RĀBIʿAH AL-ʿADAWĪYAH
AS MYSTIC, MUSLIM AND WOMAN

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a study of the Muslim woman saint and mystic, Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah, as envisioned by her main biographer, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār. Part I is a brief review of previous works and scholarship in order to situate Rābiʿah within an historical context and to judge the consistency of earlier interpretations with the actual source material concerning Rābiʿah, ʿAṭṭār's account in particular. Part II is an exploration of ʿAṭṭār's image of Rābiʿah, based on his Tadhkirat al-awliyā' and complemented by related material from his poetical works. This discussion is presented according to three themes, ʿAṭṭār's understanding of Rābiʿah as a mystic, a Muslim and a woman: the three themes from which ʿAṭṭār draws to express some aspect of Rābiʿah's spiritual personality, or to manifest, in outward form, the paradox of her inner mystical secret.

RÉSUMÉ

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TITRE DE LA THÈSE : RĀBIʿAH AL-ʿADAWĪYAH
LA MYSTIQUE,
LA MUSULMANE ET LA FEMME

DÉPARTMENT : INSTITUT DES ÉTUDES
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Cette thèse se veut une étude de la sainte musulmane et mystique Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah, telle que vue par son biographe principal, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār. La première partie passe en revue les ouvrages et études antérieurs afin de situer Rābiʿah dans un contexte historique et de juger la cohérence des interprétations antérieures par rapport aux sources primaires concernant Rābiʿah, notamment le récit d'ʿAṭṭār. La deuxième partie explore l'image de Rābiʿah selon ʿAṭṭār, basée sur son Tadhkirat al-awliyā' et complétée par certains extraits des ses oeuvres poétiques. Cet essai se présente selon trois thèmes, puisque ʿAṭṭār comprend la personne de Rābiʿah en tant que mystique, en tant que musulmane et en tant que femme. Il a d'ailleurs puisé dans chacune de ces dimensions de sa personnalité pour exprimer un aspect de son caractère spirituel ou pour manifester, par une forme extérieure, le paradoxe de son secret mystique et intérieur.

This work is dedicated to the spirit of Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah, and those like her, who have had the courage to be Nothing for the sake of God.

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This thesis has taken me over four years to complete and has been done under challenging circumstances, circumstances that include the births of three of my children, as well as a host of other responsibilities, pressures and distractions. That this work has reached completion, despite these things, is a credit to those around me who have given their help and support.

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I wish to thank Dr. Muhammad Estelami for giving me a copy of Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (his own edition) and the Persian translation of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī's Shahīdat al-ʿishq al-ilāhī, Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah. I am grateful to Miss Salwa Ferahian, Mr. Stephen Millier, the rest of the

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

For my basic primary source, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' by Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, I have chosen the text edited by Dr. Muhammad Estelami.[1] This edition is based on the manuscript dated 692 H.Q./1292-3 C.E., found in the Hüdayi Effendi library in Üsküdar Turkey and on microfilm in the University of Tehran. The manuscript used in this edition is more reliable and considerably older than those used by R.A. Nicholson in his edition.[2]

In the preparation of this study I came across a few articles in which the authenticity of Tadhkirat al-awliyā' is questioned and the suggestion is made that the entire text--and not simply the appendix of 25 biographies--might not have been written by ʿAṭṭār.[3] Julian Baldick, in his article "The Legend of Rābiʿa of Baṣra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts", refers to two works which he claims indicate doubt concerning ʿAṭṭār's authorship of Tadhkirat al-awliyā'.[4] The first reference is to C.A. Storey, Persian Literature, in which ʿAṭṭār is listed as the author of Tadhkirat al-awliyā', but with his name written in inverted comas. However, in this reference it is not explained why certain names are placed in inverted comas, and the entry description of Tadhkirat al-awliyā' does not mention that ʿAṭṭār's authorship is questioned.[5] Therefore it is possible that the inverted

comas indicate that a pen-name is being used. "ʿAṭṭār" means druggist and refers to ʿAṭṭār's profession.

Baldick's second reference is to an article by Mohammad Habib, "Chisti Mystics Records of the Sultanate Period".[6] In this article (published in 1950) the author describes Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ as a "fabricated work...a fake, a forgery, a series of old wives' tales, ill assorted and inconsistent, which some anonymous writer has tagged together and passed off as the work of the great Farid-ud-din ʿAttar...."[7] For supporting evidence, Habib notes that in Nafaḥāt al-uns Jāmī refers to Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ as attributed to ʿAṭṭār,[8] and "[n]ot less important is the fact that Maulana Jami does not utilise the Tazkirat-ul-Auliya for the compilation of his Nafahat-ul-Uns."[9] Habib also notes that the work was not mentioned by Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ in his discussion of early mystical works,[10] nor was it mentioned by Bārnī (Tārīkh-i fīrūzshāhī) in his list of books on Muslim mysticism available at the Delhi market.[11] He claims that there is no reference to Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ in Delhi until the appearance of the Afḍal al-fawāʾid. The latter work, according to Habib, is also spurious, appearing much after the time of its supposed author Amīr Khusraw (d. 725 A.H./ 1325 C.E.).[12] Habib concludes that with all these considerations in mind, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ was not written by ʿAṭṭār and did not appear until well after the time of ʿAṭṭār's death (d. circa 618 A.H./1221 C.E.).

There are several problems with Habib's arguments. In terms of the style and literary construction of Tadhkirat al-awliyā', reknown authorities on ʿAṭṭār and the Persian language, such as Dr. B. Foruzanfar and R.A. Nicholson, consider Tadhkirat al-awliyā' an excellent example of Persian literary prose.[13] In terms of its content, Dr. B. Foruzanfar has observed that ʿAṭṭār was very much drawn to the lives of the saints and his other works are full of references to mystical figures. Thus it is quite natural to expect ʿAṭṭār to produce such a work as Tadhkirat al-awliyā'.[14] A.J. Arberry, in his abridged translation of Tadhkirat al-awliyā', has listed a considerable amount of material from this text which also appears in other works ascribed to ʿAṭṭār, works which are considered authentic.[15] Concerning Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah in particular, Arberry has listed four anecdotes from Tadhkirat al-awliyā' also appearing in either ʿAṭṭār's Muṣībat nāmah or his Ilāhī nāmah.[16] Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, in Sufi Women, mentions these previous references as well as two additional anecdotes of Rābiʿah from Tadhkirat al-awliyā' which appear in poeticized versions in ʿAṭṭār's Mantiq al-ṭayr.[17] Significantly, there is no contradiction in the overall image of Rābiʿah presented in Tadhkirat al-awliyā' and the particular information contained in the six references mentioned above.[18]

Habib's statement concerning Jāmī is also problematic. In Nafaḥāt al-uns, Jāmī writes that "In the

introduction to Tadhkirat al-awliyā' which is ascribed to him [ʿAṭṭār]...." However the term Jāmī uses,"bivay mansūb ast" meaning "is ascribed to", does not necessarily imply doubt and could have a positive connotation, indicating that this attribution is generally accepted. Furthermore, Jāmī continues the sentence, "In the introduction to Tadhkirat al-awliyā' which is ascribed to him, he [ʿAṭṭār] says..." rather than "the author says" or "it is said".[19] Although Jāmī's statement leaves room for ʿAṭṭār's authorship to be questioned, it also implies that Jāmī accepts the general attribution of Tadhkirat al-awliyā' to ʿAṭṭār. As for Habib's statement that Jāmī did not use Tadhkirat al-awliyā' in the compilation of Nafaḥāt al-uns, it may be that Jāmī does not refer specifically to the former work; however at Jāmī's time it was not seen as necessary to specify sources used. The references found in works of this period are often unsystematic and incomplete; Jāmī's works are no exception to this general tendency in that he does not always identify the authors of the sources he has used.[20] Additionally Cl. Huart, in his article on Jāmī in The Encyclopaedia of Islam, specifies that Jāmī did make use of Tadhkirat al-awliyā' in his composition of Nafaḥāt al-uns.[21]

In reference to Habib's argument that Tadhkirat al-awliyā' did not exist at the time of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā', the latter died in 1325 C.E. and the two

earliest known texts of the Tadhkirat al-awliyā' are dated 1270 C.E. These dates would indicate that although Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā' may not have seen a copy of the text, the work did not appear at a later date as Habib claims.[22]

All in all, Habib's arguments are not able to support his contention that Tadhkirat al-awliyā' is a fabricated work. B. Reinert, in a statement indicative of the position of modern scholarship, writes that the "attribution [of Tadhkirat al-awliyā'] to ʿAṭṭār is scarcely open to question."[23]

Other prefacing points to be mentioned here include the method of transliteration used in this study, which is that of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, excepting previously transliterated names of authors, titles or terms within titles, or terms within direct quotations. In latter cases I have reproduced the transliterated word or words as given by the original authors. Words commonly used in English, such as Sufi, Quran, Basra, and so on, I have written without diacriticals. Quranic quotations and translations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation, The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān, Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Masri, third edition, 1938. Bibliographical citations in the chapter notes are given in full in their first occurrence, but appear in abbreviated form in subsequent citations.

As for basic terms that arise, such as "mystic", "mystical" and "mysticism", I take these terms to refer to the practical disciplines, experiences and/or knowledge associated with the realm of spiritual perception that exists beyond the realms of sense, emotion, imagination and intellect.[24] "Islamic mysticism" is thus that type of mysticism which is rooted within an Islamic context. "Sufism" has been used in a number of ways. According to its most general usage, it is loosely interchangeable with Islamic mysticism. Some scholars, however, have taken Sufism to refer only to the specific system of Islamic spirituality--usually in a Sunnī context--which includes initiation with a shaykh whose spiritual authority is traced through a recognized chain of spiritual masters back to the Prophet Muḥammad through ʿAlī or Abū Bakr, which employs specific spiritual practices such as dhikr, and which is organized into orders or brotherhoods. The chain of spiritual authority and/or the shaykh and disciple relationship may include what is known as Uwaysī relationship, in which case the shaykh and disciple may not have met within the bounds of time and space.[25] Rābiʿah was not known to have taken initiation with any shaykh, nor to have belonged to any Sufi order. Thus even allowing for Uwaysī relationship, we cannot refer to her as a Sufi if we follow the latter definition of Sufism. In this study, however, I take "Sufism" and "Sufi" in a more general sense, as the system of spirituality and the

specific persons of spiritual and mystical orientation and attainment within an Islamic (predominantly Sunnī) context; this definition excludes other distinct forms of Islamic spiritualiy and mysticism such as Ismaᶜilism, Shiᶜī ᶜirfān, or specific esoteric movements such as Shaykhism.[26] Thus we can refer to Rābiᶜah as both a mystic and a Sufi. Finally, I take the term "orthodox Islam" to refer to the basic principles and perspectives outlined in the primary Islamic sources: the Quran, the hadith and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

NOTES TO PREFACE

1. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. Muhammad Estelami, editor. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5.

2. Ibid., M. Estelami, in his introduction, pp. 41-2. See also H. Ritter, "Philologika XIV", in Oriens 11. 1958, pp. 63 ff., 64.

3. Nicholson accepts the possible authenticity of an appendix of 20-5 additional biographies that is found in some manuscripts of ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. (See ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkiratu 'l-Awliya. Reynold A. Nicholson, editor. London: Luzac & Co. 1905. Part II. pp. 3-4.) However Reinert concludes that the additional 25 biographies have been written by another author and later appended to Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. (See B. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār," in Encyclopaedia Iranica. Ehsan Yarshater, editor. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1989. Volume III, p. 23.) Estelami, in his introduction to Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, also concludes that the appendix has not been written by ʿAṭṭār.(p. xxv)

4. Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiʾa of Baṣra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts", in Religion. New York: Academic Press. Volume Twenty. July 1990, p. 234 and note 4 on p. 244.

5. C.A. Storey, Persian Literature. London: Luzac and Co. 1972. Vol. I. Part 2, pp. 930-3. Baldick has referred to C.A. Storey, Persian Literature. London: Luzac and Co. Vol. I. Part 2. 1953, pp. 1379 and 1399.

6. Mohammad Habib, "Chisti Mystics Records of the Sultanate Period", in Medieval India Quarterly. Bombay: Q Press. Vol. 1. October 1950. No. 2.

7. Ibid., p. 37.

8. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad-i Jāmī, in Nafaḥāt al-uns min haḍarāt al-quds, p. 540 in the edition (Nawal Kishore) used by Habib, and on p. 599 in the copy I am using, edited by Mahdī-i Tawḥīdīpūr. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Saʿdī. Second edition, 1366 H.Sh.

9. Mohammad Habib, "Chisti Mystics Records of the Sultanate Period", pp. 37-8.

10. Ibid., p. 38.

11. Ibid.

12. Mohammad Habib, "Chisti Mystics Records of the Sultanate Period", p. 38.

13. B. Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl va naqd va taḥlīl-i āṣār-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAṭṭār-i Nīshābūrī. Tehran. 1339-40 Sh./1960-1 C.E. Reprint, Tehran. 1353 Sh./1975 C.E., p. 51. See also Nicholson's comments in the Preface to his edition of ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkiratu 'l-Awliya, Part I, p. 6.

14. B. Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 51.

15. A.J. Arberry (translator), Muslim Saints and Mystics, Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya' by Farid al-Din Attar. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Reprint, 1983. See the section entitled "Notes on Anecdotes" which precedes each biography.

16. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

17. Javad Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women. Leonard Lewisohn, translator. New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications. Revised Second Edition. 1990, pp.28-9, 34 ff1.

18. Ibid., pp. 24-51.

19. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad-i Jāmī, in Nafaḥāt al-uns (Mahdī-i Tawḥīdīpūr, editor), p. 599.

20. Fritz Meier, "Zur Biographie Aḥmad-i Ǧām's und zur Quellenkunde von Ǧāmī's Nafaḥātu'l-uns", in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Leipzig: Kommissionsverlag F.A. Brockhaus. 1943, p. 58.

21. Cl. Huart, "Djāmī", in The Encyclopaedia of Islam. B. Lewis, editor. London: Luzac and Co. New Edition. 1965. Volume II, p. 422.

22. There are fifteen manuscripts dated earlier than 725 A.H./1325 C.E. See Ritter, "Philologika XIV", in Oriens 11. 1958, pp. 62-76.

23. B. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, p. 22.

24. For a discussion of the realm beyond the intellect, see ʿAyn al-Quḍāh (Al-Miyānajī al-Hamadhānī), Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq. ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān, editor. Tehran: Tehran University Press. 1962.

25. Uways ibn Amīr (Qaranī) of Kufa is considered a companion of the Prophet even though the two men never met each other. According to ʿUmar, the Prophet referred to Uways as the best of the Companions who, "if he would

swear, relying upon Allah, for anything, Allah would fulfill his oath." (Muslim, from Riyadh-us-Saleheen, compiled by Imam Abu Zakariya an-Nawawi. S.M. Madni Abbasi, translator. New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan. Reprinted, 1987. Vol. 1, pp. 223-6.) The connection between the Prophet and Uways has been used as the prototype example of an inner spiritual relationship between a guide and disciple who have not met within the normal bounds of time and space.

26. ʿIrfān is translated as mystical or gnostic knowlege; however it also refers to a distinct form of mystical philosophy within Shiʿī Islam. (See Henry Corbin, En Islam iranien. Paris: Éditions Gallimard. 1971. Volumes I-IV.) Shaykhism is a Shiʿī sect, originally esoteric in nature, based on the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad Aḥsāʾī (d. 1826 C.E.) which arose in early nineteenth century Iran. The doctrines of Shaykhism give particular emphasis to the importance of the 14 pure ones (the Prophet, the 12 Imams and Fāṭimah) as necessary spiritual intermediaries between the realm of God and human beings.

INTRODUCTION

The image of Rābiᶜah al-ᶜAdawīyah is a distinct and imposing presence for those studying the development of Sufism and those interested in the history and role of women in Islam. Unfortunately no thorough or systematic treatise has been written by or about Rābiᶜah to explain her overall teachings and spiritual perspective. What original material we do have is mainly collected fragments: poems, supplications, anecdotes, and sayings attributed to Rābiᶜah. Some of these attributions are questionable, and none of them completely verifiable. The most complete account of Rābiᶜah among the early works is ᶜAṭṭār's biography in Tadhkirat al-awliyāᵓ.[1] However ᶜAṭṭār has drawn from earlier sources and shaped rather than merely transmitted this material. Thus his presentation is intertwined with his own perspective on the mystical life, which invariably contributes to his interpretation of Rābiᶜah. Therefore we cannot talk of a strictly "historical" Rābiᶜah. Nor--if leaving the question of historicity aside--is it possible to discuss Rābiᶜah as she appears in the primary sources without first taking into account the factor of the narrator's interpretation present in the most extensive primary source: ᶜAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyāᵓ. Hence it follows that my investigation of Rābiᶜah is centered on an attempt

to understand and define ʿAṭṭār's image of this important saint, based primarily on his work Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ and complemented by passages from his poetical works. My analysis of ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah is broken into three parts corresponding to the three primary aspects of Rābiʿah's person: her mystical dimension, her relation to orthodox Islam, and the significance of her gender, in other words Rābiʿah as mystic, Muslim and woman.

Prior to the exploration of ʿAṭṭār's image of this saint, I will offer a brief review and critique of the previous studies concerning Rābiʿah. Here I will attempt to discern the consistency of earlier interpretations with the image of Rābiʿah presented by ʿAṭṭār (and other ancient authors). Following is a discussion of Rābiʿah's milieu (2nd century A.H. Basra), particularly the ascetical and mystical influences that existed just preceding and during her time, situating Rābiʿah within her historical context.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. For example, see Margaret Smith, Rābiᶜa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1928. Reissued, 1984), p. xvii, "By far the most extensive and complete biography of Rābiᶜa extant is that of the Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn ᶜAṭṭār...."

PART I: IMAGES OF RĀBIʿAH IN SCHOLARSHIP

CHAPTER I

RĀBIʿAH IN PREVIOUS STUDIES

Only two monographs have been done on Rābiʿah.[1] The first and by far the most substantial work is Margaret Smith's Rābiʿa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam.[2] Smith has drawn from an extensive amount of primary source material and attempted to define Rābiʿah within the context of the states and stages of the Sufi path. However Smith has a clear a priori perspective behind her analysis of Rābiʿah; specifically that Sufism is foreign to Islam and is the direct result of Christian influences.[3] Smith outlines her conception of "the Sufi doctrine", greatly emphasizing its similarity to Christian spirituality and its apparent contradiction to the teachings of orthodox Islam.[4] What emerges from this analysis is the image of Rābiʿah as an ecstatic mystic overflowing with love for the Divine Beloved, who has--except in her "weaker moments"--overcome all fear of God, reaching to union with Him.[5] According to Smith, temporary mystical union is possible in this life and foreshadows complete and unending union after death; she regards this experience as synonymous with the Christian concept of deification of the soul. From this perspective Smith interprets Rābiʿah's mystical journey as begining with exclusive and "disinterested" love (love that seeks

no reward except the Beloved Himself), leading her to vision of the Divine and union with Him that is "attained, not by annihilation, but by absorption and transmutation, so that the soul transmutted into the Divine Image...becomes itself part of God, in Him abides and lives for ever."[6]

The premise of Smith's interpretation is the Christian origin of Sufism, so it is not surprising that Rābiᶜah is shown to approach the Christian concept of sainthood.[7] Consequently Smith regards particular traits, such as Rābiᶜah's life-long practice of asceticism and celibacy, her emphasis on divine love and her direct experience (as opposed to what Smith sees as the "formalism and traditionalism of orthodox Islam")[8] as evidence of Rābiᶜah's affinity to Christianity, and likewise of her distance from orthodox Islam. Smith gives particular emphasis to Rābiᶜah's choice of celibacy, maintaining that a celibate life-style was "indeed almost a necessity, for the woman Sufi, if she was to pursue her quest without hindrance" and that "the adoption of the celibate life gave [women] an independence and freedom in the exercise of the religious life which was quite alien to the ideal of orthodox Islam."[9]

The main critical response to this and other theories of the Christian origin of Sufism has come from Louis Massignon. Massignon constructs a quite different interpretation of Islamic mystical spirituality, tracing

its root back to the Quran which he, unlike Smith, accepts as an authentic revealed scripture.[10] He discusses the common Christian-Muslim milieu and interaction, particularly between Christian monks and Muslim ascetics in the first two Islamic centuries.[11] However he views the many Christian-Muslim exchanges not as evidence of the incorporation of Christian ideas into Muslim spirituality but as an indication of the reciprocal curiosity that existed especially among the spiritual elites.[12] Likewise Massignon discusses the phenomena of commmon and borrowed terminology, similar concepts and similar spiritual characteristics of individual saints,[13] yet does not assume that the existence of similarities necessarily indicates a causal relationship. Massignon's thesis concerning the origin of Sufism rests on his study of terminology in the development of the "lexique technique" of Muslim mystics. He insists that the linguistic influence of Christianity (or of any other religious or cultual entity) cannot be assumed unless one has proven a clear historical and philosophical connection which has given rise to a hybridization of concepts.[14] Although Massignon speaks of a common life shared between Arab Muslims and Christians during the first two Islamic centuries, he does not find evidence to establish such a hybridization of concepts in the development of Islamic mysticism.[15] Instead Massignon argues that Sufi practices and concepts have originated from constant recitation,

meditation and implementation of Quranic terms and prescriptions. Thus in his view the Quran has preceded Islamic mysticism in origin and development and has given it its distinctive characteristics, seen particularly in the practice of dhikr.[16] Massignon also discerns the influence of the Quran in the allegorical themes and concepts employed by Sufis to express their mystical ideas and experiences.[17]

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. In addition to the two monographs there are a number of studies and articles in which reference is made to Rābiᶜah, such as G.C. Anawati and Louis Gardet, Mystique musulmane, aspects et tendances - expériences et techniques (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1961), Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiᶜa of Baṣra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts" (in Religion. New York: Academic Press. Volume Twenty. July 1990), and Emine Gürsoy-Naskali, "Women Mystics in Islam" (in Women in Islamic Societies, Bo Utas, editor. New York: Olive Branch Press. 1983, pp. 238-44). More popular works include First among Sufis by Widad El Sakkakini (London: Octogan Press. 1982) and Doorkeeper of the Heart, Versions of Rābiᶜa by Charles Upton (Putney, VT: Threshold Books. 1988).

2. Margaret Smith, Rābiᶜa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press. Reprint. 1984. The other monograph is Shahīdat al-ᶜishq al-ilāhī, Rābiᶜah al-ᶜAdawīyah by ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nihḍat al-Miṣriyah. N.d.) This latter work contains a very useful appendix listing of all the accounts of Rābiᶜah from the primary sources, with specific references to authors and texts. As for the analysis of Rābiᶜah, Badawī suggests theories and interpretations that are highly speculative, and draws conclusions that are not substantiated by the source material; thus his analysis adds no significant contribution to our understanding of Rābiᶜah.

3. See especially Smith's work Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East. Amsterdam: Philo Press. Reprinted 1973, pp. 124, 130, 141-2, 152, 244-57.

4. References made to Christian sources in the Part II discussion of "the Sufi doctrine" (Smith, Rābiᶜa, pp. 47-110) in order to highlight perceived similarities between Sufi and Christian thought include the following: pp. 49 ff. 3; 51-2 ff. 4; 56 ff. 3; 57 ff. 2,3; 58 ff. 2; 59 ff. 6; 60 ff. 3; 63 ff. 2,3,4; 65 ff. 3; 68 ff. 2,3; 74 ff. 2,4; 74-5 ff. 1,2; 76 ff. 4; 79-80 ff. 1; 81 ff.1; 82 ff. 4; 82-3 ff. 5; 85 ff. 1; 86-7 ff. 1; 88-9 ff. 1; 93 ff. 3; 95-6 ff. 2; 96 ff.1; 102 ff. 3; 104 ff. 2; 108; 108 ff. 2,3; 109 ff. 1,3; and 109-10 ff. 1.). This discussion includes only two references to hadith (that appear within direct quotations, pp. 100 ff.1, 101 ff.3)) and four references to the Quran, two of which are incidental (within quotations, pp. 54, 72 ff.1) and two of

which are presented as contrasting with Sufi and Christian concepts (p. 53). (See also pp. 77-8 (Part II) and 165-6 from Part III.)

5. Smith, Rābiᶜa, pp. 29, 40-1, 49, 69, 87.

6. Ibid., pp. 40, 87-8, 108-9.

7. Ibid., pp. 13, 49, 165.

8. Ibid., pp. 13, 49, 96-7, 165, 175, 203.

9. Ibid., pp. 170, 175.

10. Massignon's theory, in turn, has been challenged by scholars such as Tor Andrae who reassert the idea of Christianity's direct influence on Islamic spirituality. Andrae's position rests on several points: that the Quran (by implication) is not a direct revelation but itself can be seen as representing "a translation into Arabic language and Arabic imagination of that ascetic piety, that monastic religion, which flourished within the Syrian churches of the period...[a translation] carried out by a personality whose religious creativity one ought not to underestimate: Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah"(In the Garden of Myrtles. Birgitta Sharpe, translator. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1987, p. 8): that the interaction between Christian monks and Muslim ascetics in the first two centuries Hijra involved the incorporation of Christian images and ideas (pp. 8-32), and the adaptation of the outward characteristics of Christian monastic practices.(p. 29, c.f.Tor Andrae, "Zuhd und Mönchtum") For supporting evidence Andrae suggests that some of the exchanges between Christian monks and Muslim ascetics depict the monk as having "something to teach, which...carries a clear Christian imprint"(p. 12), that the Muslim image of Jesus bears "clear inner affinity with the Gospels" (p. 17) and that other material from the Bible (the New Testament in particular) "has apparently penetrated into Islam by way of oral tradition" (p. 19). Although Andrae has not written specifically about ascetical-mystical developments in early Basra, he has included two Muslim ascetics from early Basra, Mālik ibn Dīnār and Sufyān al-Thawrī, as participating in the Christian/Muslim exchange.(pp. 9, 11, 15, 17, 31)

11. Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1954, pp. 70-2. Massignon mentions ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd of Basra (a contemporary and associate of Rābiᶜah) among the Muslim mystics who would consult with Christian hermits on matters of theology.

12. Massignon, Essai, pp. 70, 77-8

13. Ibid. 70-3, pp., and p. 216 ff.2.

14. Ibid., p. 68.

15. Ibid., pp. 71-2, 77-8.

16. Ibid., pp. 104-5. Massignon lists characteristics such as group recitation of dhikr in a high voice (dhikr, raf^{c} al-ṣawt, similar to Quranic recitation), the establishment of regular religious gatherings for meditation ("recollection") (majālis al-dhikr) in which Quranic passages or themes are recited and which later evolved into the practice of samā^{c}.

17. Ibid., pp. 108-10.

CHAPTER II

RĀBIʿAH AND "L'ÉCOLE ASCÉTIQUE DE BAṢRAH"

Massignon asserts the Quranic basis of Sufism. In terms of the development of Islamic spirituality and mysticism in Basra proper, Massignon describes the growth of "l'école ascetique de Baṣrah" over the first two centuries Hijra, beginning with Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ending with Rābiʿah and her kinsman Riyāḥ al-Qaysī.

Basra, second century A.H./eighth century C.E., was a thriving city some distance inland from the banks of the present day Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, which flowed into the Persian Gulf.[1] Built during the chaliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in 17 A.H./638 C.E. by a companion of the Prophet, ʿUtbāh ibn Ghazwān, it served initially as a military outpost. Its strategic access to and from the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, as well as the Persian Gulf, compensated for its unfavourable geographical conditions, particularly its shortage of water and fertile agricultural land. Thus within a relatively short time it developed into a busy commercial center that intersected important river and sea routes, and also overland caravan routes coming from the Arabian Peninsula.[2]

The inhabitants of Basra came from several distinct ethnic backgrounds: a small indigenous population, probably of Iranian descent, the conquering Arab tribes and the groups--clients and slaves--attached to these

tribes, the latter group including those of Arab, Iranian, Indian (Sindi), Malai and East African descent.[3] The convergence of different peoples and cultures helped to create a rich and diverse religious and intellectual milieu. The religious character of the city was present from its foundation. The Caliph ᶜUmar charged ᶜUtbāh ibn Ghazwān to teach the Quran to the Bedouins and during the first two decades of its establishment Basra was home to over a dozen of the Prophet's companions.[4] The religious and intellectual activities that had started with the instruction of the Quran eventually expanded into the areas of hadith and linguistics. The founding Arab tribes followed the practices of Mecca and Medina, the places of leadership at that time, and in this sense Basra had a traditional character. However the city also proved to be a suitable environment for the growth of divergent doctrines, such as those of the Muᶜtazilites in the second century A.H.[5]

Although this pluralistic setting provided intellectual stimulus, the existence of different religious factions also gave rise to political and doctrinal conflict. The problems of instability and sectarianism that plagued the Muslim community following the assination of ᶜUthmān and the later succession of ᶜAlī also surfaced in Basra, where the partisans of ᶜUthmān, Imamites, Kharijites, and several other religious minorities maintained an uneasy coexistence.[6] Basra

hosted a number of social ills as well. The deterioration of public morality manifested in a general weakening of religiosity combined with an increasing interest in material wealth and sensual preoccupations.[7] By the time of Jāḥiẓ (c. 160-255 A.H./ c. 776(777)-868 C.E.) the practice of usury was common, and the institution of concubinage flourished within a social setting that also tolerated the presence of singing girls, courtesans, prostitutes and pederasts.[8] It is against this social, political and religious background that we should seek to understand the emergence of "l'école ascétique de Baṣrah".

The existence and growth of asceticism in Basra during the first few centuries (A.H.) was a discernable phenomenon.[9] Charles Pellat remarks that this is not, properly speaking, mysticism.[10] Massignon, however, describes the mystical doctrines and characteristics of important ascetics of "l'école de Baṣrah", indicating that at least on a individual basis many of the Basrian ascetics could be considered mystics as well. Massignon traces the development of this movement, beginning with the companions and tābiᶜūn of the first century A.H. who resided in Basra and were known as ascetics.[11] Massignon names and classifies the ascetics of the second century according to their particular roles or traits, such as popular preachers (quṣṣāṣ), weepers (bakkāʾūn),[12] jurists, theologians, hadith specialists, and so on. He observes

that this period was characterized by the general tendency of the ascetics to maintain their connection to the daily life of the community while devoting themselves to the practice of brotherly correction (naṣīhah), especially in the role of public preacher.[13]

Important among the first century ascetics was Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 A.H./728 C.E.), and his disciples figured prominently in the second century. This can be explained at least in part by Ḥasan's effectiveness as a teacher and popular preacher, but perhaps also by his model of conduct and position vis-à-vis the often troubled Muslim community. As political unrest gripped the community, Ḥasan maintained a position of neutrality, refusing to take sides, to condone or participate in rebellion or to conceal his views through dissimulation. Instead, he insisted on the unity of the ummah and argued that to remain obedient to God--the Ultimate source of all power and authority--one was bound to obey external authority except in rulings that directly violated the Islamic faith. This stance, which Massignon sees as the first historical manifestation of Sunnism, earned Ḥasan the censure of Kharijites and Imamites alike.[14] Ḥasan's acceptance of temporal authority did not mean overlooking moral corruption or misuses of power and priveledge. Ḥasan was candid in his criticism of Muʿāwiyah, Yazīd, Ḥajjāj and others.[15] Though politically neutral, Ḥasan

understood himself to be in line with the example of the Prophet, preaching the message of warning to society.[16]

At the same time that Ḥasan affirmed obedience to external authority he also practiced moral introspection, which involved the interiorization of certain religious ideas.[17] Massignon observes that the lexicon of mystical terms is already discernable with Ḥasan in his use of words such as fiqh, nīyah, nifāq and riḍā. For Ḥasan, these terms no longer carried their usual sensible and rational connotation but alluded to direct, inner experience.[18] It also appears that Ḥasan's emphasis on inner experience was a process of spiritual discernment and validation of religion rather than a departure from the externals of faith. Whereas he criticized the pharisaism of insincere jurists, the literalism of certain traditionists (ḥashwīyah) and expressions of blind, emotional piety, he strictly adhered to orthodox faith.[19] As an ascetic and mystic Ḥasan stressed the life of piety, the avoidance of doubtful things, and above all, the complete renunciation of the perishable world. Massignon writes that detachment from the world formed the base of Ḥasan's religious perspective, which was combined with fear of God and the need to listen attentively to the Divine Word. Massignon credits Ḥasan with laying the foundations of the science of the heart, as Ḥasan referred to the concept of states (ḥāl), levels of differentiation in intention and suggestion (waswās), and the importance

of moral introspection.[20] Thus at a time of political and doctrinal conflict, when the discontent of factions such as the Kharijites and Zaydites had led to open rebellion, Ḥasan maintained an active, though politically neutral role in society, exhorting the people to turn inward, to encounter and repent of their own selves, to renounce the world and to turn whole-heartedly towards God.[21]

Second century Basra witnessed an "intense religious fervour" which manifested in various practices, yet was not controlled by a specific or unified doctrine or set of rules.[22] According to Massignon it was Ḥasan's disciples who gradually systematized the concepts and life-style introduced by earlier figures. Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 127) started this process and was succeeded in the following generation chiefly by ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. 177).[23] Other important figures of this generation included Riyāḥ ibn ᶜAmr Qaysī (d. circa 180) and Rābiᶜah al-ᶜAdawīyah (d. circa 185 A.H./801 C.E.).[24] The former, Riyāḥ, gave doctrinal form to mystical concepts such as tajallī (to explain the vision of God on Judgement Day), tafḍīl al-walī (the superiority of the saint),[25] and khullah (divine friendship). As for Rābiᶜah, Massignon refers to her concept of divine love as the vision of the Beloved Himself, and her unconcern for Heaven and Hell in yearning for God alone.[26] Rābiᶜah and Riyāḥ belonged to the same tribe (Qays) and are said to have associated with each other. Massignon, however, includes two anecdotes from

Iṣfahānī's hagiography which "underlin[e] the nuance that separates [Riyāḥ] from Rābiᶜah";[27] these anecdotes suggest that although Rābiᶜah and Riyāḥ are depicted as spiritual companions, Rābiᶜah's all-consuming love extended beyond the I-You duality of divine friendship (c.f. Riyāḥ) and led her to become completely immersed in the Presence of the Divine Friend, the Beloved Himself.

"L'école ascétique de Baṣrah", founded largely by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ended in the posthumous condemnation of Riyāḥ and Rābiᶜah by the strict traditionists.[28] The external context for the origin of "l'école ascétique" was formed by the political and doctrinal confusion, together with the rise in social decadence that characterized early Basra. The pious call to repentence, to turn inward and amend the heart in front of God, was, at least in part, a response to these conditions. Society no longer provided the ideal context for moral development and perfection of faith, and instead had become the place of moral jihad against the increasing tendencies towards division and corruption. As for the inner inspiration of "l'école ascétique", apart from the basic human yearning for God that transcends time and place, Massignon regards the Quran as the manifestation of Muslim spirituality in history and hence the essential starting point for all further developments in Islamic spirituality and mysticism, including the ascetical-mystical movement of early Basra.

Massignon has mentioned Rābiᶜah only in brief; yet his perspective and its implications provide the framework for an interpretation of this saint. Seen in terms of both the inner and outer dimensions of "l'école ascétique de Baṣrah", Rābiᶜah appears in continuation to Ḥasan. Ḥasan already had broken from the early Islamic ideal of fulfilling one's spiritual life through full participation in society; he was a detached, independent observer and critic of society, a preacher and warner. Rābiᶜah took this detachment one step further. Although not a public preacher, she lived in semi-seclusion and received, advised, consoled and even rebuked those who sought her out. As the deteriorization of society meant, by extension, some degree of breakdown in family structure, it is likely that the pious ascetics not only turned inward, but also reconsidered the original Islamic emphasis given to societal and family roles. For a decline in the spiritual legitimacy of these roles would serve to highlight the sense of exigency for the observance of asceticism, especially for the observance of celibacy.[29] From this point of view one would interpret Rābiᶜah's life-style of seclusion and celibacy not as a departure from Islamic practice but as part of the general response to changing and troubled times. Furthermore, following Massignon's thesis, the inner essence of Rābiᶜah's spirituality arose in continuity to the Quranic revelation. Within this perspective Rābiᶜah is understood

as an essentially Muslim saint, despite her less typical life-style as a celibate ascetic.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Charles Pellat, Le milieu Baṣrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiẓ. Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve. 1953, p. 7. The original settlement, unlike modern Basra, was located 12 miles inland from the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab.(p. 7, ff.2)

2. Ibid., pp. 3-5.

3. Ibid., pp. 22-41.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., pp. 72-3.

6. Ibid., pp. 183-222.

7. Ibid., p. 255.

8. Ibid., pp. 234, 250-7. (The presence of pederastes in Basra is implied on p. 257.)

9. Ibid., p. 94

10. Ibid.

11. Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1954, pp. 163-4.

12. See also Pellat, Le milieu Baṣrien, p. 94. Pellat claims that the religious weepers constituted a distinct group. Fritz Meier, however, states that the term weeper (bakkāʾ) was used as an individual by-name and could not be seen as designating a special class of people. See F. Meier, "Bakkāʾ", in The Encyclopaedia of Islam. H.A.R. Gibb, editor. London: Luzac & Co. New Edition, 1960. Volume I, p. 959.

13. Ibid., pp. 165-8.

14. Ibid., pp. 180-1.

15. Ibid., pp. 181-2.

16. Ibid., p. 183.

17. Massignon, Essai, p. 118.

18. Massignon, Essai, pp. 117-8.

19. Ibid., pp. 188-9, pp. 180-1.

20. Ibid., pp. 190-1.

21. Ibid., p. 193.

22. Ibid., p. 213.

23. Ibid., pp. 213-4.

24. Ibid., pp. 215-6.

25. B. Radtke questions Massignon's attribution of this attitude to Riyāḥ al-Qaysī. According to him, the primary sources do not confirm this.(See Bernd Radtke , Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidī Ein islamischer Theosoph des 3./9. Jahrhunderts. Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag. 1980, p. 160 f.)

26. Ibid., pp. 215-6.

27. Ibid., p. 218.

28. Ibid., pp. 114 and 219. However the movement that had started in Basra spread into Syria through the principle disciple of ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd, Abū Sulaymān ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAṭiyah al-Dārānī (d. 215 A.H.) (p. 219).

29. Celibacy is not always part of ascetical practice. According to Andrae the majority of early Muslim ascetics held the view that it was a religious duty to marry.(Tor Andrae, In the Garden of Myrtles. Birgitta Sharpe, translator. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1987, p. 45.)

CHAPTER III

CONCLUDING REMARKS: RĀBIʿAH IN SCHOLARSHIP

The present state of scholarship on Rābiʿah is limited. Margaret Smith has produced the only significant work devoted specifically to this saint and in it has attempted to analyze Rābiʿah in terms of the states and stations of the Sufi path. Massignon has outlined Rābiʿah's historical context in his study of the first vocations in Islamic mysticism and "l'école ascétique de Baṣrah". Yet the views of Smith and Massignon are quite different; hence the image and interpretation of Rābiʿah that emerges from each perspective is quite different as well.

Leaving aside judgments concerning the correctness of Smith's theory, there are serious problems in her use of source material that affect her analysis of Rābiʿah. Smith has a strong tendency to exaggerate the similarity of Rābiʿah's spirituality (and Sufism more generally) to Christianity, while downplaying, or omitting the positive connections between Rābiʿah, Sufism, and orthodox Islam. Although Smith refers to Sufi authorities such as Ghazālī, Qushayrī, and Makkī, she does not acknowledge that these ancient authors based themselves on the authority of the Quran and hadith. Instead Smith compares the "Sufi view"

to passages from the Bible and other Christian sources,[1] and relates Sufi concepts to Christian doctrines in a way that cannot be substantiated with reference to the Sufi authorities mentioned above.[2] Thus she looks outside of the historical context of the material in order to prove the pre-assumptions of her historical argument. In terms of her analysis of Rābiᶜah, Smith emphasizes Rābiᶜah's radiant faith and direct experience as opposed to the "ritualism" of Islam, yet only mentions in passing Rābiᶜah's continued observance of ritual obligations and her regular night-long vigils of supererogatory ritual prayer.[3] Consequently Smith misses the important distinction between ritual and ritualism and presents a somewhat distorted picture of Rābiᶜah's spiritual life.

Although Smith treats the more orthodox features of Rābiᶜah's life as incidental factors, she discusses at length the more "personal" aspects of Rābiᶜah's spirituality, such as her "free prayer".[4] Finally, Smith presents Rābiᶜah as a saint who has attained the final stage of mystical union with God (a stage which Smith defines as deification of the soul, and specifically not as annihilation); however the source material only contains descriptions of Rābiᶜah's preoccuption with God, her annihilation in Him (fanā), and her yearning for proximity and union. Not in any account (by ᶜAṭṭār or other ancient author) is Rābiᶜah described as having attained "union" with God.

In all, Smith has abstracted Rābiʿah from the context of her spiritual environment and actual practice, and has introduced concepts and interpretations not found in the source material. Thus her image of Rābiʿah is not consistent with ʿAṭṭār's presentation, nor with the accounts of Rābiʿah found in the other source material. Nor has Smith proven a clear historical and philosophical connection giving rise to a hybridization of concepts (c.f. Massignon) that would substantiate any direct affinity between Rābiʿah and Christian spirituality.

Since Massignon has not given us a thorough study of Rābiʿah, we can only consider the implications of his perspective for an interpretation of this saint. Massignon has been criticized for minimizing the apparent conflict between orthodox Islamic teachings and ascetical practice, specifically concerning the issues of celibacy and monasticism.[5] Yet in spite of this weakness, the implications of Massignon's theory are more in agreement with ʿAṭṭār's portrayal, as ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah is unique among saints, but none-the-less exists within the context of Islamic practice and spirituality. A qualification of this point is that whereas Massignon presents Rābiʿah in line with Ḥasan, within the continuing development of "l'école ascétique", ʿAṭṭār brings out the clear contrast between these two figures. This difference can be explained in terms of the inner and outer dimensions of the ascetical-mystical movement. Both Rābiʿah and Ḥasan,

as ascetics, appear against the background of an unstable, deteriorating social structure. They represent the shift away from identification with society, towards a personal search for God; hence both are part of the ascetical "counter-culture". Yet in terms of inward state, ʿAṭṭār shows Rābiʿah as possessing a far higher degree of attainment, and depicts Ḥasan, in contrast, more as a zāhid, at times even a hypocrite. Ḥasan's unrelenting emphasis on purification from the world reveals that he is still attached to it, whereas Rābiʿah is detached from the world--and the world beyond--so completely that it rarely needs mention. She is so utterly preoccupied with God and effaced in her yearning and love for Him that she can no longer be occupied with the world, even for the sake of condemning it.[6] ʿAṭṭār portrays Rābiʿah at once as a woman on fire with love and nothing but dust on the Way,[7] illustrating a mystical secret and paradox that one--more significantly, that a woman--who is nothing for the sake of God is, at the same time, unsurpassed among His friends.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. See Chapter I, note 5.

2. For example see Margaret Smith, Rābiʿa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press. Reprint. 1984, pp. 53-7 (Smith presents the Sufi view of repentance in line with the Christian view (and doctrines of Atonement and Redemption, p. 39) and in contrast to "the orthodox Muslim doctrine" given in the Quran), and pp. 77-80 (Smith defines the Sufi's view of tawḥīd as "far more" than the orthodox view and as meaning the doctrine of "unification", leading to union which she describes as deification of the soul).

3. Ibid., pp. 29, 40-1, 97, 203-4, and Chapter III, "Rābiʿa's asceticism. Her prayer-life", pp. 20-30. In Chapter III Smith emphasizes the theme of Rābiʿah's free prayer (duʿāʾ), however most of the passages concerning prayer that have been taken from primary source material refer to Rābiʿah's observance of ritual prayer (ṣalāt, namāz), not duʿāʾ. (See Chapter VI of this study, Ritual Prayer.) Also, Smith relates Rābiʿah's criticism of the hajj ritual in favour of direct experience, yet omits Rābiʿah's final statement which qualifies this criticism, "'First I would not pay attention to the house [kaʿbah], I wanted You. Now I do not deserve Your house" (c.f. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, p. 76), see also Chapter V of this study, Hajj, the Tension between Inner Yearning and Outward Observance), although this statement is present in the edition of Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ used by Smith (ed. Nicholson, London: Luzac & C. 1905, Part I, p. 63).(Smith, Rābiʿa, pp. 8-9, and 75)

4. Ibid., pp. 20-30. Smith refers to R.A. Nicholson, "'In Mohammedan mysticism it is Prayer that supplies the best evidence of personality--not the ritual prayer (ṣalāt) but the free prayer (duʿāʾ) and in particular the loving converse with God (munājāt) when the mystic speaks out of the depths of his heart' [c.f. R.A. Nicholson, The Idea of Personality in Sufism], and Rābiʿa's prayers reveal her personality more clearly perhaps than anything else...prayer to her in truth was 'loving converse' with her Lord, not supplication on her own behalf or on behalf of others but simply communion with the Divine Friend, and perfect satisfaction in His presence."(Smith, Rābiʿa, pp. 26, 29-30)

5. Massignon argues that the Islamic condemnation of monasticism is not found in the Quran and has arisen from fabricated hadith (Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1954, pp. 145-53). This position has been refuted by Paul Nwyia, Exégèse coranique et langage mystique, nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq éditeurs. Série I. Tome XLIX. 1970, pp. 52-6.

6. C.f. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed., p. 86) "...one of the saints of Basra came to Rābiʿah and sat at her bedside and started criticizing the world. Rābiʿah said: 'You love the world a great deal. For if you did not love it you would not mention it. For he who breaks merchandise is he who has bought it. If you were free of the world, you would not mention it either as good or bad. But you mention it because he who loves something praises it often.'"

7. C.f. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami ed.), p. 72, and Manṭiq al-ṭayr (Le Langage des oiseaux. Garcin de Tassy, translator. Paris: Éditions Sinbad. 1982, p. 41).

PART II: ʿAṬṬĀR'S IMAGE OF RĀBIʿAH

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE STORY OF RĀBIʿAH

1. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār

Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibrāhīm, better known as Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, was born at Nīshāpūr, circa 540 A.H./1145-6 C.E.[1] Little can be said with certainty about his life.[2] ʿAṭṭār, as his pen-name indicates, was a pharmacist. He was successful at his work and began to write books out of keen personal interest rather than as a profession.[3] He appears to have led a quiet life, especially during his later years, and died at an old age, it is said at the hands of the Mongol invaders who swept through Nīshāpūr in 618 A.H./1221 C.E.[4] As for ʿAṭṭār's involvement with Sufism, leaving aside legends, there is no definite proof that ʿAṭṭār was a Sufi in any formal sense.[5] None-the-less, it is clear from ʿAṭṭār's writings that he was very much influenced by it. B. Reinert writes, "...it can be taken for granted that from childhood onward ʿAṭṭār, encouraged by his father, was interested in the Sufis and their sayings and way of life, and regarded their saints as his spiritual guides."[6] It also seems likely that ʿAṭṭār engaged in interior spiritual practices, which would account for his deep

insight into the struggles and states of the spiritual path, even though ʿAṭṭār himself claimed that he did not belong to the Sufis but tried to resemble them.[7]

ʿAṭṭār's works center around the various aspects and difficulties encountered in the journey of the soul from its state of earthly bondage to the state of proximity to God. The world, according to ʿAṭṭār, is vain and false and a source of great evil and temptation to the soul. Thus the practice of asceticism and a life of moral and ethical purity are crucial if one is to free one's soul from the grasp of the material world. Within this ascetical perspective, ʿAṭṭār also emphasizes the importance of self-effacing love in the presence of the Beloved, and the all-pervasive Oneness of God.[8]

ʿAṭṭār has a special talent for expressing deeper meaning and truth within the guise of everyday events. Though he ventures into didactic homilies and theoretical explanations, he often illustrates his message through exemplary events. His main protagonists are Sufi saints and ascetics, although he also introduces other figures from history and legend as fit the needs of his narrative.[9] Reinert observes that ʿAṭṭār "has no objection to putting his words of wisdom into the mouths of fools and madmen."[10] This appears as part of ʿAṭṭār's more general tendency to turn social norms upside down, to strip away the veils of convention in order to get to the essential truth, to the heart of the matter.[11]

Although ʿAṭṭār hardly ever specifies his sources, he seems to have relied on previously written works. In some instances, in transmitting Sufi sayings, he is very diligent in passing on full and accurate information; yet in other instances he shows a strong tendency to select and shape material according to his particular perspective and even more definitely according to the didactic or theosophical point he is trying to bring out in his narrative. Thus Reinert considers his works valuable more for the study of "hagiology and phenomenology of Sufism" than for the study of history.[12] However, despite ʿAṭṭār's tendency to shape information, he does not seem to suppress material because it conflicts with his basic perspectives. In the narrative of Rābiʿah, ʿAṭṭār includes a variant tale in which Rābiʿah is depicted as a converted musician, an image quite different from the rest of ʿAṭṭār's presentation. The only motive I can suggest for including this story is ʿAṭṭār's conscientiousness in presenting all the material at his disposal. Yet, after including this variant image, he names it leaving his own estimation.[13] Thus acknowledging ʿAṭṭār's general tendency to be selective and to mold material, it should be clear that we are dealing with ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah, Rābiʿah as understood and presented by ʿAṭṭār, which is by and large how she has been enshrined within Sufi tradition.

2. The Story of Rābiʿah

ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah is a unique, and even provocative figure among God's saints. The basic outline of her life, as given in Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, is as follows. She was born into a poor but pious family, the fourth of four daughters. At the time of her birth her family was so desperately poor that there was no cloth in which to wrap her, no lamp to light the house, nor oil to anoint her naval. That night the Prophet appeared to Rābiʿah's father in a dream, comforting him with the news that his daughter was a "queen among women" who would be the intercessor for seventy thousand of the Prophet's community. After a number of years Rābiʿah's parents both died and she and her sisters became separated during a famine. She was seized by an evil man and sold as a slave for a small amount of money. Rābiʿah's master put her to hard labor. One day she was approached by a stranger. Afraid, she fled, but fell and broke her hand. She cried out to God, not to remove her sufferings, but to know if He was satisfied with her or not. Rābiʿah was answered by a voice which foretold of her high rank in the hereafter, and she was inspired to intensify her life of devotion. One night her master awoke and saw Rābiʿah absorbed in prayer with a holy light suspended in midair above her head. Her master was amazed and felt ashamed to keep

someone of her spiritual rank as a slave. He freed her and she retired into the desert to devote her life to worship and seeking proximity to God.

It is around this basic outline that ʿAṭṭār weaves various anecdotes, sayings and supplications attributed to Rābiʿah in order to fashion and bring to life his image of this remarkable woman saint. ʿAṭṭār illustrates not only Rābiʿah's profound level of spiritual insight and attainment, but also her intense and frequently sharp-witted personality which together commanded the respect of all who encountered her. Although ʿAṭṭār emphasizes Rābiʿah's mystical dimension and particular spiritual characteristics, he does so within a context that takes into account her relation to orthodox Islamic practice and the significance of her gender. In this light we seek to understand ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah as mystic, Muslim and woman.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. B. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica. Ehsan Yarshater, editor. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1989. Volume III, p. 20, c.f. B. Foruzanfar (Sharḥ-i aḥvāl va naqd va taḥlīl-i āsār-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAṭṭār-i Nīshābūrī. Tehran. 1339-40 Sh./1960-1. Reprint, Tehran, 1353 Sh./1975, pp. 1-3). However, ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn-i Zarrīnkūb claims that 540 A.H. (originally suggested by Foruzanfar) for ʿAṭṭār's birth is doubtful, and gives 617 A.H. as ʿAṭṭār's date of death.(Daftar-i Ayyām, Tehran: Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī, Second edition, 1988, p. 39.)

2. Most of the autobiographical information accepted in the past can be found in the text Mazhar al-ʿajā'ib. Since the latter text has been proven a forgery, these details have been discarded.(C.f. H. Ritter, "ʿAṭṭār", in The Encyclopaedia of Islam. H.A.R. Gibb, editor. London: Luzac & Co. New Edition. 1960. Volume I, p. 752.) In addition, accounts of his life from later authors such as Jāmī and Dawlatshāh are seen to contain mythical elaborations rather than strictly historical information.(C.f. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, p. 21.)

3. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, pp. 20-1. Cf. B. Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 39.

4. Ibid., p. 21. See Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 91.

5. Jāmī, in Nafaḥāt al-uns, identifies Shaykh Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī as ʿAṭṭār's spiritual master.(ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad-i Jāmī, Nafaḥāt al-uns min haḍarāt al-quds. Mahdī-i Tawḥīdīpūr, editor.. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sa'dī. 1366 H.Sh. Second edition, p. 599.) ʿAṭṭār himself, in Tadhkirat al-awliyā', mentions that he met Baghdādī (Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, p. 21, refering to Tadhkirat al-awliyā' Nicholson's edition, Vol. 1, p. 6, line 21), yet this causual reference is not consistent with the extremely reverential manner in which a disciple would normally describe his shaykh. Jāmī also implies that some people consider ʿAṭṭār to be an Uwaysī Sufi.(See M. Estelami, in his introduction to ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyā'. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, p. 33. Cf. Jāmī, Nafaḥāt al-uns (Mahdī-i Tawḥīdīpūr, ed.), p. 599.) Foruzanfar notes that in a number of ʿAṭṭār's works ʿAṭṭār states his devotion to the Sufi Shaykh Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr and in a verse of his Divān claims that whatever

spiritual wealth he (ʿAṭṭār) acquired came from this saint.(Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 32. See also M. Estelami, in his introduction to ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, pp. 33-4.) Foruzanfar concludes that if ʿAṭṭār was anUwaysī Sufi, then was "influenced by the spirituality and the eternal spiritual personality of Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr, and the extent of his reverence for Abū Saʿīd could be considered as another proof for this."(Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 33.) However, Fritz Meier observes that although the figure of Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr appears often in ʿAṭṭār's works, the particular statement that ʿAṭṭār owes every spiritual treasure to Abū Saʿīd occurs only in one verse of ʿAṭṭār's Divān. Since not all verses in this latter text can be attributed definitely to ʿAṭṭār, Meier qualifies the discussion of an Uwaysī relation between Abū Saʿīd and ʿAṭṭār by acknowledging the possibility that this particular verse may not be authentic. (See Fritz Meier, "Abū Saʿīd-i Abū l-Ḫayr", in Acta Iranica, 11. Édition Bibliotèque Pahlavi, Téhéran-Liège. Difussion E.J. Brill, Leiden. 1976. Troisième Série, volume IV, p. 464. The idea of an Uwaysī relation between Abū Saʿīd and ʿAṭṭār is discussed more completely in this work by Meier cited above.) Thus all of the arguments concerning ʿAṭṭār's involvement with Sufism are considered as possibilities rather than as established facts.(C.f. Foruzanfar, Sharḥ-i aḥvāl, p. 32.)

6. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, p. 21, c.f. Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, R.A. Nicholson, editor, Vol. I, p. 5, line 23ff.

7. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 7. Nicholson's edition, Part I, p. 4, line 23ff.

8. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, Ibid., pp. 23-5.

9. Ibid., pp. 21-3.

10. Ibid., p. 21, cf. Ritter, Das Meer der Seels, pp. 165ff.

11. Ritter also discusses the idea of wisdom springing from the mouth of fools and madmen in another article, "Muslim Mystics Strife with God" (in Oriens. Leiden: E.J. Brill. Vol. 5, 31.7., 1952, No. 1, pp. 1-15). He observes that in ʿAṭṭār's works, mystic fools and mad lovers of God are permitted to quarrel with and complain to God, even to the point of threatening Him. They are permitted this bold behaviour on the basis of their lack of reason, which excuses them from being accountable for their words and actions. Ironically they often express basic truths which others also would like to express but are prohibited by religious etiquette.

I would agree with Ritter's observations, but also would interpret them more generally to fit within ʿAṭṭār's tendency of chosing figures from inferior social positions: fools, poor beggars, women, even dogs, to express superior wisdom. Thus ʿAṭṭār shows that closeness to God, or superiority in an absolute sense, is sometimes the opposite of social norms and conventions.

12. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār", in Encyclopaedia Iranica, pp. 21, 23.

13. See notes to Chapter VII numbers 12 and 17.

CHAPTER V

RĀBIᶜAH AS MYSTIC

ᶜAṭṭār's Rābiᶜah was, above all, a saint and friend of God who enjoyed intimacy with the Divine Presence by virtue of her high level of spiritual realization. It was from the basis of her spiritual attainment that all other aspects of her character and being derived their legitimacy. Rābiᶜah's special relation with God found expression in her karāmāt, karāmāt which manifested not only in her miraculous abilities, but more particularly in her direct communication with God and in His immediate response to her needs and prayers.

1. Karāmāt

Rābiᶜah had several types of karāmāt, beginning with the miraculous events that occured more-or-less on their own, without her active intercession. A holy light suspended in midair to illuminate her prayers, the kaᶜbah coming to welcome her in the desert, food which cooked itself while she engaged in spiritual conversation and prayer, verses of the Holy Quran recited from the unseen as she lay dying: all of these miraculous events attested to her level of saintliness.[1] Rābiᶜah also had an active

ability to perform miracles. When Ḥasan challenged her to pray two rakats while floating on water, Rābiᶜah threw her prayer carpet in midair, challenging him to perform prayers with her there, where everyone could see.[2] And one night when she had no light for her guests, Rābiᶜah blew on her finger, causing it to glow until morning.[3]

The most significant type of karāmāt, however, manifested in her direct, interactive relation with God, emphasizing her position of intimacy rather than her supernatural power to work miracles. At crucial points in her life Rābiᶜah cried out to God in supplication, yearning and even complaint and received an immediate response. This response was often verbal, described usually as a "voice", and in one occasion as God's direct address "without intermediary",[4] or it could be a miraculous event, such as God reviving her dead donkey after she complained, "'O my God! Do Kings treat a weak woman in this manner? You called me to Your house, then in the middle of the way, You killed my donkey and left me alone in the desert!'"[5] These examples attested to her experience of direct relation to God, and indicated that this direct relation was the central and exclusive focus of her worship, life and being. Rābiᶜah was once asked, "'Do you see Him Whom you worship?'" She replied, "'If I did not see Him I would not worship.'"[6] Hence the 'goal' of her worship--whether personal supplication or ritual

practice--could not be separated from her direct experience of God and sense of relationality to Him.

2. Sincerity and Hypocrisy

Rābiᶜah's karāmāt was the result of her closeness to God and specifically did not involve a search for miraculous powers. After throwing her prayer carpet in the air, demonstrating her superiority to Ḥasan, Rābiᶜah consoled him, "...what you did a fish can do. And what I am doing a fly can do. The real work is other than both of these."[7] Through the medium of his narrative ᶜAṭṭār indicates that the "real work" is the annihilation of self in seeking proximity to God. This is the authentic task and goal of the spiritual life, and it requires exclusive attention to God, untainted by outward or secondary concerns that distract the seeker from God and inevitably strenghten--rather than annihilate--some aspect of the ego self. At the heart of Rābiᶜah's faith and behind her acts of worship and service was her selfless devotion to God for His sake alone. It was this central reality which gave her words and actions sincerity, and which made anything less appear, in comparison, as hyprocrisy or empty asceticism. ᶜAṭṭār relates many exchanges between Rābiᶜah and other associates, Ḥasan in particular, that show Rābiᶜah's superiority precisely on this point.

Rābiᶜah often rebuked Ḥasan for outward shows of religiosity and spiritual prowess. Once while passing Ḥasan's house Rābiᶜah was splashed by water falling from

the rainpipe. Looking for the source of this water, Rābiᶜah found Ḥasan, sitting on his rooftop and shedding a river of tears. "'O Ḥasan!'" she scolded, "'if these tears are from the tenderness of your nafs (ego), keep your tears until your heart becomes a sea, so that if you seek your heart in that sea, you [can]not find it except in the keeping of a King Omnipotent.'"[8] Ḥasan found her words heavy, and one day when he encountered Rābiᶜah on the banks of the Euphrates, he threw his prayer carpet on the water and challenged her to perform two rakats of prayer there. Perceiving the egotism of his words, Rābiᶜah replied, "'O teacher! In the market of the world you offer what belongs to the next world? [If you want to do so] it should be in a way that members of the same group would be unable to do the same.'" So saying, she threw her prayer carpet in the air--a station that Ḥasan had not reached--and called, "'O Hasan come here, so that you would not be hidden from the eyes of the people.'"[9]

Despite Rābiᶜah's unsettling frankness, Ḥasan often came to her for spiritual conversation and counsel. Once he asked her to tell him something "'from that knowledge which has not come through learning or hearing, but has [been] poured in your heart without the interference of people.'" She replied,

> "I had spun a [span] of ropes to sell [in order] to buy some food. I sold it for two dirhams, and kept one coin in this hand and another in the other hand, because I was afraid that if I kept both of them [together in one

hand] they would become a pair and
deviate me. This was my [spiritual]
earning today."[10]

ʿAṭṭār includes a poetic rendition of this conversation in Mantiq al-ṭayr, afterwards describing the woes of the worldly man who spends his life amassing wealth, yet when his treasure is secured he promptly dies, leaving the heir "his legal right to strife and misery". ʿAṭṭār scolds, "You sell the Simorgh for this gold; its light has made your heart a candle in the night! We seek the Way of perfect Unity, where no one counts his ow. prosperity...."[11]

Rābiʿah thus reminded Ḥasan that the Way to truth was purification from the world. Yet Rābiʿah also taught him that purification from the world was more than limiting one's appetite and desires. One day Rābiʿah had gone to the mountain and herds of wild animals gathered around her. Ḥasan appeared and the animals ran away. He was angry and asked Rābiʿah, "'Why did they run from me but had friendship with you?'" Rābiʿah asked him what he had eaten that day, to which he replied onions fried in fat. "'You have eaten their fat,'" she remarked, "'How should they not run away from you?'"[12] In Ilāhī nāmah ʿAṭṭār repeats this conversation, adding an admonishment to the reader:

...
Thou wert told to purify thy soul
and thou art always cultivating thy
body.
Thou shouldst always respect the
inner reality and yet thou dost nought
but serve the outward appearance.

> Someone said: "'Set fire to thy self. When thou hast eaten a morsel, sit down and be silent.'"[13]

The reflection of this admonishment on Ḥasan makes him appear as a hypocrite, despite his rigorous efforts, his piety and asceticism. He had eaten only a little fat; yet by merely limiting his tastes he had achieved nothing but the outward appearance of asceticism. In search of the "inner reality" the task was to "set fire to thy self", to sever every worldly inclination and desire which veiled the goal of the quest, the true object of desire.[14]

Rābiᶜah understood that ascectism was not a goal in itself, but the means of attaining the goal of proximity to God. Furthermore, for Rābiᶜah spiritual purification extended beyond abstinence from material things, it meant complete detachment from outward and secondary concerns. Rābiᶜah once sent Ḥasan three things: some candle wax, a sewing needle and a strand of hair. She advised him, "'Like wax, burn to give light to the world; like a needle, be naked and constantly working; once you have [attained] both of these qualities, be like a hair so that your efforts should not turn to null.'"[15] Using humble, ordinary objects Rābiᶜah counseled Hasan "to burn" and "work", to attend to the spiritual task before him; yet like wax which is consumed in the fulfillment of its task, like the needle which remains naked when working and when its work is done, and like the hair which is almost imperceptible due to its thiness, he must refrain from

outward show or secondary reward if he wished for his efforts to reach their spiritual fruition. Ḥasan once exclaimed, "'O Rābiᶜah what earned you this rank?'" She replied, "'It is because I lost all 'founds' in Him.'" "'How do you know/find Him?'" Ḥasan asked. "'It is you who know by how, we know without how,'" she answered.[16] The sincerity of Rābiᶜah's words and the authenticity of her spiritual knowledge--knowledge that was poured in her heart directly, without the interference of people--derived from selflessness, from the complete absence of ego desire, of concern, even of theory or theological concept in between her heart and God. After spending all day and night talking to Rābiᶜah about the path and the truth (tarīqah va ḥaqīqah), Ḥasan realized, "'When I got up I found myself an indigent (insincere) and her the sincere one.'"[17]

Rābiᶜah and another spiritual associate, Sufyān al-Thawrī, were once engaged in conversation. Sufyān said, "'I cannot say anything for you. You say something for me.'" She replied, "'You are a good man, except that you love the world.'" Surprised, Sufyān asked, "'What is that?'" "'Narration of traditions,'" she answered. ᶜAṭṭār adds, "meaning [even] this is a dignity."[18] Sensing the truth of Rābiᶜah's words, Sufyān implored, "'God be satisfied with me.'" Yet to Rābiᶜah, this statement also lacked sincerity. "'Are you not ashamed to seek the satisfaction of One with Whom you are not

satisfied?'" she questioned,[19] implying that the servant who loved anything besides God had not found His Sole Reality to be sufficient. Yet it seemed that Sufyān's insincerity sprang precisely from this problem; he had not yet found God's Sole Reality. Thus he was tempted to incline towards something short of God Himself. Sufyān, like Ḥasan, had not completely conquered his desire for outward show and enjoyed the worldly esteem that came from being a man of religious learning. Instead of public esteem and the outward appearance of knowledge, Rābiᶜah sought true knowledge, knowledge that was inward and hidden from public view. "'An ᶜārif,'" she said, '" is he who asks God for a heart. When God gives him the heart, he returns it right away to God so that it is guarded in His grasp, and is veiled from people in His veil.'"[20]

Rābiᶜah's sincerity and her spiritual superiority rested on her direct experience of God. Hearing Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī repeat, "'Whoever knocks on a door, eventually it will open,'" Rābiᶜah remarked, "'How long will you say that...when did He close it?'"[21] Likewise, her sincerity arose from her inner state rather than outward action. ᶜAṭṭār relates that Ibrāhīm ibn Adham journeyed fourteen years to get to the kaᶜbah, performing two rakats of prayer for each step. When he arrived at Mecca he found that the kaᶜbah was not there and he was informed by a voice that it had gone to welcome a woman. Ibrāhīm was intensely jealous and when he saw the woman, Rābiᶜah, he

asked, "'Rābiʿah what is this fervour you have caused in the world?'" She said, "'You have caused fervour, you who have taken fourteen years to get to the house.'" "'Yes!'" replied Ibrāhīm. "'I have crossed the desert in fourteen years in prayer.'" "'You crossed [the desert] in namāz ([in the state of] prayer),'" she said, "'and I did it in niyāz (in the state of [spiritual supplication and] need).'"[22]

For Rābiʿah, sincerity came from one's inward state, not outward statement: from the heart, not the tongue. Once when Rābiʿah heard a man lamenting "'What sorrow!'" she replied, "'Say this: what lack of sorrow! For if you had [true] sorrow you would not have the courage to breath.'"[23] Another time she said, "'Asking for forgiveness by the tongue is the work of liars. If we repent we are in need of another repentance.'"[24] Yet she also taught that if God first granted the desire and will to repent so that repentance proceeded--not from the tongue--but from a sincere heart, then God would surely grant His acceptance of this repentance as well.[25]

In all of these anecdotes and sayings ʿAṭṭār stresses several related themes. First, that Rābiʿah's sincerity came from her state of being, from the state of her heart through which she "knew" God and experienced His Presence directly. Second, that her companions, who all fell short of this state, appeared insincere, as hypocrites and empty ascetics. The hypocrisy of Ḥasan and Sufyān was, at

times, straight forward, as when their love of outward show was exposed. Yet Rābiᶜah's critique of hypocrisy was not limited to these more direct manifestations; her message was that any statement, action or act of worship which did not rest on autnentic ground, which missed the "heart" of the matter, was hypocritical and insincere by implication.[26]

3. Rābiᶜah's Secret of Love

> "O Lord! If on the Day of Judgement You send me to Hell, I will reveal a secret that [would cause] Hell to run away from me for a thousand years."[27]

Rābiᶜah had a secret, a secret hidden in her heart, veiled from the view of people. This secret was the source of her authenticity and sincerity, it was the basis of her karāmāt, and it transformed her faith from outer worship into a living inner relationship with God. It was a secret that would make Hell run away from her for a thousand years: "'O God!'" she prayed, "'if tomorrow You send me to Hell, I will scream 'I have loved You! Are friends treated this way?!'...'"[28] Rābiᶜah's heart held the secret of love.

> O God! If I worship You in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell.
> And if I worship You in hope of Heaven, forbid it to me.
> And if I worship You for You Yourself, do not deprive me of [Your] everlasting Beauty.[29]

These are remembered as Rābiᶜah's most famous words, and the idea which they express forms the basis of Rābiᶜah's entire spiritual personality and perspective.[30] Although ᶜAṭṭār records Rābiᶜah as using the term worship--not love--to describe what passed from herself to God, the idea of love as the central reality and moving force of her worship is implied, especially when this supplication is seen in the context of her other sayings and

experiences. This love was selfless, purified from the desire for gain in this world and the motive of reward in the next. This love was directed to God, for His sake alone: "'My God!'" Rābiʿah prayed, "'Whatever You have destined for me from the world give it to Your enemies. And whatever You have destined for [me] from the hereafter give it to Your friends. Because You are enough for me.'"[31]

Rābiʿah's love had two dimensions. The first was the moving force which proceeded from herself, from her heart directly to God without the hindrance of personal desire or secondary concern. It was her remembrance of God and yearning for Him, to the exclusion of all else. The second was the consummation of her remembrance and yearning in the vision of His Countenance:

> "My Lord! My task and my wish from this world is Your remembrance, and in the hereafter Your Countenance. That is of me. You do whatever You wish."[32]

Rābiʿah experienced the first aspect of love in the context of relationship, in the context of her intimate friendship with the Divine Friend. In the second Rābiʿah experienced a loss of duality, becoming immersed, engulfed and annihilated in the vision of the Divine Himself. In some sense the two loves represented Rābiʿah's love for God and His love for her. Yet following Rābiʿah's concept of repentance, it is understood that preceeding even the first love was God's gift of inspiration that motivated

her heart to seek Him. Thus Rābiᶜah's love for God did not grow out of self-effort; rather the efforts she made, efforts to purify herself, to serve and obey, were, from the start, in response to God's call to love. And since this first love was in the context of her relationship with God, it also involved His responses to her efforts, needs and supplications, leading to His ultimate response in the vision of Himself. This two-fold love is the most central spiritual characteristic of ᶜAṭṭār's Rābiᶜah, as one or both of its aspects can be found at the heart of her every saying, action, spiritual state and experience.

Seeking God to the exclusion of all else was the motive behind Rābiᶜah's asceticism (zuhd). And Rābiᶜah sought more than purification from the material world; she sought to extinguish every personal craving and inner desire so that her only desire was for God. ᶜAṭṭār recounts that once Rābiᶜah had fasted for a week, until hunger overtook her. The eighth night she tried to break her fast, but was prevented from doing so when a cat overturned her bowl of food. She thought to break her fast with water. Yet when she rose to fetch the jar her lamp went out. In the darkness she dropped the jar, and it broke, spilling the water on the ground. Rābiᶜah sighed so heavily it seemed the house would catch fire, and she said, 'O my God, what is this that you do with poor me?'" She heard a voice, "'O Rābiᶜah! If you like We will dedicate the wealth of the world to you, but take

away Our sorrow from your heart. For My sorrow and the affluence of the world do not unite in one heart. O Rābiᶜah! You have a desire and We have a desire. Our desire does not unite with your desire in the same heart.'" In Ilāhī nāmah ᶜAṭṭār adds, "'If thou wouldst always suffer for Me thou must forsake the world forever. Hast thou the one thou canst not hope for the other, for suffering for God is not to be had without paying for it.'"[33] After hearing this voice Rābiᶜah cut off her heart from the world and severed her desires so completely that for thirty years she performed each prayer as if it were her last, and everyday she prayed, '"God! Make me occupied with You so that no one will distract me from You.'"[34]

Rābiᶜah, detached from all save God, depended on Him alone. And having severed her personal desires and relinquished her individual will, she submitted herself completely to God's Will and Desire. In Rābiᶜah's station, the station of tawakkul,[35] God was the Sole Provider, and her dependence on Him was exclusive and direct: "'I would be ashamed to ask worldly things,'" she said, "'from someone in whose hands [things] are a trust.'"[36] God was also the Sole Actor, and she understood that He alone was responsible for all the events which befell her. While a slave, Rābiᶜah prayed, "'...If the [control] of the situation were in my hands, I would not rest one hour from serving You. But You have

put me under the hand of a creature. This is [illegible] I come late to Your service.'"[37] When Rābiᶜah set out on hajj and her donkey died in the desert, she refused the help of fellow pilgrims, saying, "'I have not come depending on you. You go!'" After the caravan had left she exclaimed, "'O my God! Do Kings treat a weak woman in this manner? You called me to Your house, then in the middle of the way, You killed my donkey and left me alone in the desert!'"[38]

Many anecdotes attest to Rābiᶜah's patience in the face of suffering;[39] yet her tawakkul was not fatalistic acceptance of incomprehensible and pitiless decrees from above. That Rābiᶜah would question God, even criticize Him for stranding her in the desert reflected the intimacy of her relationship and the hopeful nature of her trust in Him.[40] At the same time, her loving trust and hope never dissipated into overconfident arrogance. ᶜAṭṭār relates that one day Rābiᶜah's servant girl was preparing food and needed an onion. The servant said, "'I will get it from a neighbor.'" Rābiᶜah stopped her, saying, "'It is forty years that I have made a covenant with God not to ask anything [from anyone]. Let there be no onion!'" Just then a bird flew by and dropped a few peeled onions into the cooking pot. Rābiᶜah put the food aside, saying, "'I am not secure from [God's] guile (makr).'"[41] Though Rābiᶜah had purified herself from the temptations of the world and reached such a degree of tawakkul that "'even

Iblīs [Satan] [did] not have the courage to go around her'",[42] she was not secure from the test of God's guile through which she might be lured unexpectedly into a worldly thought or an attitude of pride or hypocrisy, and thus fall from her position of intimacy. And just as Rābiᶜah's fear of God's guile preserved her from arrogance, so too was her loving confidence protected from complacency by the experience of spiritual constraint.[43] It was said that Rābiᶜah groaned continously, without apparent cause. When asked the reason for her condition, she replied, "'I have a cause from inside the chest that the doctors are unable to cure. The ointment for my wound is His union....'"[44]

Rābiᶜah's fear (khawf), like her asceticism and tawakkul, was fueled by her selfless love for God. This love transported her beyond the ordinary fear (khawf), fear of the torments of Hell. Rābiᶜah's only fear was of separation from God. Hence she remained wary of God's guile, or of anything that might cause such a fate to occur. ᶜAṭṭār relates that Rābiᶜah refused to keep a knife in her home for fear that she would be "'cut off'" from God.[45] Similarly it was said that Rābiᶜah wept continuously. When asked the cause of her weeping, she explained, "'I am afraid of being cut off because I have grown used to Him, lest that at the time of death I would be told; You do not deserve Us!"[46] Thus the effect of Rābiᶜah's selfless love was not to extinguish fear

altogether, but rather to transform it into fear of separation, with the related fear of God's guile through which closeness and familiarity could be changed into distance and estrangement.[47]

Just as Rābiʿah's selfless love moved her to reinterpret fear, so did her love change the meaning of hope (rajāʾ) from the rewards and pleasures of paradise, to the vision of God; "'the Neighbor first and then the house,'" Rābiʿah taught.[48] And once when Rābiʿah fell sick she explained, "'at dawn [my] heart desired Heaven, the Friend punished me; this sickness is from that.'"[49] Thus for Rābiʿah even the hope of God's reward in paradise represented shirk in having a secondary motive apart from God Himself.

Tawakkul, as the living expression of tawḥīd,[50] was the mystic's response to the realization that God is One, and the Sole and Ultimate Source of all that is. Throughout her life Rābiʿah bore witness to tawḥīd, to the principle that God is One and that He alone deserves to be worshipped and obeyed. Yet Rābiʿah's witness was more than doctrinal, it was the embodiment of this principle in her every action and utterance. As God was the Sole Reality and the Sole Cause of events, she interpreted all that occured as divinely intended. She considered any inclination of personal will or desire, apart from God's Will and Desire, as infidelity. Once when Rābiʿah was sick she was visited by her companions ʿAbd al-Wāḥid bin

ʿĀmir and Sufyān al-Thawrī. Upon seeing her afflicted state Sufyān cried, "'O Rābiʿah! Pray that God makes this suffering easy for you.'" "'O Sufyān!'" she said, "'Do you not know that my suffering has been willed by God the Most High?'" "'Yes!'" he replied. "'Since you know,'" Rābiʿah continued, "'[How can] you say that I [should] ask Him something against His Will? It is not admissible to go against the Will of the Friend...I am a servant, and what does a servant have to do with wishing? If I want and God does not want, it is infidelity (kufr).'"[51]

Just as Rābiʿah's tawakkul arose from within an attitude of loving trust and not fatalism, so too her realization of tawḥīd, in surrendering her will to His, was characterized by loving acceptance rather than impersonal determinism.[52] Having surrendered her will to His and given herself wholely into His Care, Rābiʿah accepted whatever came from the Friend. Rābiʿah did not see her poverty as a cause for complaint or as a sign of having been abandoned or betrayed by God. "'He who curses, does he not receive sustenance from Him?'" she asked. "'[How could] someone whose being is permeated with His love [not] get sustenance from Him?...'"[53] As God had willed her condition, she did not ask Him to change it. Once Mālik ibn Dīnār visited Rābiʿah and his heart was pained to see her impoverished state. "'O Rābiʿah!'" he cried, "'I have rich friends. If you allow me, I will ask them for something for you.'" "'O Mālik,'"

she said, "'you are wrong. Is my Provider and their Provider not the one and the same?...Has He forgotten the poor because of their poverty and helps the rich because of their affluence?'" "'No,'" he replied. "'Since He knows my situation, what should I teach Him? He wills this way, I also will as He wills.'"[54]

Poverty, sickness, suffering of any manner was a trial to be born with patience; yet even more, suffering was a gift. When Rābiᶜah was warned that she could have the wealth of the world but lose God's sorrow from her heart, she chose God's gift of sorrow, and the voice revealed, "'Suffering for God is not to be had without paying for it.'"[55] For Rābiᶜah any gift from God, even the gift of suffering, was a treasure for which she would sacrifice the entire world. And through the gift of suffering her heart was purified until she reached the stages of gratitude (shukr) and contentment (ridā). A servant is content, said Rābiᶜah, "'when at the time of affliction he is as grateful as at the time of affluence and blessing.'"[56] In the station of contentment Rābiᶜah held the particular gift, whether of benefit or loss, as insignificant in view of the One Who gave it.

This state of perfect equanimity and pure devotion to God was also possible through the attainment of poverty (faqr). In the higher levels of poverty the soul no longer grasped for any possession or reward, whether of this world or the next, and was thus free to love God for

Himself alone.[57] Once, during hajj, Rābiᶜah asked God for a "point of poverty" (nuqṭah-i faqr). Though she was told that she did not yet deserve it, God gave her a sign of the fortune of His lovers who had come in search of union.[58] The sign was the commencement of her menstruation, which prevented her from entering the kaᶜbah sanctuary and completing her pilgrimage. In this way ᶜAṭṭār teases his readers with the paradoxical image of spiritual purification through ritual impurity and shows that on the path of love and poverty, being deprived of one's goal, even the goal of seeking God, is a gift of purification.

At the base of each of these spiritual states and stations was the first aspect of Rābiᶜah's selfless love, according to which she sought God and remembered Him to the exclusion of all else. Having purified herself of secondary concerns and attachments, and having submitted her will to His, Rābiᶜah attained the states and stations of trust, patience, gratitude and contentment. Yet Rābiᶜah's love, in its second aspect, exceeded even these degrees. Once Ḥasan, Mālik and Shaqīq al-Balkhī sat with Rābiᶜah, discussing the nature of truthfulness. Ḥasan began, "'He who is not patient with the strike of his Lord is not truthful in his claim.'" "'This talk smells of 'I'ness,'" said Rābiᶜah. Shaqīq offered, "'He is not truthful in his claim who does not give thanks for the strike of his Lord.'" "'It should be better than this,'"

said Rābiᶜah. Mālik tried a turn, "'He is not truthful in his claim who does not find pleasure in the strike of his Lord.'" But again Rābiᶜah said, "'It should be better than this.'" "'Now you say it!'" they all replied. She said, "'He is not truthful in his claim who does not forget the pain of the wound in the contemplation of his Mawlā [his Lord, his Friend, the One Whom he is seeking]....'"[59]

Rābiᶜah sought for God not through any secondary manifestation, but directly. ᶜAṭṭār recounts that one spring day Rābiᶜah's maid called to her, "'O my mistress! Come out to see the effects of the power of creation.'" Rābiᶜah called back, "'You come in to see the Creator. Contemplation of the Creator distracts me from the study of creation.'"[60] She taught that the direct vision of God--in fact the only avenue to God--was through the heart:

> "there is no station from the eye to God (Ḥaqq). And from the tongue there is no way to Him, and hearing is the highway of trouble for those who talk, and hands and feet are rudders of perplexity. The job has fallen on the heart. Try to aquire an awakened heart, for once the heart is awakened, it does not need a friend."[61]

ᶜAṭṭār adds, "meaning the awakened heart is that which is lost in God, and he who is lost, what can he do with a friend? Annihilation (fanā) in God is here."[62]

In seeking God, Rābiᶜah became lost, annihilated in her heart's vision. ᶜAṭṭār writes that once Rābiᶜah was

performing her prayers and fell asleep. A straw went into her eyes, but from "the intensity of yearning (shawq) and immersion (istighrāq)...she was not aware of it, because of the intensity of her humility."[63] Through the strength of her yearning for God and through the intensity of her humility, humility that reached to the point of selflessness, Rābiᶜah became immersed in the vision of God, in the experience of His Presence. In Manṭiq al-ṭayr ᶜAṭṭār equates this with the experience of a lover, relating Rābiᶜah's words:

> "...If I had not lost my soul and spirit in God, I would be able to give a moment of attention to human beings; but is it not me whose eye was pierced by a thorn while I was absorbed in contemplation, all in traversing my path, and from whom the blood flowed from the eyes onto the ground without my awareness? The one whom the pain [of love] for God has taken to such a point, how would she be able to occupy herself with a man or a woman? Since I do not know myself, how can I know another by analogy?"[64]

Rābiᶜah's love had reached such a point that she could not perceive of the thorn in her eye; she had become so completely unaware of her own self that she could no longer be occupied with others. In the first love Rābiᶜah turned her back on people and prayed not to be distracted by them; yet in the second love her preoccupation with God was no longer a conscious act or decision, rather it was a state of being in which she was unaware of all else, including her own existence. Once Rābiᶜah was asked, "'Do

you love God?'" "'I do,'" she replied. "'Do you regard Satan as your enemy?'" they asked. She answered,

> "Because of the love for the All-Merciful I do not spend time on Satan's animosity, but I saw the Prophet s.a.w.s. in a dream. He said, 'O Rābiᶜah! Do you love me? I said, 'O Messenger of God! Who does not love you? But the love of God (Ḥaqq) has engulfed me in such a way that the friendship and animosity of others has not remained in my heart."[65]

Rābiᶜah's heart, engulfed by the love of God, had no room for love of the Prophet or hate of Satan, it had no room for hope of Heaven or fear of Hell. Though in the first aspect of Rābiᶜah's love she turned from everything to occupy herself with God alone; in the second aspect of her love, she became immersed in God's Presence to the extent that she perceived nothing else save Him. Thus she could forget--thus she could not even feel--the pain of the wound in contemplation of the One Whom she was seeking. Immersed in the love, in the vision of God, she would not even be able to feel the flames of Hell; and without its heat, what of its reality remained? Is it any wonder that Hell should run away from such a secret?[66]

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. M. Estelami, editor. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, pp. 74, 75, 86-7. Also see p. 77 for the story of the thief who tried to steal Rābiʿah's veil while she was sleeping, yet was prevented from doing so by the Friend who remained awake.

2. Ibid., p. 78.

3. Ibid., pp. 78-9.

4. Ibid., pp. 74-6, 82-3, 87.

5. Ibid., p. 74. See also p. 76, when God granted Rābiʿah a "sign of fortune" by causing her to menstruate, which in turn prevented her from entering the kaʿbah sanctuary, and pp. 76-7 when Rābiʿah gave two loaves of bread in charity, trusting in God's ten-fold return, and received twenty loaves in response to her supplication.

6. Ibid., p. 81. This is similar to a statement attributed to Ḥazrat-i ʿAlī who was once asked if he saw his Lord. He answered, "'I would never worship a lord whom I would not see!'"(See H.A. Landolt, Le révélateur des mystères (Kāshif al-asrār of Nūr al-Dīn Isfarāyinī). Lagrasse: Verdier. 1986, p. 97, n. 100.)

7. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 78.

8. Ibid., pp. 78, c.f. Quran LIV:55.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 79.

11. ʿAṭṭār, The Conference of the Birds (Mantiq al-ṭayr), Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, translators. London and New York: Penguin Group. 1984, pp. 104-5. See also Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami ed.), p. 82 for a similar anecdote concerning the power of dunyā (the world) to distract the spiritual wayfarer, hence emphasizing the need for purification from the world. Once Rābiʿah gave someone money to buy her a carpet. When he asked her what color carpet to buy, she took the money and threw it into the Tigris, remarking, "'From unbought carpet disunion [controversy] has appeared that [one asks] should it be white or black.'" In this way ʿAṭṭār cautions his readers

that even something unacquired, in a sense nonexistent, has the power to entangle the spiritual wayfarer in worldly concerns and controversies.

12. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami ed.), p. 78.

13. ʿAṭṭār, Ilāhī nāmah (The Ilāhī-nāma of ʿAṭṭār). John Andrew Boyle, translator. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1976, pp. 115-6.

14. See ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami ed.), p. 86 for another anecdote relating to the theme of purification from the world; "One of the saints of Basra..."(given in notes to Chapter III, number 6).

15. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami ed.), p.79.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 78.

18. Ibid., p. 85.

19. Ibid. In Nurbakhsh's work Sufi Women,(Leonard Lewisohn, translator. New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications. Revised Second Edition. 1990, pp. 43-4) it is mentioned that Kalābādhī, in Sharḥ-i taʿarruf, has given a Quranic reference: V:119 "God is content with those who are content with Him." The reference should read Quran IX:100.

20. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed.), p. 81.

21. Ibid., pp. 81-2. This anecdote is repeated in Mantiq al-ṭayr (The conference of the Birds (Darbandi and Davis trans.), p. 172). An anecdote expressing a similar theme is the conversation between Ḥasan, Mālik ibn Dīnār, Shaqīq al-Balkhī and Rābiʿah concerning truthfulness.(See this study, p. 58-9, c.f. Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami ed.), p. 86.)

22. Ibid., p. 75.

23. Ibid., p. 82.

24. Ibid., p. 81.

25. Ibid.

26. Rābiʿah also perceived of herself, of her spiritual condition, as she perceived of others; when she

discerned a small lack of inner authenticity she implied that her own words and actions were insincere. One night Rābiʿah said, "'O Lord! Make my heart present. Otherwise accept prayer without the heart.'"(Ibid., p. 87) Also, when explaining the cause of her groaning, she added, "'Eventhough I am not pain-stricken, I pretend to be like them, and it should not be less than this.'"(Ibid., p. 83) If her groaning had come from a state of true sorrow, she "'would not have [had] the courage to breath.'"(C.f. Ibid., p. 82)

27. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami ed.), p. 87.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Louis Gardet refers to the image of Rābiʿah running with a torch and a bucket of water--a torch to set fire to Heaven and water to extinguish the flames of Hell so that these two veils would no longer distract believers from true worship (c.f. Aflākī, Manāqib al-ʿārifīn)--noting that this image reached even to France where it was incorporated into seventeenth century (C.E.) litterature, such as in the figure Caritée of Pierre Camus.(G.C. Anawati and Louis Gardet, Mystique musulmane, aspects et tendances - expérie nces et techniques. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1961, pp. 166-7.)

31. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 87.

32. Ibid., p. 87. The connection between God's remembrance and His vision is reiterated in another anecdote. Ḥasan claimed that if in Heaven he is deprived of the vision of God for even one minute he would cry and mourn so that all the inhabitants of Heaven would feel pity for him. Rābiʿah remarked, "'This talk is nice. But if in this world he is in such a way that if he misses one breath of God's (Ḥaqq) remembrance the same kind of crying and mourning appears, [then] it is the indication that in the next world it would be the same, otherwise it is not like that.'"(Ibid., p. 80.)(See also note 66 of this section (chapter V).)

33. ʿAṭṭār, Ilāhī nāmah (John Andrew Boyle, trans.), p. 153.

34. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami ed.), pp. 82-3.

35. Annemarie Schimmel defines tawakkul as "complete trust in God and self-surrender to Him". (Mystical

Dimensions of Islam. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1983, p. 117.)

36. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami ed.), p. 84.

37. Ibid., p. 74.

38. Ibid.

39. For examples of Rābiʿah's patience (ṣabr) see ibid., pp. 73-4, 84-5.

40. Schimmel refers to this attitude as "husn aẓ-ẓann, thinking well of God".(Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 118.)

41. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 77.

42. Ibid.

43. Although the text mentions Rābiʿah's yearning for union, it is never stated that she experienced "union" that she would now be in a state such as tafriqah ("separation after union", c.f. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 129). Hence her state here is more likely constraint (qabḍ) after expansion (bast).

44. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 83.

45. Ibid., p. 82.

46. Ibid., p. 81.

47. Schimmel writes that for the Sufi well advanced on the spiritual path the only fear that remains is fear of God's "ruses" (makr) through which God may cause the Sufi's downfall.(Mystical Dimensions of Islam, pp. 127-8) The fear of God's guile is tempered by the attitude of husn al-ẓann. In the case of Rābiʿah, she is once reminded, or perhaps reassured, to "think well of God". After Rābiʿah prayed, "'O God! If tomorrow You send me to Hell, I will scream 'I have loved You! Are friends treated this way?!'" a voice answered, "'O Rābiʿah! Do not think of Us with suspicion. For We will place you among Our friends so that you talk to Us.'"(Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, Estelami, ed., p. 87) Concerning the Sufi concept of fear, Sarrāj states that it is of three types: fear of punishment, fear of separation from God or of anything which might block the seeker from the attainment of gnosis, and finally holy fear, the fear of God alone which is given to the elect.(See Margaret Smith, Rābiʿa the

Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1928. Reissued, 1984, p. 67, c.f. Sarrāj, Al-Lumaᶜ.)

48. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 83. Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī has quoted this phrase from Rābiᶜah to describe the Sufi concept of hope.(See Smith, Rābiᶜa the Mystic, p. 71, for a paraphrase of Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ᶜulūm al-dīn, Cairo: 1272 A.H., IV, p. 269)

49. Ibid., p. 84.

50. C.f. Schimmel, The Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 119.

51. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 85.

52. Schimmel describes the related station of perfect contentment, in which the mystic

> should accept every divine decree, be it wrath or grace, with equanimity and joy. This interior joy, this perfect agreement with God's decrees, transforms the beggar into a king and opens the way toward a participation in the divine will, toward love and "higher predestinarianism".(Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 127)

53. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 84.

54. Ibid., pp. 85-6.

55. ᶜAṭṭār, Ilāhī nāmah (John Andrew Boyle, trans.), p. 153.

56. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 81. See also ibid., p. 82 for another anecdote concerning Rābiᶜah's understanding of gratitude.

57. C.f. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 121.

58. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 76.

59. Ibid., p. 86.

60. Ibid., p. 82.

61. Ibid., p. 81.

62. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 81.

63. Ibid., p. 77.

64. ʿAṭṭār, Le Langage des oiseaux (Manṭiq al-ṭayr). Garcin de Tassy, translator. Paris: Éditions Sindbad. 1982, p. 41. The actual term used in the text is dard, meaning pain (c.f. "The one whom the pain for God...."). (Manṭiq al-ṭayr. Ṣādiq-i Gawharīn, editor. Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb. 1342 H.Sh., p. 33, v. 588. See also ibid., p. 33, v. 581.) However the idea of love is implied, especially when in another anecdote concerning Rābiʿah ʿAṭṭār describes her as a "lover". (Ibid., p. 100, v. 1809.)

65. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 80.

66. A famous poem attributed to Rābiʿah aptly expresses the two-fold secret of Rābiʿah's love:

> I [love] Thee with two loves,
> a selfish love and a love that is
> worthy (of Thee),
> As for the love which is selfish,
> I occupy myself therein with
> remembrance of Thee to the
> exclusion of all others,
> As for that which is worthy of Thee,
> therein Thou raisest the veil[s] that I may
> see Thee.
> Yet there is no praise to me in this or that,
> But the praise is to Thee, whether in that
> or this.

(See M. Smith, Rābiʿa the Mystic, pp. 102-3, c.f. Makkī, Qūt al-qulūb and Ḥurayfīsh, Al rawḍ al-fāʾiq. I have changed "I have loved" to "I love" which is more accurate in view of the verb tense used in the poem. (C.f. ʿĀisha Dabbagh, "Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, her Life and Teachings", unpublished paper, Islamic Studies (740), McGill University, 1964, notes p. 3, note 75)) Although this Arabic poem is not included in ʿAṭṭār's Persian account, it is possible that Rābiʿah's supplication "'My Lord! My task and my wish from this world is Your remembrance ...'" (c.f. above, n. 32) is a free adaptation of this poem by ʿAṭṭār.

Also of relevance to the subject of Rābiʿah's two-fold, selfless love is an anecdote in Tafsir-i Anṣārī. Once Ḥasan visited Rābiʿah while she was "'engaged in prayers'", and said:

> "I knelt next to her prayer-mat for a long time observing her. Protruding from her right eye was a broken thorn and a drop of blood was trickling off her cheek onto her prayer-mat. After she finished prayers I exclaimed, 'What have you come to? A thorn in your eye, your prayer-mat blood-stained...[.]' Rābeʿah rejoined, 'O Hasan, I vow by God's glory, which has endowed this least of creatures with Islam's elevation, that if all the torments throughout all the stories of hell were fitted upon a needle and my right eye lined with them, were my left eye to twitch even once with that pain, I would pluck it out from its base.'"(Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women, p. 52, c.f. Tafsir-i Anṣārī, Vol. I, p. 514.)

In this anecdote Rābiʿah's experience of immersion in God is clearly related to her unconcern for the tortures of Hell. It is also significant that Rābiʿah experiences immersion in the vision of God while performing ritual prayer.(See Chapter VI, Ritual Prayer.)

CHAPTER VI

RĀBIʿAH AS MUSLIM

The night that Rābiʿah was born the Prophet Muḥammad appeared to her father in a dream, foretelling of her spiritual greatness and of her intercession for seventy thousand of his community. As Rābiʿah lay dying, those attending her heard a voice, "'O soul, in (complete) rest! Come back thou to thy Lord, well pleased (thyself) and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, then, among my Devotees!'"(c.f. Quran LXXXIX:27-8).[1] For Rābiʿah's life, from beginning to end, was intertwined with Islamic symbols, personalities and practices.[2]

When the Prophet appeared to Rābiʿah in a dream, asking, "'O Rābiʿah, do you love me?'", Rābiʿah, overwhelmed by the love of God, replied that she could love no other; yet she began, "'O Messenger of God, who does not love you....'" For her spiritual state had not shattered her spiritual context, and her exclusive love for God had not severed her relation to the Prophet.

Thus despite her apparent indifference to all else but God, Rābiʿah could maintain her steadfast adherence both to God's Messenger and to the message he bore.

1. Karāmāt and Vilāyat

ʿAṭṭār recounts that one night Ḥasan and his companions went to Rābiʿah. As the night was dark and she had no lamp, she blew on her finger and it gave light until the morning. ʿAṭṭār writes,

> If someone says, "How could this be?" I answer, "The same as Moses' hand." If it is objected, "But Moses a.s. was a prophet," I reply, whoever follows a prophet, as a result he would have a share of karāmāt. For if a prophet has muʿjizah, a valī has karāmāt as a blessed result of following the example of the Prophet s.a.w.s. As the Prophet s.a.w.s. says, "Whoever returns a share of something harām (unlawful) [to the enemy] will find a degree of prophethood"....[3]

Rābiʿah, as a valī,[4] possessed both spiritual closeness, "friendship", with the Divine and spiritual authority. ʿAṭṭār, wishing to describe her vilāyat, again refers to prophethood as the preceding principle:

> "Prophethood is honor (ʿizzat) and there is no seniority or juniority in it." Therefore vilāyat is also the same, especially for Rābiʿah who, in her own time, was not surpassed in [spiritual] dealings and knowledge (maʿrifat), and was accredited among the elders of her time and was a definite proof for the people....[5]

Hence Rābiʿah's vilāyat in some way resembled the spiritual reality of the prophets, and her rank as valī bore connection to that source of spiritual grace. Her karāmāt came from following the Prophet Muḥammad's

example, yet not only in terms of his spiritual grace, also in the practical observance of lawful conduct; for "'[w]hoever returns a share of something ḥarām [to the enemy] will find a degree of prophethood.'"

2. Ḥalāl and Ḥarām

Once Rābiᶜah was visited by two shaykhs who knowing of her piety concluded, "'whatever food she brings we [will eat] because it is ḥalāl.'"[6] At another time Ḥasan found a rich master of Basra weeping at Rābiᶜah's door; he had tried to offer her a purse of gold but had been refused. Ḥasan sought to intercede on the man's behalf. Yet Rābiᶜah still refused, saying "'...How could I accept someone's money [when] I do not know whether any man's property is ḥalāl or ḥarām.'" "'Once I sewed the rip of my shirt,'" she continued, "'using the light of the Sultan's lamp. My heart became closed for a while; until I reopened that rip my heart did not open. Apologize to the master so that he would not make my heart captivated [again].'"[7]

Rābiᶜah sought to draw closer to God by following His Command. That He had given the Command, in the form of law, was enough for her to obey. What was more, she observed the law not to meet its external demands, but to protect the purity of her spiritual heart through which she experienced closeness to God. Rābiᶜah felt a definite relation between lawful conduct and her spiritual condition; thus she was motivated to go beyond normal prohibitions to avoid even the possibility of encountering

something impure, then as a result finding her heart constricted.

3. Ritual Prayer

While still a slave, Rābiᶜah was approached by a stranger; she ran from him, but fell and broke her wrist. Imploring God, she cried, "'O my God! I am a stranger, an orphan, captive, with a broken wrist. [Yet] I have no trouble from all of this, I only want Your satisfaction. Tell me whether You are satisfied [with me] or not?'" A voice responded "'Do not be sad, tomorrow you will have such a dignified rank that the intimates of Heaven will be proud of you.'" Rābiᶜah returned home and began to fast constantly and to spend the length of each night standing in prayer (namāz, the Persian term for salāt).[8]

Beginning in her youth and continuing throughout her life, Rābiᶜah worshipped God through ritual prayer (namāz). It was said that she would perform a thousand rakats in a single day and night,[9] and friends witnessed her daily prayers and night-long vigils.[10] Her prayer was more than the discharging of religious obligation; through prayer she fulfilled the "will of [her] heart in complying with [His] Commands." Worshipping God in prayer was the "light of [her] eyes", and "serving [God's] court".[11] Even more, ritual prayer was an expression of Rābiᶜah's love. In her personal supplications, Rābiᶜah uttered, "'My Lord! My task and my wish from this world is Your remembrance, and in the hereafter Your Countenance....'"[12]

As Rābiʿah spent day and night in ritual prayer, it was thus one of her primary tasks in this world, and a practical manifestation of her remembrance of God, the first aspect of her love.[13] Once while performing prayer, Rābiʿah laid down her head, perhaps in sujūd (prostration), and from the intensity of her yearning and humility she became immersed in the Presence of the One Whom she worshipped, and in this state did not notice the reed which had entered her eye.[14] This anecdote suggests that ritual prayer expressed the first aspect of Rābiʿah's love, in her yearning and remembrance, and could also be the means of attaining the second aspect of her love, in the vision of God Himself.

4. Hajj, the Tension between Inner Yearning and Outward Observance

Rābiᶜah, as a saint, did not supersede ritual practice and law, but felt bound to an even higher level of observance. Yet for Rābiᶜah, the observance of religious obligation did not always correspond to the experience of spiritual fulfillment. Three times Rābiᶜah attempted to complete the obligation of hajj. On her first attempt Rābiᶜah had not yet reached the holy city when she cried, "'O my God, I am depressed. Where am I going? I am a piece of mud, and that house is a stone, I need You.'" God spoke to her heart without any intermediary, "'O Rābiᶜah you are going into the blood of eighteen thousand worlds! Did you not see that [when] Moses a.s. asked for meeting, I showered a few bits of theophany on the mountain and the mountain was torn into forty pieces?'"[15]

Again Rābiᶜah left for hajj, yet in the middle of the desert she saw the kaᶜbah coming to greet her. She said, "'I need the Master of the house. What do I do with the kaᶜbah?...'" Meanwhile Ibrāhīm ibn Adham arrived at Mecca. He had journeyed for fourteen years, performing two rakats of prayer for each step. Finding no kaᶜbah, he first rubbed his eyes in disbelief and then was told that the kaᶜbah had gone to meet a woman. As he saw Rābiᶜah walking by, the kaᶜbah returned to its place. Ibrāhīm

turned her, demanding an explanation of these events. "'You crossed [the desert] in [the state of ritual] prayer,'" Rābiᶜah replied, "'and I did it in [the state of spiritual supplication and] need.'" She completed her hajj, then wept and prayed, "'O my God, You have promised a good reward both for hajj and for a disaster. Now [if] my hajj is not accepted where is my reward for a disaster?'"[16]

The following year Rābiᶜah said, "'If last year the ka<u>ᶜbah</u> came to welcome me, this year I will go to welcome the ka<u>ᶜbah</u>.'" She spent the next seven years turning on her side until she reached Mount Arafat. There a voice called to her, "'O you claimant, what is this request that has gotten hold of you? If you want I will show one manifestation so that immediately you melt!'" "'O Lord of Glory!'" she replied, "'Rābiᶜah has no means to get to such a degree. But I want a point of poverty.'" The voice said,

> "O Rābiᶜah, poverty is the drought of Our Wrath that We have put on the path of men. When they get so close to Our union that there is only a hair's width left, the situation changes and turns into separation. You are still veiled in seventy veils of your time. Until you come out of all this and step onto Our path and pass these seventy stations you cannot talk about our poverty....'"

Rābiᶜah looked above at a sea of blood which was hanging in midair. The voice continued, "This is the blood of the hearts of our lovers who have come in search of union and

have gotten to the first station whose whereabouts are not known to anyone in both worlds." Rābiʿah said, "O Lord of Glory! Show me a sign of their fortune." Immediately she began to menstruate. "'The first station,'" said the voice, "'is that they crawl seven years on heir sides until in Our way they visit a mud brick. When they get close to that mud brick, because of they themselves the road becomes closed to them.'" Rābiʿah was set aglow, and said, "'O God, You do not let me in Your house, and You do not let me stay in my house...Either let me stay in Basra in my house, or bring me to Your house in Mecca. First I would not pay attention to the house, I wanted You. Now I do not deserve Your house.'" Saying this, she returned to Basra and became a recluse in her hermitage.[17]

ʿAṭṭār shows that Rābiʿah, overwhelmed by the intensity of her yearning, desired a direct experience of God, not a visit to His house, not the performance of an outward rite. Yet God spoke to her, telling her that what she desired was greater than she had the capacity to sustain. Again Rābiʿah left on hajj, and again she yearned for the Master, not His house. She fulfilled the prescribed outward rites, yet the force that animated her actions was her inner state of intense supplication and need. And this inner state was more pleasing to God than fourteen years of ritual observance. After completing the rites, Rābiʿah prayed for God's promised reward for the

acceptance of her hajj, or His reward for the disaster of its rejection.

Although Rābiʿah's inner state of yearning was superior to outward observance, on her final pilgrimage God revealed that she was still veiled by seventy veils and had not even approached the station of poverty, the station that was only a hair's width from union, the station in which union became separation. Again God warned her she could not sustain the manifestation of Himself that she desired. Yet now she learned that she did not even deserve His house.

In ʿAṭṭār's portrayal there is a tension between Rābiʿah's inner state of yearning and the obligation of outward observances. Rābiʿah's inner state is shown to be higher than outward practice, even practice taken to an excessive degree. Yet her inward state does not relieve her of outward obligations, nor, in these three previous anecdotes, does it entitle her to the direct manifestation she desires. In fact, Rābiʿah is told that she does not even deserve God's house; in other words, she does not even deserve to complete the obligation of hajj itself. Thus ʿAṭṭār presents us with a contradiction: Rābiʿah's inner state is higher than outward ritual observance, yet she does not deserve to complete the ritual observance of hajj. Although there may be several explanations for this apparent contradiction, within ʿAṭṭār's account this

contradiction points to a deeper paradox where tensions are not resolved, but transcended.

In ʿAṭṭār's account, Rābiʿah's outward pilgrimage is a reflection of her inward journey. She was not only a pilgrim, traveling to the ka'bah, she was a lover in search of union. Yet approaching the mud brick of the ka'bah, and approaching union with her Lord, she learned that by reason of herself the way to both goals was blocked. She had prayed for a sign of the fortune of God's lovers, and in respsonse she was stricken with "woman's intimate complaint" and began to menstruate.[18] In the outward journey she was denied entry to the house because of the impurity of her physical body, in the inward journey she was denied access to His Presence because of the inner impurity of herself, her unworthiness to attain the stations of poverty and union.

Yet for Rābiʿah, who was on the path of love and poverty, being denied a goal was both reward and purification. An unaccepted hajj was a disaster, and she prayed for God's promised reward if that disaster occurred. Yet later, when she asked for a sign of the fortune of God's lovers, God granted her the reward of this sign by rendering her unable to continue her hajj. This was God's promised reward for disaster: the reward was disaster, and disaster was the reward. For on the path of love, reward and disaster are the same; and on the path of poverty, purification from reward is the reward itself.

5. Religion and Worship as Expressions of Love

Rābiʿah was once asked about love (maḥabbat). She said:

> "Love came from pre-eternity and reached to eternity. And in the eighteen thousand worlds did not find a person who would drink a sip from it. At the end it reached God (Ḥaqq), and this sentence was left from it: 'He loves them and they love Him.'"[19]

The last sentence is a reference to the Quran, verse V:57: "O ye who believe! If any from among you turn back from his [religion (dīn)], soon will God produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him...." Rābiʿah claimed that no one in all the worlds had tasted love, and thus all humanity had turned back from true religion, which was love for the sake of God alone.

Religion was love; yet Rābiʿah's love was not confined to the realm of personal feeling and experience. It also included a practical dimension, shown in her acts of service and worship. Rābiʿah fulfilled the ritual obligations of her faith; she prayed, she fasted, she undertook the hajj, she observed the ordinances of ḥalāl and ḥarām, in fact her observance of law and her supererogatory prayers and fasts exceeded even reasonable bounds. Yet what distinguished Rābiʿah as a Muslim saint was not the length or amount of her acts of worship, but the motive for which she undertook them:

> "It is a [bad] servant," [Rābiʿah said,] "who worships his God out of fear or out of expectation for reward."
>
> "Why do you worship God?" [they asked her,] "Do you not have expectation?"
>
> She said, "'The Neighbor first, then His house.' Is it not enough for us that we have been ordered to worship Him? That if there were no Heaven or Hell we should not obey Him?! Does He not deserve to be worshipped without any [secondary concern]?"[20]

Rābiʿah fulfilled the obligations of religion out of her love for God and for His sake alone. She taught that acts of worship and pious observances, without love, lacked their central purpose and preserved only the outer trappings of religion. ʿAṭṭār emphasizes this point in Muṣībat nāmah, where he recasts the spring day conversation between Rābiʿah and her maid as an exchange between Rābiʿah and a zāhid (an ascetic):

> What do I want to do with creation? The Creator is available to me, do not take me to creation.
>
> If there is a path to the Creator in your heart, in comparison to that, creation is like a straw.
>
> When there is such a path open for someone, why should one go through the trouble of embarking on a longer path?
>
> [The visit] to the kaʿbah of the soul is seeing the face of the Beloved, seeing His face in the [house of] the kaʿbah of the soul [the heart].
>
> If you can see in this way I will call you one with global-vision, otherwise I will call you a religionless (bī dīn) blind man.[21]

Thus for ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah, religion without love was not even religion at all.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. M. Estelami, editor. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, pp. 73, 87-8.

2. In the account of Rābiʿah (Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ Estelami, ed), ʿAṭṭār gives numerous references to Quranic verses and uses Quranic stories as analogies. For example see p.78 ("in the keeping of a King Omnipotent", c.f. Quran: LIV:55), p. 81 ("He loves them and they love Him", c.f. Quran V:57), p. 84 (Pharoh's claim "'I am your Lord Most High'", c.f. Quran LXXIX:24), p. 85 ("God is content with those who are content with Him", c.f. Quran IX:100), pp. 87-8 ("'O soul at rest...'", Quran LXXXIX:27-8). Also see p. 75 (the Quranic story of Prophet Mūsā who asked for a vision of God, and the mountain that shattered under the weight of God's theophany, c.f. Quran VII:143), p. 79 (Mūsā's hand which became white, c.f. Quran XXVI:33), p. 86 (the story of the women of Egypt who cut their hands in the comtemplation of the Prophet Yūsuf, c.f. Quran XII:31) The existence of these references and analogies supports Massignon's theory concerning the Quranic origin of Islamic mysticism, and by extension the Islamic nature of Rābiʿah's spirituality.

3. Ibid., p. 79. Although ʿAṭṭār's gives the last sentence ("'Whoever returns a share of something ḥarām....'") as a saying of the Prophet, it does not appear to be a known hadith. Estelami, in the indices to his edition of Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ, has listed it under the sayings of the saints appearing in Arabic and not under hadith.(p. 916) Nicholson mentions the same line, but whereas in other places he indentifies hadith, he does not identify this saying as such.(Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Tadhkiratu 'l-Awliya), R.A. Nicholson, editor. London: Luzac & Co. Part I, p. 65.)

4. Valī, or walī in its Arabic form, within a Sufi context refers to a saint who has achieved a high degree of closeness to God, who is a "friend" of God. The attainment of this degree is often explained in terms of the saint's connection to the Muhammadan reality, or the primordial light of Muḥammad, the "source for the illumination of human hearts".(Hermann Landolt, "Walāyah", in The Encyclopedia of Religion. Mircea Eliade, editor in chief. New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Company. 1987. Volume 15, pp. 321-2.(C.f. Sahl al-Tustarī's Quranic commentary).)

5. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), pp. 72-3. ʿAṭṭār's quotation is attributed to Abū ʿAlī Fārmadī.

6. Ibid., p. 76.

7. Ibid., p. 84.

8. Ibid., p. 74.

9. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 74.

10. Ibid., pp. 77, 83, 86-7, and a reference to Rābiʿah making ablutions (wuḍū) on p. 85.

11. Ibid., p. 74.

12. Ibid., p. 87.

13. Fasting, like prayer, is also an obligatory and supererogatory practice in orthodox Islam. Through fasting Rābiʿah expressed her gratitude to God, and thus it was another means for her remembrance of Him.(Ibid., p. 87)

14. Ibid., p. 77.

15. Ibid., pp. 74-5.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 76.

18. ʿAṭṭār, The Conference of the Birds (Manṭiq al-ṭayr). Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, translators. London and New York: Penguin Group. 1984, p. 86.

19. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 81.

20. Ibid., p. 83.

21. ʿAṭṭār, Muṣībat nāmah. Nūrānī Viṣāl, editor. Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Zavvār. 1338 H.Sh., p. 198.

CHAPTER VII

RĀBIʿAH AS WOMAN[1]

That one secluded in the special
woman's quarter,
That [one] covered with the covering
of sincerity,
That [one] burnt with love and ardent
desire,
That [one] infatuated with proximity
and burning,
That deputy of pure Maryam,
That [one] accepted by the men
[dignitaries],
Rābiʿah-i ʿAdawīyah....[2]

1. Spiritual Manhood

"'When tomorrow on the Day of Judgement,'" ʿAṭṭār relates, "'they call: 'O you men!' the first person who will step [forward] into the line of men will be Maryam.'"[3] Thus ʿAṭṭār begins his account of Rābiʿah--the deputy of pure Maryam--boldly justifying her inclusion among the other "men of God":

> If someone asks, "Why did you include [Rābiʿah's] description among the men?": we say, the Master of the Prophets--peace and greetings be upon him--says, "Verily God does not look to your forms"; the job is not by the form, it is by the intention...When a woman is a man of the path of God, she cannot be called a woman.[4]

ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah was a "man of God", one who uttered words "worthy of a man indeed",[5] one who ventured fearlessly on the "path of men".[6] Yet Rābiʿah was not

immune from physical weakness and the vulnerabilities particular to the feminine sex; as a young girl she was seized by a wicked man and sold into slavery. Later she was approached by a stranger, she was afraid and fled. Hence, ʿAṭṭār's concept of manhood had little to do with the conventional images of physical strength and virility. It also contrasted with the stereotypical images of womanhood characterized by passivity, irresolution and emotional weakness. True manhood was possessing inner strength and courage. It was having unfailing endurance and a will of iron. True manhood was inward and spiritual, and it required the strength of a warrior to wrestle and defeat the inner enemy of the nafs (ego) and to endure the hardships on "the path of men", on the journey towards God.

Though spiritual manhood required a break from stereotypical "feminine" behaviour, it was not a denigration of woman's essential nature, nor was it the effacement of womanly traits. As Rābiʿah journeyed towards the kaʿbah, and towards the Master of that house, God struck her a blow, rendering her ritually impure through menstruation, through "woman's intimate complaint". Yet although her body was in a state of impurity, her spiritual state remained such that God spoke to her through a heavenly voice. What was more, ʿAṭṭār depicts God as using even this "feminine" analogy to illustrate the condition of the spiritual seeker, and all humankind,

in front of the Divine Presence; for although the impediment of menstruation is specific to woman, the more essential spiritual impediment of being veiled by oneself is experienced by every human being.

Rābiᶜah's spiritual manhood was neither a denigration of "femaleness" nor an exaltation of "maleness"; it pointed beyond these two poles to the source of Rābiᶜah's authenticity and spiritual grace: her effacement in the One. ᶜAṭṭār writes:

> ...in truth, where these people are, they are all naught of tawḥīd. In tawḥīd when will the existence of "I" and "you" remain, let alone that of "man" and "woman".[7]

Rābiᶜah, who surpassed others in the intensity of her sincerity and self-surrender, counted as one of the first among the "men of God". "No, she wasn't a single woman," ᶜAṭṭār writes, "but a hundred men over";[8] and "though a woman, [she] was the crown of men".[9]

2. Marriage and Men

Once Ḥasan asked Rābiᶜah, "'Do you feel like marrying [me]?'" With her usual stinging wit, Rābiᶜah replied, "'The marriage contract is applicable [only] to a being. Where is the being here? For I do not belong to myself, I belong to Him and [am] in the shadow of His decree. The proposal should be addressed to Him.'"[10] Another time Rābiᶜah was asked why she did not get a husband. She replied that she was puzzled with three things, and if she could find the answers to her questions, then she would marry.

> "First," [she said,] "at the time of death, will my faith be intact or not? Second, will my record [of deeds] be [placed in] my right hand or not? Third, at the time when a group of people will be taken from the right side to Heaven, and a group from the left side to Hell, to which group will I belong?"

"'We do not know,'" they said. "'Since I have such an ordeal in front of me,'" she replied, "'how can I dare to get married?'"[11] And with this answer she silenced all further questions.

Rābiᶜah had a talent for rebuttal.[12] Her words, like a knife, cut through exterior arguments to the heart of the issue. And the sting of truth left no room for countering replies. In exchange after exchange Rābiᶜah pronounced the decisive statement, the final word. And

through her sharp and cutting replies, she revealed her superiority to all of her--mostly male--fellow mystics, not to mention her superiority to other men of wealth and position.[13] Rābiʿah's boldness reached even to the angels, as she answered the two (Munkar and Nakīr) who questioned her in the grave, "'Go back and tell God (Ḥaqq) that despite the several thousand creatures that You have, You did not forget an old woman; I, who have [only] You from all the world, will never forget You so that You should send somone to ask, 'Who is your God?'"[14]

Through the wit of her words, Rābiʿah challenged perspectives, overturned expectations, and always revealed a deeper spiritual truth. Yet though a challenging figure, Rābiʿah was not a social reformer or a mouthpiece for shallow conceptions of women's "liberation". Armed with truth and sincerity, Rābiʿah challenged those around her to look to the heart of every issue and to determine meaning and significance only in relation to that source of authentic truth. In the case of marriage, her clever replies expressed not a rejection of traditional concepts of authority and obedience, but rather a reinterpretation, even more, a regrounding of these concepts in the ultimate source of authority and obedience, in the ultimate source of one's being and belonging. Similarly, Rābiʿah's decline of marriage was not a protest against women's roles or social institutions; rather it pointed to her unique spiritual state which overshadowed outward

circumstances and transcended normal roles and expectations. While a slave, Rābiʿah had found her station neither a cause for complaint nor an essential obstacle on the spiritual path; yet as a matter of preference, she clearly desired to serve her Divine Master to the exclusion of everyone else. Her celibacy, likewise, was an expression of preference; as obedience was the starting point in her spiritual quest, the issue was not whether to obey, but <u>whom</u> to obey. And as in every other aspect of her life, if the choice were her's, Rābiʿah preferred to serve and obey her Lord directly and to the exclusion of all else, to "'have [only Him] from all the world'".

As a freed slave, an orphan and unmarried, Rābiʿah fell outside of the usual web of family and social relations. A lone woman, no man regulated her interactions, no man oversaw her affairs. Rābiʿah veiled herself in keeping with Islamic requirements.[15] Yet despite the Islamic emphasis on sexual segregation, she met and conversed with men in a manner not typical of other Muslim women.[16] The legitimacy of this behavior, as with the other aspects of her character, stemmed from her spiritual authenticity. It was Rābiʿah's spiritual wisdom that drew others to seek her out, so too was it her spiritual rank and authority that overshadowed, and in some instances, qualified the consideration of her gender. As a <u>valī</u>, as a friend of God, Rābiʿah interacted on equal

footing with men and women, and she commanded the respect of all.[17] Once, said Ḥasan, "'I spent twenty-four hours with Rābiʿah [talking] about ṭarīqah and ḥaqīqah, in a way that it neither occured to me that I am a man, nor did it occur to me that she is a woman. And at the end when I got up I found myself an indigent and her the sincere [one].'"[18]

Through Rābiʿah ʿAṭṭār expresses subtle, paradoxical spiritual truths. He conveys his message not only in what statements Rābiʿah makes, but to whom she makes them. That Rābiʿah, a woman, triumphs over an almost entirely male cast of associates is clearly deliberate on ʿAṭṭār's part. In her interaction with men, Rābiʿah hardly presents an image of woman as submissive and subdued. Rābiʿah is shown to be hospitable, respectful,[19] and even consoling,[20] but never intimidated in front of men or male authority. Yet since ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah is not a proto-feminist or social reformer, what does she stand for? What does ʿAṭṭār, through Rābiʿah, want to say about woman, and the significance of womanhood?

3. The Weakness of Woman

> It is narrated that a group of people went to [Rābiʿah] to test her, and said: "All the virtues have been poured on the heads of men, and the crown of compassion has been put on the heads of men, and the girdle of generosity has been put on men. Prophethood has never descended upon a woman. [Therefore] for what reason [do you] boast?"[20]

Rābiʿah, a woman, poor and alone, could boast neither of wealth nor of social position. She was simply a woman, a weak woman. She even described herself as such, asking God if Kings treated a "'weak woman'" as He did when He stranded her in the desert, or telling the angels of the grave that she was an "'old woman'" with nothing from this world. Yet those who knew her marveled at the paradox and mystery of her outward weakness and her inward strength. "'What a surprise!'" exclaimed Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī. "'[Me] an ignorant man and [her] a weak [yet] knowledgeable woman.'"[22] Said a noble of Basra, "'Look at the magnanimous spirit of this weak woman that has pulled her to such a high rank that she refuses to waste her time with begging.'"[23] And at her death, the saints of Basra gathered around her corpse praising her, and saying, "'Rābiʿah came into this world and went into the hereafter [in such a way] that she never committed any boldness with God (Ḥaqq) and never asked for anything and never said make me such or do such and such [a thing for me].'"[24]

In her life Rābiʿah strove not to be something, but to be nothing for the sake of God. She sought to extinguish every form of self-aggrandizement, every inclination of selfishness, pride and arrogance, so that her heart, emptied of self, could be filled with the pure vision and transforming light of God.[25] Effaced in this Truth, her actions were sincere, her words were authentic.

On the day that a party had come to test her, saying all the glories had been showered on the heads of men, and therefore of what did she boast, Rābiʿah replied:

> "All of these things that you have said are true. But egotism and self-worship and [Pharoah's assertion that] 'I am your Lord, Most High' have never sprung from a woman's breast. [Nor has any] woman ever been an effeminate."[26]

Though deprived of the "glories of manhood", woman had never claimed to be God. And having not attained the rank of man, woman had never fallen from manhood into effeminacy. As a woman, Rābiʿah could boast of nothing: and it was precisely of "nothing" that Rābiʿah boasted.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. The subject of mysticism and gender, with reference to Rābiʿah, is the topic of an article, "Women Mystics in Islam", by Emine Gürsoy-Naskali. (In Women in Islamic Societies. Bo Utas, editor. New York: Olive Brancn Press. 1983, pp. 238-243.) However, the discussion both of Rābiʿah and of women mystics in general is basically an abbreviated summary of material from Margaret Smith's work. (Rābiʿa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1928. Reissued, 1984.)

2. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. M. Estelami, editor. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, p. 72.

3. Ibid., p. 72, quoted from ʿAbbāsah-i Ṭūsī.

4. Ibid. The hadith, with slight variation, is given by Muslim. (In Attar's version the term ṣuwarikum (physical forms) replaces ṣuratikum in the original. See A.J. Wensinck, Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane. Leiden: E.J. Brill. 1967. Tome VI, p. 476.)

5. ʿAṭṭār, Ilāhī nāmah (The Ilāhī-nāma of ʿAṭṭār). John Andrew Boyle, translator. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1976, p. 115.

6. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 76.

7. Ibid., p. 72.

8. ʿAṭṭār, Mantiq al-ṭayr. Ṣādiq-i Gawharīn, editor. Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb. 1342 H.Sh., p. 33, v. 581.

9. Ibid., p. 100, v. 1803.

10. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 79. Nicholson's edition of Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (London: Luzac & Co. Part I, p. 66) reads:

> "The tie of marriage applies to those who have being. Here being has disappeared, for I have become naughted to self and exist only through Him. I belong wholly to Him. I live in the shadow of His control. You must ask my hand of Him, not of me." (translated by A.J. Arberry,

Muslim Saints and Mystics. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Reprint. 1983, p. 46)

I favor the reply in Estelami's edition, as it is a play on the word "being" and hence more in line with Rābiʿah's other characteristically witty remarks.

11. ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), p. 80.

12. See Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiʿa of Baṣra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts".(In Religion. New York: Academic Press. Volume Twenty. July, 1990, p. 235.) Baldick remarks that Rābiʿah can be noted for "anecdotes of her wit", and contends that this attribute is part of a larger persona of Rābiʿah the musical entertainer and courtesan. Although Baldick draws on the existence of such a legend in folk culture and popular belief, there is little support of this variant image of Rābiʿah in the source texts. Hence it would appear that the image of Rābiʿah as a converted courtesan has some basis in popular culture, yet is not consistent with Rābiʿah as she has been enshrined within Sufi tradition.(See also note 17 of this section and the discussion of Rābiʿah's grave site in Appendix B of this work.)

13. For examples of witty rebuttals and indications of Rābiʿah's superior state see ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ (Estelami, ed.), pp. 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81-2, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88.

14. Ibid., p. 88.

15. Ibid., p. 77. A thief tried to steal Rābiʿah's chaddur, a long veil which covers the body as well as the hair. There is also an indirect reference to Rābiʿah as a "veiled one" in ʿAṭṭār's biography of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. (Tadhkirat (Estelami, ed.), p. 37)

16. Concerning the relation between spiritual rank and gender considerations, see also Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics, pp. 173-5, for the story of Fāṭimah, wife of Aḥmad-i Khaḍrūyah and disciple of Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī.

17. ʿAṭṭār includes only one phrase indicating that Rābiʿah may have behaved with sexual impropriety. He writes that after being freed by her master, Rābiʿah

> started a prayer life. It is said that everyday she performed one thousand rakats of prayer, and from time to time she would go to the assembly of Ḥasan-i Baṣrī. Some

people say that she fell into musicianship, and again repented and took up residence in a ruined place. (Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed.), pp. 72-3.)

In Nicholson's edition this anecdote is included in the list of variants (Part I, p. 26), the last lines reading; "[Rābiᶜah] from time to time attended the assembly of Ḥasan-i Baṣrī and made a friendship (tavallā) with Ḥasan. Some say she fell into musicianship then repented at Ḥasan's hand and took up residence in the ruins".

Phrased as such (in both renditions), it is clear that ᶜAṭṭār favors the idea that Rābiᶜah started an intense prayer life, and presents the idea that she "fell into muscianship and again repented" only as what some people say. The idea of Rābiᶜah slipping into a period of irreligiosity, which within the social and cultural context implies courtesanship, is not present or even reflected in any of the remaining material of her biography. Further, it is not substantiated in any of the other source material pertaining to Rābiᶜah, with the exception of an indirect reference made by "the notoriously unreliable hagiographer" Shams al-Dīn Aflākī.(See Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiᶜa of Baṣra", p. 234, c.f. Aflākī, Manāqib al-ᶜārifīn.)

Massignon refers to Rābiᶜah as "ancienne joueuse de flûte, convertie...'", however his only reference for this statement is ᶜAṭṭār's account.(Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1954, p. 215, ff. 3)

18. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed.), p. 78.

19. Ibid., pp. 76-7.

20. Ibid., p. 78.

21. Ibid., p. 84.

22. Ibid., pp. 81-2.

23. Ibid., p. 84.

24. Ibid., p. 88.

25. See also ᶜAṭṭār, Ilāhī nāmah (John Andrew Boyle, translator), pp. 330-1, where ᶜAṭṭār describes the light of God which transforms the heart, and includes reference to Rābiᶜah.

26. ᶜAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed.), p. 84.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: ʿAṬṬĀR'S RĀBIʿAH AS MYSTIC, MUSLIM, AND WOMAN

"If it is permitted," writes ʿAṭṭār, "to take two-thirds of the religion from ʿĀyishah--may God be pleased with her--it is also permitted to draw benefit from her slave girls."[1] Through the image of this slave girl, Rābiʿah, ʿAṭṭār seeks to express the subtle paradoxes of mystical insight and truth. Drawing on every symbolic nuance of her character, ʿAṭṭār presents Rābiʿah, the mystic, the Muslim, the woman, the friend and lover of God, as a model of sincerity, a lesson in truth. ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah, as a mystic, is one "burnt with love and ardent desire...infatuated with proximity and burning", who reached the rank of intimacy and friendship with God by virtue of her all-consuming love. It is this love which inspired her to seek God and remember Him to the exclusion of all else, and it is this love which engulfed her heart and overwhelmed her in His vision.

ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah, as a Muslim, exists within the context of orthodox Islamic practice, yet is not typical of traditional piety. She used the medium of orthodox practice to give form to the inner spiritual reality and experience of her selfless love, in both of its aspects.

And although Rābiʿah's inward state is superior to outward practice, ʿAṭṭār never describes her as superseding the practical obligations of faith; rather he portrays her acts of worship and physical pilgrimage as the outward manifestations of her inward spiritual journey.

As a woman, ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah is a complete departure from the image of feminine passivity and submissiveness. Possessing spiritual "manhood", Rābiʿah shows that being a woman is not an essential impediment on the path towards God. Yet what is more, Rābiʿah shows that in the quest for spiritual manhood--the quest which begins with the submission of the ego to God--woman, in her weakness, has a decided advantage.

* * * * *

> Because on this path you are not God or prophet,...you are a handful of dirt. Be content to be the dust of this path...Because you are only a handful of dirt, speak down to earth. [Like Rābiʿah] believe that all is pure, and speak accordingly with purity of heart.[2]

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NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ. M. Estelami, editor. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, p. 72.

2. ʿAṭṭār, Le Langage des oiseaux (Manṭiq al-ṭayr). Garcin de Tassy, translator. Paris: Éditions Sindbad. 1982, "Anecdote sur Rābiah", p. 41. (See ʿAttār, Manṭiq al-ṭayr. Ṣādiq-i Gawharīn, editor. Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb. 1342 H.Sh., p. 33, verses 590-2.)

APPENDIX A

Rābiʿah's Genealogy

Rābiʿah was born in the second century A.H./early 8th century C.E. Jāḥiẓ refers to her as Rābiʿah al-Qaysīyah, hence Pellat writes that Rābiʿah belonged to the Banū ʿAdī branch of al-Qays, al-Qays being one of Basra's founding Arab tribes.[1] Margaret Smith specifies that Rābiʿah belonged to the al-ʿAtīk tribe of Qays b. ʿAdī (or ʿAdaw) which would account for the fact that she is sometimes referred to as al-Qaysīyah and sometimes as al-ʿAdawīyah.[2] According to Nurbakhsh, the al-ʿAtīk traces its lineage back to the Prophet Noah.[3]

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī writes that Rābiʿah belonged to the Banī ʿAdwa branch of the al-ʿAtīk, descended from the tribe of Azd, descended from the tribe of Qays. Referring to Ibn Khalikān, Wafayāt al-aʿyān, and Ibn Taghrībirdī, Al-nujūm al-zāhirah, Badawī claims that Rābiʿah was in the service of the al-ʿAtīk. He presumes this to mean that her father had been an attached slave of that tribe but had gained his freedom prior to Rābiʿah's birth. Badawī states that the tribe of al-ʿAtīk descended from the tribe of Azd, originally of Qays. He makes the further supposition that the al-ʿAtīk have been in Marv (then Iran) and suggests that perhaps the al-ʿAtīk along with its attached slaves (which included Rābiʿah's

predecessors) were originally of Iranian descent. He appears to be the first to suggest this.[4]

Massignon, although listing Badawī as his source reference, writes Rābiᶜah's clan was ᶜAtīk ibn Naṣr ibn Shunūw descended from Azd, but not Qays.[5]

NOTES TO APPENDIX A

1. Charles Pellat, Le milieu Basrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiẓ. Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve. 1953, p. 23 and p. 104, ff. 15.

2. Margaret Smith, Rābiᶜa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprint. 1984, p. 3, c.f. Ibn al-Jawzī, "Mirāt al-zamān", fol. 256 a. Taghrībirdī, Al-nujūm al-zāhirah, I, p. 365.

3. Javad Nurbakhsh, "Rābeᶜah Al-ᶜadawiya", in Sufi Women. Translated by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications. Second Revised Edition, 1990, p. 16.

4. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Shahīdat al-ᶜishq al-ilāhī, Rābiᶜah al-ᶜAdawīyah. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nihḍat al-Miṣriyah. N.d., p. 9, and pp. 8-10/Farsi translation: Shahīd-i ᶜishq-i ilāhī, Rābiᶜah-i ᶜAdawīyah. Muḥammad-i Tahrīrchī, translator. Tehran: Intishārāti-i Mawlā. 1367 H.Sh., pp. 9-12.

5. Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. In the Addenda of the 1954 edition, p. 239. Incidently, Pellat lists Azd (along with Qays) as one of Basra's founding Arab tribes.(Le milieu Basrien, p. 23.)

APPENDIX B

ʿAṭṭār's Rābiʿah and the Question of Historical Dates

I have found only one instance of estimated dates given for Rābiʿah's birth, namely circa 95 or 99 A.H.[1] Several dates are given for her death starting with 135 A.H. as the earliest, followed by 180 A.H. and 185 A.H./801 C.E. A.J. Arberry, in his abridged translation of Tadhkirat al-awliyā', gives both 135 A.H. and 185 A.H. for Rābiʿah's death.[2] Massignon, in Essai, mentions both these death dates, but judges in favor of the later date.[3] Nurbakhsh, in Sufi Women, lists all three dates with reference to specific source works.[4] As additional information, we hear in an anecdote related by ʿAṭṭār that Rābiʿah was an "old woman" when she died.[5]

The problem of historical dating becomes more complicated when we consider the specific material in ʿAṭṭār's account, as he portrays Rābiʿah as having associated with figures from both the first and the second century A.H. If we accept Massignon's judgement of the later date for Rābiʿah's death, it seems unlikely that any meeting took place between Rābiʿah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (b. 21 A.H., d. 110 A.H.[6]) of the nature described by ʿAṭṭār. Rābiʿah must have been quite young, perhaps no more than 10 or 11 when Ḥasan died, not the age to consider his

marriage proposal or to carry on a mature spiritual companionship as depicted in ʿAṭṭār's account.[7] However, if Rābiʿah's date of death was 135 A.H., then such a meeting conceivably could have taken place. Similarly, her meeting wtih Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 130 A.H.[8]) better coincides with this earlier date of death. Yet this assumption also raises new problems. If she died in 135 A.H., then she would not have been the contemporary of other companions mentioned in ʿAṭṭār's account, such as Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī (d. circa 172-6 A.H.[9]), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161 A.H.[10]), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194 A.H.[11]) or Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d.c. 165 A.H.[12]).

Two incidents from Attar's account which might have been useful in determining historical dates are the mention of ʿIsā Rādān (or Zādān in Nicholson's edition) as the governor of Basra at the time of Rābiʿah's birth[13] and the famine in Basra which coincided with Rābiʿah's childhood. Unfortunately, I have not found any mention of ʿIsā Rādān (Zādān) or any similar name in the work of Charles Pellat (Le milieu Baṣrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiẓ), although Pellat lists all the governors and significant officials of Basra for the first several centuries. Nor have I seen any reference to a famine in Basra during the first through seventh centuries A.H. However, Pellat mentions that under normal conditions Basra had a brutal climate which varied from intense heat to extreme cold and, more significantly, the city had a

serious shortage of usable water.[14] Thus famine-like conditions could occur, and may have occurred quite frequently, yet would not necessarily have been regarded as exceptional events.

In addition to the historical considerations mentioned in determing Rābiʿah's date of death, it is possible to interpret Rābiʿah's meeting with Ḥasan al-Basri as a conflict between two trends in Sufism: the first, as represented primarily by Ḥasan, is the ascetical approach based on the fear of God, whereas the second, represented by Rābiʿah, is the path based on the love of God, intense yearning for Him and seeking proximity to Him.[15] The latter approach not only reflects ʿAṭṭār's mystical thought but could account for the creation of non-historical legends. If this interpretation is correct, it also could account for the exchanges between Rābiʿah and Mālik ibn Dīnār, a disciple and contemporary of Ḥasan.[16] We should note, however, that ʿAṭṭār shows Rābiʿah to be superior to all her other associates, including those of later date, based on her direct experience of knowledge and inner state of yearning. Thus this contrast betwen Rābiʿah and other spiritual companions also could be interpreted as representing two trends or approaches within Sufism. Nevertheless, Ḥasan's extreme emphasis on asceticism and fear of God makes him a more appropriate symbolic representation of the first type of Sufism mentioned above.

It does not seem possible to draw a definite conclusion concerning Rābiʿah's historical dates; yet overall I would follow Massignon's preference of the later date. He considers a number of sources in addition to Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ and favors the date of 185 A.H. on the basis of Rābiʿah's association with Riyāḥ al-Qaysī, her meeting with Sufyān al-Thawrī who came to Basra after 155 A.H., and the marriage proposal from Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥashimī, the governor of Basra from 145-72 A.H.[17] Finally he mentions that Rābiʿah was said to have been born when Ḥasan started, or as he further suggests "re-started", giving sermons. He estimates this date to be around 95-99 A.H.[18] When we look at this estimation together with ʿAṭṭār's statement that Rābiʿah died as an "old woman", (Massignon suggests that she was at least 80[19]) then it appears that we should also favor the later dates of 180 or 185 A.H.[20] The implication of accepting these later dates is to view Rābiʿah's association with Ḥasan and Mālik as non-historical.[21]

A final note in this discussion is the location of Rābiʿah's tomb in Basra.[22] There has been much confusion concerning her grave site. Some have mistakenly claimed that she is buried in Jerusalem, at the top of the Mount of Olives. Nurbakhsh suggests that this grave belongs to another famous Rābiʿah, the mystic Rābiʿah of Syria, with whom Rābiʿah of Basra is often confused.[23] Julian Baldick, however, notes that there is a grave site in

Damascus which reportedly belongs to Rābiʿah of Syria, and that the site in Jerusalem is claimed as a holy tomb not only by Muslims, but also by Jews and Christians.[24] The Christian saint supposedly buried there is Saint Pelagia, a converted courtesan. Thus we see the possibility of a variant image of Rābiʿah of Basra, the image of Rābiʿah the converted courtesan, converging with the image of Saint Pelagia, and giving rise to the assertion that Rābiʿah of Basra is buried at the top of the Mount of Olives,[25] despite her reported tomb in Basra.[26]

NOTES TO APPENDIX B

1. Louis Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. 1954, p. 215, note 5.

2. A.J. Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Reprint. 1983, p. 39.

3. Massignon, Essai (1954), p. 215, including footnote 5.

4. Javad Nurbakhsh, "Rābeʿah Al-ʿadawiya", in Sufi Women. Translated by Leonard Lewisohn. New York: Khanıqahi-Nimatullahi Publications. Second Revised Edition, 1990, pp. 22-3.

5. Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics, p. 51.

6. Ibid., p. 19.

7. Additionally, in ʿAṭṭār's account of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Tadhkirat al-awliyā'. Estelami, ed. Tehran: Zavvār Bookstore. Fourth edition. 1984-5, p. 33) Rābiʿah is described as an "old woman" at the time when she attended Ḥasan's assemblies. This would suggest that according to ʿAṭṭār they were at least contemporary in age.

8. Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics, p. 26.

9. Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women, p. 23. Massignon (Essai, p. 167) gives Ṣāliḥ's date of death as 172 (A.H.) (c.f. Jāḥiẓ).

10. Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics, p. 129.

11. Ibid., p. 133.

12. Ibid., p. 62.

13. Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, editor), p. 73. Nicholson's edition, p. 60.

14. Charles Pellat, Le milieu Baṣrien et la formation de Ǧāḥiẓ. Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve. 1953, pp. 15-9.

15. This idea also has been suggested by Charles Upton in a more popular work on Rābiʿah, Doorkeeper of the Heart, Versions of Rābiʿa (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1988), p. 8, and also may be more generally implied by Margaret Smith in Rābiʿa the Mystic.

16. Mālik ibn Dīnār was reported to have been a disciple of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and in his life story, as presented by ʿAṭṭār, he shows strong tendencies towards self-mortification.(See Arberry, Muslim Saints and Mystics, pp. 26-31) In one of the anecdotes translated by Arberry the limits of both Mālik's asetical approach and his understanding of obedience to God through external, moral discipline are brought out through an episode with his licentious neighbor. Mālik rebuked his young neighbor for his corrupt behaviour and threatened to "'tell the All-Merciful'". The youth replied that God was too generous to punish him. When Mālik came to rebuke him a second time, he was warned by a heavenly voice, "'Keep your hands off My friend'". Mālik was amazed and when he repeated this to the young man the latter exclaimed, "'Ah since things are like that I dedicate my palace wholly to His service. I care nothing for all my possessions.'" Thus the young man left everything and everyone behind, surrendering himself in complete trust to God.(Arberry, pp. 28-9) Whereas Mālik was left amazed and, in a sense, rebuked by the Almighty for having judged a man according to his exterior behaviour.

17. Massignon, Essai, p. 215, ff 5.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 215.

20. Nurbakhsh (Sufi Women, pp. 67-8, c.f. Muntakhab rawnaq al-majālis) has given an anecdote not included by ʿAṭṭār which describes an incident between Rābiʿah (as a grown woman) and the Umayyad general Ḥajjāj. According to Pellat, Ḥajjāj died in 95 A.H./714 C.E. (Pellat, "Baṣra", in The Encyclopaedia of Islam. H.A.R. Gibb, editor. London: Luzac & Co. New Edition. 1960. Volume I, p. 1086. Pellat also mention al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf in Le milieu Baṣrien (see the index to this latter work).) In order for any interaction between Rābiʿah and Ḥajjāj to have taken place Rābiʿah must have been born some years prior to 95 A.H./714 C.E. If we accept this information we would have to consider the earlier death date of 135 A.H. as most probable. Yet the source text Rawnaq al-majālis by Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nīsābūrī (al-Samarqandī) (the text from which Muntakhab rawnaq al-majālis has been extracted), comes from the mid-15th century (C.E.) and is of considerably later date and therefore less reliable than other texts, such as Qūt al-qulūb, by Makkī (d. 996 C.E.)

and Ḥilyat al-awliyā', by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1038 C.E.) which have been used to establish Rābiʿah's date of death near the end of the second century A.H. (See Massignon, Essai, p. 215 ff. 5 and Pellat, Le milieu Basrien, p. 105 ff. 1, 3. Makkī refers to the marriage proposal from Ḥashimī, and Abū Nuʿaym relates the exchanges between Rābiʿah and Riyāḥ. The dates for the three authors above are taken from C. Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur. Leiden: E.J. Brill. Supplement Band II (1938), p. 285, and Band I (Second edition, 1943), pp. 217 and 445 respectively.)

21. Not only Massignon (Essai, p. 215 ff.5), but also Smith (Rābiʿa the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprint. 1984, p. 11), Badawī (Shahīdat al-ʿishq al-ilāhī, Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nihḍat al-Miṣriyah. N.d., pp. 48-50/Farsi translation: Shahid-i ʿishq-i ilāhī, Rābiʿah-i ʿAdawīyah. Muḥammad-i Taḥrīrchī, translator. Tehran: Intishārāti-i Mawlā. 1367 H.Sh., pp. 59-60), and Nurbakhsh (Sufi Women, p. 23) have reached this conclusion.

22. Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women, p. 24 and Julian Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiʿa of Baṣra: Christian Antecedents, Muslim Counterparts", in Religion (New York: Academic Press, Volume Twenty, July 1990, pp. 235-6).

23. Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women, p. 24.

24. Baldick, "The Legend of Rābiʿa", pp. 235-6.

25. Ibid., pp. 233-47. See also notes to Chapter VII, numbers 12 and 17 of this study.

26. The location of Rābiʿah's grave site in Basra is generally acknowledged.(Massignon Essai, p. 215, ff.4, Smith, Rābiʿa the Mystic, p. 45, Nurbakhsh, Sufi Women, p. 24.) Massignon gives as supporting evidence that Rābiʿah's tomb in Basra was visited by Muḥammad ibn Aslam al-Ṭūsī. However, this appears to be simply a repetition of an account from ʿAṭṭār's Tadhkirat al-awliyā' (Estelami, ed., p. 88), and therefore cannot be used as an independent source to verify ʿAṭṭār's text.

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