph Ulrich, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische theologie in Samarkand*, 344.

73 Ibid, *Al-Māturīdī*, 330.

ولو أمعن هؤلاء الفرق النظر فيما تقدّم من ذكر الأدلّة لعلموا قصور عقولهم عن الوقوف على الحكمة البشرية فضلا عن أن يحيطوا بحكمة الربوبية . . . ولزم القول بكل ما لا تبلغه عقولنا بدرك الحكمة بعد أن ثبت أنّه منشؤه ومحدثه أن نعلم أنّ فيه حكمة بالغة لم تبلغها.[74]

> Had those (heretical) factions looked closely at the arguments previously presented they would have known the limited nature of their intellects in understanding human *ḥikma*, let alone that they could encompass divine *ḥikma* … and it is necessary to follow [even] all of those things our intellects do not comprehend by the attainment of *ḥikma*, after it has been confirmed that he (God) initiated it and brought it into existence, [and] that we should know there is a prescient *ḥikma* that has not reached (our intellects).

Al-Māturīdī's concept of *ḥikma* is clearly not Muʿtazilī since the Muʿtazilīs would never have conceived of a believer following a *ḥikma* that his intellect could not comprehend. The Muʿtazilīs considered God's rationality to be similar to human rationality. However, as we can see from al-Māturidī, he considers *ḥikma* to be of two types, divine *ḥikma* and human *ḥikma*. Al-Tirmidhī makes a similar distinction in his definition of *ḥikma* that we had mentioned previously from *KḤ*:

الحكمة إحكام الأمور على جهتها من آفاتها في سبلها سبل الأمور من الرب إلى العبد ومن العبد إلى الرب مرورها على طرق من وجوه الأسباب والآلات فالأسباب الخارجة من النفس والآلات الجوارح المختلفة فبالحكمة يحكمها العبد.[75]

> *Ḥikma* is the precise execution of matters in light of their various harmful qualities with respect to the way they function, the movement [of these matters] from the lord to the servant, and from the servant to the lord in terms of their causes and means. So, external causes [come] from the soul and the means [come from] the various limbs [of the body]. Hence with *ḥikma* the servant comes to gain control over them.

For al-Tirmidhī, there is human *ḥikma*, that is, knowledge of what proceeds from the servant to God, and then there is divine *ḥikma*, which is knowledge

74 Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 180–181.

75 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 1v.

that proceeds from God to the servant. Later, in *KḤ*, al-Tirmidhī further clarifies this by explaining that the *ḥakīm* is like someone walking through the wilderness who knows the pathways, is aware of the various wild beasts that lurk there and so can pass safely through.[76] Hence, *ḥikma* is the 'worldly' knowledge of things outside of the soul that relate to vices and temptations, likened to wild beasts that can attack the soul on its path towards God. At the same time, al-Tirmidhī believes *ḥikma* can be a knowledge from God and an inspiration about the way God interacts with the world. Al-Māturīdī uses the same vocabulary as al-Tirmidhī in terms of *āfāt* (harmful qualities) and *ālāt* (means) in describing how *ḥikma* functions. Al-Māturīdī argues that human senses are limited in the same way that *'uqūl* (intellects) are limited. Intellects understand the world in terms of opposites (*aḍdād*), but due to the created and limited nature of intellects, sometimes they consider good things to be bad and bad things to be good. Hence, he says that it is possible that something could befall a person that would prevent him from being able to distinguish between wisdom (*ḥikma*) and foolishness (*safah*).[77] The inability to make true distinctions for al-Māturīdī is a result of custom (*'āda*) and habit (*ulf*). The only way for a person to truly understand things as they are and make correct distinctions is through divine *ḥikma* (*al-ḥikma al-rubūbiyya*), and through this *ḥikma* such a person is protected from *āfāt* (harmful qualities). This is because his usual state is that he is overcome by his limbs (*jawāriḥ*) even though he makes use of means (*ālāt*). Al-Māturīdī explains that a person guided by divine *ḥikma* realizes that he acts through a strength (*quwwa*) created by God and a more useful knowledge. This is what is called *taḥakkum*, i.e., gaining control over weakness and ignorance by means of God, who is able and knowing.[78] It is almost as if al-Māturīdī is quoting al-Tirmidhī's definition of *ḥikma*. The vocabulary is practically identical, and the structure of the various parts of the concept of *ḥikma* for both of them is similar.

We can safely say that al-Māturīdī and al-Tirmidhī are operating under a similar definition of *ḥikma*. This could possibly be the case because they had access to similar sources. We should also consider whether they actually use *ḥikma* in similar ways. Al-Tirmidhī uses *ḥikma* to support his concept of *wilāya* and to indicate the nature of the station of *fardāniyya* (non-duality) that is characteristic of the *kubarā'* and the *awliyā'*. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, *ḥikma* serves to frame the non-dual nature of al-Tirmidhī's mystical theosophy. For al-Tirmidhī, the *awliyā'* exemplify God's non-dual nature and, in that sense,

76 Ibid., fol. 6v.

77 Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Al-tawḥīd*, 180–181.

78 Ibid., 181.

are a site of the manifestation (*tajallī*) of his attributes. Al-Māturīdī is not concerned with *wilāya*; instead, he focuses on theological arguments concerning the nature of God and his existence. Nevertheless, al-Māturīdī uses *ḥikma* to indicate a non-dual concept of God. For al-Māturīdī, opposites (*aḍdād*) lead to foolishness and meaninglessness when they are not kept from collapsing in on each other.[79] Just like al-Tirmidhī, al-Māturīdī sees *ḥikma* as the maintenance of order and harmony through the sustaining of the distinctness of opposites. While both are operating under the same basic definition of *ḥikma*, one key difference is that al-Tirmidhī indicates that this order is preserved through the knowledge of the *ḥakīm* as an instrument of God, while al-Māturīdī simply describes God as being the one who maintains this order directly. *Ḥikma* is defined in multiple places in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* as "putting things in their proper place." When al-Māturīdī refers to "things in their proper place" he means the placing of opposites in relation to one another such that the result is harmony. For opposites to have a particular place and order, it is necessary that something must exist to define that order and bring it about, i.e., God. In a section on theodicy in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, al-Māturīdī indicates how the *ḥikma* of opposites and their interaction in the world indicates the non-dual nature of God. The argument begins with al-Māturīdī's premise, argued earlier, that *ḥikma* (wisdom) must connect to all things created by God. He does not simply argue that good is known through evil and vice versa, but rather that God creates good and evil so that he can be known through the interaction of these opposites. The example he gives, interestingly, is the conflict between the enemies of God and his *awliyā'*. Through this conflict, God's warning (*ḥadhar*), support (*ta'ahhub*), aid (*maʿūna*) and victory (*naṣr*) are known.[80] He goes on to explain how the opposites in the world indicate God's non-dual oneness. Al-Māturīdī succinctly explains this below:

> وأيضا إنّ الخلق على اختلاف جوهرهم في المضار والمنافع جعلهم الله في الدلالة على مدبّر لهم حكيم عليم وعلى وحدانيّته لجوهر واحد في الاتفاق من جهة الدلالة والشهادة ولا قوة إلا بالله فيكون في ذلك بيان عجيب حكمته أن جمع بين الضار والنافع والخير والشر على تناقضهما في الدلالة على وحدانيّته والشهادة بربوبيّته واحدا.[81]

79 Ibid., 179.
80 Ibid., 175.
81 Ibid., 176.

> And furthermore, all created things depending on their various essences are either in harm or benefit. God made them to indicate his being a planner for them, wise and knowledgeable, and also to indicate his oneness as one single essence, as is agreed upon from the standpoint of proof and testament. There is no strength or power except by God. So, from that the amazing nature of his wisdom is demonstrated such that he joins between harm and benefit, good and evil, despite their being opposed to each other, as a proof of his oneness and as a witness to his being one through his lordship.

It is clear that al-Māturīdī, like al-Tirmidhī, uses *ḥikma* to frame *tawḥīd* (God's unity) such that it is understood in a non-dual sense. Both use *ḥikma* in similar ways but to make different types of arguments. Al-Māturīdī explains the non-dual nature of God's essence in terms of the interaction of opposites, and he uses the term *waḥdāniyya* for non-duality. Al-Tirmidhī, on the other hand, argues for the non-dual nature of *wilāya* (*fardāniyya*) because it is a manifestation of God's non-duality in the world. Both al-Māturīdī and al-Tirmidhī conceive of God in non-dual terms but are applying the framework of *ḥikma* in different contexts.

4.7 Al-Tirmidhī and the Later Ḥanafī Tradition

So far, we have demonstrated a strong connection between al-Tirmidhī and the early Ḥanafī creedal texts, the Ḥanafī theological tradition of al-Tirmidhī's own era, and finally al-Māturīdī, who was a major figure in the transition of Ḥanafī theology into the phase of formal methods and dialectical reasoning. Up to this point, none of the Ḥanafī theological texts have mentioned al-Tirmidhī by name. The connections have been demonstrated through structural similarities and the use of terminology. Among the later Ḥanafī theologians, however, al-Tirmidhī is actually mentioned by name and clearly counted as one of their own. Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī in his *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, which is by far the most comprehensive work in the Māturīdī theological school, quotes al-Tirmidhī by name on the topic of beholding God with the eye in the next life. Al-Nasafī writes:

وذكر الشيخ أبو عبد الله محمد بن علي الترمذي الحكيم في تصنيف له سمّاه: مسألة في سلوك أهل العدل بين المشبّهة والمعطّلة فقال اتفقت على حديث الرؤية عدة من أصحاب رسول الله عليه السلام كلّهم أئمة.[82]

> Shaykh Abū Abdullāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Tirmidhī, al-Ḥakīm, mentioned in a work by him which he called *Treatise on the Way of the People of Balance between the Anthropomorphists and Those who Negate Attributes*, "A large number of the companions of the Messenger, upon whom be peace, agreed upon the *ḥadīth* of the vision of God in the next life; all of them were eminent."

Al-Lāmishī, the student of al-Nasafī, also mentions al-Tirmidhī on the same topic as his teacher but adds the title of *zāhid* (mystic). He states, *wa dhakar al-shaykh al-zāhid Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī raḥimahullāh fī taṣnīfin lahu…* or, "The Shaykh, the mystic, Muḥammad b. ʿAli al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in a work of his…"[83] Here, al-Lāmishī includes the title of *zāhid* but does not mean 'renunciant.' As we will see later, the term *zāhid* and its plural *zuhhād* among Ḥanafīs in Khurāsān and Transoxania came to indicate a mystic, or what could also be termed a Ṣūfī.

4.8 Mysticism in the Ḥanafī Tradition

If al-Tirmidhī was thoroughly integrated into the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theological tradition as we have demonstrated, then the question remains why this should have been overlooked by scholarship for such a long time. Annemarie Schimmel considered al-Tirmidhī to be a Shafiʿī; Yves Marquet considered him a Traditionalist; Bernd Radtke correctly understood him to be a Ḥanafī, yet considered his Ḥanafī leanings superficial. The evidence we have brought to bear demonstrates the contrary. He was, in fact, an important figure to the Ḥanafī theological school and played a significant role in its development. Part of the reason for his inability to place al-Tirmidhī accurately in the historical context arises from the clearly mystical nature of his thought. Al-Tirmidhī purposefully attempts to produce works that are holistic in nature and that reflect what he sees as the important devotional and inspirational function of religious texts. Often, as ʿAbdallāh Baraka mentions, these texts have underlying

82 Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adillah*, 400.

83 Maḥmūd b. Zayd Al-Lāmishī, *Kitāb al-tamhīd li-qawāʿid al-tawḥīd*, 80.

Fiqhī (jurisprudential) and Kalāmī (theological) motives.[84] Another possibility is that Ḥanafī theology has been misunderstood and understudied in comparison to Ashʿarī Kalām, and so Ḥanafī theology sometimes goes unrecognized for what it is. Even more, there is a tendency in the study of Islamic mysticism in general to disassociate theology from mysticism, possibly because of this trend in European concepts of mysticism. What we find in general among Ḥanafī theologians in Khurāsān and Transoxania is a strong mystical current in their works. At this point, we will only demonstrate the mystical tendencies in some of the works that we have already discussed to show that al-Tirmidhī's mysticism is not out of place in his intellectual milieu.

In al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī's *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, we find a list of individuals appended to the end of the treatise who are credited with upholding certain doctrines championed by the text, which is a foundational work in the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theological tradition. The fact that this list occurs at the end of the work and includes the very name of the author himself means that this section was in no doubt added by later generations of Ḥanafī/Māturīdī scholars. A procedure used in this creedal text, especially in the section in which this list, is to present a point of jurisprudence that differentiates Ḥanafīs from Shāfiʿīs, or even Shīʿīs, and then to list the eminent individuals from particular generations who upheld that point of jurisprudence. The companions of the Prophet are listed, then the scholars of Ḥadīth and Fiqh after them, and then the *zuhhād* (mystics) and *ʿubbād* (pious ones). Based on the names in this list, it is probable that they were added to the text sometime around the mid to late 10th-century CE, at a time when Sufism was taking root, as is attested by the works of al-Kalābādhī, al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī. The list of *zuhhād* (mystics) begins with Ṣāliḥ al-Marrī (d. 172/788 or 176/792) and Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859) but conspicuously leaves out the Baghdād mystics such as al-Junayd. Almost all the mystics listed were of eastern Ḥanafī tendencies. This could possibly be a result of the fierce competition between Ḥanafīs, who were using the term *zuhhād*, and Shāfiʿīs, who were identifying themselves as Ṣūfīs.[85] Another equally valid and more probable interpretation is that these were still separate mystical traditions in their own right that were only merged by al-Sulamī in the generations following Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī. Al-Tirmidhī provides a useful reference point in this respect for understanding the relationship between Ḥanafī theology and mysticism. The mystics who al-Tirmidhī mentions in his

84 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Baraka, *Naẓariyyatuhu*, 95.

85 The research concluding that most early Ṣūfīs were Shāfiʿī needs to be revisited based on a closer reading of *Tarīkh nīshāpūr* by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. My own reading of this text has demonstrated that the exclusive connection between Shāfiʿīs and Ṣūfīs in Nīshāpūr during the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE is not conclusive.

various works are like the mystics appended to *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, the author of *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, is often referred to as a mystic in later biographical accounts. He is also listed as a mystic in the section of *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* that was later added to the text after his death. Rudolph mentions that al-Māturīdī had mystical propensities, and later Ḥanafī theologians such as Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, frequently mention the same local mystics of Khurāsān and Transoxania, which represent a distinct layer in al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*. As we will show in a forthcoming chapter, the relationship between mysticism and Ḥanafī theology is a very close one and existed since the 9th-century CE. Therefore, Islamic theology should not be seen as opposed to Islamic mysticism nor in conflict with it since many early theologians were also mystics, especially in the eastern Ḥanafī milieu.

The convention of listing authorities in successive generations is not unique to *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*. In fact, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is one of the first Muslim theologians to use this convention, and he does so crossing the normal lines that demarcate the various *madhhabs*. In *Manāzil al-qurba*, al-Tirmidhī lists as authorities of the Muslim community in the third generation after the prophet: Abū Ḥanīfa, Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774) and Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795).[86] He says that these figures became widely known and accepted for their knowledge by the Muslim community. Al-Tirmidhī's purpose in listing these early scholars is to push back against the Shīʿī claim that only the *ʿitra* (family) of the Prophet should be considered authorities in the Muslim community. Al-Tirmidhī's willingness to include as authorities Muslim scholars from various legal *madhhabs* under one umbrella indicates that he is probably one of the earliest theologians to conceive of a proto-Sunnīsm as a response to the Shīʿī challenge.[87]

4.9 The Effect of Ḥanafism on al-Tirmidhī's Doctrine of *Wilāya*

If we can agree that al-Tirmidhī was actively engaged in the discourse stream of Ḥanafī jurisprudential and theological thought, then it is clear why he developed his doctrine of *wilāya* in particular ways. In Chapter 5, we continue to discuss the nature of al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya*; however, here we will discuss an important effect of Ḥanafī theology upon al-Tirmidhī, which concerns the way he opened up the possibility of *wilāya* to all Muslims. As we

86 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Manāzil al-qurba*, 96.

87 Most conceptions of *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa* date from the early 4th-century AH. See the article "*Sunna*" in *EI2*.

mentioned in the discussion about the Ḥanafī doctrine of belief (*īmān*), the Ḥanafīs are noted for having a very expansive definition of belief. This definition only required believers to state the formula of the testification of faith (*shahada*) and to believe it in their hearts. Wilferd Madelung demonstrates how this ran counter to an early Umayyad political establishment that preferred an Arab identity to Islam and sought to discourage conversion.[88] We have been using al-Samarqandī's *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* as a Ḥanafī text representative of al-Tirmidhī's general approach to Ḥanafī theology since it corresponds closely to many elements of his thought. In al-Samarqandī's treatise, the *awliyāʾ* are described as synonymous with the *muʾminūn* (believers). He writes, *yanbaghī an yaʿlam annahu lā yakūnu ʿaql al-awliyāʾ wa-al-muʾminūn wa-ʿaql al-kuffār mustawiyān*, "One must know that the intellect of the saints and the believers is not the same as the intellect of the unbelievers."[89] Al-Samarqandī continues to clarify this by presenting five types of *ʿaql*, with the *awliyāʾ* and *muʾminūn* both sharing the *ʿaql ʿaṭāʾī* (the bequeathed intellect), the third of the five intellects. The first two are shared by the unbelievers and the last two are shared by the prophets and messengers. Al-Samarqandī clearly indicates that any Muslim believer can possibly be one of the *awliyāʾ*. We demonstrate in Chapter 5 how al-Tirmidhī states the exact same formula, conceding that all the *muwaḥḥidūn* (those who make the testification of Islamic faith) are a type of *awliyāʾ*, but represent the lowest level of *wilāya*. Hence, we can see that both al-Samarqandī and al-Tirmidhī in their concept of *wilāya* propound *wilāya* as a diffuse concept because all Muslim believers in their systems have a share of *wilāya* at one level. This may not be understood by those who read al-Tirmidhī's works because of his often vaulted mysticism and unique terminology, such as his distinction between the *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh* (the saints who observe the right(s) of God)[90] and the *awliyāʾ Allāh* (the bona fide saints). For al-Tirmidhī,

88 Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, 13.

89 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, fol. 44.

90 This is similar to how al-Muḥāsibī treats the word *ḥaqq* (truth, reality, right) in the title of his work *al-riʿāya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*, meaning, "Watchfulness over the rights of God." Radtke translates this type of saint as "the friends of what is due unto God," which has a similar meaning. Translating this term is difficult because it is specific to al-Tirmidhī and is not used in his other works. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 41–42. The closest al-Tirmidhī comes to explaining this term is when he distinguishes in *NU* between *ahl lā ilāhā illā Allāh* (the people of 'there is no god but God') and *ahl qawl lā ilāhā illā Allāh* (the people of the words 'there is no god but God'). The first group corresponds to *awliyāʾ Allāh* and the second to *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh* in *KA*. The second group mentioned in *NU* are those who say it on their tongues but whose actions still follow their lower desires (*hawāhā*). The first group in *NU* have realized the true meaning of the testification of faith both inwardly and outwardly because they no longer follow their lower desires, since God has chosen

wilāya has many forms and types, and at its most basic level it covers all Muslims who make the testification of faith. For those believers who are sincerely seeking God on the path of *maʿrifa*, they are the *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh*. Those who have been chosen by God for his special favor are the bona fide saints (*awliyāʾ Allāh*). Even among these bona fide saints there are various types of saints such as the *ḥukamāʾ* (sages), the *muqarrabūn* (those brought near), and the *munfaridūn* (the solitairs) as well as the *ṣiddīqūn* (the truthful ones).

4.10 The *Awliyāʾ* in Early Creedal Texts

We now return to some of the early Ḥanafī creedal texts and note how they reference the *awliyāʾ*. The earliest of these texts is *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* attributed to the eponym of the Ḥanafī legal school, Nuʿmān b. Thābit, mostly known as Abū Ḥanifa. This text is a creedal text of ten articles of faith that address doctrinal differences among various Islamic sects of the 8th-century CE. In a later development of the creed, we find a longer version of *Al-fiqh al-akbar I* in what is called *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*, attributed falsely to Abū Ḥanifa. This text reflects theological controversies of the first half of the 9th-century CE. In this text, we begin to see mention of the *awliyāʾ* of God.[91] *Al-fiqh al-akbar II* makes it a point of creed that one should believe not only in the miracles of the prophets but also the lesser miracles of the *awliyāʾ*. Here we find the *awliyāʾ* as the natural successors of the prophets. The *awliyāʾ* are now the inheritors of the prophets. Just as prophets have miracles that verify their authority as representatives of God, the *awliyāʾ* have miracles that indicate their authority as representatives of the prophets.[92]

In *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, or The Great Masses, we see a further development of the creed with sixty-two points of belief supported by arguments. In this text, the *awliyāʾ* figure prominently. Like *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*, the *awliyāʾ* are conjoined with the *anbiyāʾ* or the prophets. The first point that is clarified is that the *awliyāʾ* cannot be of greater rank than the prophets.[93] Secondly, al-

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them and made those desires inoperative. Hence, one way to view the *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh* is that these are the saints who are 'trying' to observe the rights (*ḥuqūq*) of God but are falling short and inevitably following their lower desires despite their efforts. At some point in the spiritual path (*ṭarīq*), God may choose the *awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh* to become bona fide saints (*awliyāʾ Allāh*) through his mercy. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 5, 499.

91 Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 188–197.

92 Ibid., 193.

93 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, fol. 38v–fol. 40r.

Samarqandī states that a believer must accept the validity of the miracles of the *awliyā'*, and he proceeds to give numerous examples of holy men and women who were shown to have miracles in various scriptural traditions.[94] Finally, and probably most importantly for us, al-Samarqandī states that the *'aql*, translated often as intellect but actually meaning inherent spiritual aptitude, is different between the *awliyā'* and the non-believers. Here the *awliyā'* are coupled with the believers in juxtaposition to the non-believers. The *awliyā'* and the believers have the same *'aql* but are different in their level of spiritual attainment.[95] Al-Samarqandī adds another important point of doctrine which is that the believer must pray the festival prayers behind whichever leader is leading the prayers, whether he be righteous or unrighteous. The term he uses here is *amīr*, or commander, and indicates a military ruler. He does not use the terms *khalīfa*, *walī* or *imām*. All these other terms would indicate some type of religious authority in the title. However, *amīr* is used to indicate a military leader who has no particular religious authority.[96] It is at this time that we can clearly see a split occur in the creedal texts between raw power (*sulṭa*) and *wilāya*.

Finally, in the 10th-century CE, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī wrote his celebrated work in Ḥanafī theology titled *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, or *Book of Divine Oneness*. At this point, works of creed give way to a theological treatise based on a unified philosophical approach. Al-Māturīdī uses the *awliyā'* as a means of explaining divine attributes. One of the aspects of the *awliyā'* is that they are close to God. How is it that God says he is close to particular individuals when he is not supposed to be qualified by distance? Al-Māturīdī's answer is that the *awliyā'* are close in terms of receiving God's attribute of mercy, which manifests as help, victory, honoring, special election, guidance or ease. These are the avenues of God's mercy that he uses to bless his *awliyā'*. Then, al-Māturīdī states that, in this way, the *awliyā'* are the conduits of God's blessings and benefits accruing to mankind.[97]

By thinking in terms of discourse streams and relating this to the theological milieu of Transoxania in the 3rd/9th-century CE, we are able to identify the systems of meaning that connect al-Tirmidhī to the intellectual currents of his day. The Ḥanafī/Murji'ī/Māturīdī theological tradition played a key role in the eastern lands of the 'Abbāsid Empire, and when we read al-Tirmidhī through this lens, we see that his thought builds upon ideas working within this milieu

94 Ibid., fol. 40r.
95 Ibid., fol. 44r–44v.
96 Ibid., fol. 19r.
97 Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 174–175.

just as it is in conversation with it. That al-Tirmidhī was an independent and unique thinker for his time is no doubt the case; however, he was not someone who operated outside of a pre-existing framework as some scholars of Islamic mysticism have posited. One can see here how al-Tirmidhī's identity as a reformer comes to the fore. Like al-Ghazālī after him, al-Tirmidhī saw real problems with the way religious knowledge was becoming formalized and institutionalized. He wanted to reclaim what he saw as the original vigor of the revelatory message after its apparent fossilization through disciplines such as jurisprudence and theology. Al-Tirmidhī believed that these should not and cannot be separated from the hidden spiritual realities from which they emerge. With such a complex and nuanced figure as al-Tirmidhī, we must look at his ideas holistically, in relation to his larger body of works and within his social and learned context. By identifying Ḥanafī theology as one of the several discourse streams within which al-Tirmidhī operated, we can begin to see that, while scholars of Islamic mysticism often see him as a mystic, his role as a mystic was only one of his multiple identities. For al-Tirmidhī, theology functions best when it maintains the parameters by which a free religious discourse can take place. Thus, in his *NU*, al-Tirmidhī stresses that points of belief in Islam are few and simple and that theology is meant to serve as a support for *wilāya*.

CHAPTER 5

Al-Tirmidhī's Gnoseology of Sainthood

5.1 Introduction

Thus far, we have shown how al-Tirmidhī's concept of sainthood did not appear out of a vacuum, nor was it on the fringe of the Islamic mystical tradition. Important social and political factors were at play in motivating al-Tirmidhī to propose a new approach to Islamic sainthood. The category of *wilāya* had already existed in al-Tirmidhī's Ḥanafī theological milieu and al-Tirmidhī used Qur'ān and Ḥadīth literature as the main source of his inspiration. He readily appropriated Hellenistic mystical/philosophical speculation to create a theoretical frame for his focus on *wilāya*. The complex synthesis of these disparate elements is what immediately comes to the fore. Al-Tirmidhī's milieu in Transoxania was clearly one of vibrant intellectual exchange. While we have looked at the various discourses that informed al-Tirmidhī's thought, we have not yet looked deeply into the internal structure of his thought. This will be important in tracing al-Tirmidhī's legacy as he was internalized and interpreted by the later Islamic mystical tradition.

5.2 Sainthood in the *Homilies* of Isaac of Nineveh

In Chapter 3, we discussed the use of wisdom (*ḥikma*) in the work of Isaac of Nineveh. As we stated earlier, Isaac of Nineveh provides a useful point of reference for our study of early Islamic mysticism. Even more so than wisdom, the saints play a key role in Isaac's teaching. We have talked about how the use of the term *walī* indicates a particular set of associations and meanings as a result of its derivation from the Arabic root *w-l-y*. Isaac wrote in Syriac and the word he used for 'saint' ܩܕܝܫ (*qadīsh*) is derived from the Semitic root *q-d-s*. This word in Syriac does not leverage the connotations of protection and power that we find with the root *w-l-y* in Arabic. The word ܩܕܝܫ (*qadīsh*) means "holy one" and connotes that which is sacred and pure, as well as virginity and celibacy.[1] This is consistent with the way Isaac used this term in his Homilies. For Isaac, the saint is idealized as the celibate monk who becomes pure through

1 R. Payne Smith, and Jessie Payne Smith Margoliouth, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 489–490.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004416550_007

his ascetic piety.[2] The saint is someone who suffers in this life but overcomes his suffering through contemplation and prayer.[3] He is someone close to God who wanders in the wilderness and the desert by treading the path of asceticism to make the way easier for those who come after.[4] Saints gaze upon God without a veil and are given miracles.[5] People in positions of authority seek them out for their blessing.[6] For Isaac, the saint is holy and reaches his sainthood through his ascetic practice and not primarily through knowledge. The saint is juxtaposed to the theologian and the judge.[7] Isaac of Nineveh's description of the saints closely follows Peter Brown's formulation of the saint as a 'friend of God' and as an intercessor.[8] However, the saint of late antique Christianity is primarily a saint who is immortalized in death and whose body and grave become loci where heaven and earth meet.[9] The veneration of the saints shifted the center of devotion from the pagan temple at the center of the late antique city to the cemeteries that lay on the edge of the city where great mausoleums and monuments marked the redefined religious landscape.[10] The Desert Fathers inspired a new vision of sainthood tied closely to asceticism, and this ideal gave rise to important monastic institutions that sought to capture this vision. The ideal Christian saint in the Near East just before the rise of Islam was someone who lived the life of an ascetic and hermit, but in death was celebrated as a powerful connection between Heaven and Earth.

5.3 Sainthood in the 9th-Century CE

Goldziher was the first orientalist to provide a critical evaluation of sainthood in Islam. His essay, "Veneration of saints in Islam," attempts to show how the pure theology of Islam was forced to negotiate and therefore accede space to the cult of saints that was socially and culturally embedded in the regions the Arabs had conquered. Goldziher sees the early Qur'ānic message as portraying a God that is so different and distant from humanity that Muslims needed mediators to bridge the "insurmountable barrier that divides an infinite and

2 Isaac of Nineveh, *Mystic Treatises*, 369.
3 Ibid., 279, 284.
4 Ibid., 220, 281, 372.
5 Ibid., 282, 286.
6 Ibid., 206.
7 Ibid.
8 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 6.
9 Ibid., 4–7.
10 Ibid., 8.

unapproachable Godhead from weak and finite humanity." For Goldziher, grave visitation, relics, the healing powers of places visited by a saint, and saintly miracles are all examples of pre-Islamic cultural practices that Muslim theologians found impossible to reject.[11] What we have demonstrated thus far, however, is that early Islamic *wilāya* was almost exclusively concerned with the living *awilyā'* and not the dead. The cult of Muslim saints is a later development and is not directly associated with the writings of the early Ṣūfīs.[12] As we saw in Chapter 2, some early Islamic notions of *wilāya* reflect the structure of social institutions that grew out of the Arab/Islamic conquests and the negotiation of power and authority between Arabs and non-Arabs. Goldziher's observations are important but do not relate directly to this study, which is concerned primarily with the theoretical and cosmological aspects of sainthood, that is, *wilāya* as a concept and doctrine.

Yet, still important to our discussion of *wilāya* is the level to which the *walī Allāh* is indebted to the 'holy man' of Late Antiquity. This will give us a point of departure to then discuss the several types of *awliyā'* in 9th-century CE Iraq and Khurāsān. Despite the many continuities between Islam and its Christian and Jewish context in Late Antiquity, those who study prophetology in Islam and Judaism view Islam as a movement that was to some extent *sui generis* with respect to Jewish prophetic antecedents.[13] Islam set the stage for a new paradigm of activist piety in which the holy man was not only the one who healed the sick, exorcized demons and made barren women fertile, but one who came with an army to conquer cities.[14] The source material for this early period aside from the Qur'ānic text does not provide more than a glimpse into the dynamic of prophecy and, by extension, sainthood. According to Jaakko Hämeen-Antila, there were two types of prophecy in early 7th-century CE Arabia. There were Arabian prophets, who were modeled after their Biblical counterparts, and *kuhhān*, or soothsayers, who played an intermediary role between human beings and the divine through fortune-telling, clairvoyance and haruspicy. The continuum between prophet and *kāhin* seems to have been fluid in

11 Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II*, 255.

12 Christopher Taylor identifies the first Muslim grave visitation (*ziyāra*) guide as that of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Faḍḍal al-Taymī al-Kūfī who died in 838/839 CE. However, the first guides to which we possess more than a passing reference, date to somewhere around the end of the 10th-century CE. Christopher Schurman Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous,* 5. It is known that the graves of early Muslim saintly figures such as Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 200–201/815–816) became sites of visitation almost immediately after their deaths. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, vol. 1, 472.

13 Chase Robinson, "Prophecy and holy men in early Islam," 242.

14 Ibid., 243.

the pre-Islamic period in Arabia.[15] Nevertheless, by the 9th-century CE, both prophecy and soothsaying were no longer viable options within mainstream Muslim society. The idea of continuous prophetic revelation after the death of the Prophet was not accepted by Sunnīs, nor Twelver Shīʿīs by the end of the 9th-century CE.[16] If Islam represents a break with the past with respect to prophetic types, and if a distinctly Arabian prophecy was no longer operative by the 9th-century CE, we can assume that *wilāya* was the product of transformations that occurred within Islam, as well as through negotiated interactions with other religious traditions living under Muslim rule.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, early concepts of *wilāya* were wedded to political meanings.[17] It was the Shīʿīs who first developed this term and made it the cornerstone of their doctrine of the Imamate. Early Shīʿī ascetics[18] were some of the first to discuss the relative importance of the *awliyāʾ* and the *anbiyāʾ*, giving preference to the former over the latter.[19] Following them in this were two ascetics from Syria, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830) and Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥawārī (d. 230/845 or 246/860), who are portrayed as privileging the *awliyāʾ* over the *anbiyāʾ*. The Muʿtazilīs of this same period formed an opposing position denying the existence of *wilāya* altogether.[20] The political nature of the divide is clearly apparent with those disenfranchised groups such as the Shīʿīs and early ascetics developing a competing regime of authority in opposition to the dominant power structure. Muʿtazilī theology was the first orthodoxy in Islam to extend beyond a single locale, and it came to be associated with an entrenched religious scholarly class.[21] While Shīʿīs were opposing the political structure of the Caliphate, early ascetics opposed the 'corruption' of

15 Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila Nissinen, "Arabian prophecy," 115.

16 Among proto-Sunnī theologians, the Prophet Muhammad was seen as the last prophet; among Imāmī Twelver Shīʿīs, the minor occultation had taken place, later to be replaced by the greater occultation, sealing prophecy until the return of the awaited Mahdī. The idea of continual prophecy did not completely die out though, but it continued with the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿīs and other groups such as the Aḥmadiyya. For more on the Aḥmadiyya and the continuation of prophecy in Islam, see *Prophecy Continuous* by Yohanan Friedmann.

17 Abū al-ʿIlā ʿAfīfī. *Al-taṣawwuf, al-thawra al-rūhiyya fī al-islām*, 291.

18 For example, Kulayb and Riyā, both from Kūfa, were among the early Shīʿī ascetics.

19 Ibid., 304.

20 Ibid., 305.

21 The *miḥna* was a process by which the ʿAbbāsid state sought to create uniformity in its judicial system. It was the test scholars were given before allowing them to become judges or provide testimony in court. By making Muʿtazilī doctrine a key to acquiring a position in the judicial system, the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate was creating an entrenched group of religious notables (*aʿyān*) which was only supplanted with the arrival of the Seljuqs in the 11th century. Martin Hinds, "Miḥna," *EI2*.

true religious practice among Traditionists.[22] It is apparent that the concept of *wilāya* in both early groups became a doctrine that voiced opposition to a reification of authority both politically and religiously.

The veneration of holy individuals was common amongst several other major movements during this period. Traditionists, for example, were known for demonstrations of their dedication to the Prophet through relics, as when Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is said to have requested that he be buried with three hairs of the Prophet, one upon each eye and one on his mouth. Demonstrations of devotion at his grave were described as so ardent that the cemetery had to be protected by civil authorities. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's grave was one of the most visited gravesites in Baghdād after his death.[23] A similar type of devotion is recorded among certain Khārijīs who would not go to war against the Umayyad troops until they had cut their hair at the tomb of Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ (d. 78/697), a Khārijī who had rebelled in Northern Mesopotamia around 695 CE.[24] These examples of veneration at the tombs of holy men are but one facet of the social and cultural practices that were later integrated into Islamic forms of saint veneration. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894), a Traditionist and *zāhid* (renunciant), provides us with a useful point of reference on the topic of *wilāya* at the end of the 3rd/9th century. He was a contemporary of al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī and a tutor to several ʿAbbāsid Caliphs.[25] His book *al-Awliyāʾ*, or *The Saints*, is a collection of Ḥadīth, quotes from important ascetics/mystics, and stories about the saints (*awliyāʾ*). In Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's book, the ideal saint (*walī*) is the ascetic worshiper (*zāhid ʿābid*). They are worshippers (*ʿubbād*) who are clothed in awe (*khushūʿ*), lowliness (*dhull*), fear (*khawf*) and God-consciousness (*taqwā*).[26] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's work seems to consciously disassociate the *awliyāʾ* from having any worldly or temporal power. In a quote ascribed anonymously to a "man from Banī Hāshim" he writes:

22 Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ (d. 188/803) represents a trend of would-be *ḥadīth* scholars who became disillusioned with the profession of Ḥadīth science and withdrew from the ranks of the professional men of religion. Here we see the early development of an identity that contrasts to the identity of the *ʿulamāʾ* and is nonconformist and anti-establishment. Alexander Knysh., *Islamic Mysticism*, 24.

23 Henri Laoust, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," *EI2*.

24 Chase Robinson, "Prophecy and holy men," 255.

25 Dietrich, "Ibn Abī al-Dunyā," *EI2*.

26 ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Al-Awliyāʾ*, 48.

لا ينبغي لأولياء الله من أهل دار الخلود الذين لها سعيهم وفيها رغبتهم أن يكون أولياء السلطان من أهل دار الغرور الذين لها سعيهم وفيها رغبتهم هم أشدّ تبارزا وأشدّ تعطّفا لأنسابهم وأخلاقهم وأمورهم من أولياء الله في ربهم ودينهم.[27]

> The saints (*awliyā'*) of God from the people of the Everlasting Abode, whose striving is for that and whose desire is wholly for that, should not let the supporters (*awliyā'*) of the Caliph from the people of the Deceitful Abode, whose striving is for that and whose desire is for that, be more competitive and more covetous for their ancestry, their manners, and their affairs, than the saints (*awliyā'*) of God are for their Lord and their religion.

This quote clearly restricts the saints to an otherworldly status and juxtaposes them to the supporters (*awliyā'*) of the Caliph who are engaged in worldly endeavors. In other words, there are only two options for the *awliyā'*; either to be God's saints, in which case they should be otherworldly, or to be outward supporters (*awliyā'*) of the Caliph. We can contrast this to al-Tirmidhī's strident claims that the *awliyā'* were, in fact, the true caliphs themselves and that the ʿAbbāsids had lost any right they may have had to the title. By the end of the 3rd/9th-century CE, the *awliyā'* were a topic of discussion and it was not only the Ṣūfīs who were talking about the *awliyā'*. Ascetics and people of the court like Ibn Abī al-Dunyā were intent on defining who the *awliyā'* were. The fact that the Ṭāhirids and Samānids were relatively autonomous from the control and supervision of Baghdād may have given al-Tirmidhī the space to write freely on this topic without fear of retribution from the ʿAbbāsid authorities. Al-Tirmidhī's major contribution to the concept of *wilāya* was to combine the *awliyā'*, and all the associations this word conjures of power and authority to a gnoseology that imbued these *awliyā'* with knowledge directly from God. We will now look at the structure of al-Tirmidhī's concept of *wilāya* and what its implications are for the trajectory of Islamic thought and religious culture.

27 Ibid., 20.

5.4 The Light-basis of al-Tirmidhī's Doctrine of *Wilāya*

As we have seen up to this point in the work of Isaac of Nineveh, as well as saintly and holy figures in various early Islamic communities from the Traditionists (Ahl al-Ḥadīth) to the Khārijīs, *wilāya* was an element of a shared koine in the Near East during the first three centuries of Islam. The topic of the *awliyā'* was discussed in early Ḥanafī theological texts primarily to differentiate between prophets and saints with respect to miracles and their relative superiority. By the beginning in the 8th-century CE, we find the knowledge-category of light (*nūr*) coming into formal use among Muslim intellectuals. The idea of knowledge as light was developed by the early Shīʿīs in their formulation of the doctrine of the Imamate, but this became widespread among both Sunnī and Shīʿī circles in the 9th- and 10th-centuries CE and was developed in detail by al-Tirmidhī.[28] Knowledge as Kalām was formalized by the Muʿtazilī theologians. This knowledge-type was rejected by al-Tirmidhī as we mentioned earlier in Chapter 4. The idea of belief (*īmān*) construed as light (*nūr*) was something already developed within Ḥanafī theological circles before al-Tirmidhī. Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī in his *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam* describes belief (*īmān*) as light (*nūr*), contrasting it to disbelief (*kufr*), which he calls darkness (*ẓulm*).[29] According to al-Samarqandī and general Ḥanafī creed, belief (*īmān*) is also a knowledge (*maʿrifa*) in the heart and affirmation (*iqrār*) by the tongue.[30] In al-Samarqandī's definition of the Ḥanafī creed, belief is explained as the combination of four created actions (*afʿāl*) from the believer and four uncreated attributes (*ṣifāt*) from God. When these eight elements combine in the heart, the result is true belief.[31] This confluence of uncreated attributes (*ṣifāt*) from God and created actions (*afʿāl*) from the believer (*muʾmin*) which meet but never exactly touch is a motif reminiscent of the Qurʾānic analogy of the meeting of the two seas between which there is an interstice (*barzakh*).[32] We can compare this to al-Tirmidhī's approach to belief

28 Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 151. Early 'proto-Sunnī' scholars like Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) are also quoted as considering knowledge to be light.

29 Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī, *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*, fol. 77.

30 Ibid., fol. 22.

31 Ibid., fol. 20. The four uncreated 'attributes' (*ṣifāt*) from God are guidance (*hidāya*), giving the guidance (*iʿṭā'*), holding firm (*al-tamassuk*) to the guidance, and acceptance (*qabūl*) of the guidance. The four elements from the believer are seeing (*ruʾyā*) the guidance, accepting (*qabūl*) the gift of guidance, ignoring or forgetting the hold upon guidance (*jahl al-tamassuk ʿalā al-hudā*), and beseeching God (*al-taḍarruʿ*) to accept the guidance.

32 Qurʾān (55:19-20): He released the two seas, meeting; between the two is an interstice that is not crossed.

as knowledge and created light that mingles and meets God's attribute of light as it appears in the heart of the believer (*muʾmin*).[33] This formulation for the mechanism of belief in the Ḥanafī theological tradition made it very easy for al-Tirmidhī to introduce an alternative definition of 'light-knowledge' and to make it central to his discussion on *wilāya*. For al-Tirmidhī, the *walī* is the mature believer (*al-muʾmin al-bāligh*).[34] The *walī* knows God and has certainty (*yaqīn*) of him through the shining of God's light into the saint's heart. This light shines upon the *nafs*[35] (lower self), where it is tamed and settles in the 'earth' of the bowels; then the *rūḥ* (spirit) ascends to the 'heavens' of the brain. When the *nafs* (lower self) and the *rūḥ* (spirit) return to their origins, God's light can shine forth unaltered and unobscured,[36] and when this happens, the believer is perfected and becomes a *walī*. According to al-Tirmidhī, this can only happen by God's grace, although God's grace typically reaches only those who strive vigorously to master their lower selves. The crucial point here, however, is that this light (*nūr*) cannot be quantified or objectively measured against an external criterion. If true knowledge/belief is, in fact, light (*nūr*), then theoretically, anybody could claim to possess *wilāya*. The social consequences of such a proposition must have been obvious to al-Tirmidhī, who, as we mentioned in Chapter 2, was a landed patrician in terms of his social status. Al-Tirmidhī's gnoseology had to be limited in some way to protect against its anarchic possibilities.

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33 Al-Tirmidhī describes this effect using the function of sight and its ability to distinguish color. He describes sight as a merging, or confluence, of light (*ḍawʾ*) from outside (*khārij*) the human being as meeting the light (*nūr*) of vision within the eye; however, these two lights meet but do not mix (*lā yajtamiʿān*). Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 5, 240. Al-Tirmidhī also writes that aid (*ʿawn*) from Allāh is a light (*nūr*) that is cast upon the heart and gives light to belief (*īmān*). Ibid., vol. 5, 174. Also, al-Tirmidhī describes *tawḥīd* as belief, which is *nūr Allāh fī qalbihi*, the light of God in his heart. Ibid., vol. 5, 119. Al-Tirmidhī talks about two levels of light in the heart. He says that when God chooses belief for a person he puts a light (*nūr*) in his heart, and through this light, he guides the servant to his light. The true light of God (*al-nūr al-aʿẓam*) is the light of the inward (*bāṭin*), and the light of the outward (*ẓāhir*) is the light of protection (*wiqāya*) that covers this light. When someone commits a major sin, then the protective outward light leaves the inward light unprotected; but, this outward light returns when one returns to obedience. Ibid., vol. 4, 90–91.

34 Ibid., vol. 4, 159.

35 In al-Tirmidhī's framework the *nafs* refers to the negative substance that desires the world and is bent on caprice.

36 It is not obscured by the smoke generated from the fire of the desires of the lower self (*nafs*).

5.5 Restricting Sainthood

Al-Tirmidhī was not a revolutionary and he built into his concept of *wilāya* several mechanisms to balance the claims that he was making about the light-knowledge of the *awliyā'*. One mechanism al-Tirmidhī used to limit the chaotic potential of light-knowledge was to set a standard by which this knowledge could be gauged. Al-Tirmidhī accomplishes this to some degree in his *KA* by posing a series of questions that a would-be saint should answer were he to claim *wilāya*. These questions were meant to be extremely challenging, and even their number, one hundred and fifty or more, is daunting. Some of the questions are, "What are the decrees of divine predestination?" and "What has every messenger received as his allotment from his Lord?"[37] These questions come under the rubric of what al-Tirmidhī calls *ḥikmat al-ḥikma* or *al-ḥikmat al-ʿulyā* (the wisdom of wisdom, or the highest wisdom). This type of wisdom includes knowledge of the letters (*ḥurūf*), the primordial covenant (*mīthāq*), of God's divine gifts (*ālā'*) and God's preordainments (*maqādīr*).[38] The second constraint al-Tirmidhī places on access to *wilāya* is to restrict them to the scholarly class. It seems counterintuitive that al-Tirmidhī would make such a restriction given his fierce criticism of the scholars (*ʿulamā'*) of his time. However, we must remember that while al-Tirmidhī himself came from this class of religious scholars, he saw himself as a reformer of this class. He was not trying to replace the scholarly class (*ʿulamā'*) but was seeking to reform it. In al-Tirmidhī's *Kitāb bayān al-ʿilm*, he expounds upon his tripartite division of scholars who are the *ʿulamā'*, *ḥukamā'* and *kubarā'*. As mentioned previously, the term *kubarā'* is another term al-Tirmidhī uses for the highest of the *awliyā'*.[39] For al-Tirmidhī, however, these are not separate categories, but are nested one within the other. The largest category is *al-ʿulamā' bi-aḥkām Allāh* (the scholars of God's rulings) and these are the scholars of outward (*ẓāhir*) knowledge. Within this category there is a smaller group of scholars of outward knowledge that al-Tirmidhī calls the *ḥukamā'* (sages). These he terms *al-ʿulamā' bi-amr Allāh* (the scholars of God's command), and they are knowledgeable about God's orchestration of affairs in the world, or his *tadbīr* (planning) of affairs. It should be noted that these are also called *ʿulamā'* (scholars).

37 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 72–86.

38 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 48.

39 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb bayān al-ʿilm*, fol. 20b. Al-Tirmidhī writes, *fa-ulā'ika* (*al-kubarā'*) *khulafā' Allāh ʿalā ʿibādihi wa-awliyā'ihi fī arḍihi*, "And those (the *kubarā'*) are the caliphs of God over his servants and his saints in his earth."

The final group, which is a smaller group among the *ḥukamāʾ* (sages), are the *kubarāʾ* (great ones). These are called *al-ʿulamāʾ bi-Allāh* (the scholars through/by God), and this group contains the knowledge of the previous two groups, but they are also purified inwardly and are God's bona fide saints. Al-Tirmidhī writes in *Kitāb bayān al-ʿilm*:

> الكبراء هم الذين جمعوا هذه العلوم كلها فعلموا الحلال والحرام وفهموا تدبيره عنه في تحليله الحلال وتحريمه الحرام واطلعوا في علم الملكوت واستشعرت قلوبهم من عظمة الله فهابوه وأجلّوه ولهت قلوبهم إليه وحنّت إلى لقاءه فبعلم اليقين عبدوه.[40]
>
> The great ones (*al-kubarāʾ*) are the ones who have encompassed all of these knowledges; hence, they know the licit and the illicit, and they have understood his (God's) planning concerning his allowance of the licit and his prohibition of the illicit, and they have experienced the knowledge of the angelic world and their hearts have felt the immensity of God; and so they are in awe of him and exalt him, and their hearts desire him and yearn to meet him. Through the knowledge of certainty they worship him.

This nesting of scholar-types results in outward knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) being the first door one must enter to reach the *wilāya* of the *kubarāʾ*. As we mentioned before, this has the effect of sanctifying the entire scholarly class since all of the signs of *wilāya* are subjective rather than objective criteria in al-Tirmidhī's schema. If outward knowledge is a gatekeeper for *wilāya*, it sets up formidable obstacles to attainment of this rank because the outward knowledge al-Tirmidhī referred to, the *ḥalāl* (licit) and the *ḥarām* (illicit), was taught and understood in Arabic in his time and the means for formal study were not available to many Muslims.[41] Hence, we can view al-Tirmidhī's approach to *wilāya* as an attempt to reform the scholarly class rather than replace it and empower lower strata in society. Al-Tirmidhī tries to reorient the scholars of outward knowledge toward a higher type of light-knowledge that he sees as the true and real knowledge. For al-Tirmidhī, the reform of the *ʿulamāʾ* eventually

40 Ibid., fol. 16b.

41 See Bulliet's discussion of the obstacles to acquiring knowledge in Nīshāpūr in *The Patricians of Nishapur*, 55–56.

reforms other elements of society as their knowledge filters down to the common Muslim.

5.6 The Optimism of al-Tirmidhī's Doctrine of *Wilāya*

Al-Tirmidhī's concept of sainthood is not simply an idea about the role of particular elite individuals who are privy to a special knowledge they derive directly from their colloquy (*ḥadīth*) with God. Rather, al-Tirmidhī initiates a very different approach and perspective that runs counter to the prevailing 'degeneration' framework, that sees the first generation of the Islamic community (even the first three generations) as the height of perfection, only to see each successive generation as a degeneration from this pristine origin.[42] The idea that the Islamic community is hurtling inevitably toward its eventual demise is one that permeates much of the culture of Ahl al-Ḥadīth discourse around the corruption of modern times. The oft-cited prophetic *ḥadīth* that is used to demonstrate this viewpoint is, *khayru al-nās qarnī thumma al-ladhīna yalūnahum thumma al-ladhīna yalūnahum…*, "the best of people is my generation, and then those that follow them, and then those that follow them..."[43] The conclusion taken from Ḥadīth of this kind, that each successive generation is worse than the previous one, is an approach that could justify a certain resignation and attitude of inevitability to the difficulties and challenges that have beset Muslim communities throughout history. Al-Tirmidhī challenges this notion by disconnecting the highest levels of *wilāya* from time and stating that "the *wilāya* of the level of *ṣiddīqiyya* (the level just below prophecy) in no way depends upon time."[44] Al-Tirmidhī, through his concept of *wilāya*, offers an optimistic alternative to this sometimes pessimistic narrative. According to al-Tirmidhī, there will always be true saints who offer guidance to human beings as successors to the Prophet until the end of the world comes about. These are individuals who receive the light of guidance directly from God and are in colloquy with him. Al-Tirmidhī also offers evidence from the Ḥadīth corpus to

42 This idea was first identified by Geneviève Gobillot in the chapter titled, "Le système de la sainteté," in her work *Le livre des nuances ou de l'impossibilité de la synonymie* or *Kitāb al-furūq wa manʿ al-tarāduf*. At the end of this chapter, she explains how al-Tirmidhi differed from his contemporaries in taking a more positive view of the future possibilities of the Muslim umma. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Geneviève Gobillot, *Le livre des nuances*, 102–106. I would not go so far as Gobillot, however, to say that al-Tirmidhī believed in human progress or science such as his contemporary and the philosopher, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī.

43 Al-Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Chapter on witnesses (*Al-shahādāt*), 2509.

44 Diego R. Sarrio, "Spiritual anti-elitism," 282.

support his view that later generations of the Muslim *umma* (community) may be, in fact, greater than earlier generations. He quotes the *ḥadīth*, *mathalu ummatī ka-l-maṭar lā yadrī awwaluhu khayr*^{un} *am ākhiruhu*, "My community is like the rain; one doesn't know if the first is better or the last."[45] It would seem that what al-Tirmidhī means is that both the first generation and the last generation will be the best rather than the more orthodox view that the first generation is always the best. However, rather than looking at just the Muslim *umma* (community) throughout time, al-Tirmidhī is looking at the entire world community and its guidance and blessedness. Both the *anbiyā'* and the *awliyā'* are sent to this world community commensurate to its overall spiritual state in order to establish an equilibrium. The darkness of ignorance is balanced with the light of gnosis (*maʿrifa*) that comes through these individuals. Hence, when one of al-Tirmidhī's students ask him about this point, he responds with the following argument:

قال: إنّ ولاية الصديقية ليست من الزمان في شيء، وإنّ الوليّ والصديق حجّة الله على خلقه، وغياث الخلق وأمانهم لأنّهم دعاة إلى الله على بصيرة، فهم في وقت الحاجة أحرى أن يكونوا، وقد بعث الله الرسل في الفترة والعمى ودولة الباطل حتى نعش الحقّ وزهق الباطل، فلماذا يكبر في الصدور أن يكون في آخر الزمان من يوازي أوّلهم لحاجة الخلق إليهم؟[46]

> He replied: The *wilāya* of the level of *ṣiddīqiyya* (the level just below prophecy) in no way depends upon time. Indeed, the saint of God and the strictly truthful person are God's proof against mankind, and they are an assistance and protection for mankind because they call [people] to God with discernment (*baṣīra*). Thus, it is more appropriate for them to exist during a time of need, and indeed God has sent the messengers when there was a period of no prophecy (*fatra*), [and there was] blindness and the dominion of falsehood, in order for that which is true to be invigorated and for falsehood to perish. So why does it seem too great in [men's] hearts that at the end of time someone would exist who corresponds to the persons who existed at the beginning because of mankind's need for them?

This understanding of light (*nūr*) and darkness (*ẓulma*) is consonant with al-Tirmidhī's approach to *ḥikma*, which is a knowledge of God's use of opposites

45 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 3, 298.
46 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 119.

in the world. This is not a Zoroastrian model of a cosmic battle between the forces of light and darkness. Rather, as al-Tirmidhī states in his *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, both light and darkness are needed to know God, since they are opposites created by him and they define each other.[47] Thus, it makes sense that al-Tirmidhī would see an even greater need for exemplars of truth (*awliyā'*) to appear when the darkness of ignorance was greater. While this approach is 'optimistic,' it is not one that promises 'progress,' or the idea that society or humanity is moving towards perfection, or that perfection is even an ideal. Perfection is clearly not possible on a societal level. This idea does not seek to erase or destroy ignorance because that would be impossible in this model. Rather, the point is to 'separate' knowledge from ignorance so that there is no turbidity (*kadar*) or admixture (*ikhtilāṭ*) in the opposites, and that truth and falsehood can accurately define each other as opposites. That is the primary function of the *ḥakīm* (sage).[48] Such a cosmography that describes the universe in terms of opposites serves to frame God's traces (*āthār*) in the world. As we have mentioned previously, al-Tirmidhī numbers these traces as four. Since they are representative of God on earth, and because God, by definition, has no opposite, those traces also have the quality of non-duality. Thus, the dualisms that al-Tirmidhī sets up are a way of pointing to and identifying these traces, or these non-duals, which derive their non-duality from God's singularity and uniqueness. In this way, al-Tirmidhī's cosmology indicates an optimism about the possibilities of human spiritual achievement. Not only are we informed by al-Tirmidhī that there are at least forty of God's *awliyā'* alive at any time and that they can be a means of guidance for humanity, but this also leads to an awareness of God's immanence, and that the manifestation of his traces in the world are palpable and capable of being experienced.

5.7 *Wilāya* Creates a Third Space

We discussed in Chapter 3 how al-Tirmidhī uses a Pythagorean sense of *ḥikma* (wisdom) to view the world as arranged by opposites (*aḍdād*) that, in turn, point to an underlying unitary principle. For al-Tirmidhī, this principle was Allāh, who created the world as opposites. Adopting aspects of a Pythagorean cosmology was not difficult for al-Tirmidhī because this basic structure is clearly explicated in the Qur'ān, specifically in verses 49 and 50 of Chapter 51,

47 Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 16v.
48 Ibid., fol. 3r.

al-Dhāriyāt, and supported by many other verses throughout the Qur'ān,[49] *wa-min kulli shay'in khalaqnā zawjayni la'allakum tadhakkarūn fa-firrū ilā Allāh innī lakum minhu nadhīrun mubīn*, "And of everything we have created pairs so that perhaps you will remember. So flee to God; I am only a clear warner for you." The Qur'ān clearly views the world as a place of dualities, not in an antagonistic sense as in Zoroastrian cosmology, but as dualities which point to God as signs (*āyāt*). The Qur'ānic discussion of marriage is a case in point in which the *zawj* (spouse, pair or opposite) is created in order for God's attributes to manifest. For example, *mawadda* (love) and *raḥma* (mercy) occur between the two spouses and are a sign (*āya*) of God. These attributes are characterized in a non-dual sense because they are traces of God, who is described in the Qur'ān as *al-wadūd* (the loving) and *al-raḥmān* (the all-merciful).[50] Al-Tirmidhī's cosmology can be considered Pythagorean in the sense that Pythagorean notions fit well into his Qur'ānic worldview.

For al-Tirmidhī, God and his attributes are not the only non-dual. God's "traces" in the world also take on an aspect of his non-duality and are thus representative of God on earth.[51] These four traces (*āthār*) of God are: the Qur'an, the *sulṭān* (temporal ruler, in an abstract sense of representing God's power), the Ka'ba (God's house), and the saints (*awliyā'*). In *NU*, al-Tirmidhī writes about these four traces:

> ولله في أرضه أربعة من آثاره به يقطع المشتاقون أعمارهم: القرآن وهو كلامه، والسلطان وهو ظله، والكعبة وهو بيته ومعلمه ومطهره، والولي وهو خليفته في أرضه. فعلى كلامه بهاء وطلاوة ولبق وعلى ظله هيبة وعلى بيته ومعلمه وقارة وعلى خليفته نور جلاله فبهؤلاء الأربع تقوم الأرض فإذا دنا قيام الساعة رفع القرآن وهدمت الكعبة وذهب السلطان وقبض الأولياء عن آخرهم فلم يبق في الأرض ذو حرمة. فالمنتبهون إنما مأخذهم من القرآن لطائفه وطلاوته ولبقه ومن السلطان هيبة ظله ولا يلحظون إلى أفعالهم

49 For other verses in the Qur'ān that discuss creation in pairs, see 13:3, 20:53, 20:131, 26:7, 30:21, 35:11, 36:36, 42:11 and 43:12.

50 Qur'ān, 30:21.

51 Al-Tirmidhī specifically says that God has no opposite, *lā ḍidda lahu*, "He has no opposite." Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 1, 21. The four traces of God each have a non-dual character. There is only one Ka'ba, the Qur'ān represents the attribute of God's speech (*kalām*) which borrows from God's non-duality, the *sulṭān* (temporal ruler of all the Muslims) is God's shadow on earth (*ẓillihi*), and the saints (*awliyā'*) attain the station (*manzil*) of *fardāniyya*.

وسير تهم ومن البيت إلى وقاره لا إلى تلك الأحجار والبنيان ومن الولي نور جلاله الذي قد أشرق في صدره.[52]

> God has four of his traces in his earth to which lovers dedicate their lives: the Qurʾān, which is his speech; the ruler, which is his shadow; the Kaʿba, which is his house, symbol and his place of purity; and the saint, who is his vicegereant on his earth. Over his speech is beauty, splendor and elegance. Over his shadow is awe and dread. Over his house and symbol is dignity. Over his vicegerent is the light of his majesty. Through these four the earth persists. So if the Hour comes close, the Qurʾān will be lifted, the Kaʿba will be destroyed, the temporal ruler will disappear, the souls of the saints, up to the last of them, will be taken, and there will not remain on Earth any sacred person. Those who are aware simply take from the Qurʾān its subtleties, its beauty and its refinement; and from the temporal ruler the awesomeness of his shadow, but not [his] actions or [his] example; and from the House of God they perceive God's dignity, but not the stones and structure; and from the saint they perceive the light of God's majesty which dawns in the saint's heart.

These four traces are sources of protection for humanity because it is through them that the world is protected by God from destruction. The Kaʿba in Makka is described as a *ḥaram* (sacred precinct) in which fighting or killing is not allowed.[53] The role of the *sulṭān* (the temporal ruler) is to maintain order and justice such that people's rights are not transgressed, and the ideal ruler is someone who is a protection for people.[54] The Qurʾān, or God's speech (*kalām*), has a sanctity (*ḥurma*) that makes it inviolable to touch unless one is ritually purified through ablution.[55] The *walī* is a protection for the land he lives in and because of him, the crops are watered and the animals fed.[56] Al-Tirmidhī mentions that when a believer beholds any of these four things, his heart finds ease and calmness (*istarwaḥa*).[57] The *awliyāʾ*, as representatives of God's trace on earth, become not only a means of witnessing God's light, but are also loci for God's mercy and protection. It appears that al-Tirmidhī is saying that if a person can find one of these saints, then he can find protection and security

52 Ibid., vol. 3, 424.
53 Ibid., vol. 3, 84–85.
54 Ibid., vol. 6, 421.
55 Ibid., vol. 6, 74.
56 Ibid., vol. 5, 132.
57 Ibid., vol. 3, 421.

through the blessing of the *walī*, since the heart of the *walī* occupies a station at which God's light enters the world.

For al-Tirmidhī, the dualisms in the world provide a framework to identify the non-dual traces of God in the world. At the end of Chapter 3, we discussed the non-dual station of the *walī*, which is called *fardāniyya* (non-duality, solitariness). This station is unique and is reserved for the highest of the *awliyā'*. In *KḤ*, al-Tirmidhī provides us with a *mathal* to explain the non-dual position of the *walī*, and how this creates a safe space for those who are connected to the *walī*. In an analogy we had mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, al-Tirmidhī compares the *walī* to a shepherd who has a flock of sheep. When predators attack the sheep, the shepherd's dogs fight the predators and kill them. The shepherd and his flock remain safe, while the dogs and predators fight each other.[58] Al-Tirmidhī mentions how the sheep dog was, at one time, a predator itself, but that through the influence of the shepherd it becomes the opposite of its original nature and fights off the other predators. Here, the non-dual position of the shepherd actually gives rise to the duality of dog versus predator that, in turn, frames the non-duality of the safe space in which the sheep inhabit. Here, the *walī*, as a conduit for God's light and a trace of God in the world, is a means for establishing safe spaces that are impervious to the interaction of opposites, which can sometimes, but not always, be antagonistic.

5.8 The Political Ramifications of *Ḥikma*

The authority of the *ḥakīm*, when considered in relation to diffuse and contractual authority, is a subversive form of authority, like the authority of the early *Ṣūfiyya*. Al-Tirmidhī tries to encompass this type of authority by placing it between contractual (scholarly – of the *'ulamā'*) and dispersive (caliphal) forms. However, it would be safe to say that keeping such a type of authority solely within the purview of the learned elite would not be possible. *Ḥikma* follows a Hellenistic model in the sense that it is hierarchical. Al-Tirmidhī alludes to this numerous times when he describes the *ḥakīm* as a *malik* (king).[59] This is because the authority of *ḥikma* does not transfer to others.[60] The *ḥakīm* is someone who gathers knowledge from its source and makes judgements of truth or falsehood about matters in the world. The *ḥakīm* is like the doctor whose knowledge of things worldly and spiritual allows him to treat the

58 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-ḥikma*, fol. 6v.
59 Ibid., fol. 7v.
60 Ibid., fol. 4v.

spiritually ill.[61] While the Ṣūfiyya prior to al-Junayd were primarily subversive vis-à-vis caliphal authority, the *ḥukamā'* are subversive vis-à-vis the *'ulamā'*. One can participate in the authority of the *'ulamā'* by becoming part of the various solidarity groups that they formed; however, one cannot participate in the authority of the *ḥakīm* except by becoming one as well. As we discussed in relation to Bulliet's study of Nishāpūr, many Islamic cities in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the 9th–11th-centuries CE were primarily controlled by factions headed by the learned classes. This means that an authority structure subversive to the *'ulamā'* would have political consequences.

The closest analogy to al-Tirmidhī's *ḥukamā'* would be the Falāsifa. The *ḥukamā'* are not the same as the Falāsifa but are *'ulamā'* who bring *falsafa* (philosophy) into the context of religious learning. One of the most famous examples of this would be Suhrawardī al-Maqṭūl, who lived almost three hundred years after al-Tirmidhī. While it is clear that Suhrawardī's illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) philosophy differed in significant ways from al-Tirmidhī's conception of *ḥikma*, there are enough similarities that we can draw some general conclusions about the subversive nature of al-Tirmidhī's notion of *ḥikma*. Suhrawardī was a member of the religious scholarly class. He was a Shafi'ī and had studied numerous Islamic disciplines. This is the first aspect that accords with al-Tirmidhī's conception of the *ḥukamā'*, that is, they are first and foremost scholars of Islamic religious learning. However, above and beyond religious textual knowledge, the *ḥukamā'* have knowledge of the world and the soul. Suhrawardī's light-cosmology is an emmanationist cosmology that includes a hierarchy of various kinds of light-beings, emanating from the Light of Lights, via the First Light.[62] We should not forget that al-Tirmidhī, himself, uses light as an explanatory paradigm to discuss the subtleties of the structure of the heart as well as to describe a number of spiritual aspects connected to the world. Ultimately Suhrawardi runs afoul of the *'ulamā'* of Allepo, who have him charged with heresy. He was executed by order of Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193). It is clear that the *'ulamā'* saw the authority of the *ḥakīm* as particularly dangerous to their power. This may be because the knowledge of *ḥikma* threatens to supplant the knowledge derived from religious texts as an alternative explanatory paradigm. Al-Tirmidhī did not see these types of knowledge or authority as being mutually exclusive or antagonistic to one another; however, it could be that he also did not take into account the full implications of his approach. What is significant is that the later Ṣūfī tradition did not adopt al-Tirmidhī's notion of *ḥikma* or his vision of the role of the *ḥukamā'*. The Ṣūfī

61 Ibid., fol. 18v.

62 Roxanne Marcotte, "Suhrawardī," 203.

shaykh would not be a physician of the heart as some today conceptualize the Ṣūfī shaykh to be. Rather, the Ṣūfī *shaykh* is a *walī* to his murids and the authority structure is primarily contractual. In addition to the Ṣūfī shaykh, we have the development of the *quṭb* as the pole around which the spiritual universe revolves. This is in fact a diffuse structure rather than a hierarchical one as it is often portrayed. Hence, in Ṣūfī discourse, the two modes of Islamicate authority reappear even if relegated to spiritual dimensions.

5.9 The *Khātim al-Awliyāʾ*

One of the most controversial elements of al-Tirmidhī's concept of *wilāya* is his doctrine of the seal of sainthood (*khatm al-wilāya*). Al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of the seal of sainthood is sometimes misconstrued because of the close association between the sealer of saints (*khātim awliyāʾ*) and the sealer of prophets (*khātim al-nabiyyīn*), i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad. Al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of the seal of sainthood (*khatm al-wilāya*) might easily be mistaken for certain Shīʿī notions of the final redeemer (Maḥdī), who will come at the end of time to rule the Muslim community with justice (*ʿadl*). Similar beliefs are held among Sunnīs but are characterized in more political terms than in theological terms. Al-Tirmidhi's doctrine, however, places *wilāya* next to prophethood, as we saw in the creedal texts discussed in Chapter 4. Once this is accomplished, a parallelism is drawn between *wilāya* and *nubuwwa*. Just as the Prophet Muḥammad is the sealer of prophets, similarly a sealer of saints exists who will complete *wilāya*. The sealer (*khātim*) is not simply the last *walī* (*al-ākhir mabʿath*^{an}), but also one who completes *wilāya*.[63] Critics of al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of the seal of sainthood point to his passage in *Khatm al-awliyāʾ* in which he rejects the idea put forward by many in his time that the meaning of sealer (*khātim*) is final or last (*khātam*), with a *fatḥa* vowel on the letter *tāʾ* rather than a *kasra*.[64] Al-Tirmidhī actually puts forward both interpretations based on a correct reading of this passage as well as according to his statements in other works.[65] So, according to al-Tirmidhī, the Prophet is both the last (*khātam*) as

63 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Drei Schriften*, 42.

64 Al-Tirmidhī states, *fa-inna alladhī ʿamiya ʿan khabar hādhā yaẓunnu anna khātim al-nabiyyīn innamā taʾwīluhu annahu ākhiruhum mabʿath*^{an} *fa-ayyatu manqabat*^{un} *fī hādhā? Wa-ayyu ʿalam fī hādhā? Hādhā taʾwīl al-bulh al-jahala*, "Now whoever is unaware of this Tradition and thinks the interpretation of 'seal[er] of the prophets,' only means that he is the last of them [the prophets] to be sent – would this be a feat or a mark of distinction? This is an interpretation of stupid people and fools." Ibid., 42.

65 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Baraka. *Naẓariyyatuhu*, vol. 2, 377–378.

well as sealer (*khātim*) of the prophets, while the sealer of saints (*khātim al-awliyā'*), or the *qā'im bi-l-ḥujja* (the one who stands as a proof),[66] is the sealer (*khātim*) of the *awliyā'*, but not necessarily the final (*khātam*) *walī*. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) rejects this particular doctrine of al-Tirmidhī as unorthodox, citing it as having been unknown to the earlier generations and contradictory to revealed scripture, reason and the *awliyā'* themselves.[67] The doctrine of the *khātim*/*khātam* as introduced by al-Tirmidhī has no precedent in the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth corpus, so then one may ask how al-Tirmidhī invented this doctrine, and why he placed such an emphasis on it. Al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of the sealer of the *awliyā'* is important to his overall approach to the *awliyā'* as authority figures within the Muslim community. If the *awliyā'* are characterized by a special knowledge vouchsafed by God, then there should be some way of verifying that this knowledge is correct. Just as the Prophet completes the knowledge of all the other prophets and is a *ḥujja* (proof) of their veracity, the sealer of the *awliyā'* functions in the same way. This is because the part is always judged against the whole. Al-Tirmidhī indicates indirectly in numerous places in his writings that he is the sealer of the *awliyā'*.[68] This would make al-Tirmidhī's theory of *wilāya* stronger because it would not only establish the *awliyā'* as authorities but provide a possible basis for evaluating the *awliyā'* against a standard.

5.10 The "Hierarchy of Saints"

One of the consistent themes within Sufism, and a source of much criticism by non-Ṣūfīs, is the general Ṣūfī belief in a hierarchy of saints. The word hierarchy does not appear anywhere, however, in the Ṣūfī sources.[69] The use of the word "hierarchy" imposes a high degree of interpretive license. Nevertheless, almost every scholar in the field of Islamic Mysticism uses this term to describe the various levels of saints beginning with the *quṭb* (pole) and descending down a series of levels to the *akhyār* (chosen ones) who number one hundred in the schema of al-Hujwīrī. The concept of the *quṭb* seems to have been something that developed in stages, and al-Tirmidhī is considered one of the first to initiate something close to this idea with the *khātim al-awliyā'*. However, the *khātim*

66 This is another name al-Tirmidhī uses for the *khātim al-awliyā'* (sealer of the saints) who comes at the end of time and is both the last saint as well as the completion of sainthood.

67 Deigo R. Sarrio. *Spiritual Anti-elitism*, 282.

68 Bernd Radtke, "The concepts of Walāya," 493.

69 The closest would be the *diwān al-awliyā'* (the court of the saints) which evokes a caliphal court as used by Ibn al-ʿArabī. Yannis Toussulis, *Sufism and the Way of Blame*, 237.

al-awliyā' is one individual who completes *wilāya* for all time. By the time of al-Hujwīrī, *quṭbiyya* is quite developed, being an office held by different *awliyā'*, at different times, around whom the spiritual universe turns. The *quṭb* is hidden but always exists until the end of time. The closest we get in al-Tirmidhī's writings to the *quṭb* is someone he describes as the foremost amongst the *abdāl* (substitutes).[70] By al-Sulamī's time, we have a *quṭb* who completes the deficiencies of the *awliyā'*. The *quṭb* functions here in a similar way to al-Tirmidhī's *khātim al-awliyā'*; however, the *quṭb* is a *walī* who completes the *wilāya* of the *awliyā'* in any given time period.[71] The concept of the *quṭb* as it develops in the 11th-century CE is not a hierarchy in the sense that spiritual authority descends to lower levels of the spiritual ladder through the *quṭb*. Rather, the *quṭb* is the center around which the spiritual universe pivots. Since the *qutb* is known only to God it decentralizes this function. So, while the *qutb* is the anchor that holds the spiritual universe together, the *qutb* only functions in that capacity to maintain the dispersive nature of *wilāya*. The structure of *quṭbiyya* more closely follows the model of diffuse authority that was discussed earlier rather than a hierarchical model that was foreign to Arab and Islamic social organization. While al-Tirmidhī is the one who bases his concept of *wilāya* on contractual authority using *walā'* (clientage), it is al-Sulamī and others who develop *wilāya* at the level of diffuse authority.

Al-Tirmidhī's vision of sainthood clearly demonstrates a great deal of versatility. By combining and amalgamating various trends in early Islamic thought and mysticism, al-Tirmidhī was able to put forward ideas that were socially and politically relevant to his time. Not only were they relevant, but they had powerful transformative potential. Al-Tirmidhī takes the light-motif and places it at the center of his gnoseology, similar to the way the proto-Shīʿīs had construed the *'ilm* (knowledge) of their imams and the proto-Sunnīs of Madīna had construed the charisma of the prophetic legacy. Al-Tirmidhī clearly belonged to the discourse stream of proto-Sunnism; however, it wasn't until the arrival of al-Tirmidhī that the light-motif takes center stage amongst the Sunnī *'ulamā'*. When al-Tirmidhī combines this light-motif with *wilāya*, which was a category that was already established in Ḥanafī theological discourse, the result is a new spiritual geography. Knowledge, as light, resides in the hearts of living saints who are undesignated except by spiritual markers within the Muslim community. They exist as the conduits through whom God continues to

70 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 33. Al-Tirmidhī relates a dream in which he is told that he is the first of forty who have come to save the people. These forty are clearly a reference to the *abdāl*. The fact that there is a foremost one amongst the *abdāl* is indicative of something close to the idea of the *quṭb*.

71 Kenneth Honerkamp, "A Sufi itinerary of tenth century Nishapur," 64.

provide guidance to humanity as successors to the Prophet. Hence, God's light flows into the world through the hearts of these men and women, if only they can be found. This doctrine provides a counterweight to the aforementioned fatalistic and pessimistic tendency that the Muslim community is in a continual state of decline, moving toward the final destruction of both mankind and the world at the end of time. Al-Tirmidhī's eschatology also admits to an end of the world but explains that before that time, God's guidance for humanity is always commensurate with the level of ignorance and darkness that is simultaneously occurring in the world. Hence, sainthood here can address very important theological views about God's involvement in the world and the continuation of an element of prophecy through sainthood.

Al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of *wilāya* also has implications for the socio-political sphere. By separating temporal authority from religious authority, al-Tirmidhī opens up religious authority to new claimants. However, at the same time, he attempts to restrict this authority by making outward religious knowledge a prerequisite for it. The *awliyā'*, as traces of God on earth, create safe spaces that are a protection for humanity. This idea inspired early Ṣūfīs like al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī to integrate this structure into Sufism. In time, the Ṣūfī *shaykh* would come to function as a buffer between ordinary Muslims and the unmitigated power of the state, which serves to affirm al-Tirmidhī's vision of *wilāya*.

CHAPTER 6

A Ṣūfī by Any Other Name: Al-Tirmidhī's Relationship to Islamic Mysticism

6.1 Introduction

We now examine the theoretical backdrop that informs al-Tirmidhī's thought by exploring his relationship to other mystical movements in early Islam. In Chapter 2 we discussed how al-Tirmidhī uses the language of clientage (*walā'*) to propose a new type of religious authority, which ultimately would invest the *'ulamā'* as custodians of that authority. In Chapter 3 we showed how al-Tirmidhī uses aspects of Hellenistic thought and Pythagorean notions of wisdom (*ḥikma*) to frame his discussion of the *awliyā'*. In Chapter 4 we explored al-Tirmidhī's debt to Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theology and how his use of theological categories helped to situate and justify his concept of *wilāya* within that discourse. There are multiple discourse streams at work here that blend and interact within al-Tirmidhī's thought. We are interested in how he developed and integrated these discursive formations as his concept of *wilāya* emerged and took form. The social institution of clientage (*walā'*) provided a strong social basis for the preservation of Arab privilege and lent itself to the transformation of this social privilege into *wilāya*, thereby sanctifying the scholarly class (*'ulamā'*). This transformation was possible because the category of *wilāya* had already existed in the Ḥanafī theological tradition, although it was not linked to social or political power before al-Tirmidhī's time. Al-Tirmidhī then uses elements of Pythagoreanism to posit a gnoseology that elevates wisdom (*ḥikma*) to the level of a type of revelatory knowledge that speaks to the human being through nature. This is a different kind of gnosis (*ma'rifa*) than that of the proto-Ṣūfīs who styled their knowledge as light (*nūr*).[1] Thus, the Islamic mystical tradition had already devised a language and a path (*ṭarīq*) to a realization of this type of theophanic knowledge that was not mediated through either texts or nature. Light (*nūr*) is one of the knowledge-types Rosenthal uses to frame the Islamic mystical tradition. Al-Tirmidhī is the first one to bring all the three knowledge-types we have just discussed together in one system. For al-Tirmidhī, it is the *awliyā'* and not the *ḥukamā'* who pass beyond both textual knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ẓāhir*) and the knowledge of nature (*'ilm al-asbāb*). In

1 Al-Tirmidhī also heavily relies upon a light gnoseology to understand *ma'rifa*.

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this way, al-Tirmidhī situates gnosis (*maʿrifa*) in relation to the two important modes of knowledge in his time: textual religious knowledge within the Islamic orbit and philosophical, or wisdom-based, knowledge whose roots were in the Hellenistic tradition. Al-Tirmidhī not only borrows heavily from what he calls the *ṭarīq al-maʿrifa* (the path of gnosis) associated with the proto-Ṣūfīs, but his concept of *wilāya* plays a key role in the development of what later becomes Sufism. I will discuss how I view Sufism in its mature form as a product of the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th-century CE.[2] Thus, while so many have sought to understand the continuities that link al-Tirmidhī to his context, this study is also interested in understanding the ruptures and discontinuities that al-Tirmidhī initiated with his new approach to *wilāya*.

6.2 Was al-Tirmidhī a 'Ṣūfī'?

Most scholars in the field of Islamic mysticism (Alexander Knysh, Nile Green, Ahmet Karamustafa, Laury Silvers et al.) agree upon a narrative that situates early Sufism, in Baghdād during the latter half of the 9th-century CE, as a somewhat *avant-garde* movement of mystics who self-identified as Ṣūfīs and who were somehow connected to the circle of al-Junayd.[3] The term *lābis al-ṣūf* (wearer of wool) itself is much older, reaching back to pre-Islamic times and used to designate certain Christian ascetics in the same general geographical region of Iraq.[4] This Baghdād tradition then moved eastward to Khurāsān where it blended with older Khurāsānian and Transoxanian ascetic and

2 Francesco Chiabotti (2014) discusses how al-Qushayrī represents the climax of the development of Ṣūfī aesthetics and practice between the early masters and the later great *shaykhs* such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). He also argues that al-Qushayrī represents the best example of a harmonization of the various different social groups and knowledge-types of his time. Chiabotti's study of al-Qushayrī supports the idea that al-Qushayrī (we include al-Sulamī who was the basis for much of al-Qushayrī's thought) developed a broad synthesis of Islamic knowledge and practice that significantly informed Sufism as a mystical movement. For this reason, we dub the combined contribution of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī to Islamic mysticism as, 'The Great Mystical Synthesis of the 5th/11th-Century.' In this sense, the introduction of Khurāsānian mysticism into Sufism by al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī was as important to what would become mature Sufism, if not more important, than the contribution of al-Junayd's circle of Baghdād Ṣūfīs. Francesco Chiabotti, *Entre soufisme et savoir islamique*, 635.

3 Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism, the Formative Period*, 7.

4 Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 18. Green argues that this does not necessarily point to a Christian 'origin' for Sufism because early Muslim ascetics can be seen just as much as rivals to Christian ascetics as they were imitators of their conventions. Hence, Green sees this process as one of 'mirroring' rather than 'borrowing'.

mystical traditions until it superseded and replaced them.[5] From Khurāsān, Sufism spread to all corners of the Islamic world and continues to be a vibrant mystical tradition in Islam to this day. This narrative assumes a somewhat continuous trajectory from the circle of al-Junayd up to the Ṣūfīs of Khurāsān in Nīshāpūr in the 11th- and 12th-centuries CE. While some elements of this narrative are undeniable, the narrative also leaves unanswered questions concerning the role that other indigenous mystical trends played in the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century. Furthermore, the reduction of Sufism to its Baghdād variety presupposes a Baghdād-centric view of Islamic mysticism, which is a view of Islamic mysticism that we must concede most Muslim mystics share to this day. What we seek to demonstrate here is that Sufism in its mature form represents a new development in Islamic mysticism and is an emergent event brought about by the confluence of several factors. This understanding of Sufism makes better sense of al-Tirmidhī's place in Islamic mysticism, since he is often characterized as an outlier and somewhat of an anomaly.[6]

Bernd Radtke is emphatic that al-Tirmidhī was not a Ṣūfī. He quotes several early Ṣūfīs who deny that al-Tirmidhī was a Ṣūfī. Among these was the early Ṣūfī historian Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 348/959) and ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088), a Ḥanbalī Ṣūfī who is understood to have been markedly against any type of theological speculation. Despite the positions of these two mystics, there were many other early Ṣūfīs who did consider al-Tirmidhī to be part of the Ṣūfī tradition.[7] In this way, we can see that al-Tirmidhī problematizes our notions of what it means to be a Ṣūfī since Ṣūfīs themselves were split on whether he should be counted among their number. Al-Tirmidhī never used the term '*ṣūfī*', and in several places in *NU* he speaks in derogatory terms about "those who wear wool," which we can assume is most likely a statement criticizing asceticism rather than any particular mystical group associated with the nascent Ṣūfīs of Baghdād. It is also important to remember that al-Tirmidhī precedes the seeding of Baghdād Sufism in Khurāsān and Transoxania by about a hundred years, if we do not take into account a few early teachers such as Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 320/932), who may have fled Baghdād in the wake of the *miḥna* of Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888).[8] Nevertheless, al-Tirmidhī's writings exhibit many

5 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 99–100.

6 Ibid., 105.

7 Al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī and al-Kalābādhī all considered al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī to be a forerunner of Sufism.

8 Biographical dictionaries indicate that not until the 11th century do we find the beginnings of a considerable number of scholars identified as Ṣūfīs. Before this time, those who are identified as Ṣūfīs are few and usually are those who at some point passed

of the characteristics that we would associate with Sufism in the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE in Khurāsān.[9] In some cases, al-Tirmidhī's mysticism is closer to what we might call the product of the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century (i.e., mature Sufism), with his emphasis on a type of mysticism that is squarely anti-ascetical. Yet, a number of the Ṣūfīs of Baghdād were ascetics, and al-Junayd, in his writings, clearly defended asceticism and its important role in his mystical training.[10] If we contrast al-Junayd's views on asceticism with those of al-Qushayrī and al-Sulamī, we find in the latter two an approach that is more in line with al-Tirmidhī's views.[11] Al-Junayd's unique articulation of Ṣūfī aesthetics was seminal in defining a way of mystical practice; however, it was not a way that was accessible to other than a small elite who could internalize his often highly complicated terminology. On the other hand, if we understand Sufism in a broader sense to be the product of an encompassing mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century CE, we see that this type of Sufism was accessible to aspirants of a variety of diverse backgrounds and adherents who were associated with many different schools (*madhāhib*) of thought in Sunnī Islam. If we contemplate the diverse, institutionalized and theoretically grounded mysticism of Khurāsān and Transoxania before the arrival of Baghdād Sufism, we find that Baghdād Sufism entered a highly developed matrix of mystical thought and activity. To posit that Baghdād Sufism replaced

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through Baghdād. Up through the 12th-century, indigenous forms of Islamic mysticism were dominant in Khurāsān and Transoxania. Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 45. For some of the reasons pertaining to al-Wāsiṭī's emigration to Khurāsān, see Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret*, 33.

9 Al-Tirmidhī uses the term "*qawm*" (folk) in the phrase "*manāzil al-qawm*" to talk about the stations of the path. The word *qawm* (folk) in this way is used in later Sufism as another way of identifying the Ṣūfīs. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 4, 153. Al-Tirmidhī uses the term *ṭarīq* (way) similar to the manner of the later Ṣūfīs as well. In *KA* he writes about those who pretend to know the path (*ṭarīq*) of the *awliyā'*: *wa lā huwa ʿālim bi-l-ṭarīq wa lā bi al-makāmin fī al-ṭarīq wa lā bi muntahā al-qawm wa manāzilihim*, "…and he is not knowledgeable of the path nor the ambushes of the path, nor does he know the goal of this folk (*qawm*) and their halting stations." Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 30. More similarities to later Sufism abound in al-Tirmdihī's writings, such as his attendance at gatherings of *dhikr* and his discussion of some aspects of *samā'* (audition). Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, vol. 1, 243; vol. 2, 23–24; vol. 5, 6–7. We intend to show that al-Tirmidhī's terminology includes elements that Baghdād Sufism did not include but that were adopted in what later became mature Sufism.

10 Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, *Rasā'il al-junayd*, 66–67.

11 Al-Qushayrī mentions several different viewpoints on *zuhd* (renunciation) and then quotes his teacher al-Sulamī to the effect that *zuhd* does not mean "eating course food or wearing a woolen cloak." 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism, al-risala al-qushayriyya fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf,* trans. Alexander D. Knysh; reviewed by Muḥammad Eissa (Reading: U.K., 2007), 134–135.

these movements ignores the composite nature of Sufism in its mature form. The field of Islamic mysticism must not underestimate the heritage Sufism owes to Khurāsānian mysticism.

6.3 Sufism and Hellenism

In Chapter 3 we discussed the extent to which al-Tirmidhī makes use of Hellenistic thought. The Pythagorean elements we find in al-Tirmidhī's works, especially *KḤ*, do not represent, by any means, the entirety of al-Tirmidhī's mystical outlook. Rather, al-Tirmidhī uses wisdom (*ḥikma*) to frame and situate his doctrine of *wilāya*. By looking at Christian mysticism and its structural foundations during the same general historical period as al-Tirmidhī, we see how al-Tirmidhī belongs within a broadly defined tradition of mystical thought indigenous to the Near East.

Patrik Hagman demonstrates that Isaac of Nineveh was in conversation with a Christian theological tradition that drew heavily from Neoplatonism. The problematique that Isaac, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Evagrios, and John of Apamea were attempting to solve returned back to the Neoplatonic notion of the soul (*nous*) as an uncreated substance. These early Christian ascetics and theologians were trying to reconcile the existence of passions with a Hellenistic concept of the soul as incorruptible and uncreated.[12] This notion of an uncreated soul whose source in the Godhead is modeled after the Platonic Good, or Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. This is an emanationist cosmology and was readily accepted by many early Christian theologians as part of their basic *Weltanschauung*. This cosmological doctrine is also clearly found among Neoplatonic and Aristotelian Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī[13], Ibn Sīnā[14], al-Rāzī[15] and Ibn Rushd,[16] among others.[17] The question before us, however, is whether or not the early Islamic mystics participated in this discourse stream that was active from the 7th-century CE onwards in Iraq and greater Khurāsān.

12 Patrik Hagman, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh*, 75–76.

13 Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950)

14 Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. Sīna (d. 428/1037)

15 Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or 323/935)

16 Abū al-Walīd b. Rushd (d. 595/1198)

17 Al-Ghazālī seeks to refute the doctrine of the Falāsifa (philosophers) concerning the uncreated soul in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Ibn Rushd responds to his refutation with a refutation of his own, *Al-radd ʿalā al-radd*.

Louis Massignon's work on Ṣūfī terminology indicates that Sufism in its mature form derives its terminology as well as its basic premises primarily from the Qur'ān.[18] While this might be true in general, one can see many similarities that also connect Ṣūfī thought and practice to pre-Islamic precedents.[19] Some scholars of Sufism have referred to these similarities as 'floating motifs,' or a shared koine, that is difficult to link to any particular 'borrowing.'[20] It is no doubt that the early Ṣūfīs participated in this koine as did all of the major Islamic movements of the first three Islamic centuries. However, while there are clearly outward semblances to a shared koine, the deep structure of Ṣūfī thought appears to be molded by a consistent return to Islamic sources in the form of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth for justification of its doctrines. This can be apparent by looking closely at those Muslim mystics whose thought closely resembles aspects of Hellenism. One case in point are the ideas of the Baṣran mystic Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), who was contemporaneous with al-Tirmidhī and who also discussed *wilāya*. Gerhard Böwering, in his masterful work on the mystical vision of Sahl al-Tustarī, interprets al-Tustarī's treatment of the soul in terms of Neoplatonic emanation.[21] Indeed, on the surface, al-Tustarī's cosmogony looks emanationist. God creates Muḥammad from his light after which Adam and his progeny, as well as the entire universe, is then created from the Muḥammadan light.[22] This is a cosmogony that is also shared by al-Tirmidhī. Bernd Radtke refers to it as the 'Old Islamic Cosmology.' Al-Tustarī's cosmogony seems to mirror Neoplatonic emanation in which Intellect (Nous) proceeds from the One and the individual human souls subsequently proceed from Intellect. These individual souls are immersed in Matter and are a less perfect image of the intellection of Nous.[23] They are directly connected to the 'One' through the intermediary of the Intellect.[24] The Neoplatonic soul is noetic, that is, it emanates directly from the Intellect, which itself is a form that

18 Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 26–27.

19 As mentioned previously, the term Ṣūfī, for example, has been traced back to early Christian ascetics in Iraq who were labeled "*lābis al-ṣūf*" or "wool wearer." It is highly probable that Muslim ascetics developed similar ascetic practices in competition with these Christian ascetics. Ibid., 19–20.

20 Ibid., 21.

21 Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, 153.

22 Ibid.

23 The European Graduate School. Online resource: <http://www.egs.edu/library/plotinus/biography/>.

24 Magic Medicine and Science Course Homepage. Online resource: <http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/mms/handouts/mmsplotinus.html>.

comprises all possible forms.[25] The return of the soul to its source in Nous is often characterized as a mystical ascent, and it became an important element of Gnostic speculation, which borrowed heavily from Neoplatonic cosmology.[26] For al-Tustarī, the *ʿaql* of each human being does not emanate from the Muḥammadan light but is created by God from that light i.e. it is not a part of God.[27] The soul (*nafs*), on the other hand, in al-Tustarī's framework is actually created from the temporal world.[28] For al-Tustarī, the sublimation of the lower self and the plunging of the self into the 'earth' as if to bury it (note here the theme of death) results in the ascension of the *rūḥ* (spirit) or *rūḥ al-nafs* (spirit of the soul) to the Throne of God. However, as we will see with al-Tirmidhī, this same separation of the soul as earthly and the spirit as heavenly is what creates a 'space' in the heart for the divine light to manifest. The point for both al-Tustarī and al-Tirmidhī is not a 'return' to union with God as we see stylized by Christian ascetics like Isaac of Nineveh, but rather the formation of a break in the fabric of the temporal world out of which the divine theophany manifests.[29] We also see that in al-Tustarī's view the *ʿuqūl* (intellects) that are specks of light also do not emanate, but they are each created separately by the Creator directly from the greater Muḥammadan soul. In the Neoplatonic view, individual souls are not only immaterial but also uncreated, which further separates al-Tustarī's concept of the soul from a Neoplatonic one. In fact, al-Tustarī's cosmogony is more of an attempt to systematize various disparate statements in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth literature that talk about the intellect, soul and the Muḥammadan light.[30] The entire thrust of al-Tustarī's discussion

25 Plotinus uses a light metaphor to explain how the soul is like a window for the Intellect to shine into the physical world. Plotinus, Enneads: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.mb.txt>.

26 This should not mislead us into assuming that Gnostics were merely Christian Neoplatonists. This was far from the case, and Neoplatonic philosophers such as Plotinus and Porphyry took pains to distinguish themselves from the Gnostics, particularly because the Gnostics held to a radically dualistic cosmology that was foreign to Neoplatonism.

27 Al-Tustarī's cosmogony seeks to answer the central question of *qadar* (free will) in Islamic theology, a problem that became central to Islamic theology based on Qur'ānic claims about the nature of God and his all-powerful and all-knowing attributes.

28 Sahl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-tustarī*, 314. Qur'ān 110:2. The self (*nafs*) desires this world because it is from this world. The spirit (*rūh*) desires the next world because it is from the next world.

29 Ibid., 159.

30 In the Qur'ān, the Prophet Muhammad is understood by most exegetes to be referred to as a light. In Qur'ān 5:15 we have the words … *qad jāʾakum min Allāhi nūrᵘⁿ wa-kitābᵘⁿ mubīn*, "…there has come to you from Allāh a light and a clear book." The word *nūr* (light) is interpreted in *al-Jalālayn* to be a reference to Muḥammad. In Qur'ān 7:172 we have a verse that refers to the extracting of the progeny of Adam from his loins to testify to

on the soul addresses a problematique that arises out of various positions espoused by early Islamic theological doctrines.[31] As Douglas Crow has aptly shown, the mythic *ʿaql* narratives of the Ḥadīth literature that focus on the *mīthāq* (divine covenant) grow out of early Islamic theological debates over free will (*qadar*) and predestination (*jabr*).[32] Crow demonstrates, contrary to Ignaz Goldziher, that the *ʿaql* of the Iraqi Qadarīs was not a Neoplatonic 'First Emanation.' The Ḥadīth corpus represents a measure of both continuity and rupture with Hellenistic, Patristic and Biblicist precedents.[33] Scholars like al-Tustarī and al-Tirmidhī in the 9th-century CE, who sought to systematize both Qurʾān and Ḥadīth statements into a coherent cosmology, created systems of thought founded on a very different set of premises than those that governed early Patristic thought. While the terminology and structure of some early Islamic mystical motifs resemble pre-Islamic precedents and were no doubt influenced by them, Qurʿān and Ḥadīth knowledge culture realigned these motifs to produce very different significations. The discourse stream of Islamic mysticism is apparent in the many similarities that we find between al-Tustarī and al-Tirmidhī. Al-Tirmidhī describes the soul as being tripartite with the *ʿaql* situated in the head, the *hawā* (caprice) situated in the bowels and the heart situated between both of these, and it is in the heart where the light of God's gnosis is placed.[34] This tripartite structure mirrors the tripartite structure of the soul in Plato's *Timaeus* and was upheld by later Neoplatonists such as Apuleius of Madauros (mid-120s to after 170 CE).[35] In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the soul as having three parts, the rational portion in the head, the spirited portion near the heart, and the appetitive in the lower bowels.[36] While it would seem that al-Tirmidhī is following a Platonic vision of the soul, when we look closer at the underlying structure of al-Tirmidhī's notion of the soul, we find

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Allāh's lordship. There is a linguistic relationship between the Qurʾānic term *dhurriyyāt* (offspring) and the term al-Tustarī uses *dharrāt* (specks). Both are derived from the same Arabic root. Also, the idea that the Muḥammadan light was created from God's light originates in a report attributed to Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 78/698). This report is considered raised (*marfūʿ*) by most Ḥadīth specialists; however, al-Tustarī is developing his cosmogony, not from a Neoplatonic philosophical approach, but rather from Qurʾān and prophetic traditions that he is piecing together into a single narrative. One cannot definitively state that Ḥadīth of this kind have their origin in Neoplatonic speculation and furthermore this is another question that cannot be answered here.

31 The context of al-Tustarī's discussion on the primordial covenant is an explanation of *shaqāwa* (damnation) and *saʿāda* (felicity). Ibid., 68.

32 Douglas S. Crow, *The Role of ʿAql in Early Islamic Wisdom,* xxv.

33 Ibid., *The Role of ʿAql*, xvii.

34 Bernd Radtke, "A forerunner of Ibn ʿArabī."

35 John F Finamore, "The tripartite soul in Middle-Platonism," 105.

36 Ibid., 105.

that it runs contrary to the very foundations of Neoplatonism. Al-Tirmidhī conceives of the soul as being created from clay and placed in the bowels by the Devil.[37] Furthermore, the heart is not the locus for the spiritual soul but rather a site for the manifestation of God's light or gnosis. Al-Tirmidhī's spiritual anatomy presents a way of setting up a non-dual epistemology and ontology so that it is framed by the dualities that constitute the material world (*dunyā*) and make it understandable to the intellect. Yves Marquet provides a lengthy comparison of al-Tirmidhī's doctrine of light to that of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā and concludes that it is essentially non-Hellenistic in its complete disregard for any attempt to systematize an original source of "light" to other than God himself.[38] The conclusion of Radtke that al-Tirmidhī's gnoseology is not Neoplatonic is supported by Marquet's findings as well as my own. The light mysticism that al-Tirmidhī uses derives from a discourse stream of Islamic mystical thought that developed during the 8th-century CE and the first half of the 9th-century CE. We can see this in the way al-Tirmidhī draws upon the same light-cosmology as al-Tustarī. The fact that they both are working from similar material indicates that this light-cosmology predates them both.

6.4 Early Sufism

Our discussion of the various sources of Hellenism and Sufism has helped us to understand the difficulty in identifying the foundational elements that structure the thought of early Islamic mystics. This does not deny the variety of non-Islamic influences that were omnipresent in the context of these mystics; however, it helps to situate them in relation to a new center within the discursive topography of Near Eastern movements. If we look at asceticism/mysticism in the Near East as an element of Near Eastern thought and practice that predates Islam, then the arrival of the Islamic revelation and the prophetic Ḥadīth represents a rupture and a re-centering of the discursive map. Early Islamic mystics were almost without exception Traditionist in their approach, that is, they were Muslims from the scholarly class who saw the Ḥadīth as a primary source for their views.[39] The Ṣūfīs of Baghdād as well as other ascetic/

37 Bernd Radtke, "A forerunner." A conception of the soul as originating in a material substance could not be farther from the Neoplatonic idea of soul.

38 Yves Marquet, *Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et Neoplatonisme*, 43.

39 Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret*, 2. Silvers argues that Sufism developed in a milieu that can best be characterized as an Ahl al-Ḥadīth (party of Ḥadīth) culture.

mystical movements were seeking to legitimize as well as articulate their experiences through the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth corpuses. Hence, Muslim mystics in both Baghdād and Khurāsān were writing for the scholarly class, both mystic and non-mystic alike. Al-Sarrāj, in his *Kitāb al-luma'*, uses the central Gabriel *ḥadīth*[40] to situate Sufism as the epitome of the Islamic sciences (*'ulūm*), characterizing Sufism as the science of *iḥsān* (beauty, excellence), the third and final stage of spiritual attainment mentioned in this *ḥadīth*. While al-Tirmidhī was not defending 'Sufism' in the same way as al-Sarrāj, he was arguing for the primacy of the path of gnosis (*ṭarīq al-ma'rifa*), by appealing to Qur'ān and Ḥadīth sources, almost a hundred years before al-Sarrāj. The ascension of Ḥadīth dominance is unmistakably obvious in both of their approaches.

Also during the 9th-century CE and simultaneous with the ascension of the Ḥadīth folk, al-Muḥāsibī develops a sophisticated psychology of introspection.[41] Al-Muḥāsibī's concept of the soul breaks from a more ancient Arabian notion of the soul as synonymous with *'aql*.[42] This notion of the soul (*nafs*) combines Neoplatonic and Patristic notions of the soul within an Arab/Islamic framework. The shift represented by Ḥadīth dominance reconfigured these notions based on a new reference point. While the soul is the vehicle by which to reach God, this soul does not seek 'union' with God, but rather seeks the manifestation of God's presence and attributes in the world.[43] For Aristotle, the soul is primarily a passive element, while for the Neoplatonists the soul has both an active and passive nature.[44] Even so, the active nature of the soul for the Neoplatonists was active in a subconscious manner, that is, the intellection of the soul is always happening through the soul's actualization of the forms of matter in the 'mind' of the soul.[45] Early Arab/Islamic notions of the *'aql* (mind/soul), on the other hand, were preoccupied with *qadar* (free will) and *jabr* (predestination). While Neoplatonism was concerned with epistemology,

40 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma'*, 6. This report is considered by Muslim legal scholars to be one of the central Ḥadīth to Islamic lore and doctrine.

41 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 44–45.

42 Ibn 'Abbās considers the *nafs* (soul) and *'aql* (intellect) to be synonymous. Gavin N. Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam*, 173.

43 The discussion on 'union' (*jam'*) is an example of what I believe is a misreading of early Ṣūfī mystical terminology. The discussion in al-Junayd's mystical treatises on *jam'* (I prefer gatheredness rather than union) and *tafriqa* (separation) must be understood within the paradigm of *ḥikma* as discussed in Chapter 2. This was a vocabulary that described the interaction of opposites in the world. Al-Tirmidhī engages in a similar discussion of opposites being gathered and separated. This vocabulary provided the framework for understanding how God's theophany manifests in the world.

44 Paulina Remes, *Neoplatonism*, 138.

45 Ibid., 137.

al-Muḥāsibī focuses on intentionality (*irāda*) as a focal point for the development of the soul/self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Again, the context of al-Muḥāsibī's thought must be situated within the frame of the intentionality of actions that will lead one either to salvation (*saʿāda*) or damnation (*shaqāwa*). For al-Muḥāsibī, the path of *tazkiya* is a path of purification that leads ultimately to sincerity of intention while eschewing its opposite, i.e., *riyāʾ* (showing off or intending one's worship for other than God), which is the primary sin in al-Muḥāsibī's spiritual regime.[46]

6.5 Al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī Build on the Work of al-Muḥāsibī

We will now look at how al-Muḥāsibī's concept of the soul, as configured and modified by the discourse stream of Ḥadīth dominance, informed the thought of both al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī. This is important because it highlights the complicated and non-linear development of Ṣūfī thought. We can view al-Muḥāsibī's discussion of the soul as a departure from previous modes of thinking about the soul in Islamic mystical discourse. Particular individuals who followed after him and internalized his teachings (specifically al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī) became the theoretical progenitors of what was to become Sufism in its mature form.[47] Al-Junayd lived in Baghdād and was the only one of the early Baghdād Ṣūfīs to admit a debt to al-Muḥāsibī.[48] While al-Tirmidhī did not meet al-Muḥāsibī, he records in his autobiography that it was one of the books of al-Anṭākī, the *rāwī* (narrator) of al-Muḥāsibī, that opened his spiritual insight.[49] We can see clearly from al-Junayd's writings that he borrowed from al-Muḥāsibī, whose influence extended his thought in important ways. Al-Junayd shared al-Muḥāsibī's basic methodology for refining the self, although he made it a lesser stage in the process of spiritual realization. Al-Junayd compares two terms in his *Rasāʾil* (*Letters of al-Junayd*): *ṣidq* (truthfulness) and *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). *Ikhlāṣ* is higher than *ṣidq*, and *ṣidq* entails *al-qiyām ʿalā al-nafs bi al-ḥarāsati wa al-riʿāyati lahā*, "…gaining control over the *nafs* through constant observation and watchfulness of it." Al-Junayd uses the exact same terms to refer to the very same methodology presented by al-Muḥāsibī. However,

46 Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 205.

47 Alexander Knysh (2011) discusses al-Muḥāsibī's Ṣūfī credentials and notes that some have interpreted him as a 'moralizing theologian' rather than as a Ṣūfī. Nevertheless, the importance of his approach to spiritual purification on later Sufism is undisputed. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 47.

48 Ibid., 53.

49 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 17.

al-Junayd refers to *ṣidq* (truthfulness) as a lower station and then continues to explain how *ikhlāṣ* is yet a higher station of spiritual attainment. Al-Junayd describes *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) as a characteristic of *wilāya* that is granted unto the believer by God. In his mystical system, the one characterized by sincerity goes beyond *ʿaql* (intellect), a movement that is not particularly clear in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. Al-Junayd says, *fa ʿinda wuṣūl al-ʿabdi ilā hādhā kharaja ʿan ṣifati wujūdi mā yūṣafu bi-l-ʿaql fa-ṣārat ʿawāriḍ al-ʿaql ʿinda wujūd haqīqati al-tawḥīd wasāwis taḥtāju ilā an yaruddahā…*, "When the servant reaches this [point], he leaves the attribute of the existence of that which can be described by the intellect, and [for him] the effulgences of the intellect [standing] before the existence of the reality of oneness are but disturbances that need to be repelled."[50] Here, we can see a more developed presentation of the *ʿaql*, not simply as that which represents a capacity to understand God, but rather a faculty that reflects the world and gives rise to 'thoughts.' For al-Junayd it is not enough for the servant (*ʿabd*) to orient himself toward God with his intellect, but rather, true realization is to go beyond the *ʿaql* itself and thus beyond form (*rasm*). This does not happen because of the ability of the servant, but through the servant's *khuṣūṣiyya* (being chosen by God). The servant is taken beyond his intellect by the overpowering nature of God's presence. Not only does al-Junayd build upon the methodological foundation established by al-Muḥāsibī, but he introduces some important transformations. While al-Muḥāsibī calls for the servant to turn away from and thus ignore the *nafs*, al-Junayd calls for its *fanā'* (annihilation). Al-Junayd says, *fa-lammā faqadat al-arwāḥ al-naʿīm al-ghaybī alladhī lā tuḥāssuhu an-nufūs wa lā tuqāribuhu al-ḥusūs alifat fanāhā ʿanhā wa wajadat baqāhā yamnaʿuhu fanāhā*, "and when the spirits lose the hidden pleasure which souls do not sense nor do feelings come near, their annihilation from them (their *nufūs*) becomes habitual, and they find their subsistence, which their annihilation had prevented [them from finding]."[51] For al-Junayd, the concept of sobriety (*saḥw*), a characteristic coterminous with *baqā'* (subsistence), is built on the idea that spiritual practice is primarily an inward discipline that results from the annihilation (*fanā'*) of the soul as it is directed towards the contemplation of God. In other words, it is al-Muḥāsibī's radical interiorization of the ascetic path that al-Junayd is refining.[52] I call al-Muḥāsibī's mystical approach 'radical interiorization' because he appears to

50 Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, *Rasā'il*, 53.

51 Ibid., 34.

52 I agree with Nile Green, who states that Islamic mysticism was as much a reaction against asceticism as it was influenced by early Christian and Muslim asceticism. Islamic mysticism grows out of a dialog among the Ḥadīth folk about the place of asceticism in Islam. Al-Muḥāsibī's approach can be characterized as an inward asceticism or an

call for an asceticism of the soul as opposed to an asceticism of the body. For al-Muḥāsibī, strictures of the body do not cure the evil inclinations of the soul. In this we can see an important departure from early Christian asceticism. This differs markedly from the approach of Isaac of Nineveh, whose asceticism directly links the mortification of the body with the spiritual ascent of the soul.[53] Al-Muḥāsibī's logic is as follows: When the *ʿaql* continuously watches over (*muḥāsaba*) the soul for occurrences of ostentation (*riyāʾ*), the soul gradually leaves ostentation and begins beholding God himself. Al-Muḥāsibī's spiritual regimen leads the mystic to the point of witnessing God. For al-Muḥāsibī, the highest level of spiritual attainment is *tawakkul* (complete reliance upon God).[54] At this level of spiritual attainment, the seeker of God does not see anything but him, and is even oblivious to his own self. At the end of *Ādāb al-nufūs* al-Muḥāsibī states, *wa-l-mutawakkil ʿalā Allāh lā yaltafitu ilā al-dunyā li-annahu lā yarāhā li-nafsihi khaṭarᵃⁿ, wa lā yarāha wa-nafsahu wa jamīʿa mā fihā illā Allāh...*,[55] "The reliant one does not turn his attention to this world, because he does not see his very soul even as a single thought, and he does not see it nor his soul, nor all that is in it, save God..." We can see from this quote that full realization requires the mystic to lose sight of his self (*nafs*) in the vision of God. This 'forgetting' of the self/soul is clearly a precursor to al-Junayd's annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of the self/soul. Al-Muḥāsibī's regime of radical interiority leads one to question Böwering's assertion that al-Muḥāsibī is more of a "moralizing theologian" than a mystic. Al-Junayd takes this process of refinement and interiorization even further to the point where all oppositions and points of reference are lost, and the mystic is annihilated in the divine presence (*fanāʾ*). According to al-Junayd, the path (*ṭarīq*) does not stop there, but the mystic then recovers from this spiritual death to subsist (*baqāʾ*) in God, which he considers a higher station than annihilation. For al-Junayd, the mystic journey is not simply a process of refinement, accounting for one's actions (*muḥāsaba*), and witnessing (*mushāhada*), but it is a process of the mystic himself becoming the site of God's manifesting presence. While the approaches of al-Muḥāsibī and al-Junayd express a new way of discoursing about the path (*ṭarīq*) to God by focusing on the vehicle of the soul, neither of these two theoreticians of Islamic mysticism invest the mystic with religious

asceticism of the soul (*nafs*), from its attachments to the world and its desires, and a turning (*tawba*) towards God. Al-Junayd adopts al-Muḥāsibī's 'asceticism of the soul' but does not completely disown asceticism of the body.

53 Isaac of Nineveh, *Mystic Treatises*, 5.

54 Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-nufūs*, 180.

55 Ibid., 179.

authority because of his *wilāya*. For both of them, the saint (*walī*) is someone who is a source of guidance (*hidāya*) for others and is protected by God, but is not a *khalīfa* (successor to the Prophet or to God).[56]

Al-Muḥāsibī's inward spiritual psychology gave him the theoretical basis to criticize bodily asceticism as a viable path to reach God. Al-Junayd was not the only mystic who inherited and built upon the ideas of al-Muḥāsibī. Al-Muḥāsibī's views on the soul were also inherited by al-Tirmidhī, who voices a very similar condemnation of ascetical practice and motives. Al-Tirmidhī's process of *tazkiya* as he expounds it in *KA* follows al-Muḥāsibī's lead. Al-Tirmidhī's inward asceticism of the soul ends in *wilāya*. We can see that al-Muḥāsibī's approach begs the question "To what end?" in his intricate moral psychology, and we find that both al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī proffer two very different answers to this question. The two divergent approaches of al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī were then eventually incorporated into the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century by al-Sulamī and his student al-Qushayrī. Hence, Sufism in its mature form is a product greater than the sum of its parts and constitutes a synthesis of various mystical approaches, such as elements of al-Muḥāsibī's spiritual psychology, filtered through the thought of mystics like al-Junayd and al-Tirmidhī, who built upon his radical interiorization of the spiritual path.

6.6 Nīshāpūr and the Development of Sufism as a Meta-Identity

To understand Sufism in the 5th/11th century, we need to move from Baghdād, where al-Muḥāsibī and al-Junayd were operative, to Khurāsān and, in particular, the city of Nīshāpūr. Khurāsān was a crucible for the continued sustainability of what different factions within Islam were calling *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamāʿa* (the people of *sunna* and community). As we will see with the case study of Nīshāpūr during this period, Sunnīsm as an orthodoxy was not a forgone conclusion at the beginning of the 11th-century CE. A crumbling ʿAbbāsid state, a schism between East and West, invasions of Turkic tribes from Central Asia and social and economic divisions that threatened to tear apart the fabric of urban life all militated against a collective spirit that would bind Muslims together.

56 Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, *Rasāʾil*, 20. The saints (*awliyāʾ*) do not figure prominently in al-Muḥāsibī's spiritual hierarchy. Rather, it is the *ḥukamāʾ* (sages) who play a key role as knowers of God (*ʿārifīn*). Al-Junayd mentions the *awliyāʾ* more frequently but even for him, the term *awliyāʾ* is one of many descriptors of the knowers of God.

Nīshāpūr was the cultural and intellectual capital of Khurāsān in the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE. As we have seen with the Ṣūfī authors already discussed, most of these authors either hailed from Nīshāpūr, travelled through it, or at some point studied there. Richard Bulliet's study of the patrician class helps us to better understand the internal workings of this medieval Muslim city in Khurāsān.[57] More importantly, the political and social dynamics of Nīshāpūr during this period will also help us to better understand what was taking place in the development of Sufism at the same time. Rather than looking at Sufism as a factor in the factional strife in Nīshāpūr[58] during the 5th/11th century, we can view it as a possible reaction to this factionalism and strife, and as a vote of no-confidence in a system that was broken and which eventually led to the destruction of the city.

The origins of the struggle between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs in Nīshāpūr predate our period of inquiry, starting as early as the 3rd/9th century. It is at the end the 10th-century CE that factional violence begins with the adoption of Ashʿarī theology solely by Shāfiʿīs. We can think of Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs as political parties as much as they are legal schools during this period.[59] Shāfiʿī ideology was more 'progressive' in the sense that it supported new trends in society such as mysticism and semi-determinism. Ḥanafī ideology, at least in Nīshāpūr, was more aristocratic and conservative and was connected with Muʿtazilī theology.[60] In Transoxania, where al-Tirmidhī lived, the situation was much

57 Bulliet correctly warns us from extrapolating our understanding of Nīshāpūr to other urban centers in Khurāsān. Ḥanafīs in Nīshāpūr meant something quite different than Ḥanafīs in Samarqand. Despite the rivalries and factional conflicts between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs, we see that the educational system remained unified and did not break up into two separate schooling systems.

58 Margaret Malamud casts the Ṣūfīs of Nīshāpūr as primarily Shāfiʿīs. The Shāfiʿīs were less aristocratic and more open to new trends, leading them to try out Sufism. There are several problems, however, with Malamud's interpretation of the usage of the term *al-ṣūfī* in al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's *Tārīkh naysābūr*. The first consideration is the assumption that the term *ṣūfī* is used to specifically mean someone who associates with Baghdād Sufism. Rather, al-Naysābūrī seems to use the term to refer to mystics in general, such as when he refers to al-Ḥākim al-Samarqandī, who is mentioned in Chapter 3 as a Ṣūfī. Al-Samarqandī had no known affiliation with the Baghdād Ṣūfīs and was a Ḥanafī theologian and mystic. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Ṣarīfīnī, *Al-muntakhab min al-siyāq li-tārīkh naysābūr*, 73.

59 This speaks to the importance of conceiving these categories as constructed identities. One finds in the *ṭabaqāt* literature, for example, a Ḥanafī Shāfiʿī. This would seem to be an oxymoron of sorts, but what we find is that Shāfiʿī becomes identified with Ṣūfī, and what is really meant here is a Ḥanafī Ṣūfī and not someone who is following two different legal schools at the same time. Richard Bulliet, *Patricians*, 41.

60 Ibid., 36.

different with Ḥanafīs primarily adhering to a Murji'ī/Ḥanafī theology. The divide between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi'īs in Nīshāpūr appears to have been the outward manifestation of deeper social divisions amongst the leading aristocratic families.[61] A series of factors led to an upset in the balance of power between patrician families who controlled the city. When the Ghaznavids replaced the Samānids as rulers of Nīshāpūr in 999 CE, they sought to increase their control in the city by supporting various factions of the city against others. At the beginning of his reign, Maḥmūd of Ghazna officially endorsed Mu'tazilī theology as propounded by the Ḥanafī leadership of the city. Later he appointed a Karrāmī, Abū Bakr, as the *ra'īs* (mayor) of Nīshāpūr even though Karrāmīs were fanatically anti-Mu'tazilī. The result was a reign of terror in Nīshāpūr in which Ash'arīs, Mu'tazilīs and Ismā'īlīs were denounced from the pulpits of the mosques and attacked with impunity.[62] The Karrāmiyya derived the base of their support from the despised lower classes such as weavers and the urban and rural poor. They were highly organized and stressed moral and social reform. The appointment of a Karrāmī to a position of such importance in the city upended the balance of power that had existed amongst the patriciate. When the Seljuqs replaced the Ghaznavids in 1037 CE, they continued the same policy of divide and conquer.[63] The Seljuq vizier 'Amīd al-Mulk Kundūrī (d. 455/1063) instituted an inquisition of Shāfi'ī Ash'arīs in which the Ash'arī Ṣūfī al-Qushayrī was forced to flee Nīshāpūr.[64] The factional strife in Nīshāpūr kept spiraling downwards during the 11th-century CE, climaxing in the devastation of the city by the Ghuzz[65] and its eventual abandonment. A recurring

61 We find that before Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī identifications come into play by the middle of the 10th-century CE a similar split along the lines of Kūfan and Madīnan *madhāhib* exists. In this period, local dialect, history and customs constituted the core of an individual's identity which was overlain by a veneer of cosmopolitan religious practices and imperial administrative procedures. Ibid.

62 Margaret Malamud, "The politics of heresy in medieval Khurāsān," 46.

63 In Medieval Muslim cities in greater Khurāsān during the 10th- and 11th-centuries CE, the rulers needed the city more than the city needed the ruler. The traditional balance of power in the city between the various patrician families unwound as new rulers sought to increase their influence and power in the city. The social unrest that was the result of this policy had to do with a struggle for power and authority between a foreign ruler and a landed aristocratic class.

64 It is not clear why al-Kundūrī instituted this inquisition of Ash'arīs, whether it was for personal reasons or whether it was a Machiavellian attempt to reassert the balance of power between Shāfi'īs and Ḥanafīs after the former gained an inordinate share of control of the city. Richard Bulliet, *A View from the Edge*, 126.

65 A Turkic speaking nomadic people originally from the Aral region of Central Asia, the Ghuzz moved westward into the Caspian region and by the 11th- and 12th-centuries CE had become overwhelmingly Muslim.

question in Bulliet's work is why the patriciate allowed such factional strife to escalate to the point of self-destruction. The opposition between legal or even theological schools does not fully explain why Nīshāpūr could not solve its internal factionalism.

While Bulliet's work shows that Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī were identifications that could mean more than simple affiliation to a legal school, Jacqueline Chabbi's work on the historical development of mystical movements in Khurāsān demonstrates the possibility that the identification 'Ṣūfī' used by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) in his *Tārīkh nīshāpūr,* in effect, referred to Malāmatīs who had consolidated under the banner of Sufism in a coalition against the Karrāmiyya.[66] The problem we face in trying to understand who the Ṣūfīs really were in Nīshāpūr during the 10th- and early 11th-centuries CE is that Ṣūfī histories and biographical dictionaries do not clearly coincide with the accounts of travelers and geographers. The geographer Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī (d. 380/990), who visited Nīshāpūr in 374/984 near the end of his life, does not mention Ṣūfīs or Malāmatīs in his works but rather refers to pietists (*'ubbād*) and renunciants (*zuhhād*).[67] The Karrāmiyya, on the other hand, do figure prominently in his descriptions of the various factional groups in the city. Similarly, the historian Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) is more concerned with anathematizing the Karrāmiyya than he is aware of Sufism.[68] The first 'Ṣūfī' to be mentioned in the biographical dictionaries of the scholars of Khurāsān is Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 320/932),[69] who was one of the only students of al-Junayd that we know of to have ventured eastward in the early part of the 10th-century CE.[70] From his time onward, we increasingly see the use of the term Ṣūfī to describe local *shaykhs* but never is the term Malāmatī used.[71] If Chabbi's assertion holds true, it means that the term Ṣūfī, like the legal affiliations mentioned previously, was a flexible identity that could be manipulated for various purposes even in Nīshāpūr during the 5th/11th century. Before al-Qushayrī, we can see that Sufism may have served the purpose of uniting a local mystical movement relying for its support on the tradesmen fraternities of the bazaar. According to Chabbi, this may have occurred in the face of the rising threat of an ascetical/mystical movement (the Karrāmiyya), which based its strength on the urban poor and connections with the rural areas surrounding the city. In this process, the value of *futuwwa* (often translated as 'chivalry')

66 Jacqueline Chabbi, " Remarques sur le développement historique," 67.
67 Sara Sviri, "Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī movement in early Sufis," 590.
68 Margaret Malamud, "The politics of heresy," 50.
69 Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret*, 35.
70 Sara Sviri, "Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī movement," 589.
71 Ibid.

and the culture of the *fityān* (chivalrous youth) combine with a prestige and authority that was associated with ʿIrāqī, and more specifically Baghdādī, credentials. We can think of Sufism in its Khurāsānian-inspired form as possibly Malāmatism with a Baghdādī veneer. While I do agree with the general thrust of Chabbi's hypothesis, I disagree that Sufism was a response to the Ḥanafī Karrāmiyya, primarily because the Shāfiʿī connection to Sufism is weak. Furthermore, Sufism in Nīshāpūr functioned as an identity that was inclusive of legal and theological allegiances within Sunnī Islam. The spokesmen for this new form of mysticism were al-Sulamī and his student al-Qushayrī, both of whom stood at a crossroads in the history of Islamic mysticism. Before discussing the contributions of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī, we address two earlier defenders of Sufism, al-Sarrāj and al-Kalābādhī. Both individuals positioned Sufism as a *meta-madhhab*, or an approach that would encompass the various factionalisms that had developed among proto-Sunnīs. This idea of Sufism as a *meta-madhhab* carried over into the work of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī who offered Sufism as a solution to the rampant factionalism that gripped their city of Nīshāpūr. Unfortunately, Sufism was not able to save Nīshāpūr, but it quickly spread to all corners of the Muslim world within only a few centuries of its formulation by al-Sulamī and, in particular, al-Qushayrī.

6.7 Al-Sarrāj and al-Kalābādhī

In the latter part of the 10th-century CE, both Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) and Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 390/990) wrote manuals on Sufism that are often viewed as apologetic, that is, they sought to attenuate Sufism to the palate of the *ʿulamāʾ* (scholarly class).[72] Green provides a different view, arguing that since Ṣūfīs were from the scholarly class (both scholars of Ḥadīth and Fiqh), they did not really need an apologia; rather, their manuals were manifestos seeking to advertise the mystical scene of Khurāsān to newcomers.[73] Both of these views see Sufism through a diffusion model in which Sufism was developed in Baghdād as a new kind of mystical piety that spread from this point outward. Yet, a diffusion model may not be the best model to explain such a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon as Sufism. The question we would like to answer is: At what time did Sufism actually become a discourse stream? Or rather: When was it that Ṣūfīs were writing about themselves as a distinct identity opposed to other identities within Islam? When we analyze

72 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 120–123.

73 Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 52.

al-Junayd's *Rasā'il* we find no mention of the *ṣufiyya* or *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). Rather, what we find are descriptions of *awliyā'* (saints), *ḥukamā'* (wise men) and *'ārifīn* (gnostics). These are all categories that are familiar to us in the works of al-Tirmidhī and other mystics of his generation such as al-Tustarī. We only find mention of Sufism by al-Junayd in statements attributed to him through individual reports and in sections of later books that seek to bolster Sufism itself.[74] Nor do we see the term Sufism used by other authors of the eclectic group who were called Ṣūfīs in Baghdād except through the lens of later Ṣūfīs of the latter part of the 10th-century CE.[75] It seems that Sufism was possibly a term others may have used to refer to the mystics of Baghdād during the 9th-century CE, first as a slightly pejorative term and then reclaimed as a universal term for Islamic mysticism in general. Furthermore, neither al-Sarrāj nor al-Kalābādhī saw Sufism as a purely Baghdād phenomenon.[76] Al-Sarrāj and al-Kalābādhī were not necessarily defending a particular 'school' of mysticism, but rather, were negotiating the place of Islamic mysticism within the larger Traditionist discourse stream of the Ḥadīth folk.[77] If we look at three individual mystics, al-Junayd, al-Tustarī and al-Tirmidhī, all of them were writing about topics related to Islamic mysticism somewhat independently around the same time, at the end of the 3rd/9th-century. Each of them was using his own unique terminology; however, we find that they were all concerned with the nature of knowledge and positioning the possessor of inward (*bāṭin*) knowledge above the one who possesses only outward (*ẓāhir*) knowledge. All these individuals came from the scholarly religious class (*'ulamā'*), and their reference to Qur'ān and Ḥadīth texts indicates that they were in discussion with the larger Traditionist discourse stream. Al-Sarrāj and al-Kalābādhī from the 10th-century CE were heirs to this larger mystical discourse, and it is in this spirit that we can make better sense of their works, which pull from several disparate mystical trends. Al-Kalābādhī's *Al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* is a case in point and we would like to show how his work weaves together a Baghdādī style mysticism with important mystical elements from

74 Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī in his short treatise *Mas'ala fī qawā'id al-taṣwwuf wa-mabānihā* attributes several traditions about the nature of *taṣawwuf* to al-Junayd but without any chain of transmitters (*asānīd*). Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ismā'īl b. Nujayd al-Naysābūrī al-Sulamī, *Masā'il wa-ta'wīlāt al-ṣūfiyya li-abī 'abd al-raḥmān al-sulamī*, 1–2.

75 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 117.

76 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma'*, 42. Al-Kalābādhī sees al-Tirmidhī as an important figure in Sufism as well as other Khurāsānian ascetics and mystics.

77 P. Lory, "al-Sarrāj," in *EI2*.

greater Khurāsān, thereby developing a synthesis that laid the foundation for later Ṣūfīs to build upon.

Paul Nwiya divides al-Kalābādhī's main work on Sufism into three sections: a historical overview, apologetics seeking to promote Ḥanafī points of creed as being one and the same with the creed of the Ṣūfīs, and finally a description of the Ṣūfī mystical path.[78] Nwiya's discussion on the *Taʿarruf* is cursory at best and partly inaccurate. When reading the *Taʿarruf* carefully we can see that his creedal section does not simply echo tenets of *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*, as Nwiya claims, but rather, it seeks to demonstrate the accord between the doctrine of the Ṣūfīs and Māturīdī theology, as well as some aspects of Ashʿarī theology. Al-Kalābādhī's work most likely borrows its inspiration not from *Al-fiqh al-akbar II*,[79] but from al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī's creedal work *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī is mentioned by name in the *Taʿarruf*, and the creedal points mentioned by al-Kalābādhī match with al-Samarqandī's creed very closely.[80] Al-Kalābādhī asserts that all the major Ṣūfīs he mentions in the beginning of the *Taʿarruf* adhere to sixty-five points of Ḥanafī creed, a difficult argument to make given the diversity of figures mentioned, many of whom were non-Ḥanafīs. If we understand the milieu that al-Kalābādhī was writing in, we can assume that he was probably seeking to distinguish the *ṣūfiyya* from the ascetic 'wearers of wool' among the Karrāmiyya who were despised by the more learned scholarly class of Ḥanafīs. This context is significant because it also connects al-Kalābādhī in important ways to al-Tirmidhī who, as we demonstrated in Chapter 4, was an important figure in Ḥanafī theology. Al-Kalābādhī also includes two sections in his *Taʿarruf* that indicate a debt to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmdhī's works. The first of the three sections of al-Kalābādhī's work discusses the nature of *wilāya* and, here, al-Kalābādhī reproduces al-Tirmidhī's distinction between the "saints of God by right" (*awliyāʾ ḥaqq Allāh*) and the higher "saints of God" (*awliyāʾ Allāh*), a distinction unique to al-Tirmidhī. Al-Kalābādhī uses almost the exact same terminology as al-Tirmdhī.[81]

78 P. Nwiya, "al-Kalābāḏẖī," in *EI2*.

79 *Al-fiqh al-akbar II* was most likely written some time at the end of the 4th Islamic century (10th-century CE) around the time of al-Kalābādhī's death.

80 Out of approximately fifty points of doctrine mentioned in al-Kalābādhī's *Taʿarruf*, forty of those match directly to points of doctrine in al-Samarqandī's *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*. Of the ten that differ, the majority of these are points of doctrine that represent a more advanced stage in Ḥanafī/Māturīdī theology, since al-Kalābādhī most probably wrote his *Taʿarruf* as much as half a century after al-Samarqandī wrote *Al-sawād al-aʿẓam*.

81 Al-Kalābādhī writes, *al-wilāya wilāyatān wilāya takhruju min al-ʿadāwa wa-hiya li-ʿāmmati al-muʾminīn fa-hādhihi lā tūjibu maʿrifatuhā wa-l-taḥaqquq bi-hā li-l-aʿyān lākin min jihat al-ʿumūm fa-yuqāl al-muʾmin walī Allāh wilāya ikhtiṣāṣ wa-iṣṭifāʾ wa-iṣṭināʿ wa-hādhihi*

Furthermore, al-Kalābādhī takes al-Tirmidhī's tripartite structure of knowledge and reproduces it in the *Taʿarruf*.[82] In addition to this, al-Tirmidhī is mentioned by al-Kalābādhī as one of those who wrote on Ṣūfī practice (*muʿāmalāt*).[83] If we are correct in understanding that someone as central to the Ṣūfī canonical tradition as al-Kalābādhī uses al-Tirmidhī's construct of *wilāya*, as well as the structure of his gnoseology, it would follow that al-Tirmidhī was, indeed, integrated into the mainstream Ṣūfī tradition. What we will demonstrate in the next section is that not only al-Tirmidhī's notion of *wilāya* is integrated into Sufism in its mature form, but also his vision of religious authority as well. The great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century led by al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī fused Baghdād-inspired Sufism with Malāmatī mysticism, along with a gnoseology and saintology developed by al-Tirmidhī. This synthesis resulted in a product that imbued the *ʿulamāʾ* with a special kind of religious authority that demanded obedience to them even by the temporal rulers of their time. This was the vehicle that helped spread Sufism all over the Muslim world, particularly wherever the Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* had gone.

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tūjibu maʿrifatuhā wa-l-taḥaqququ bihā wa-yakūnu ṣāḥibuhā maḥfūẓ^{un} *ʿan al-naẓar ilā nafsihi*, "Sainthood is of two types, a sainthood that arises out of enmity (*al-ʿadāwa*), and it is for the generality of believers; this kind does not necessitate knowledge of it (sainthood) and realization of it (sainthood) for those chosen; however, for the most part, it is said that the believer is a saint (*walī*) of Allāh with a specialized, chosen and prepared sainthood. [Then there is] this [other] type which requires knowledge of it (sainthood) and realization of it (sainthood), and the one who has it is protected from beholding his self." Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī, *Al-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, 82–83. This is precisely the distinction that al-Tirmidhī makes between *walī ḥaqq Allāh* and *walī Allāh*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 43. Compare this to al-Tirmidhī's terminology in which he says, *al-wilāyatu ʿalā wajhayn, wilāyat*^{un} *yakhruju bihā al-ʿabdu min al-ʿadāwa wa-huwa wilāyat al-tawḥīd wa-wilāyat*^{un} *yakhruju bihā min al-khiyāna fa-yakūna amīn*^{an} *min umanāʾ Allāh ʿazza wa-jall, qad jāhada nafsuhu fī dhāt Allāh ḥattā kaffa nafsahu wa-jawāriḥahu al-sabʿa ʿan maḥārim Allāh taʿālā wa addā farāʾidahu fa-lazima ismu al-waraʿ*. "Sainthood is of two types, a sainthood by which the servant escapes from enmity (*al-ʿadāwa*) and it is the sainthood of affirming unity (*tawḥīd*) and [then there is] a sainthood by which he exits from treachery and he thus becomes a trustworthy one from among those who are trustworthy by Allāh, may he be exalted and glorified; he is one who has struggled with his lower self for the sake of Allāh's very self until he has pulled his lower self and its seven limbs away from those things prohibited by Allāh most high, and he has performed its duties, and thus adheres closely to scrupulousness." Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 141.

82 Al-Tirmidhī's tripartite structure of knowledge is: *ʿilm al-ẓāhir*, *ḥikma* and *maʿrifa*. Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *Al-taʿarruf*, 100–101.

83 Ibid., 30.

6.8 Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī

Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī stood at the crossroads of Islamic civilization. Both scholars came from the city of Nīshāpūr and lived during the second half of the 10th-century CE and the first part of the 11th-century CE. Like al-Tirmidhī, they belonged to the patrician class of their city; their families were of noble Arab ancestry, and they owned land and engaged in scholarly pursuits. Both men traveled in search of knowledge, specifically to study Ḥadīth, and both belonged to the Shāfiʿī school of law (*madhhab*).[84] These men were connected by a similar culture of Arab identity within a Persian speaking milieu and Arabic textual tradition. They could both claim descent to the Arab tribe of Banī Sulaym, thus reinforcing their spiritual fraternity with ties of kinship. After al-Qushayrī's spiritual master passed away, he took al-Sulamī as his master.[85] Both men were well situated to synthesize the various mystical trends that had developed in Iraq and greater Khurāsān. The city of Nīshāpūr, where they both lived for most of their lives, was on the Silk Route that passed through northern Iran and Central Asia, connecting Iraq to China in the Far East. Al-Sulamī received a *khirqa* (Ṣūfī cloak) from the Shāfiʿī Ṣūfī master, Abū al-Qāsim al-Naṣrābādhī (d. 367/977–8); however, his education was entrusted to his maternal grandfather, Abū ʿAmr Ismāʿīl b. Nujayd (d. 366/976–7), who was a disciple of Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910), one of the important figures in the Malāmatī School.[86] Al-Sulamī consciously integrates Malāmatī figures into his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, and he even wrote a treatise in which he describes the Malāmatiyya as of a higher spiritual rank than the Ṣūfiyya.[87] In his *Al-risāla al-malāmatiyya* al-Sulamī uses the term *ṣūfī* to describe the particular movement that originated in al-Junayd's circle in Baghdād, while in other contexts such as his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya,* he uses the same term to refer more generally to a mystic of high spiritual rank, regardless of school.[88] This is significant because it means that al-Sulamī, like al-Kalābādhī and al-Sarrāj, is using the

84 Gerhard Böwering, "Al-Sulamī," in *EI2*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. 26 December 2014 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-sulami-SIM_7147>

85 Franscesco Chiabotti, *Entre soufisme et savoir islamique*, 61.

86 De Jong, "Malāmatiyya," in *EI2*.

87 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 126–127.

88 In his work *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* al-Sulamī uses the term *ṣūfiyya* to refer to both Baghdādī and Khurāsānī mystics; however, in his *Al-risāla al-malāmatiyya* he refers to the *ṣūfiyya* specifically as the Baghdādī mystics. See al-Sulamī's introduction to his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 5. See also Abū al-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī's work on the Malāmatiyya: Abū al-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī, *Al-malāmatiyya wa al-ṣūfiyya wa ahl al-futuwwa*, 112.

term *ṣūfī* as a general term for an Islamic mystic and is not representing a particular school of mystical thought. Our discussion of Sufism as a *meta-madhhab* brings up the question of its relationship to the other indigenous mystical schools operative in Nīshāpūr at the time, primarily the Malāmatiyya and the Karrāmiyya. Both Chabbi and Knysh argue that Sufism replaced these indigenous mystical schools. If we view Sufism as the result of a mystical synthesis that took place in Nīshāpūr during the 11th-century CE, then we can say that, rather than replacing the Malāmatiyya and the Karrāmiyya, Nīshāpūrī Sufism was able to adapt to new contexts while these other schools were not. Rather than the Ṣūfīs replacing these groups, we find that the demise of the Karrāmiyya, for example, seems to coincide with the Mongol invasions of the 13th- and 14th-centuries CE.[89] The Malāmatiyya have been more resilient than the Karrāmiyya, with offshoots of the movement surviving into the Ottoman period; however, traditional Malāmatism in its Khurāsānian form is also no longer detectable after the Mongol invasions.[90]

The introduction to al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* uses a style of language and terminology that is very close to what is used by al-Tirmidhī. Al-Tirmidhī's ideas and terms are quite unique, and given that al-Sulamī was highly acquainted with his writings, it is fair to say that he could have taken inspiration for some aspects of his work from al-Tirmidhī. The first biographical dictionary of Muslim mystics[91] is not, in fact, al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*, but rather the no longer extant *History of the Shaykhs* (*Kitāb al-mashāyikh*), that is attributed to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and mentioned by al-Hujwīrī in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb.*[92] In al-Sulamī's introduction we find a statement whose only known precedent

89 Clifford E. Bosworth, "Karrāmiyya," in *EI2*.

90 Margaret Malamud, "Malāmatiyya," *EI2*.

91 It is not clear that mystics are meant by the title *mashāyikh*, a term that al-Tirmidhī only uses to refer to scholars (*'ulamā'*). The one reference to the word we find is negative, referring to the scholars of outward knowledge who persecuted al-Tirmidhī in his city of Tirmidh. It is not clear though that this is the original title that al-Tirmidhī used, and among Ḥanafīs of al-Hujwīrī's time period, the term *mashāyikh* referred to 'authorities' but not necessarily mystics. However, given that almost all al-Tirmidhī's works are of a mystical nature, and since Hujwīrī mentions that al-Tirmidhī describes Abū Ḥanīfa as having been one who wore wool in his early days, we might assume that al-Tirmidhī is using the fact that Abū Ḥanīfa abandoned the wearing of wool as a sign of his leaving asceticism. Al-Tirmidhī was a mystic who consistently attacks asceticism. Also, the context for Hujwīrī's discussion is a mystical treatise. Even if the *mashāyikh* mentioned here were not strictly mystics, the book would still be a first of its kind in the genre of biographical dictionaries.

92 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-maḥjūb,* 46. Al-Sulamī uses the term *shaykh* to describe the Ṣūfī master in the introduction to his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 5.

seems to be in the writings of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. Al-Sulamī writes, *wa-atbaʿa al-anbiyāʾ ʿalayhim al-salām bi-l-awliyāʾ yukhallifūnahum fī sunanihim wa-yaḥmilūna ummatahum ʿalā ṭarīqatihim wa-simatihim*, "He made the *awliyāʾ* follow the prophets, upon whom be peace, and he made them (the *awliyāʾ*) successors in their ways. They (the *awliyāʾ*) guide the community upon their [straight] path and their [high] character."[93] In Chapter 2, we discussed how al-Tirmidhī makes an important claim about religious authority by saying that the *awliyāʾ* are the successors (*khulafāʾ*) of the prophets (*anbiyāʾ*). The *awliyāʾ* in al-Sulamī's introduction are those who, *yataʾaddab bi-him al-murīdūn wa-yaʾtasī bi-him al-muwaḥḥidūn*, "…those with whom seekers of God have good manners and from whom the ordinary Muslims seek healing."[94] In the same introduction, he specifically states that the *awliyāʾ* are the successors (*khulafāʾ*) of the prophets and messengers, *fa-hum fī al-umamī khulafāʾ al-anbiyāʾ ʿalayhim al-salām wa-l-rusul ṣalawāt Allāhi ʿalayhim*, "Among the various nations they are the successors of the prophets and the messengers, may the blessings of Allāh be upon them."[95] Al-Sulamī goes on to use a specific term that we rarely see outside of al-Tirmidhī's mystical writings. He says, *wa-hum arbāb ḥaqāʾiq al-tawḥīd, wa-l-muḥaddathūn*, "They are the masters of the realities of unification and those spoken to by God."[96] None of the Ṣūfīs quoted in al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* use the term *muḥaddath* (one spoken to by God). Only one use of the term is found in al-Sulamī's qurʾānic commentary *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr*, in a quote by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 309/922), one of the Ṣūfīs of Baghdād in the circle of al-Junayd. However, in this quote he does not specifically connect the *muḥaddath* to the *walī*. On the other hand, throughout al-Tirmidhī's works, the highest of the *awliyāʾ* are described as *muḥaddathūn*, just as al-Sulamī describes them in his introduction.[97] It is also important to note that the student of al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī discusses the *muḥaddathūn* in extenso in his *ʿUyūn al-ajwiba fī funūn al-asʾila*, describing the relationship of the *muḥaddath* to the person who has mere thoughts (*khawāṭir*) as well as the person characterized by clairvoyance (*firāsa*).[98] According to al-Sulamī, these *awliyāʾ* are *aṣḥāb al-firāsāt al-ṣādiqa*, "those who possess true insight,"

93 Ibid., 4.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., 5.
96 Ibid.
97 For al-Tirmidhī's description of the types of *muḥaddath*, see *NU*, vol. 2, 450. For al-Tirmidhī's connection of the *awliyāʾ* with the *muḥaddathūn*, see *NU*, vol. 3, 410. For the same connection also see *KA*. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 86.
98 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and Florian Sobieroj, *ʿUyūn al-ajwiba fī funūn al-asʾila*, 71–73.

that is, they have special knowledge from God.[99] They are an elect group that will be present in the Muslim community until the end of time. This is how al-Tirmidhī also describes them in *KA*, *kullamā māta minhum rajul*^{un} *khallafahu ākhir*^{un} *maqāmahu hattā … atā waqt zawāl al-dunyā*, "Whenever one of them dies, another succeeds him until…the time for the end of the world arrives."[100] Al-Sulamī is explicit about the purpose of his *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*. He writes in his introduction, *fa-aḥbabtu an ajmaʿ fī siyar mutaʾakhkhirī al-awliyāʾ kitāb*^{an} *usammīhi ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, "I wanted to make into a book the biographies of the later saints; I call it the Generations of the Ṣūfīs."[101] Al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* can be seen as an extension of al-Tirmidhī's basic premise that the saints are the true inheritors and successors of the prophets and that they will be present in the Muslim community till the end of time. Another assumption in al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* is a theological one that al-Tirmidhī clearly makes, which is that the *awliyāʾ* can, in fact, be known. When al-Sulamī lists his generations of Ṣūfīs, he is specifying particular individuals as *awliyāʾ*. Even during al-Sulamī's time, the general agreement among Ḥanafī/Māturīdī and Ashʿarī theologians was that a *walī* is hidden and that he cannot claim that he is a *walī*.[102]

Al-Tirmidhī addresses the question of hiddenness versus visibility of the *walī* in his *KA*, *fa man saʾala rabbahu al-imāma li al-muttaqīn hal yakūnu ghāmiḍan*,[103] "But is that person hidden from view who asks his Lord to make him an *imām* for those who fear God?"[104] Al-Tirmidhī gives the example of the caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. He argues that both caliphs are considered *awliyāʾ* of God and they were clearly not hidden.[105] Al-Tirmidhī even claims that a *walī*

99 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 5.

100 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 44.

101 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 5.

102 According to Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), one of the foremost Māturīdī theologians, the person who claims *wilāya* loses that stature immediately, and the saint (*walī*) who sees a miracle (*karāma*) proceed from himself must assume that it could be a means of God leading him astray, and he must try to conceal the miracle. Ibid, *Tabṣira al-adilla*, 536–538. Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403–405/1013), in his book on the miracles of prophets and the miracles of saints, and their difference from other supernatural phenomena, does not bring up the issue of whether a *walī* can openly claim to be a *walī* or that a *walī* can know he is a *walī*. Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-bayān ʿan al-farq bayna al-muʿjizāt wa-l-karāmāt wa-l-ḥiyal wa-l-kahāna wa-l-ṣiḥr wa-l-nāranjāt*, ed. Richard Joseph McCarthy (Bairūt: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1958). Al-Qushayrī mentions in his *Risāla* that Abū Bakr b. Furāk (d. 406/1015), an Ashʿarī theologian in Nīshāpūr, believed a *walī* cannot know or claim that he is a *walī*. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 270.

103 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Thalāthat muṣannafāt*, 60.

104 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Concept*, 129.

105 Ibid., 128.

can, in fact, know that he is a *walī*.[106] Al-Sulamī's introduction to his *Ṭabaqāt* brings several important ideas together. He appears to use al-Tirmidhī's idea that the *awliyā'* are the real successors (*khulafā'*) to the prophets.[107] Then he connects the idea of *wilāya* with the term *ṣūfiyya*, giving this term wider connotations than merely being a reference to a particular mystical school. Finally, he brings under the title of the *ṣūfiyya* a whole range of different mystical movements, ranging from the Baghdād Ṣūfīs to the Malāmatiyya to the Ḥukamā'. Al-Sulamī then uses the literary genre of the biographical dictionary as a compelling tool to communicate this synthesis. The content of the biographical sketches that al-Sulamī employs are pithy statements that demonstrate the divinely inspired knowledge of these exemplars. This also follows al-Tirmidhī's position that *wilāya* is knowledge-based. A *walī* is a *walī* primarily because he is given special knowledge by God. This understanding of *wilāya* differs from previous concepts of *wilāya* that saw the *awliyā'* as distinguished primarily by their ability to perform miracles (*karāmāt*).[108]

Al-Qushayrī is the first Ṣūfī writer to include a chapter on *wilāya* in his epistle on *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). Al-Qushayrī builds upon al-Sulamī's basic framework, incorporating a more concise version of al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* at the beginning of his handbook on Sufism. Al-Sulamī clearly set a pattern that was then adopted by later Ṣūfīs such as ʿAbdallāh al-Anṣārī in his own *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) in his *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 627/1230) in his *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, and al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) in his *Nafaḥāt al-uns*. Like al-Tirmidhī and al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī accedes to the possibility that a *walī* can know he is a *walī* without this detracting from his reverence for God.[109] Yet, what distinguishes al-Qushayrī's contribution most is that he formalized the relationship between master (*shaykh*) and disciple (*murīd*). We can see this formalization as a logical progression of the concept of the successorship (*khilāfa*) of the Prophet, initiated by al-Tirmidhī and normalized by al-Sulamī. In al-Qushayrī's advice (*waṣiyya*) to aspirants to the path (*murīdūn*) he writes:

106 Ibid., 41.

107 Both al-Tirmidhī and al-Sulamī call the *awliyā'* the *khulafā'* of the *anbiyā'* (prophets), and of the Prophet Muḥammad in particular by al-Tirmidhī.

108 The primary discussion of *wilāya* in books of creed and theological treatises up to al-Tirmidhī was concerned with distinguishing between the miracles (*karāmāt*) of saints and the miracles (*muʿjizāt*) of prophets.

109 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 270.

ولم يكن عصر من الأعصار في مدة الإسلام إلا وفيه شيخ من شيوخ هذه الطائفة ممن له علوم التوحيد وإمامة القوم إلا وأئمة ذلك الوقت من العلماء استسلموا لذلك الشيخ وتواضعوا له وتبرّكوا به ولولا مزيّة وخصوصيّة لهم وإلا كان الأمر بالعكس.[110]

> There has never been an age in the history of Islam except that there has been a master from among the masters of this group who had proficiency in the science of the oneness [of God] and had leadership of the Ṣūfīs to the extent that the greatest scholars of that epoch would subordinate themselves to that *shaykh* and show humility towards him and seek blessings through him. Had distinction and special qualities not belonged to them, this would not have been so.[111]

We can see from this quote that the term *ṣūfiyya* here cannot be a reference to the school of mysticism that originated in Baghdād around the circle of al-Junayd, but rather is used as a synonym for the *awliyā'*. The conflation of *ṣūfiyya* with *awliyā'* is an idea that al-Qushayrī appears to have taken from al-Sulamī. According to al-Qushayrī, the *ṣūfiyya* had been present in the Muslim community since its inception. They came from the scholarly class of the *'ulamā'*. *Taṣawwuf* was considered a 'science' (*'ilm*) from among the sciences (*'ulūm*) of Islamic learning, and for al-Qushayrī, it represented the highest science.

Both al-Qushayrī and al-Sulamī use the same freedom/bondage dichotomy in reference to the *ṣūfiyya*/*awliyā'* that we saw in al-Tirmidhī's terminology. Al-Sulamī calls the Malāmatiyya *aḥrār* (the free ones) and they are equivalent to the highest degree of *awliyā'* in his mystical hierarchy.[112] Al-Qushayrī devotes a section in his *Risāla* to the *aḥrār* (the free ones), indicating that freedom (*ḥurriyya*) is a quality of the highest of the *awliyā'*.[113] This structure is consistent with al-Tirmidhī's framework, in which we see that slavehood (*riqq*) applies to all Muslims except the slave (*mukātab*) who has paid off the last *dinār* that he owes to his master.[114] Those who have attained their freedom from their master, i.e., God, become the true rulers of the world and the temporal rulers (*salāṭīn*) have no power over them. Al-Qushayrī writes, *al-ḥurriyya an lā yakūn al-'abd taḥt riqq al-makhlūqāt wa lā yajrī 'alayhi sulṭān*

110 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 425.
111 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 404.
112 Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Al-malāmatiyya*, 115.
113 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 229.
114 Ibid., 231.

al-mukawwanāt,[115] "Freedom means that the servant of God does not allow himself to become enslaved by [other] creatures, nor is he subject to the power of originated things."[116] While it was al-Tirmidhī who first used the structure of *walā'* (clientage) to describe the *awliyā'*, he did not include the concept of lineage (*sanad*) that was also a central aspect to Arab claims of superiority over non-Arab Persians. With al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī, not only do we find the motif of clientage, but we also find the ideal of lineage (*sanad*) as a further buttress to the claims of authority by the Ṣūfīs who, in their eyes, represent the spiritual and religious exemplars in the Muslim community who are most deserving of the title *awliyā'*.

Al-Qushayrī extends this paradigm first inaugurated by al-Tirmidhī and later developed by al-Sulamī.[117] His *Risāla* functions to generate a transformation of authority in which the *awliyā'* are the true rulers of the world. This authority then transfers to a new social milieu in which the *shaykh* and his disciples (*murīdūn*) represent a microcosm of the Islamic community ruled by the *awliyā'*.[118] The *shaykh* is the *walī* and his disciples are the *mukātabūn* (freed slaves who owe allegiance to their free master). With al-Qushayrī, the Ṣūfī *shaykh* is to be treated as the successor to the Prophet (*khalīfa*) and one of the free ones (*aḥrār*), who are among the highest of the *awliyā'*. A central aspect of this microcosm is the pact (*bay'a*) between the disciple (*murīd*) and his master (*shaykh*).[119] This pact (*bay'a*) resembles the pact that Muslims traditionally made with the caliph of the Prophet establishing his authority over them. The pact between master (*shaykh*) and disciple demands complete obedience to the will of the master. To contravene this pact is likened to apostasy (*ridda*).[120]

In terms of the elements of Ṣūfī gatherings, al-Qushayrī also defends the Ṣūfī practice of *samā'* (audition).[121] The Ṣūfī gathering (*majlis*) in al-Qushayrī's

115 Ibid., 253.

116 Ibid., 230.

117 Al-Sulamī wrote a treatise on the manners (*adab*) of a disciple (*murīd*) with his master (*shaykh*) and he links this *adab* with the *adab* an ordinary Muslim should have with the saints (*awliyā'*). Chiabotti claims that al-Sulamī introduces the idea that the disciple should not question his master and al-Qushayrī builds upon this thesis. Francesco Chiabotti, *Entre soufisme et savoir islamique*, 621–622.

118 One of the most developed pieces of scholarship on this topic is by Rachida Chih, "Sainteté, maîtrise spirituelle et patronage," 79–98.

119 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 407. Also see a discussion of the importance of the pact (*bay'a*) in al-Qushayrī's vision of Sufism in Chiabotti's dissertation. Chiabotti also claims that respect for the *shaykh* is at the center of al-Qushayrī's narrative. Francesco Chiabotti, *Entre soufisme et savoir islamique*, 622.

120 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 415.

121 Ibid., 342–357.

Risāla is akin to a caliphal court with the Caliph presiding over his retinue. This atmosphere differed markedly from the gathering (*majlis*) of the Baghdād Ṣūfīs, which resembled the salon more than a kingly court. The virtual power of the *awliyā'* that al-Tirmidhī assigns to an ambiguous and amorphous group of elite exemplars (*khawāṣṣ*) is narrowed by al-Sulamī to a select group of representative individuals in his *Ṭabaqāt*, and then narrowed further by al-Qushayrī to idealize the position of the spiritual master (*shaykh*). The basic structure in this progression from al-Tirmidhī to al-Sulamī to al-Qushayrī remains the same, in which the master/slave and caliph/subject dichotomies are transferred to a new social space that mediates and negotiates ties of allegiance between master and disciple. Francesco Chiabotti claims that al-Qushayrī is speaking to masters just as much as he is speaking to disciples and some of his texts can be construed as a template by which these masters can consecrate their authority. Since knowledge and application of the sacred law (Sharīʿa) was the first stage of religious development for all of these figures; it meant that the Sunnī *'ulamā'*, wherever they were in the Muslim world, could potentially aspire to this new status of Ṣūfī and *walī*. This can go far in explaining why Sufism spread so far and so quickly from a limited geographical space to the far reaches of the Muslim world in only a couple of hundred years. It is significant to note that Sufism did not spread to the entire Muslim world from Baghdād, but rather spread from Nīshāpūr, because it was in Nīshāpūr that Sufism reached its maturity. Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī used al-Tirmidhī's basic framework to present the *'ulamā'* as the new caliphs of the *umma* through the new institution of Sufism. Muslim scholars from around the Muslim world adopted this new framework almost en masse.

Al-Tirmidhī was not a Ṣūfī in the specific sense of the word since he was not acquainted with the Baghdād Ṣūfīs of whom al-Junayd was their leader. However, if we look at Sufism in the broader sense, and as a product of the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th-century CE in Nīshāpūr, we can quite easily consider him to be one of the leading theorists of that synthesis. When we look at al-Tirmidhī's contemporaries and Muslim mystics prior to al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī, we find that *wilāya* was a concept that was used but did not occupy the place of central importance that it played in al-Tirmidhī's writings or in the writings of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī. When al-Tirmidhī connected *wilāya* to religious authority, he created an alternative paradigm of authority that rivaled not only the Shīʿī imams and the temporal ʿAbbāsid caliph and his sultans, but also the Sunnī scholarly class (*'ulamā'*) of his time. However, since the *awliyā'* ultimately came from the ranks of the *'ulamā'*, his concept of *wilāya* had the effect of sanctifying the entire class of Sunnī scholars. The Ṣūfīs of Baghdād tended to be more collegial in their relationships with one another. Their

gatherings were more akin to salons in which a small group of elite mystics would gather to discourse on mystical topics. It is al-Sulamī who combines the prestige of Baghdād Sufism with the authority structures of eastern mysticism, particularly the Malāmatīs. Al-Tirmidhī's concept of *wilāya* was instrumental in allowing a new form of mysticism to emerge, a form of mysticism that we call Sufism today. This was the great mystical synthesis of the 5th/11th century in Khurāsān. The elite and inward-looking phenomenon of Baghdād Sufism came to represent the outward face of a mystical system that was wholly Khurāsānian. Al-Qushayrī took the basic template provided by al-Sulamī and formalized it in his master/student paradigm. If al-Hujwīrī of Ghazna was correct in stating that *wilāya* is the basis upon which Sufism is built, it is clear that this basis was a Khurāsānian basis.

Conclusion

Through this work I have sought to reimagine the way we think about *wilāya* in the early Islamic period, by bringing a new methodological approach, new textual sources to bear, as well as a close reading of al-Tirmidhī's major works. The results have provided significant explanatory potential for numerous social, political and religious movements in early Islam. I did not want to simply write a book about al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and his ideas. That has already been done by previous authors. My purpose was to reframe the discourse around al-Tirmidhī and his ideas and provide a new and hopefully beneficial approach to the study of Islamic Mysticism that other scholars may be able to reproduce and explore in further detail. After several attempts to apply Weber's paradigm to early Islamic *wilāya*, it became clear that there was a lack of congruence between the theory and the subject matter. Early on, I had tried to apply Foucault's concept of the episteme, and that too produced mediocre results. It was not until I looked for a structure within early Arab/Islamic social and political history that I began to notice the transactional and socially dynamic manner that authority conveyed within Islamicate society. This approach has the possibility of allowing us to rethink not only certain aspects of Islamic Mysticism but also the way Islamic history is understood generally. I have pointed out some of these insights throughout the book.

Instead of looking at al-Tirmidhī's gnoseology through the prism of sainthood, I looked at *wilāya* as it was playing out socially and politically in the two centuries prior to al-Tirmidhī. This required tracing the historical roots of *wilāya* as it grew out of the early Arab/Islamic conquests and the rule of the Rāshidūn caliphs up to and including the first couple of centuries of the ʿAbbāsids. When looking across numerous Islamic movements during the first three centuries of Islam, it is clear that *wilāya* occupied a very different social-semantic universe than sainthood, while overlapping in only a few distinct areas. If *wilāya* was not the same as sainthood then, based on its various meanings and usages, it must be related to authority or some discourse around the negotiation of power. In fact, we find that *wilāya* speaks to a range of power relations in pre-Islamic and early Arab/Islamic society that coalesce around the solidarity group. It is the solidarity group that is primary in this model rather than the individual. We find social structures connected to the way solidarity groups form and interact at both the political and social levels. The city-based mercantile classes had developed strong ties of dependence with the nomadic Bedouin ethos that surrounded the urban oases. This *Weltanschauung* proved to imbue early Arab/Islamic social structures with durable patterns that gave

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precedence to transactional and diffuse types of authority that varied significantly from the more hierarchical agrarianate models often used in Islamic Studies.

This approach to early Islamic history helps us look at the development of Sufism in a different way. It brings into question Melchert's thesis that Sufism developed out of a transition from asceticism to mysticism in the 3rd/9th century. His thesis does not resolve a number of outstanding anomalies that have plagued the study of Islamic Mysticism for decades. For example, why are 'wearers of wool' always characterized differently in the literature than Ṣūfīs? The problem partly lies in the persistence of certain assumptions about Ṣūfīs, such as their being primarily mystics, and their vaulted mystical doctrines being the centerpiece of their efforts. Rather, Chapter 1 shows us that the Ṣūfīs were more concerned with correcting what they saw as negligence and abuse by the caliphal establishment. When the state persecuted them, the Ṣūfīs transformed from being a diffuse subversive movement to following a more stable contractual model founded on the doctrine of al-Junayd. One of the significant points about the Ṣūfīs is that, in doing so, they developed a solidarity group that could absorb other solidarity groups and thus become a type of meta-solidarity group. Al-Tirmidhī developed out of the same Baṣran-based milieu that gave rise to the Ṣūfiyya. Al-Tirmidhī focused on the *wilāya* model of the early *zuhhād* such as Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, who were Traditionists representing a contractual authority structure outside of the nascent *madhāhib*. It is these two types of authority that eventually merge to then be reconstituted in Nīshāpūr in the 11th-century CE.

Chapter 2 explains how al-Tirmidhī thought about *wilāya* through the prism of clientage (*walā'*). Through a close reading of al-Tirmidhī's works, it is clear how he is not as interested in promoting *virtuosi* as he is concerned with working out the relationship of the *ʿulamā'* to the common Muslims and the political rulers. He is focused on reforming the scholarly class and preserving its position of authority in a time of political instability and rapid social change. Clientage (*walā'*) could schematize both the path towards freedom (in a spiritual sense) and a new basis for social dependence and authority that prioritized Islamic norms rather than Arab descent. The beneficiaries of al-Tirmidhī's model are the *ʿulamā'*, who become the class from which the *awliyā'* arise. These are the *awliyā'* who are worthy to be followed; however, their precise characterization always remains amorphous.

In Chapter 3, we looked at al-Tirmidhī's notion of *ḥikma*. The debate has swung back and forth about whether or not al-Tirmidhī was influenced directly by Hellenistic thought. I position myself somewhere in between Radtke and those who say that al-Tirmidhī incorporated Greek learning directly in its

Aristotelian and Neoplatonic forms. What is significant, however, about my presentation is that it shows how al-Tirmidhī attempts to encompass and synthesize a foreign knowledge-paradigm within his traditional Islamic scholarly framework. What is more important than the content of this imported knowledge is the way in which al-Tirmidhī interacts with that knowledge. *Ḥikma* and the purveyors of *ḥikma*, i.e. the *ḥukamāʾ*, are not adopted by the later Ṣūfī tradition as authority figures. This is not necessarily because they saw *ḥikma* as a foreign implant, but more probably because the authority of the *ḥukamāʾ* was ultimately subversive to the authority of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

Chapter 4 serves to demonstrate al-Tirmidhī's connection to the normative scholarly tradition as exemplified in the works of early Murjiʾī/Ḥanafī creedal texts. Al-Tirmidhī's discourse on the *awliyāʾ* was part of a much wider discourse among the *ʿulamāʾ* that sought to place the *awliyāʾ* as the true inheritors of the *anbiyāʾ*. By the end of the 3rd/9th century, the *awliyāʾ* figure prominently in these creedal texts, and it is assumed among large numbers of Muslims in the Eastern lands of Islamdom that the *awliyāʾ* not only exist, but that their miracles (*karamāt*) are recognized by the normative tradition. Again, this provides a correction to the view that al-Tirmidhī was an outlier or that his views were incompatible with the normative tradition. While al-Tirmdhī's notion of *ḥikma* was not adopted by the later Ṣūfī tradition, it does seem to have influenced the Māturīdī theologians of Transoxania as a theoretical basis for their theological discourse. In this sense, the theoretical approach we can call *ḥikma*-based was disassociated from its connection to the *ḥukamāʾ* and so also its potential to generate authority. However, *ḥikma* for the Māturīdīs seems to function in a similar way to Aristotelian philosophy for the Ashʾarīs after al-Ghazālī.

In Chapter 5, we looked at how al-Tirmidhī develops a schematization of *wilāya* that reflects the primary binary structure of diffuse versus contractual modes of authority. He does this through a tripartite approach to authority types focusing on the *ʿulamāʾ*, *ḥukamāʾ* and *awliyāʾ* (*khulafāʾ*). The *ʿulamāʾ* and the *awliyāʾ* represent the two primary modes of both contractual and diffuse structures, while the *ḥukamāʾ* represent a subversive authority that frames *wilāya*. Chapter 5 also addresses a number of aspects of al-Tirmidhī's concepts of *wilāya* and *ḥikma* that are important for his overall gnoseology. Examples of these are the light-based nature of al-Tirmidhī's notion of *wilāya* as well as the potential ramifications of *wilāya* and *ḥikma* for Islamicate social and political history. While *ḥikma* does not become important for Islamicate authority, it does become important as a conduit for foreign knowledge elements to enter into the Islamic scholarly discourse.

In Chapter 6, I complete the book by showing how the discourse on authority and al-Tirmidhī's notions of *wilāya* were important building blocks for the

Great Mystical Synthesis of the 11th-century CE in Nīshāpūr. Again, I show how al-Tirmidhī was not necessarily the outlier that many characterize him to be, even for the discourse stream of Islamic Mysticism. One of the important lessons of this work is that the solidarity group should be understood as the primary basis of negotiating authority in Islamicate societies. Al-Tirmidhī's ideas and his contributions to Ṣūfī discourse are more important than the figure of al-Tirmidhī himself for Islamicate society. What is clear is that al-Tirmidhī was actively working through central issues at the center of Islamic social, political and religious thought. For that reason, we should not view al-Tirmidhī as only an Islamic mystic but as one of the important early ideologues of Islamic social, religious and political thought. His approach to new knowledge paradigms is still very relevant today as we see Islamicate societies grappling with the challenges of modernity while attempting to ground their claims to authority through Islam. Al-Tirmidhī exemplifies the process of Islamic renewal and a path that leads forward in a time of political and social change.

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