

THE IDEA OF *TASHABBUH* IN SUFI COMMUNITIES
AND LITERATURE OF THE LATE 6TH/12TH AND
EARLY 7TH/13TH CENTURY IN BAGHDAD

LA IDEA DEL *TAŠABBUH* EN LAS COMUNIDADES
Y LA LITERATURA SUFÍES DE BAGDAD A FINALES
DEL SIGLO VI/XII Y PRINCIPIOS DEL VII/XIII

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The aim of this paper is to focus attention on the role of the *mutashabbih* within the active life of *ribāt* in sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth century Sufism of late Abbasid Baghdad with its basic source being Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī's '*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*'. Other concepts and groups are also analyzed such as *qalandariyya*, *majdhūbs*, *takalluf*, which is the semblance of ecstasy during *samā'*, and the ambiguous status of *khādim*. The broad category *khādim*, according to al-Suhrawardī, seems to have included types of affiliation and function in Sufi collective life that went beyond the specific position of the *khādim* as a senior disciple of a particular *Sheikh*. The infinitive form *khidma* would probably have implied categories ranging from a transitory affiliation motivated by some expenditure on the Sufis, through a more robust one in which the same title might designate those who occasionally visited resident Sufis and participated in one or more of their rituals, and on to actual residence of such "servants" in the *ribāt*. Al-Suhrawardī's *tashabbuh* theory is based on the essential purpose of creating a popular Sufi system open to one and all, with an inherent dynamic that leads ultimately to the rank of *Sheik*-hood (*mashyakh*).

Key words: Mutashabbih; Rukhṣa; Ribāt; Khādim; Qalandariyya; Samā'; Takalluf.

Este artículo pretende analizar el papel del *mutashabbih* en la vida activa del *ribāt* en el sufismo del período tardío de los 'Abbasíes de Bagdad (finales del siglo VI/XII y principios del siglo VII/XIII). Su fuente principal es el '*Awārif al-ma'ārif*' de Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī. También se analizan otros conceptos y grupos, como la *qalandariyya*, los *mayḏūbs*, el *takalluf* (la apariencia de éxtasis durante el *samā'*), además del estatus ambiguo del *jādim*. La amplia categoría de *jādim*, según al-Suhrawardī, parece haber incluido clases de afiliación y función en la vida colectiva sufi que iban más allá de la posición específica del *jādim* como un discípulo veterano de un jeque concreto. La forma *jidma* probablemente incluía categorías que iban desde una afiliación transitoria motivada por algún pago a los sufíes, pasando por una más sólida en la que el mismo título podría designar a los que de forma ocasional visitaban a los residentes sufíes y participaban en uno o más de sus rituales, hasta implicar una residencia real de tales "siervos" en el *ribāt*. La teoría de al-Suhrawardī sobre el *tašabbuh* tiene el propósito fundamental de crear un sistema popular sufi abierto a todos, con una dinámica inherente que en última instancia podía permitir alcanzar el rango de jeque (*mašyaja*).

Palabras clave: Mutašabbih; ruṣṣa; ribāt; jādim; qalandariyya; samā'; takalluf.

Around the sixth/twelfth century there were three large currents manifest in Sufism. In the East, a vision-based Sufism was embodied in the work of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. circa 618/1221); in the West there was the pantheistic Sufism of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240); and in the center we find the Sufism of Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) who, while showing elements derived from the other two Sufi figures, nonetheless occupies an independent position of his own and radiates his influence to East and West. The *magnum opus* of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* signifies a serious attempt to create a unique Sufi identity by means of reestablishing both the theoretical doctrines and the practical codes produced during the first decades of Sufism. The effect that this book left on the actual life of the Sufi communities during its author's lifetime and beyond it, as well as the influence it had on the Sufi thinking and praxis in general, reached as far as the eastern territories of Persia and the Indian subcontinent. Even though terms like *tashabbuh* (lit. "imitation"), *khidma* (lit. "service"), and *khādim* (lit. "servant") had already found their way into early Sufi literature, in the work of al-Suhrawardī they obtained innovative implications within one comprehensive and systematic framework by which the author attempted to grant the Sufi community with an authority and an independent identity that was uniquely their own.

This paper focuses attention on the important role of the *mutashabbih* (lit. "imitator") within the active life of Baghdadi *ribāṭs* during the 12th and 13th centuries. It is the *mutashabbih* who manages to imitate the disciplined Sufis yet is unable to comply with all their duties. Alongside the chapter on dispensations (*rukhas*) in the *Ādāb al-Murīdīn* of Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168), the uncle of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, the relevant chapters on the imitator of the Sufis (*al-mutashabbih bi-l-ṣūfiyya*) and the *khādim* in the *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* written by his nephew ʿUmar, will be extensively considered. The position of the *khādim* in the Sufi communities of the late Abbasid period in Baghdad is still an ambiguous topic, and therefore invites a detailed investigation of the major *oeuvres* produced during the period examined. We believe that by shedding light on the role of the *khādim* in Sufi contexts of the period under discussion in comparison with this interesting function in earlier sources, we may be able to reveal what might have been considered

marginal and implicit in the crucial process of institutionalizing the Sufi communities of the late Abbasid era. I argue, therefore, that the function of the *khādim* should be taken as major part of a wider framework of *tashabbuh* system. The main implications of both *tashabbuh* and *khidma* in early medieval Sufism will be presented in the final section of the paper.

I. *Tashabbuh* in Sufi Literature Prior to the Sixth/Twelfth Century

In the fourth/tenth century, the renowned Sufi author Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988) succinctly defined *al-taḥallī* (lit. “beautifying oneself”) by stating that: “*al-taḥallī* is to imitate pious men in word and deed.”¹ However, when the Persian author, Hujwīrī Jullābī (d. c. 465-69/1072-77) quoted this definition,² he mentioned the critical views of some Sufis regarding the pretence of pious behavior: “*Taḥallī*, then, is to imitate people without really acting as they do. Those who seem to be what they are not, will soon be put to shame, and their secret character revealed.”³ For ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), every “reasonable” man should know Sufi principles to some extent so as to differentiate between true Sufis and their imitators (*al-mutashabbihūn bihim*) who dress like them and practice their outward mannerisms (*al-mutalabbisūn libāsahum wa-l-muttasimūn bi-simātihim*), so that he can distance himself from the latter.⁴ Unlike his successors, as mentioned below, al-Sulamī disapproves of the semblance of ecstasy of Sufi devotions and manners. According to a statement of his, one who simulates an act that he has not been entrusted with, shall waste what he has actually been entrusted to him (*man takallaḥa mā lam yukallaḥ ḍayya’a mā qad kullif*).⁵ The younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-

¹ Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma’ fī l-Taṣawwuf*, Leiden, 1914, 362.

² Hujwīrī Jullābī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, R.A. Nicholson (transl.), London, 1976, 389.

³ Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*.

⁴ Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima fī l-Taṣawwuf wa-Ḥaqīqatīhi*, Y. Zaydān (ed.), Cairo, 1987, 84. See also the English translation of the whole paragraph in: Ohlander, E.S., *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods*, Leiden and Boston, 2008, 192.

⁵ Al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi’ Adāb al-Ṣūfiyya*, E. Kohlberg (ed.), Jerusalem, 1976, 30.

Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) referred to the meaning of *muḥibbūn* (loving ones) in discussing the Sufi *samā'* (listening to music). He welcomes those able to offer the Sufis support in the form of money and help in their daily needs as persons to be accepted and warmly received in the Sufi community. Such followers, though without the qualifications of true disciples, may accompany the Sufis, and through their sincerity and loyalty acquire a degree of Sufi light and purity, according to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, even as smooth wax holds the heat of the sun.⁶

In the last chapter of Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī's *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, the author surveys 40 dispensations (*rukḥṣa*, pl. *rukḥaṣ*) that in his view may be granted to those whom he calls the imitators of the Sufis (*al-mutashabbihūn bi-l-ṣūfiyya*).⁷ The literal meaning of *rukḥṣa* indicates ease and relaxation. In Islamic law, it refers to conditional lenience in applying a Muslim law (*shar'*, *sharī'a*), an exemption from the original behavior code that becomes permissible in specific circumstances.⁸ At the beginning of his final chapter Abū al-Najīb attributes this to the Prophet: "God Himself likes people to adopt *rukḥaṣ* in the same way that He likes them to adopt strict prescriptions (*'azā'im*)."⁹ The author's own definition of *rukḥṣa* follows

⁶ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā and Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, *Tracts on Listening to Music Being Dhamm al-Malāhī and Bawāriq al-Ilmā'*, J. Robson (ed.), London, 1938, 126.

⁷ Al-Suhrawardī, Abū l-Najīb, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, M. Milson (ed.), Jerusalem, 1977, 80-99.

⁸ See, for example 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*, Beirut, 1969, 225. In Sufi literature, the term contradicts the strict prescriptions of asceticism. The word *'azīma*, therefore, has been used for such a state, in which the Sufi must observe these prescriptions and not slide to the lower degree of concession. One Sufi statement, for example, indicates that marriage, for the beginner Sufi, is "sliding from the high state of *'azīma*, an obligation of his state, and a salient condition for his sincerity as a beginner in the path, towards the lower state of concession", Abū Ḥaṣṣ al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārīf al-Ma'ārīf*, Cairo, 1967, 147. According to 'Ammār al-Bidlīsī (d. between 590/1194 and 604/1207), Sufi states differ in their weakness and strength in that weak states are characterized by concession, strong states by certainty and total trust in God. Hence for the Sufi of the second type, difficulty and ease are equal as are divine presence (*wajd*) and loss (*faqd*), spiritual voyaging (*saḡar*) and settling (*ḡaḡar*). See Badeen, E., *Zwei mystische Schriften des 'Ammār Al-Bidlīsī*, Beirut, 1999, German introduction, 1, and the second published treatise of the author, Badeen, E., *Ṣawm al-Qalb*, 52-53. On the terms *rukḥṣa* and *'azīma*, see also: Nallino, C.A., *Raccolta di Scritti editi e inediti, a cura di Maria Nallino*, Roma, 1940, vol. 2: *l'Islām: Dogmatica, Ṣūfismo, Confraternite*, 227, 271; Wensinck, A.J., *Concordance et indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, Leiden, 1992, entries *rukḥṣa* and *rukḥaṣ*.

⁹ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 80.

his attempt to justify the separate treatment of this special topic in a long and detailed chapter at the end of his manual. He writes: “*rukḥṣa* is a watering place (*manhal*) to which the beginner comes; within which the wayfarer (*mutawassit*) is restricted, and resting in it is vouchsafed for a time to the Sufi in the highest ranks of the path.” Accordingly, “true Sufis” may not remain in *rukḥṣa* status except when they intend to leave it as soon as they can.¹⁰

The main purpose of Abū al-Najīb’s final chapter is to support the idea that those who imitate disciplined Sufis mainly in their morals and patterns of behavior are warmly welcome to accompany them. This is based on another prophetic statement, according to which those who imitate certain people actually are one of them (*man tashabbaha bi-qawm fa-huwa minhum*).¹¹ In his introduction to *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, Menahem Milson refers briefly to the author’s significant theory on *tashabbuh*.¹² Milson notes that the author did not make use of the early negative interpretation of the word *mutashabbih*, but rather indicated those who had true intentions to adhere to the Sufis, and thus the book of Abū al-Najīb is the earliest Sufi manual in which this special type of affiliation is clearly presented.¹³ More recently, Eric S. Ohlander devoted three pages in *Sufism in an Age of Transition* (2008) to what he called “lay affiliates” in both Abū al-Najīb and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī’s teachings.¹⁴ The impression formed is that the author attributes the authenticity of this matter for the most part to Abū al-Najīb. Ohlander concludes that:

None of these dispensations [brought about by Abū al-Najīb!], of course, have anything to do with the discipline of the *ribāṭ* itself as the *mutashabbih* has absolutely nothing to do with the types of exercises, devotions, and austerities to which its other constituents, such as the mendicants and the aspirants, are required to adhere.¹⁵

¹⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 80-81: “*wa-l-rukḥṣa manhalun yaridu ‘alayhi al-mubtadi’ min al-murīdīn wa-yataḥayyazu fīhi al-mutawassit min al-sālikīn wa-yastariḥ ilayhi al-fā’iz min al-‘arīfīn*”.

¹¹ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 81; Aḥmad b. Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, Cairo, n.d., 88.

¹² Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, the editor’s introduction, [7]-[10].

¹³ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, [8]-[9].

¹⁴ Ohlander, *Sufism*, 243-246.

¹⁵ Ohlander, *Sufism*, 245.

There is no doubt that Abū Ḥaḥṣ, who unlike his uncle did not prescribe a comprehensive survey of dispensations, insists throughout his writings on the inferiority of those he calls “possessors of dispensations” (*arbāb al-rukḥṣa*) to the “possessors of strictness” (*arbāb al-'azīma*).¹⁶ The arguments of both Milson and Ohlander rest on the assumption that *tashabbuh* demonstrates a type of weak or, according to the latter’s terminology, “lay” affiliation. Ohlander indicates that “the manner in which such individuals actually related to or participated in the religiosity of the *ribāṭ* however is not entirely clear.”¹⁷

Ohlander’s brief assessment, though an important attempt in itself, arouses more questions than it provides answers, and thus invites deeper examination. Abū Ḥaḥṣ’s treatment of the rank of *khādim*, for example, or his acceptance of *takalluf* (semblance of ecstasy) during *samā’* makes it difficult to agree with Ohlander’s perception that the *mutashabbih* had nothing to do with the Sufi practices of his disciplined colleagues. His view as quoted above restricts the involvement of that *mutashabbih* to the so-called “culture of the *ribāṭ*.” The teachings of Abū Ḥaḥṣ, not those of his uncle, provide the theoretical background for a view of the dynamic functions of *mutashabbihūn* in Sufi communities. While such functions concerned the daily agenda of the disciplined Sufis, they seem nevertheless to have taken a temporary and instrumental, rather than an obligatory form.

As stated at the outset of this paper, Sufi literature prior to the sixth/twelfth century contains several indications of followers who used to accompany the Sufis even though they were unable to perform Sufi ascetic practices and spiritual duties. It appears that they did manage to participate in the Sufi gatherings of *samā’* and recollecting God (*dhikr*).¹⁸ However, Sufi authors before Abū al-Najīb, did not deal with this phenomenon in depth. On the contrary, it is

¹⁶ Ohlander, *Sufism*.

¹⁷ Ohlander, *Sufism*, 243.

¹⁸ Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī in the biography of Abū ‘Abd al-Lāh al-Rudhbārī (d. 367/977), quotes the latter’s statement on the types of people with whom the Sufi may share *samā’*. For the imitators the term “lovers of the Sufis” was used: “A Sufi is allowed to share *samā’* with three types of people: The *ṣūfiyya*, the *fuqarā’* (poor), and those who love them (*al-muḥibbūn lahum*)”, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, Leiden, 1960, 531.

evident that Sheikhs would warn their companions against the public disclosure of Sufi theory and the revelation of its deepest secrets. Nor can one overlook the heresy trials of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907-8) and other Baghdadi Sufis in 264/ 877,¹⁹ nor al-Ḥallāj's tragic execution in 309/922, nor the other historical manifestations of strife and conflict between Sufi leaders and their opponents.

Thus, Abū al-Najīb's open-mindedness towards the *rukḥṣa* concept seems to contradict the early ideal of avoiding acts that might be regarded as indulging the lower soul.²⁰ However, in many instances, the author declares that the rank of dispensations is the lowest in the Sufi path, and is not suitable for anyone except the "true imitators."²¹

II. The Rank of *Mutashabbih* in the Text of '*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*'

In the first part of Chapter 7 of '*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*', Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī defines *mutashabbih* as one attracted to *taṣawwuf* without being capable of performing all the duties required from disciplined Sufis.²² While his forebear's considerations in this regard were for the most part, generalized, the author of '*Awārif*' locates the question of *mutashabbih* within his detailed classification of the different patterns of initiating a Sufi community. For him, *mutashabbih* should accompany the Sufis, as this is the entrance to all goodness (*al-qurb minhum muqaddimat kulli khayr*).²³ Among the various patterns for initiating the path, the author places the *mutashabbih* at

¹⁹ On this event see for example, van Ess, J., "Sufism and its Opponents: Reflections on Topoi, Tribulations, and Transformations", in F. de Jong and B. Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden, 1999, 26-28; Karamustafa, A., *Sufism: the Formative Period*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2007, 11-12.

²⁰ Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 489, quoting Muḥammad b. Khafīf (d. 371/982): "Nothing would hearten the disciple more than compliance with the moods of his own lower soul by performing concessions and accepting interpretations". This implies that the disciple interpreted restrictive Sufi theories by suiting them to his own way of behavior. Cf. al-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 10 ("[True] Sufis should not slide into the rank of concessions and facilitating interpretations, and they should not seek deeds or suspected acts permitted to beginners, as this is considered an underestimation of religion" –*tahāwun fī l-dīn*). Cf. al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi'*, 54).

²¹ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 98.

²² Al-Suhrawardī, '*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*', 94.

²³ Al-Suhrawardī, '*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*', 96.

the bottom of the Sufi hierarchy. Above him is the *mutaṣawwif*, then the *malāmatī*, and at the top stands the *ṣūfī*.²⁴ Generally the term *malāmatī* indicates one Sufi tradition, which at least on the level of the technical term, may have originally been founded in Khurāsān. According to the dominant trend in this tradition, constant suspicion against the lower self brought about self-censure and the entire avoidance of praiseworthy acts, since all outward appearance of piety was considered boastful.²⁵

With the later developments of the *malāma* tradition, it appears that behavior intentionally outside the social consensus has been traced back to Sufis contemporary with al-Suhrawardī and who, according to the author practiced “antinomian patterns of behavior” (*manāhij ahl al-ibāḥa*).²⁶ There are, nonetheless, two points to note:

A. Al-Suhrawardī did not use the term *mutashabbih bi-l-malāmatīyya*, which later appears in Jāmī’s *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*.²⁷ However, his noting of the antinomian pretenders of the *malāmatīyya* implies an important difference between the prohibition against imitating *malāma* on one hand, and permission to imitate mainstream Sufis on the other. Due to the ideal of pure sincerity (*ikhhlās*), the theoretical base of *malāma*, this tradition essentially contradicts the idea of imitation, which is however permitted to non-*malāmatī* Sufis.

²⁴ Al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, 95, 100.

²⁵ Al-Sulamī’s treatise on *malāmatīyya* (*Risālat al-Malāmatīyya*) may have been the earliest Sufi text on this topic, and was published by Abū l-’Alā ‘Afīfī in *al-Malāmatīyya wa-l-Ṣūfīyya wa-Ahl al-Futuwwa*, Cairo, 1945. However, the basic concept of pure sincerity in keeping one’s acts hidden from the public eye originated in early Sufi literature. Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/837), for example, represents the ideal of *isrār bi-l-’amal* (lit. “concealing the act”) in al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Masā’il fī A’māl al-Qulūb wa-l-Jawāriḥ*, Kh. Maṣṣūr (ed.), Beirut, 2000, 52, 54. See also De Jong, F. and Algar, H., “Malāmatīyya”, *EP*, 6, 223-225. In any case the main principle of *malāmatīyya* is to keep one’s acts pure and entirely sincere by hiding them, and hence eschewing pride. Evidently too, many *malāmatīyya*, from the period of al-Sulamī, tended to behave incompatibly with accepted social norms in order to arouse blame. (See for example al-Sulamī, *Risāla*, 101: “Sufī Sheikhs liked to be dressed as *shuṭṭār* (rowdies and evildoers) while acting piously”. See also al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi’*, 6: “*kāna Abū Ḥātim al-’Aṭṭār zāhiruḥu zāhir al-fujjār wa-bāṭinuhu bāṭin al-abrār*” (The outward appearance of Abū Ḥātim al-’Aṭṭār was like that of evildoers while his interior was pure).

²⁶ Al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, 101.

²⁷ Jāmī distinguishes between a true imitator of *malāmatīyya* and a pretending imitator. See Jāmī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, M. Pūr (ed.), Tehran, 1918, 14-15. Accordingly, the second type could be considered a synonym of what al-Suhrawardī meant, without using the same term.

B. Antinomian pretenders of *malāma* differ also from other problematic groups depicted in a chapter of 'Awārif, the *qalandariyya*.²⁸ These anti-social traveling Sufis actually won a less hostile and almost positive treatment in al-Suhrawardī's *magnum opus*. The attitude to both groups in Chapter 9 of 'Awārif, entitled: "Chapter on those associated with the Sufis but not considered Sufis" (*fī dhikr man intamā ilā l-ṣūfiyya wa-laysa minhum*),²⁹ unless examined carefully, is misleading. While the author seems to some extent to express sympathy towards "goodness of heart" (*tībat al-qulūb*) of the *qalandariyya*,³⁰ he accuses pretenders of *malāma* of antinomianism and disregard for religious obligations. True *malāmātiyya* try to hide their inner states, and hence preserve social customs and religious commandments. This aspect of *malāmātiyya* gives it the sense in which al-Suhrawardī understood *malāma* – as the self-blame of a Sufi for showing off his good deeds. For al-Suhrawardī, the sublime rank is that of the *ṣūfī*, the one who goes beyond the level in which he is entirely aware of his own being by controlling his sincerity, i.e. the rank of *malāmātī*, to a higher level in which total extinction in the Deity invalidates the Sufi's awareness of his own sincerity. For earlier Sufi authors, this was expressed by the term *mukhālaṣat al-ikhhlāṣ* (lit. "to make the sincerity sincere.")³¹

Qalandariyya, according to the text of 'Awārif, do not observe ascetic rites but rather indulge in worldly pleasures. The main flaws the author attributes to them are the abrogation of social customs and satisfaction with a minimum of religious duties. Hence Meier concludes that the al-Suhrawardī, in his chapter on *qalandariyya*, does not refer to the *qalandarī* ascetic tradition of his Syrian contemporary, Jamāl al-Dīn Ṣāwī and his followers in Damascus, but

²⁸ On the history and doctrines of this group see the research of Karamustafa, A., *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550*, Salt Lake City, 1994.

²⁹ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 100.

³⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif. See also the English translation of this paragraph in: Karamustafa, *God's Unruly*, 34.

³¹ Al-Suhrawardī quotes literally from al-Sulamī's *Risāla* (al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 100). He quotes directly from one treatise attributed to Muḥammad al-Ghazālī. (Compare al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 99 with al-Ghazālī's, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut, n.d., part 2, 18. Similarly, al-Suhrawardī quotes al-Sulamī's early classification of the four types of *dhikr* according to *malāmātī* doctrines (al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 100; al-Sulamī, *Risāla*, 104).

rather to earlier doctrines in the history of this tradition.³² It is also suggested that al-Suhrawardī did indeed know about the Sufis distinguished by their asocial behavior, mainly among those *majdhūbs* whom his biographies suggest he might actually have met.³³ Based on this assumption, the description of *qalandariyya* in *ʿAwārif* could have referred to the *majdhūbs*, even though those *majdhūbs* were not designated as *qalandariyya* in other relevant instances in the book.³⁴

The patched Sufi cloak *khirqā* was considered a symbol of initiation into Sufi life in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. The master's act of bestowing the *khirqā* upon his disciple symbolizes his surrender to the Sheikh, and is considered as an entry into steady companionship with him. According to al-Suhrawardī, being invested with the *khirqā* should not be preceded by a period of examination in which the "true intentions" of the disciple are put to the test.³⁵ For him, putting on the *khirqā* may affect the disciple's inner soul in the same way that a patient feels

³² Meier, F., *Abū Saʿīd-i Abū l-Khayr (357-440/ 967-1049): Wirklichkeit und Legende, Acta Iranica*, 11, 1976, 512. Karamustafa suggests that when al-Suhrawardī finished writing the *ʿAwārif* (probably in 624/1227) he actually knew nothing about the ascetic *qalandariyya* of Damascus (Karamustafa, *God's Unruly*, 35). Cf. the recent *terminus ad quem* for *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, according to which it was composed earlier in 605/1208-9 in: Ohlander, E., "A New *Terminus Ad Quem* for ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's *Magnum Opus*", *JAOS*, 128, 2 (2008), 293.

³³ See for example, an anecdote mentioned by al-Yāfiʿī (d. 768/1367), according to which al-Suhrawardī visited ʿAlī al-Kurdī, the famous *majdhūb* of Damascus, during his mission to al-Malik al-ʿĀdil in 604/1207; ʿAbd al-Lāh b. Asʿad al-Yāfiʿī, *Rawḍ al-Rayāhīn fī Hikāyāt al-Ṣāliḥīn*, M. al-Jādir and ʿA. ʿAbd Rabbihi (eds.), Damascus, 1995, 480-481. Historically, al-Suhrawardī's meeting with this *majdhūb* seems doubtful. Most probably because of Yāfiʿī's interest in legitimizing the theory of Sufi *jadhb* the story of al-Suhrawardī's meeting with al-Kurdī was mentioned in his text. Meanwhile, al-Suhrawardī, in his *ʿAwārif*, adopts a basically positive attitude towards the theory of *jadhb* by indicating that the Sufi who qualifies as a master must be either a *majdhūb mutadārak bi-l-sulūk* (a person who is effortlessly attracted to God and his attraction is followed by treading the path), or a *sālik mutadārak bi-l-jadhba* (a wayfarer whose treading of the path is followed by an effortless attraction). Nonetheless, Suhrawardī regards the first type (i.e. the *majdhūb mutadārak*) the most perfect for the master status (*al-maqām al-akmal fī l-mashyakha*). Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, 106-107.

³⁴ See the author's description of what he calls *al-majdhūb al-mujarrad* (the mere *majdhūb*), and why this type is not to be qualified for the master status in al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, 106.

³⁵ The period of examination had been theorized by Hujwīrī. He conditions the investment of the *khirqā* on three years of examination: Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 54. Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Adāb al-Murīdīn*, 28.

better right after taking his physician's medication, even though the remedy could not have affected the illness immediately and may even have had no healing power at all. According to the author, only disciplined Sufis should be invested with the *khirqat al-irāda* ("cloak of novitiate"), while the *khirqat al-tabarruk* ("cloak of benediction") is permitted for Sufi imitators.³⁶ An unpublished treatise of his declares that he actually sent his *khirqat al-tabarruk* to a ruler of his time inviting him to adopt the Sufi way of life.³⁷ It appears, besides, that some of the author's short *waṣāyā* ("testaments") have been basically addressed to *mutashabbihūn* encouraging them to join the "path."³⁸ The *mutashabbih* is required to preserve Muslim law, to follow his companions, the disciplined Sufis, and to look forward to being qualified later for the cloak of the novitiate.³⁹ Clearly, then, the following story in Chapter 7, which is devoted to the *mutaṣawwif* and his *mutashabbih*, demonstrates the significant role of the outward appearance, mainly dress and behavior, in the theory of *tashabbuh* :

I heard my master [Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī] saying: While we were in Iṣfahān, a man asked the Sheikh Aḥmad al-Ghazālī to invest him with the patched cloak. The Sheikh replied: Go to so-and-so and he will explain to you what *khirqā* means and then return to me to get my *khirqā*. He [Abū al-Najīb!] said: This man came to me, and I told him all about the duties and regulations imposed on those wearing the patched cloak. Consequently the man regarded the matter as very difficult and did not agree to wear it. Afterwards, he told the Sheikh [al-Ghazālī!] about the conversation he had with me. The Sheikh ordered me to come before him and scolded me. He said: I sent the man to you for a prompt explanation on *khirqā*, but you shocked him with your frustrating reply. What you told him is actually true. However, if we impose all the duties and strict regulations of the path on our new disciple he will turn away from us. Meanwhile, if we invest him with the patched cloak and let him imitate the

³⁶ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 112-113.

³⁷ Al-Suhrawardī, untitled treatise, MS Tübingen (Ma VI 90), 117b.

³⁸ See for example, al-Suhrawardī's *waṣīyya* to Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Iṣfahānī in al-Suhrawardī, untitled treatise, MS Jagiellońska (3994), 55a-55b; and his *waṣīyya* to Rashīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 632/1234) in *ibid.*, 30b-32a. See also al-Suhrawardī's message to the Persian poet Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī. From a manuscript in the municipal library of Iṣfahān, Hussein Baḥr al-Ulūmī quotes the whole text of this testament in his introduction to al-Iṣfahānī's *Dīwān*; Kamāl al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Dīwān Khallāq al-Ma'ānī*, H. Baḥr al-'Ulūmī (ed.), Tehran, 1969, Introduction, 9-10.

³⁹ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 114.

Sufis and participate in their gatherings, one expects he will obtain some of their blessings, and by imitating their behavior and customs he most probably can also attain to some of their inner states.⁴⁰

The technique of lenience with prospective beginners finds legitimacy in a statement attributed to a famous early figure in the history of *taṣawwuf*. The Baghdadi Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/909) is much quoted in this context. He advises the Sufis to avoid strict codes of behavior with the beginner Sufi.⁴¹ Al-Sulamī quotes another statement of al-Junayd, according to which he advises al-Shiblī (d. 334/945) to accept whoever agrees with him about one single word he says!⁴² Besides such humorous sayings, al-Junayd warns his fellow Sufis to avoid public discourse on deep Sufi doctrines, as reiterated in his short letters preserved by al-Sarrāj. In one such letter, the author may seem to gainsay his own lenience. He tells his companions that a letter of his fell into the hands of someone who misunderstood it, obliging al-Junayd to make great efforts to avoid an imminent conflict by offering a moderate interpretation of what he wrote. Subsequently, in the text of *Luma'*, al-Junayd indicates that what he has said about being lenient is not to be understood as revealing the deep secrets of the path to them because telling someone about matters he cannot understand is not considered as lenience.⁴³

Al-Suhrawardī permits the semblance of ecstasy (*takalluf*) in the context of *samā'* while differentiating between two types of *takalluf*. The first type is performed for sake of personal benefits and social honor (the author describes this type as making something obscure –*talbīs*, and as a deception, *khiyāna*), while the second type is performed for the sake of truth in the same way that the high point of ecstasy (*wajd*) is achieved by means of *tawājjud* (pretending *wajd*).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 96-97.

⁴¹ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 97; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 146: “*idhā laqīta al-faqīr fa-lā tabda'hu bi-l-'ilm wa-ibda'hu bi-l-riḡ, fa-inna al-'ilm yūḥishuhu wa-l-riḡ yu'nisuhu*”.

⁴² Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 146.

⁴³ Al-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 240.

⁴⁴ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 161. On *tawājjud* as a combination of the mental, psychological and physical faculties of a person in the state of deep ecstasy, see e.g., During, J., “Musique et Rites: Le Samā'”, in A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Les Voies d'Allāh: Les Ordres Mystiques dans le Monde Musulman des Origines à*

Based on a prophetic tradition, according to which one who meets “suffering men” should weep or, if he cannot weep, feign tears,⁴⁵ al-Suhrawardī allows those striving toward the state of “true listeners” though as yet without sufficient spiritual qualities, to attend *samā’* gatherings. Unlike his kinsman, al-Suhrawardī proclaims that *mutakallifūn* in the rituals of *samā’*, as well as *mutakallifūn* of ecstasy, are still “polluted” by love of the world and compliance with their human instincts. This seemed sufficient for al-Sarrāj to call them *lā wazn lahum* (not worthy).⁴⁶ In one instance in *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī uses the term *takalluf maḥmūd* (praiseworthy pretense) to signify personal techniques adopted by the Sufis in general along the path to induce high states of grace by means of artificial stratagems (*hiyal*). Theoretically, his definition assumes that inner states may be simulated at the beginning but later become genuine.⁴⁷

According to al-Suhrawardī, pure *samā’* does not invent anything that did not exist previously in the Sufi’s heart, but rather moves pre-existing emotions of the heart.⁴⁸ Logically speaking, Sufis might have been allowed to create their own pre-existing emotions in order to let the act of listening to music move them. Such logic may explain the Sufi ritual of gazing at a beardless youth during *samā’* parties as a technique for inducing ecstasy. In such cases, the youth was not the singer (*qawwāl*) himself, but a cause of the Sufi’s ability to attend the *samā’* and to fall under its influence.⁴⁹ Even so,

Aujourd’hui, Paris, 1996, 165.

⁴⁵ Al-Sarrāj, *Luma’*, 303; al-Suhrawardī, *‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, 161.

⁴⁶ Al-Sarrāj, *Luma’*, 303.

⁴⁷ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Beirut, 1981, 2, 296. See also Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Bawāriq*, 126 (“*samā’* is allowed to companions of the Sufis if they are imitating the people of purity and perfection in their movements and pauses”). The same author also states that a person should certainly be permitted to imitate his companion’s movement (Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Bawāriq*, 152). However, the original statement might be interpreted differently, as permission to the Sufi whose ecstasy is motivated by love towards one of his fellows in the *samā’* circle. This is compatible with the author’s earlier statement on the incident in question: “If someone experiences ecstasy through his love towards one person or by looking at him [...]” (Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Bawāriq*).

⁴⁸ Al-Suhrawardī, *‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, 164. Cf. Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, Cairo, 1940, 172; ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Kharkūshī, *Tahdhīb al-Asrār*, B. Bārūd (ed.), Abū Zabī, 1999, 334; al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, 2, 268.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), for example, tells of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī whose companions found him in a close encounter with a beardless youth in a place filled with flowers, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ‘I. al-Ḥarastānī and M. al-Zaghālī (eds.), Beirut, 1994,

this ritual was most likely an exceptional practice among the Sufis in the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, indeed, points out that listening to either beardless youths (*amrad*) or marriageable women (*imra'a ghayr mahram*) in *samā'* gatherings is forbidden because it leads the listener into “seduction” (*fitna*).⁵¹ Nonetheless, whoever denies *samā'* altogether is, in Suhrawardī's words, like an impotent (*'innīn*) who is not susceptible to sexual desire or a blind person incapable of enjoying human beauty.⁵² To add this latter notion to the author's permission of *takalluf* in *samā'*, though only if it is performed “for the sake of truth”, one might suggest that Suhrawardī's detailed treatment of this problematic topic, like that of other Sufi theoreticians of the so-called moderate streams in Classical Sufism, most probably played an important role in opening the gates before “less restricted” practices in *samā'* and other popular Sufi rituals later on.

349. Later, Aḥmad Ghazālī, in his *Sawānih*, points to the vision (*taṣf*) of his Turkish slave. See Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Gedanken über die Liebe*, R. Gramlich (ed), Mainz, 1976, 11. In another incident in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Talbīs*, the author mentions that a group of Sufis used to bedeck beardless youths with ornaments and colored garments in order to contemplate God's beauty in His beautiful creatures (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs*, 350). Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī in his Persian *Kīmyāy-i Sa'ādat*, criticizes this practice as *liwāt* and *juṣq*, al-Ghazālī, *Kīmyāy-i Sa'ādat*, Tehran, 1967, 379-380. Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 916/1510), the commentator on Qushayrī's *Risāla*, describes the Sufi practice of gazing at beardless young men during *samā'*, putting candles in their hands, and letting each participant examine his own spiritual capability to be attracted to the youths, or alternatively, being so totally absorbed into the inner content of the music that he becomes “fortified” against such an attraction, Muṣṭafā al-'Arūsī, *Natā'ij al-Afkār al-Qudsiyya fī Bayān Ma'ānī Sharḥ al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, in the margins of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, *Sharḥ al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, Būlāq, 1290/1873, 2, 103. On the Persian concept of *shāhid bāzī* (lit. “witness game”), see e.g. Ritter, H., *Das Meer der Seele, Mensch, Welt und Gut in den Geschichten des Farīduddīn 'Aṭṭār*, Leiden, 1955, 434ff; Ritter, H., “Philologika VII”, *Der Islam*, 21 (1933), 89-91.

⁵⁰ Meier, F., “The Dervish Dance: an Attempt at an Overview”, in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, J. O'Kane (transl.) with editorial assistance of B. Radtke, Leiden, 1999, 35.

⁵¹ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 159. Here, the author's attitude appears more subtle than in other places of his long treatment of *samā'* in his *'Awārif*. Even though the author's main intention was to accentuate his basic principle according to which *samā'* must not be absolutely denied and should be considered pursuant to its different impacts and types of participants, listening to *amrad* or *imra'a mahram* is to be regarded as a specific level of religious prohibition, a level called *ḥarīm*. The latter concept indicates something which is not prohibited for its own sake but for its probable unlawful impact. See al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, (“[...] yuḥarram *samā'uhu li-khawf al-fitna lā li-mujarrad al-ṣawt, lākin yaj' aluhu samā' al-ṣawt ḥarīm al-fitna*”). On the word *ḥarīm*, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut, 1994, 12, 120.

⁵² Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 159.

III. The Gazing Effect

In his *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, R. Gramlich mentions the seminal role that gazing at the Sufi master plays in the inner development of the disciple.⁵³ The spiritual effect of observing the pious behavior of one's fellows and masters is an early pragmatic motif in the Sufi literature: "The Sufi's absorption in gazing at the image of his master is better than listening to music," al-Suhrawardī reiterates.⁵⁴ Al-Junayd declares: "Whoever looks at a friend of God, kisses him and confers honor upon him, God will confer His own honor upon him."⁵⁵ There is also a common saying: *man lam yara muflīhan lā yuflih* (lit. "One who looks not at a prosperous man will not himself become prosperous.")⁵⁶ The gazing effect marked later developments of the master-disciple relationship too. According to 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565), for example, one glance of the Sheikh at his disciple could be enough to elevate him from the lowest rank in the path to the highest state of divine knowledge! One such glance can turn the disciple into pure gold and suffice to exempt him from rigorous exercises!⁵⁷

The foregoing brief arguments regarding the implications of inducing *takalluf* on the Sufi doctrines in general, along with the literary evidence of the gazing act as a pragmatic feature in Sufi companionship (*ṣuḥba*), combine to draw attention to the crucial role of the *tashabbuh* concept in practical Sufi life after the twelfth century.

IV. The Status of *Khādīm*

A major task of the problematic *khādīm* seems to have been soliciting donations for *ribāṭ* residents.⁵⁸ Here one should ask who the *khādīm* favored in a particular chapter in his 'Awārif is, follow-

⁵³ Gramlich, R., *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, Wiesbaden, 1976, 2, 246-251.

⁵⁴ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 287.

⁵⁵ Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 150.

⁵⁶ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 111.

⁵⁷ 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyya fī Bayān Qawā'id al-Ṣūfiyya*, Beirut, 1999, 1, 99.

⁵⁸ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 108.

ing the author's treatment of *mashyakha* (the status of master), and what makes the *khādim* an important element in *tashabbuh* theory. Broadly speaking, I agree with Erik Ohlander's distinction between al-Suhrawardī's two terms: *khādim*, and *aṣḥāb al-khidma* ("companions of service"). Kāshānī (d. after 735/1352-53) seems to have made a similar distinction.⁵⁹ Ohlander supposes that *khādim* was an advanced disciple of a particular sheikh and so proposes the word "superintendent" to translate the Arabic original.⁶⁰ Indeed, al-Suhrawardī himself nowhere ascribes the spiritual guidance of the disciples to the *khādim*. By contrast with the "high-ranking" position of *khādim*, the sole duty of *aṣḥāb al-khidma* was to serve the residents of the *ribāṭ*.⁶¹ The "companion of service," given his inadequacy for Sufī discipleship, is the one addressed in the *tashabbuh* theory. It is this category that reminds us of the idea raised by Qushayrī according to which companionship (*ṣuḥba*) with those who are of a higher degree than yours is simply *khidma*.⁶² Most likely, the word *khidma* here simply indicates service in daily life and mundane affairs.

The position of *khādim* as an advanced disciple of a particular sheikh may partially clarify the potential confusion between Sheikh and *khādim*, against which al-Suhrawardī frequently warned disciplined Sufis.⁶³ Besides, it would be very important to make it clear that the *khādim* as a senior disciple, who by accompanying his Sheikh and personally serving him succeeds in becoming Sheikh by his own right,⁶⁴ was a well documented topic in early as well as

⁵⁹ See 'Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāya*, Jalāl al-Dīn Humāyī (ed), Tehran, 1381sh/2002, 119 (*khuddām*), 157 (*ahl-i khidmat*).

⁶⁰ Ohlander, *Sufism*, 203, 206.

⁶¹ Ohlander, *Sufism*, 239.

⁶² Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 145.

⁶³ See, for example, al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 108. Cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 45 ("He who serves the Sufis should be the most truehearted one among them, the most tolerant and he whose heart is the strongest, and whose faith and sincerity exceed those of anyone else [...] as service is a rank second to that of Sheik-hood").

⁶⁴ Junayd Shīrāzī, in his hagiographical *Shadd al-Izār* (written in 791/1389) indicates in many biographies that a particular Sufi was a servant of another renowned Sheikh and that he accompanied him. Statements like *khādim al-Sheikh wa-ṣāḥibuhu* occur frequently in the first lines of the biographic entry. See for example, Mu'īn al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim Junayd Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-Izār fī Ḥaṭṭ al-Awzār 'an Zuwwār al-Mazār*, M. Qazwīnī (ed.), Tehran, 1328sh/1949, 46-47.

later Sufi literature.⁶⁵ However, one should ask whether the position of *khadim* in al-Suhrawardī's period was particularly institutionalized in a way that might have been restricted basically to his position as a senior disciple of the sheikh. Most probably at that time, the term *khādīm* and its infinitive form *khidma* were not yet institutionalized, and were thus applied to a wide range of positions within the active life of the *riḩaḩ*. Notably, the word *khidma*, in one contemporary biography such as *al-Tashawwuf*, could designate various meanings such as a non-religious work or an uncertain profession.⁶⁶ In other instances, it designates the simple act of serving people,⁶⁷ or, in some cases, the pure will of worshipping God.⁶⁸

For al-Suhrawardī, the *khādīm* is essentially a person who is willing to "give rest to disciplined Sufis and let them devote themselves to the inner life with God by guaranteeing their living."⁶⁹ Moreover, as al-Suhrawardī indicates, there is also the imitator of the *khādīm* (*mutashabbih bi-l-khādīm*, *mutakhādīm*) who serves the Sufis to gain public praise, and ceases to do so when his acts do not serve that purpose.⁷⁰ However their flawed service does not keep the *mutakhādīm* from being welcome to accompany the Sufis and attain the same reward as the regular *khādīm*.⁷¹ Even though this

⁶⁵ On this position in the period following al-Suhrawardī, see for example, Ohlander, *Sufism*, 208, and the references in note 43. For earlier data, see the reference made by Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh in his *Durrat al-Asrār* to Abū l-'Azā'im Mādī b. Sulṩān, the *khādīm* and pupil of Abū l-ḩasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) (*tilmīdh sayyidīnā wa-khādīmuhu*), as an authority for his master's teachings (Muḩammad b. Abī l-Qāsim al-ḩimyarī known as Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Durrat al-Asrār wa-Tuḩfat al-Abrār*, Tunis, 1887, 3; Cf. the English translation in: *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shādhilī*, E. Douglas (transl.), New York, 1993, 12; Cf. Ṣafī al-Dīn b. Abī l-Manṩūr, *Risāla*, D. Grīl (ed.), Cairo, 1986, 57 (*kāna l-khādīm al-kabūr ra's al-khuddām*), 76-77 (the biography of Abū 'Abd al-Lāh al-Shāḩibī), 91; Yūsuf b. Yaḩyā al-Tādīlī Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashawwuf ilā Rijāl al-Taṩawwuf*, A. al-Tawfiq (ed.), Casablanca, 1997, 414 (the biography of Yaḩyā b. Maymūn).

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashawwuf*, 255, 257.

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashawwuf*, 161. Cf. 'Abd al-Lāh b. Muḩammad al-Mālikī, *Riyād al-Nufūs*, B. al-Bakkūsh (ed.), Beirut, 1983, 2, 266, 1, 480.

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Tashawwuf*, 183l. Cf. Al-Mālikī, *Riyād*, 2, 269.

⁶⁹ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awāriḩ al-Ma'āriḩ*, 118. On this function of the *khādīm* in the fourth/tenth century see Muḩammad b. Monavvar, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness or The Spiritual Stations of Sheikh Abu Sa'īd [Asrār al-Towḩīd fī Maqāmāt al-Ṣeyk Abi Sa'īd]*, J. O'Kane (transl.), California and New York, 1992, 616, n.º 256.

⁷⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awāriḩ al-Ma'āriḩ*, 109.

⁷¹ This attitude could be compared with a statement of the author in another treatise: "Do not be deceived by those accompanying pious men and ascetics, who serve them without truly following of their morals. If the act of serving the pious could produce real

attitude opens the door for questionable affiliates to be freely involved in the activities of the Sufi centers, one of its prominent advantages lies in its openness, as well as its usefulness for poor and rich alike. It allowed the poor to serve disciplined Sufis in their household, in return for which they enjoyed the amenities of the Sufi centers. For the rich, social reputation and potential economic interests seemed to be the major rewards expected for financial service to the Sufis.⁷² Being aware of the problematic outcomes of such openness, al-Suhrawardī mentions the phenomenon of young men who used to adopt Sufi dress and enjoy the endowments of the *ribāṭs*. He believes that in order to solve this problem, Sufi masters should encourage young men to perform *khidma* for the disciplined Sufi residents of the *ribāṭ* in return for their enjoyment of *sharṭ al-waqf*.⁷³ Therefore *khidma*, in al-Suhrawardī's system of thought, plays a fundamental role in "purifying" and preparing the ground for the *mutashabbihūn* to act in the framework of the *ribāṭ*'s community in the most legitimate way.

A key function related to *mutashabbih*, and in many cases to *khādīm* as well, in the text of 'Awārīf is that such individuals appear to have acted as a support system that provided disciplined Sufis with the financial means for their daily life. Chronicles that cover this period furnish us with numerous indications of individuals who were involved in *khidma*, and seemed to have provided the financial support of the *ribāṭ* community or of individual Sufi figures. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sim'ānī (d. 561/1166), for example, in the biography of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Turjumānī indicates that this person "served the

fruits, the wives of Nūḥ and Lūṭ would have benefited from serving their husbands" (al-Suhrawardī, *Ghīrar al-Khalq wa-istidrājuhūm*, MS. Jagiellońska, 3168, 92b). See also Ghazālī's critique of those who spend money on the Sufis as a means towards social or political reputation. He mentions that in his time, many rich men used to gather groups of so-called "Sufis" and supported them so they could gain many followers, while others received money from despotic rulers and spent it on the Sufis in order to profit from the proceeds of their centers, al-Ghazālī, M., *al-Kashf wa-l-Tabayīn fī Ghīrar al-Khalq Ajma'in*, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il*, part 5, 183. The last statement implies that some financial sponsors profited from the proceeds of the endowments (*waqf*) they granted to the Sufis, benefiting from their support of the pious.

⁷² See for example al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārīf al-Ma'ārīf, 110. Accordingly, *khādīm* or, more precisely, *mustakhdām* could be a rich man whom disciplined Sufis came to adulate. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 3, 503.

⁷³ Al-Suhrawardī, 'Awārīf al-Ma'ārīf, 122: "lā yazāl mashāyikh al-ṣūfiyya yandubūn al-shabāb ilā l-khidma ḥiṣṣan lahum 'an al-baṭāla".

Sufis for sixty years and expended all his property from his father's heritage on them.”⁷⁴ According to one indication mentioned along with other similar ones by al-Dhahabī (d. 747/1346) in his *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, a person called Munīr b. Muḥammad (d. 548/1153) “used to serve the Sufis and to gather money and expend it on them” (*kāna yakhdimuhum wa-yuḥaṣṣil al-amwāl wa-yunfiq 'alayhim*).⁷⁵

According to Chapter 15 in *'Awārif* (“on the features and affairs of the people of *ribāṭ*”), the *khādim* plays another role within the walls of *ribāṭ*. The author orders the disciplined Sufis to take the *shaykh* or the *khādim* as a judge in their disputes with their fellows. Al-Suhrawardī directs the “acting judge” to investigate the motives for each dispute, and resolve it through *niqār*. This involves questioning both parties about their behavior in a sharp, accusatory tone.⁷⁶ On this point, the Sufi ideal of preserving community harmony, the *dā'irat al-jam'iyya*, to use al-Suhrawardī's expression,⁷⁷ existed side by side with another ideal according to which “the Sufis still prosper inasmuch as they dispute, but if they become reconciled they will be totally wiped out.”⁷⁸

There were two facets to the collective life of the Sufis in the *ribāṭ*, which was accordingly divided into two spatial areas. The first area was devoted to the collective rituals of the resident Sufis ac-

⁷⁴ 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sim'ānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, M. 'Atā (ed.), Beirut, 1998, 1, 479: “*khadamahum sittīn sana [...] wa-anfaq jamī mā waritha min abīhi 'alayhim*”.

⁷⁵ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, 'U. Tadmurī et alī, (ed.), Beirut, 1989-2004, 37, 339. Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, 32, 203-204 (“[...] he practiced various types of *khidma* [...] and used to financially support the Sufis with most of the money he had been granted with”). Cf. 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila li-Wafayāt al-Naqala*, B. Ma'rūf (ed.), Beirut, 1988, 3, 479; Ibn Abī l-Manṣūr, *Risāla*, 64, 84.

⁷⁶ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 120. On the word *niqār* see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 5, 229-230.

⁷⁷ Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 120.

⁷⁸ *Lā yazāl al-ṣūfiyya bi-khay mā tanāqarū fa-idhā iṣṭalahū halakū* is a statement attributed to Ruwaym (d. 303/915) in: al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi'*, 41; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 171; al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 36. The author of *Ādāb al-Mulūk* (an early Sufi manual from the fourth/tenth century by an anonymous author) formulated the second part of this statement quite differently: “[...] *fa-in tarakū al-munāqara tarakū al-mudhākara*”, Anonymous author, *Ādāb al-Mulūk*, B. Radtke (ed.), Beirut, 1991, 54. The act of observing one's fellow men, and scolding those whose behavior seemed not to agree with the known codes, or in many cases, with the personal views of the critic himself, was common among the Sufis in their associations. See for example the chapter Kharkūshī devoted in the late tenth century to the Sufi associations: Kharkūshī, *Tahdhīb al-Asrār*, e.g. 533, 534.

accompanied by another types of participants such as the non-disciplined companions or stranger-guests, the *bayt al-jamā'a* (lit. house of the community). The other area, by contrast, was for the most part assigned for individual training and retreat (*khalwa*), and called a *zāwiya*,⁷⁹ which was a domain restricted to old men and masters, because “their souls require much rest and control of movement and inactivity.” For young disciples living together with their peers in the *bayt al-jamā'a*, this created a situation in which their behavior was monitored, and provided a satisfactory means for keeping their soul under constant and effective control. When the communal sphere of the *ribāṭ* becomes harmful to the young disciple, when worldly discussions replace spiritual practices, masters should impose a period of reclusion upon the disciple by granting him his own *zāwiya*.⁸⁰ At this point, al-Suhrawardī mentions the appropriate sphere of *aṣḥāb al-khidma* within *ribāṭ*. According to the definition used here, a member of this group is one who “entered the *ribāṭ* as a beginner, did not grasp the ‘taste’ of pious deeds,⁸¹ and who is not able to observe his inner states.” Meanwhile, serving the resident Sufis is not actually harmless for this type of affiliate, and thus Sufi manuals emphasize the need to be one of the larger Sufi community in the sense of being in basic sympathy and agreement to them, in order to be accepted as *aṣḥāb al-khidma*. For al-Suhrawardī, disciplined Sufis are but human beings, and manifestations of this humanity through unacceptable behavior might harm one not familiar with Sufi doctrines as it can also bring about misunderstandings and unnecessary criticism. It is not clear in *ʿAwārif* whether *aṣḥāb al-khidma*, as a specific type of the general group of imitators, took up residence in the *ribāṭ* or not. However, one might assume at least on the conceptual level, that the broad category title *khidma* would have included shades and types of affiliation and function in Sufi collective life, from a transitory affiliation motivated by expenditure on the Sufis,⁸² through a more robust one in which the same title is used for those who occa-

⁷⁹ Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, 118.

⁸⁰ Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*.

⁸¹ Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*. Here, the sentence appears as *wa-lam yadhuq taʿma al-maʿlam*. Gramlich translates it as: “den Geschmack frommen Tuns noch nicht gekostet”, al-Suhrawardī, ʿUmar, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des ʿUmar as-Suhrawardī* (*ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*), R. Gramlich (ed.), Wiesbaden, 1978, 111.

⁸² Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, 119.

sionally visit the resident Sufis, participate in one or more of their rituals (using the technique of *takalluf*), and on to actual residence of the *aṣḥāb al-khidma* in the *ribāṭ*. The third is the most active type in terms of spiritual development and practical training. By constant observation of the Sufis, listening to their conversations, and imitating their behavior, companionship (*ṣuḥba*) becomes a pragmatic instrument for inner progress up to the ultimate rank of *mashyakha*. In all versions, the basic principle of sympathy towards the Sufis had to be preserved. It was probably a function of the Sheikh to examine the true intentions of each new affiliate, whatever the young man's own version of his affiliation might be.

V. Major Implications of the *Tashabbuh* Theory

The following are suggested as the major implications of *tashabbuh* in the theoretical system drawn up by both Suhrawardī:

A. Sufis during the period in question had become aware of the uniqueness of their collective way of life. Sufism therefore overcame the early stage of severe conflicts with both religious and political authorities and moved on towards a new era of widespread penetration among the masses. Gradually, the Sufi way of life and thinking became a basic feature in the religious life of Mediterranean Muslim societies. Sufi awareness of their unique role in their communities, and their inclination to disseminate Sufi doctrines might also have been motivated by the growing influence of their masters, who by degrees had consolidated their control over their disciples, closely monitoring their progress to the point of interfering in the minutiae of their daily life. In the last part of Abū al-Najīb's chapter on Sufi dispensations, he attributes to the Prophet this saying: *man kaththara sawād qawm fa-huwa minhum* ("whoever increases the number of a group of people is considered a member of it.")⁸³ This in essence gives the impression that a serious pragmatic purpose of expanding the Sufi framework among a wider group of affiliates lies at the basis of the author's theory of *tashabbuh* derived from his numerous dispensations. Remarkably, moreover, initiating a Sufi community in that period came to be conditioned no longer on strict seclusion and

⁸³ Al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, 98.

renunciation of social relations and worldly affairs. In other words, the “price” of initiating the Sufi path became cheaper than ever and thus came to interest “purchasers.” It may also be possible to attribute part of this theoretical and practical change to the *malāmatī* principle of preserving a full social life and avoiding public displays of piety, so as to conceal true inner states.⁸⁴

B. The *tashabbuh* concept demonstrates the dogmatic system of twelfth century Sufism. It contributed to creating a popular system open to one and all, even to one with nothing else except his sympathy for Sufi ideals. Thanks to this system, the institutionalized Sufi centers were supported by potential waves of adherents from all social sectors and educational levels.

C. Through the new institutionalized Sufi system the theory of *tashabbuh* proposed a potential alternative to the hierarchical structure of Abbasid society. Mobility, flexibility, and an absolute belief in the ability of every person to rise from the rank of *mutashabbih* to the exalted rank of *mashyakha* through intensive self-development, all suggest that such a dynamic system led by increasingly influential Sufi masters, could offer the ordinary man a new formula of solidarity and collaboration within a unique form of collective life.

VI. Conclusion

A. Through the forty dispensations (*rukhaṣ*) listed in the last chapter of Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī’s *Ādāb al-Murīdīn*, the concept of *tashabbuh* was expressed for the first time in a comprehensive and positive manner. Moreover, through the interest in *rukhaṣ* of the author’s nephew, Abū Ḥafṣ, there developed a full-scale presentation of the imitators (*mutashabbihūn*) as a class within a dynamic and a creative system of self-improvement and independent progress. It was exclusively Abū Ḥafṣ’s role in defining the imitator and locating his place within the Sufi community, while also proposing a system for his inner development that opened the doors to the high rank of *mashyakha*.

⁸⁴ That is why *malāmatī* Sufis refused to have any distinct rituals, and adopted the idea of “coming into the markets” (*dukhūl al-aswāq*) to earn their own living. See for example Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 48-51.

B. The term *mutashabbih*, in the teachings of Abū Ḥafṣ, seems to be fluid, while *khādim*, besides indicating a senior disciple, denotes a very specific type of imitator. Reading the relevant chapters of *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* leaves the impression that the *khādim* concept was confused with that of Sheikh when opportunists took advantage of their expenditures on a group of *faqīrs* to gain that high title, and probably also due to the similarity of some administrative tasks ascribed to both masters and their assistants. The author warns the Sufis against considering such men as Sheikhs when they are actually *khādims*, a remark indicating how essential were financial matters within the contemporary institutionalized life of the Sufi centers. If this was indeed the case, then the high rank of *mashyakha*, examined in detail by Abū Ḥafṣ himself, seems in fact to have been shared by many rich opportunists better described as *khādims*.⁸⁵ While such a type of affiliation does not relate to Sufi life and practices inside the *ribāṭ*, a *khādim* might be a rich man who just because he is unlike the other affiliates of the *ribāṭ*, can be charged with some of the administrative affairs of the Sufis. On the other hand, the *aṣḥāb al-khidma* are ordinary *faqīrs* for whom serving the Sufis, in the literal sense of the word, was the only way to qualify for true discipleship.

C. This paper proposes to draw attention to the influential role of the *tashabbuh* concept on Mediterranean Sufism from Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī's time onward. Through this concept Sufism was transformed into a wide-ranging system that attained mass popularity. Clarifying the important role of *khādim*, as a senior disciple of the Sheikh, as a financial supporter or as a mere servant, and granting him the Sufi "blessings" by openly recognizing his involvement in collective Sufi life, contributed, along with other dynamics, to institutionalizing the Sufi system in later decades.

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⁸⁵ Al-Suhrawardī warns the Sufis of his time against adherents who frequently "feed" them, for they are servants, not masters. (Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 108). The master who spent money on his companions was not unknown in early Sufi literature (see for example al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 9, line 8; al-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 194, lines 11-13 and 197, lines 1-2).