Chapter 3: Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam
and Defending the Boundaries of Religious Practice

I. Introduction

As we have seen in the last chapter, the treatises that have come down to us ascribed to Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam can provide us with a wealth of insight into ideas and practices of the late Khwājagān/early Naqshbandiyya. What is less clear is how to look at the treatises in order to understand and make a first attempt at looking beneath the surface of the text. One could look at the material with treatise-by-treatise analyses, discussing approaches and sources, using methods commonly employed by those working in more familiar paths of religious history. The approach employed here, however, will look across the treatises at one theme to glean more information about how Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam viewed the context of his own work.

In this chapter we shall examine some of what could be construed as “borders” of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s group. There are many ways this could be derived from his oeuvre; one method would be looking at the adab treatises¹ and seeing who and what is presented as “proper behavior.” This would be a perfectly acceptable approach, yet one which would have certain pitfalls. The structure of the adab treatises is basically formed around anecdotes; while this anecdotal structure is present in some of the radd treatises as well, as can be see in discussions of hagiographies,² it is a form that is easily manipulated.

¹ See Chapter 2 for a list of the adab treatises.
Determining what is being left unsaid can be difficult since the text is not constructed to be a response (at least to our knowledge). In addition, as in hagiographical works, who and what are included are easily shifted by the inclusion or exclusion of a name or place to reflect the ideas of the time, not just of the writer, but of the copyist. The study of the shifting of anecdotes across Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s works and across the works of his contemporaries would be worthwhile. However, in order to avoid some of the necessary complexities of this approach, I have elected to draw upon works which are constructed around treatise-length arguments, in order that the who and how of the treatises’ logic is not so readily manipulated, although changes occur nonetheless.

A few of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam treatises suggest that they were written expressly to respond to arguments apparently being made by those outside the group. This genre of literature, radd, can also be used to construct something to argue against in order to present one’s views, in addition to answering reproaches from without. One of the reasons this type of literature is important is explicitly because it often can help us see who is being constructed as being within the group, and who is perceived to be external to it. One also must assume a certain kind of honesty is present in the treatises, since as radd, the readership at the time the texts were written would likely have known well the other side of the argument. While this does not mean that the “opposing” side cannot be misrepresented – certainly any polemical literature will attempt to draw its readers into agreement with its own position – the fact that these works have survived four hundred years tends to support the view that they found enough resonance in their own time to have been copied down to this day. At the same time it should be noted that the three works that will be examined as the core of this discussion are among the ones that some
majmu’ā leave out, despite the fact that two of them form the beginning of many codices. (More on this below.) This chapter will be based upon three treatises, Tanbih al-ʿulamā, Samāʿiyya and Asrār al-nikāḥ, in which the author explicitly states he is writing to counter criticism, and parts of others where he indicates reproach of the group, to examine how groups can be perceived within these texts. We shall see that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam seeks to draw in his detractors, who seem most commonly to be from the religious and social elite. At the same time, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam seems to avoid delimiting divisive splits within the Ṣūfī congregations that probably existed in his time, although our ability to pinpoint this, based on our knowledge of the intellectual currents of his time, is spotty at best.3

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the manuscripts provide us with a complex picture. These three treatises are not all found in every codex. In our Indian codex, Asrār al-nikāḥ and Samāʿiyya are both lacking; in the Kattakhanov and Tashkent 501 codices Tanbih al-ʿulamā is lacking. Tashkent codices 1443 and 10626 contain all three treatises, although it seems clear that 10626 is simply a shorter version of the same exemplar branch as 1443. As we saw in Chapter 2, we do not have a simple progression of newer and newer manuscripts; the Kattakhanov manuscript, for instance, is undated, but is virtually identical to Tashkent ms. 501, which is dated 997/998 AH. For contrast, discussions of Tanbih al-ʿulamā will include Tashkent ms. 6646, since this codex is one of the few that mostly follows the Kattakhanov/501 exemplar branch and also includes

this treatise. Thus while we will not be able to make simple comparisons across time, as might be desirable, we can hope that ideas that may have flowed through this branch might be included. The manuscript issues for Asrār al-nikāḥ and Samāʿīyya are rather more complex, since both these treatises show significant variation across the manuscript examples; the ways in which these shifts affect the discussion will be approached as the context warrants.

A. Methodological Context

In the language of anthropology and social psychology, understandings of how groups are formed and maintained often turn on how each group creates structures that determine who is in the group and who is not.4 Where one finds the most discussion of the points of difference between groups is at the places where groups come into competition – sometimes for members, sometimes for the more abstract commodity of “social capital”5 – and the competition is sometimes articulated as which behaviors or practices are acceptable. When group structuring comes to religion, the question is then phrased in terms of “orthodoxy” or orthopraxy. How do thinkers define the mainstream of ideas from which they construct orthopraxy? This dynamic is essential since as groups develop and change over time, so too do the debates surrounding them. For instance, when a group seeks members from different social strata, it must find a way to accommodate itself to that group in order to convince them that their own ways of being or behaving are wrong. The debate occurs at the edges of a circle that encloses


“acceptable” behavior, as the *sharīʿa*-minded and those with whom they are competing argue over what is within the religious law and what is just outside of it. To the extent that these debates were carried out in writing, they provide us with documentation of the arena within which religious ideas were commodified. In the texts presented below, we will see constructions of both the “in-group” – the group with which Makhdūm-i Aẓam identifies, which he calls “this exalted group” (*in ṭa’lfa-i ʿalya*), and the “out-group,” those who are arguing against his group, which will be discussed in more detail below. The dance between the two, as they work out issues of authority, helps us to see the complexities of society.

Looking at these constructions helps us understand how the place of Sufism within society was being worked out at this time, in addition to how issues were developing within Ṣūfī groups. Label such as “conservative”, “*sharīʿa*-minded”, “liberal”, “orthodox”, etc. are often applied to whole Ṣūfī orders or individual Ṣūfī shaykhs. As we can see with various Salafiyya movements today, or with Ibn Taymiyya in his time, calls to follow “the law” as “it has always been” cannot be immediately characterized as “traditional” (i.e., following what “has always been”) or “liberal” or even “radical”, that is trying to create significant change. We cannot even assume that calls to an unchanging law even means the law has always been followed or enforced.7 Thus the focus is narrowly on what we can find in the text itself, to start with a logical

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7 In fact, one might even assume the opposite, since laws that are universally followed are rarely discussed.
base from which to build more ideas about the order and social milieu in which Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam found himself. Some of the issues touched upon here will cast light on what might have been considered “sharīʿa-minded” during this time, and can in turn cast a new light on our understanding of Ṣūfī orders and religious thought within the eastern Islamicate world. It is telling that none of the boundaries which the author seems interested in are ones that we would today recognize as important constructs; there is little discussion of ethnicity (although, notably, it is not entirely absent), and nothing whatsoever about settled versus nomadic adaptations, although this may well be because the settled economic adaptation is assumed. The author never labels external (to him) Ṣūfī groups, and it may be that his understanding of the Khwājagān includes those that have been commonly represented as being outside the Naqshbandiyya, such as the Kubrawiyya and the Yasawiyya.8

It would be interesting to find a source that argues against Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam, but none has yet come to light. Instead we must look at Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s works themselves to see the context of his religious beliefs. Often this form of literature falls into two patterns, both constructed around presenting both sides of the argument.9 Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam does little to present the case that he is refuting. Yet in order to answer their charges, he must at times repeat them, giving us the opportunity to discern what some of the “resources” were over which the groups were debating. During roughly the same time, Ṣūfī groups, some more antinomian than others, were also competing with the sharīʿa-minded religious scholars in Iran and parts of what is now northern

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8 Both of these figures are mentioned in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s works, although without any sense that their followers formed any kind of competing group.

Afghanistan and eastern Turkmenistan.\textsuperscript{10}

As mentioned above, Makhdūm-i ʿAżam wrote several treatises that were designed to refute specific points on which his group had apparently been challenged: 

*Tanbīh al-ʿulamā*, the Admonition of the Religious Scholars,\textsuperscript{11} which consists of an argument with religious scholars (ʿulamā) over how they have been criticizing Makhdūm-i ʿAżam’s group; *Asrār al-nikāh*, the Secrets of Marriage,\textsuperscript{12} which gives arguments in favor of having multiple wives, was written because the author has seen people criticizing “Muslims” who have many households;\textsuperscript{13} and *Samāʿiyya*, Audition, was written because religious scholars called the group who practiced *samāʿ* “unlawful”


\textsuperscript{11} The discussion here is based on an analysis of three manuscripts: Mss. 1443 and 10626 in Tashkent’s Sharqshunoslik instituti, and Ms. 2092 from Patna, India. All page references, however, will be made based on Ms. 1443, included as Appendix VI. The fourth manuscript, which was preserved in Dahbid, is available on 35 mm negatives in the US at the Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies (RIFIAS) at Indiana University, but does not contain this treatise. See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of the manuscripts in which these treatises are found.

\textsuperscript{12} *Asrār al-nikāh* exists in four copies in the United States, from the three mentioned in the preceding note and one additional photographed manuscript held in private hands in Samarqand, but originally from Dahbid. It will be referred to as the Kattrakanov codex, named for the family that protected it during the Soviet era. It is interesting because it seems to follow a different branch of the manuscript tradition than 1443, but the same branch as Tashkent Ms. 501, the oldest of the known manuscripts of Makhdūm-i ʿAżam. Differences among the manuscripts will be noted in the translations.

\textsuperscript{13} Ms. 1443, I/1b. This treatise has been treated in an academic article, based on Indian manuscripts: Sachiko Murata, “Mysteries of Marriage”: Notes on a Sufi Text,” in *The Heritage of Sufism. Vol. II: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999).
out of their "ignorance."\textsuperscript{14} From these works we can see some of the problems Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam had with others and by looking at how he argued his points, we can see how he saw himself and other Ẓūfīs like himself within the core of the Islam of his time and place. In addition to these three, we shall also look at parts of Tānbīh al-salātīn, the Reproach of the Princes, which generally offers instructions and pointed suggestions for how the political rulers should treat the group, and Bayān-i ṭāqʿah, Concerning the Dream, which discusses Sufism generally in response to statements that author overheard at court. As noted in Chapter 2, we unfortunately have little information about the order in which these treatises were written; because Bayān-i ṭāqʿah mentions other works by Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam (but not the other ṭāqʿahs), it clearly is later than some of Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam’s other works. Therefore these treatises cannot be used to portray a development of ideas or change over time in Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam’s own thinking. Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam is arguing for clarification of social institutions, but in terms of creating greater social space, rather than less.

It is well worth noting that Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam wrote these responses. Of the twenty-nine treatises in Ms. 1443, for instance, only thirteen even mention the word “nuskhe” (manuscript). Of these, eight give explanations for why they were written; only the three mentioned above state they were written to counter criticism.\textsuperscript{15} (The others were written for a variety of reasons, all are essentially didactic.) Makhdūm-i ʿAẓam often gives the reason for the writing of the manuscript in the context of mentioning the

\textsuperscript{14} Ms. 1443, II/15b-16a.

\textsuperscript{15} Bayān-i ṭāqʿah does not appear in Ms. 1443.
text as being both heard and seen. For example, from Tanbih al-'ulamā:
Because of this, this weakest of the least of the servants brought to
mind these great ones, which, from those that have come to him
[the author] from the dust-kissing of their noble threshold,
delineates (sāfiti naviṣad) some of their states and circumstances
and stages because of compassion, such that by seeing and perusing
this manuscript from the path of true faith, they will be informed
about their states and stages, and abandon their debate and
objection and opposition. And because they share their
happinesses, and that meaning which is performed in the vessels of
these letters from these two royal springs of grace – which are
hearing and seeing – sprinkles down in the pool of the heart and
[on] the tree of lawfulness, which is their noble capabilities.17

He is articulating, in not overly ornate prose, that he himself (the weakest of the
least of the servants), by his own studies (the dust kissing of the noble threshold), shall
explicate some of what he sees as setting the group apart. He expects the reader to both
read ("see") and think about the text, and therefore see that the group is in accordance
with the Shari'a (the path of true faith), and end their objections. With these statements,
he reminds the reader both of the writer's skill in putting down the words, and the
reader's necessary attention to grasp them. The next metaphor is used in only three
places in the manuscript; the other two are in treatises more directed toward rulers.18
With this metaphor he again reminds the reader – here specifically one who both grasps
the text with his eyes and his ears – that effort is required on the reader's part. The
language used here, "in dū shāh jūt-e fayż ki samā' u baṣr ast" (these two royal springs,
which are hearing and seeing), uses Arabic terms for hearing and seeing, and the pairing,
mirroring the pair of eyes, the pair of ears, the reader and writer as a couple, God and
man even, is a very tightly constructed metaphor. This could also be interpreted as the

16 Ms. 10626 has "don't share," XXI/211b.
17 Ms. 1443, XCVI/358a; Ms. 10626, XXI/211a-b; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/72b-73a.
18 Ms. 1443, XXII/301a; XCV/357a.
The author wanting the text to be both read to oneself and in front of an audience. But it is also about the text, its words, being experienced, not merely repeated or memorized. It is apparently this “tasting” that Makhdūm-i Āʿẓam wants to sprinkle onto his reader.

II. The Disputants

The first topic to be addressed will be who the disputants are that Makhdūm-i Āʿẓam has delineated in the text. Although they are often not clear, by taking the set of texts as a whole and contrasting them to one another, we shall see that each has a specific target in mind. Included in this discussion will be some idea of who the disputants are not, for there are groups that are noticeably lacking, although the earlier traditions would seem to have set the stage for them as possibilities.

The most prominent and least surprising group at which Makhdūm-i Āʿẓam takes aim is the ʿulamāʾ, or religious scholars. I am not here presenting a knee-jerk, Sufism-against-legalism construction;19 Makhdūm-i Āʿẓam’s presentation is too nuanced to be so simplified. Makhdūm-i Āʿẓam provides the reason for writing Tanbih al-ʿulamāʾ, saying: The reason for the compilation of this manuscript is that some religious scholars and legal scholars of the age, do not have knowledge of this exalted group and they say, “they [the Sūfis] don’t draw from the states and conditions and degrees and their own esoteric states.” They make analogies from their own exoteric science and action to their [Sūfis’] esoteric acts, and they say, “We also have what they have.” ... They say that the intention of the Shariʿa is submitting to the words of that excellency [the Prophet Muḥammad] and the intention of the tariqah20 is putting these words into action, and the only true state would be bringing these words into action. Thus, they have not been informed of the

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20 Literally, the path, usually understood as the Sūfi group.
esoteric path (ṭarīqat) and the acts of the heart of that excellency [Muhammad] such that they debate and oppose this group and deny their tastes and states and forbid themselves from this happiness.  

Who the ʿulamāʾ were that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam addresses is difficult to know. “ʿUlamāʾ” is a general term for religious scholars, and can include those who study diverse branches of the Islamic sciences, which include the study of Arabic philology, the Qurʾān, the development of Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) and law, which is composed of all of the above in addition to studying earlier precedents according to one or more legal schools. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam does provide us with some information, however; firstly, he is not speaking about all the ʿulamāʾ:

But know, oh loyal seeker, that the acceptance of the words alone and bringing the exoteric acts of his excellency the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, into being, with even this attained through God, it is not possible that the true state be reached. In this way some of the exoteric religious scholars think erroneously [gumān burdand] that only they have the true state. [They cannot attain these states] without the discipleship and licensure of a completely perfect [master], heaven forbid, since only he would be the person of the true state and [only he] will be.

As we see in two of the passages translated above, he says some of the ʿulamā. He is inviting his readers who are ʿulamā not to be among those who think erroneously, inviting them to be on his side of the boundary. The term he uses here to mean “think erroneously”, gumān burdand, carries an attitude of arrogance or conceit with it; Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam uses the same term when he discusses elsewhere how Satan (Iblīs) refused to bow down to Adam at God’s command. There are subtle echoes of this.

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21 Ms. 1443, XXVI/357b-358a; Ms. 10626, XXI/211a; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/72b. These manuscripts do not have punctuation; all punctuation and paragraphing I have added. I have omitted a hadith here.

22 Ms. 1443, XXVI/360a; Ms. 10626, XXI/212b; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/74a.

23 Ms. 1443, XXVI/357b, 360a.

24 Ms. 1443, VI/107a.
earlier in this treatise. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam discusses Adam’s creation as a “mirror for the beauty and majesty” of God, and how God breathed life into him. Both are illustrated with quotations from the Qurʾān, verses XVII:70 and XV:29 respectively; both are close to verses discussing Satan and his error, XVII:61 and XV:31. So from XVII:70, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam quotes, “And surely we have honored the children of Adam, and we carry them on the land and the sea”, nearby is “And when We said to the angels: make obeisance to Adam; they made obeisance, but Iblīs [did not].” (XVII:61) For those who know their Qurʾān well – and the ‘ulamāʾ surely would – the message is not just that God sends a friend – Adam here, but in general a Ṣūfī shaykh – to the world, but that those who refuse to accept that friend commit a grievous error. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam makes this plain in other treatises, notably in Samāʾīyya, where he is also facing shariʿa-minded ‘ulamāʾ, but here, with the ‘ulamā he wants to be subtle, to plant hints and suggestions that will give the ‘ulamā reason for reflection.

Two terms that are paired here frequently are “‘ulamā and fuqahā”’. Fuqahā’ (singular, faqih) are those who practice fiqh, that is, those who issue legal opinions. Many times in Persian we see terms in pairs and triplets with more or less the same meaning because style (and the realities of manuscript transmission) called for it. Yet this is not to say that these terms are always paired, within Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s own work or others. For example, in a letter written to the court in Herat during the fifteenth century
from a disciple of Khwāja Aḥrār, we have “ʿulamāʾ and fāḍil” (religious scholars and learned men). The fuqahāʾ themselves are only mentioned in three other treatises in Ms. 1443. In Shaybiyya, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam makes clear his ideas about the fuqahāʾ, saying “A faqīh may be a Sūfī, not a Sūfī a faqīh” because “the first task (ʿamal) of the shariʿa and being learned should be placing the hand on the portal [of the door of God].” The term translated here as “being learned” is “faqāhat”, that is, an abstract noun with the same root as “faqīh”. Thus the learning necessary to attain the rank of a religious scholar is only the first step; this is why, as he constructs it, the faqīhs are beneath the Sūfis, who continue on to the “summit” of “closeness”. Another way in which this term appears in these polemical treatises is in a saying in Arabic, “The jurists (fuqahāʾ) are to this group as the pharaohs to the prophets”, a common saying which one

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30 Ms. 1443, treatises II (Samāʾiyya), IV (Ādāb al-sālikīn); XXVI (Tanbih al-ʿulamāʾ); XXVIII (Shaybiyya). ʿUlamāʾ, on the other hand, are mentioned in twelve other treatises: II (Samāʾiyya, on 5 folios); III (Wajūdiyya, on 5 folios); VI (Ganj-nāma, on 2 folios); XII (Nafahāt al-sālikīn, on one folio); XIII (ʿIkriyya, on 3 folios); XVII (Silsilat al-ṣiddiqīn, on one folio); XVIII (Bīṭikhiyya, on one folio); XX (Aḥwāl ʿulamāʾ wa umarāʾ on 7 folios); XXII (Miʿrāj al-ʿāshiqīn, on 3 folios); XXIV (Fath-nāma, on one folio); XXV (Bāburiyya, on 2 folios; XXVI (Tanbih al-ʿulamāʾ, on 7 folios) and XXIX (ʿIlmiyya, on one folio).

31 Ms. 1443, XXVIII/376b, ms. 10626, XXIII/224b. Ms. 1443, XXVIII/376b, ms. 10626, XXIII/224b. This treatise is not present in the Kattakhanov codex. Ms. 10626 is slightly clearer in this section, but both codices are rather unclear about the verbs here.

32 Ibid.
can also find in Ibn ʿArabi and likely countless other Ṣūfī sources. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam groups the ‘ulamā’ with the fuqahā’ frequently, and for the most part we need to assume he is speaking about them either together or synonymously. This seems especially clear when he notes that the “‘ulamā’ have the science of the word of God. He continues, stating that since their science is derived from the word of God (the Qurʾān), which holds a place of great honor in Islam, they must themselves be esteemed. Yet “It is amazing that the fuqahā’ (legal scholars) have from ancient times always been gossiping about this exalted group and have been in the stage of battle and opposition and criticizing.”

Because the fuqahā’ have been singled out for the longevity of their criticism, we can assume that theirs is the more serious criticism, probably because their text-based approach to understanding God is nearly opposite to that of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s group, no matter how “sober” their mystical practice. One may also draw from this that unlike many mystical writers in other parts of the Islamic world, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam was not himself a jurist, trained in the complexities of Islamic law. Nowhere in any of our texts can we find Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam even discussing fatwas (legal rulings).

If anything, Asrār al-nikāh, while its opening says that people are blaming “Muslims”, and indeed, much of the treatise is taken up with delimiting a common hierarchy of humans, beginning with their creation and working through prophets and “saints” (awliya, friends of God), this one treatise’s criticism seems so focused on gender that one could easily make an argument for Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s purpose being to

35 Ms. 1443, XXVI/363a; Ms. 10626, XXI/214b; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/75b.
36 Ms. 1443, XXVI/365a; Ms. 10626, XXI/216a; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/76b.
37 Ms. 1443, I/4b-6b.
include more fully women in the society. While there is no evidence for women’s participation in the group, and one might argue that the opening salvo seems to indicate that women were distinctly not intended to read the treatise. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām presents a story of a deception by Muḥammad:

> It is related from his excellency, the Messenger, *peace and blessings upon him*, that he negotiated with [his] holy spouses in such a manner that no one of them saw more love from his Excellency than the others, because he veiled this secret from them. All of them asked, oh Messenger, say which one of us you love the most. His excellency said, tomorrow I will answer your question. When night came, his Excellency secretly gave a ring to each one of them and said, Don't reveal [to anyone] this secret, and with anyone chat [about it]. When tomorrow [came and] they asked again, his Excellency said, She to whom I gave something and I said don't reveal it to anyone [I love the most]. Each one had witnessed this act herself, [and] was exalted and joyful.38

Nonetheless, by emphasizing, as we shall see below, women’s important role in God’s plan, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām must have wanted to address a broad group, which by its sheer breadth may have defied labeling for him.

This is not to say that these texts present the ʿulamā as being only an enemy. For instance, in *Tanbih al-salāṭin*, for instance, a qāżī is presented as judging (correctly, in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām’s presentation) that the Ṣūfīs who have been called to the attention of the king for behaving in a way construed as outside the norm are no threat. This story is repeated in *Ādāb al-sālikīn*, but otherwise the only mention of the title “qāżī” throughout ms. 1443 is with regards to Khwāja Aḥrār’s teacher, Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Qāżī.39 We will see more of this qāżī below, in the discussion of Junayd.

Yet, for all his qualifying, mentioning that he’s only talking about some religious

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38 Ms. 1443, I/3a.
39 Ms. 1443, XV/241b, XVII/254a, XXII/326a, XXVIII/373a, XXIX/404a.
scholars, this grouping is largely “flat” when we try to tease out who they could be or how they might relate to our “Ṣūfis”. Because of the relatively limited construction of them – largely limited to Tanbih al-ʿulamāʾ and Samāʿiyya – we are not given much insight into who it could have been who was challenging the lawfulness of the group. Given that they are not mentioned at all in Asrār al-nikāḥ, we must guess that it was not the religious scholars who were challenging the group concerning their marriage practices, although as we shall see below, it would seem to follow from what we can understand from the arguments across treatises.

Distinct from the ʿulamāʾ but sometimes included with them are the “sadat” (singular, sayyid), those who trace their biological lineage from the Prophet Muḥammad. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam specifically says they are ennobled because their “transitory, accidental existence is received from the accidental existence of that excellency [Muḥammad].” After this point Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam talks of “ʿulamāʾ and sadat” and addresses them directly with the polite form, “shumāyan.” This is an interesting confluence of earned rank – the ʿulamāʾ and fuqahāʾ have at least the assumption of having to struggle for long periods to master the knowledge needed for their status – with the inherited rank of the sayyids. This distinction is difficult to draw too sharply, however, for before he brings the two together, he briefly discusses how

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40 This is an area in which the chronicles will help to shed some light, and one of my areas of continuing research.

41 Ms. 1443, XXVI/363a-b; Ms. 10626, XXI/215a; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/75b-76a.

42 Ms. 1443, XXVI/363b, 364a; Ms. 10626, XXI/215a; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/76a. This form is literally the plural of a plural, since the normal second person plural is “shumā”. This is a way of expressing deference.
children are “colorless” but for the colors – qualities – that their parents make appear.43 It would appear he is suggesting that except for qualities of “asceticism and science” that the “scholars and ascetics speak” and those qualities that this group absorbs through reading, “the children of Adam” would be pure.44 This combination of science and asceticism is somewhat odd; typically in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s work one sees a “student of science” who tries to engage in asceticism failing.45 But we can see it as leveling the playing field: essentially everyone, excepting perhaps one who came from bad parents, is good; if anything, the learning that this group engages in draws it away from goodness. This helps to clarify his next point, that those who inherit their position – explicitly, children of khwājas (Ṣūfī shaykhs), sayyids and members of the professional classes, mullahs, scribes and landholders – are elevated socially based on “conferring favor on others.”46 Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam is making two points: firstly, no matter what one’s social station, one must help others; secondly, that those who are socially elevated are no more pure than anyone else, including those pursuing the esoteric path, like Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam himself. The text does not permit the reading that those who perform service for the community acquire social status like those of the hereditary and professional classes. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam here seems to be trying to appropriate for everyone the purity apparently assumed of those whose social position is largely hereditary. This expanding boundary has to be directed toward his students, since one might assume that society’s

43 Ms. 1443, XXVI/361b; Ms. 10626, XXI/213b; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/74b. This echoes a saying of Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240 CE), whom Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam cites elsewhere, which says that the color of water is the color of its container. It is unclear if Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam knew of this saying or not.
44 Ms. 1443, XXVI/361a-b; Ms. 10626, XXI/213b; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/74b.
45 E.g., Ms. 1443, XIII/197a-b.
46 Ms. 1443, XXVI/361b; Ms. 10626, XXI/214a; Patna Ms. 2092, IX/75a.
professional classes would not want to have the status quo questioned; its use here seems
counter-intuitive. We must also note that apparently some of the hagiographies ascribe to
Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam a sayyidly lineage on his mother’s side.47

Although discussing it at depth would draw us beyond the scope of this chapter,
one more group needs to be mentioned at this juncture. The one group that Makhdūm-i
Aʿẓam does not present as disputing his stance are other Ṣūfīs. Although he seems to be
worried about fragmentation, and looks to the political figures’ support to help prevent
that, it is difficult to understand this group for which he seeks help as less than all Ṣūfīs,
although that would be an odd position to take. Earlier Khwājagānī figures were not
reluctant to take on Ṣūfīs whose practices they saw as incorrect or inappropriate;48 the
whole practice of silent ḡikr in the Naqshbandiyya is said to have arisen from Bahāʾ al-
Dīn Naqshband’s break from then-current practice to earlier methods. Even the
presentation he makes to the individual at the gathering at the court of Khaqani Khān, as
presented in Bayān-i wāqʿah gives such standard presentations of Ṣūfī positions that
virtually anyone except the most antinomian Ṣūfī would be able to agree.49

47 I am guessing as to the original source; the most scholarly reference is in Bakhtiyar
Babadjanov, “Makhdum-i Aʿzam,” in Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii. Entsklopedicheskii
slovar’, ed. S. M. Prozorov (Moscow: Izdatel’skaya Firma “Vostochnaya literatura” RAN, 2006), 262. It
also appears in the popular literature on Makhdūm-i Aʿzam, Tohirxon Marzaeva Marzaeva and
Abdulvohidkhon Orifkhającich Nuradinov, Makhdumi Aʿzam Kosonli (Namangan: Namangan Viloyat
Noshirlik, 1995); Bakhtier Toraev and Feruza Muhammadiyova, Sayid Ahmad ibn Mavlono Jalaliddin
Khojagi Kosonli Makhdumi Aʿzam (868/1461-949/1542) (Tashkent: "Havrzo" Nashrieti / Respublika
Ma`navii Madaniyat Targhibot Markazi, n.d.).

Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications,
1992), 142-143.
Thus we can see, that although some treatises have a harder edge towards their purported accusers, most of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s response to his delimited disputants are rather gentle, trying to draw them in rather than pushing them away, trying, as we can see with his hierarchical construction in Shaybiyya, to show them that while they are to be respected, they are only adolescents compared to the greater knowledge and abilities of “this group”. With our protagonists in mind, let us look at the larger issues that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam is presenting in these polemical treatises.

II. The Issues

The role of passion broadly defined is one of the issues along which Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam wanted to distinguish his group. This can be seen most clearly in Samāʿiyya and Asrār al-nikāh, where the contrasts to other ways of understanding Sufism are most narrowly delineated.

What I am calling passion here, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam calls “pain and burning” (dard u suz) which he contrasts to “science and asceticism” (ʿilm u zuhd). Equated with a stage (maqām) and love (ʿishq) in many places in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s work, the emphasis here is on the emotions that seem to go hand in hand with manifestations of states. In Samāʿiyya, he indicates clearly that “the path (rāḥ) of union and closeness is

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49 Some things, like the three “maqām” of fanā closely follow constructions I have seen attributed to Junayd, although not quite in the same language. These three are so common it would be unlikely to trace them to an earlier source, since virtually any other discussion of fanā would be likely to include something like it. See, for instance, Kattakhanov. XXVIII/311a.

50 Ms. 1443, II/26b-27a, Kattakhanov. II/23a.
the path of pain and burning, not science and asceticism”\textsuperscript{51}. We can understand more clearly what he means by asceticism by looking at a similar use of the term in Ādāb al-ṣiddīqīn, where the group (ṭayīfa) which will attain lordship of this world and the hereafter, and “this path is the path of pain and burning, not ascetic science (zuhd-i ʿilm).”\textsuperscript{52} This is part of the path (rāh) of shuṭṭār (the highwaymen),\textsuperscript{53} which is the culmination of the three paths that make up Sufism in this treatise. Although he has other practices and ideas figured prominently in other treatises as the ideal, here, the first path, “the path of choice” (rāh-i ikhtyār) is one of “asceticism and piety and science and retreat and religious exercises (riyāzat) that some of the ascetics (zuhhūd) and holy men (ʿibd, here voweled ʿubbd) have chosen.”\textsuperscript{54} Thus these activities as a group would all stand in contrast to “pain and burning”. The ordering here suggests a hierarchy, with the first being the lowest; shuṭṭār is the last, and therefore highest. This asceticism seems to be something that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam saw as being of declining importance in the tariqat; although riyāzat\textsuperscript{55} is used in Silsilat al-ṣiddīqīn as a description of some of the activities

\textsuperscript{51} Ms. 1443, II/27a; Kattakhanov, II/22b.

\textsuperscript{52} Ms. 1443, V/103b. The Kattakhanov passage is slightly different (V/85b): “This path is the path of love (ʿishq) and pain and burning, not the path of asceticism and science.”

\textsuperscript{53} There is also a branch of the Suhrawardiyah which emerged in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century by the name of the Shatṭariyyah. While it does not seem that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam had this group in mind, given its emergence in the “neighborhood”, it probably should not be ruled out. Scott A. Kugle, ’Heaven’s Witness: The Uses and Abuses of Muhammad Ghaithi’s Mystical Ascension,’ Journal of Islamic Studies 14, no. 1 (2003). and K. A. Nizami, “Shatṭariyya,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden: Brill), vol. IX 369b. See also DeWeese, “Mashaʾikh-i Turk,” 180n1, where he mentions that “sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries speak of four major Sufi orders active in Mawarannahr [in addition to the Yasawīyya, Kubrawiyya and Naqshbandiyya] the ʿIshqīyya, whose origins are linked with those of Sufi communities called ‘Khalvat’ in several regions (including, for a time, Central Asia) and ‘Shatṭīyya in India’.

\textsuperscript{54} Ms. 1443, V/102a.

\textsuperscript{55} Translated above as “spiritual exercise”, it can also mean “asceticism”.
that some of the figures used to move themselves along the path, Muḥammad Charkhī, Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband’s first successor, and according to this silsila, the teacher Khwāja Ahrār, is the last person so described.56 Neither of the two links between Makhdūm-i Aʿzam and Aḥrār is described as having been engaged in riyāzat. It is not used as a descriptor for any of Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband’s immediate predecessors, either. Thus it would seem clear that while Makhdūm-i Aʿzam saw it as part of the Khwājagān, he did not see it as a valued part of his own group’s practices.

Asceticism was understood to be a range of practices among Ṣūfis (if not all Muslims), but not one that Makhdūm-i Aʿzam himself seems to have encouraged. This plays more directly into how we understand Asrār al-nikāḥ, which takes a stance opposite that of many “sober” Ṣūfis with regard to family and marital relations. Although Makhdūm-i Aʿzam states that one must break the attachments of women and children, that is, it is not recommended to become too attached to one’s family, he also constructs an argument around the necessity of sex, and, since it must be kept within the sharīʿa, having as many wives and concubines as one could keep satisfied. Because he understood these basic human urges, which he says women and men share equally, as being a by-product of eating (although not only eating), he calls not for restraining oneself while eating but to engage in the sexual equivalent of defecating. Although this is a gross simplification of the treatise, which uses a variety of Qurʾānic and hadith references in justification of its representation, it demonstrates that the restraint and discipline characteristic of ascetic practices was not being encouraged in this treatise.

All Makhdūm-i Aʿzam discussions of passionate encounters emphasize that they

56 Ms. 1443, XVII/ 249b-253b.
must be based on legal principles; while these rarely evolve into distinctions between the
categories of legality, he plainly wants not to wander out of the range of practices that
legal scholars would find acceptable. Thus, in Asrār al-nikāḥ, despite characterizing
male orgasm as being a normal, regularly occurring act, not unlike bowel movements, he
nonetheless emphasizes that one must only have sexual relations within legal bounds. He
says, “[if a man can’t control himself] and chooses another, then he’s contradicting this
verse [Qurʾān IV:3, “then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and
four”], and he would be throwing himself into an extremely dangerous situation, and
would be making himself worthy of the threat, Don’t go to perdition willingly, God
forbid.”

What I am calling “passion” here could also be called “intoxication”, but these
terms in English leave us with some conceptual baggage that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam may not
have intended. For instance, the idea of control or loss of control can be found within
both these terms. I have been avoiding the use of intoxication, because I want to stay
away from the idea of something organic outside the self being the agent behind the
mental state which both terms seek to describe. Passion, which also connotes a loss of
control, seems more to carry the image of one’s self having the agency (although modern
popular literature might have something to say about this). One is being attracted to
something which one perceives to be glorious, rather than simply having a chemically
altered mental state. But intoxication, in terms of something chemically induced, is not
absent from these discussions. That Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam included them, particularly in the
context of defending his own group, can provide us with a more nuanced image of what

57 Ms. 1443, I/2b.
his “opponents” could have considered “proper”.

IV.  The Authorities

Like any good polemicist, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam needs to draw upon sources with which his detractors would have a difficult time arguing. Some of the treatises discussed here have brought their sources more to the forefront than others; Samāʿiyya is a good example of one in which Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam has foregrounded his use of sources, not quite giving us author and work, but nonetheless presenting us with names of authorities.

A. Pre-Khwājagān/Naqshbandi Ṣūfīs

I must begin here with a word about what I mean about a “pre-Khwājagān” Ṣūfī. Since the silsila, or religious genealogy, that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam gives in several places (Silṣilat al-ṣiddiqīn, ʿIlmiyya) starts with Abū Bakr and moves forward in time, it is difficult to delineate what one might mean by “pre-Khwājagān”. Since we have virtually no scholarship on when and under what circumstances the “Khwājagān” per se even began self-identification, I can only impose some arbitrary parameters.

Some of the people given below are mentioned in the silsilas of the ʿtarīqat that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam gives, so it would be likely that he would argue with me that they are, in fact, Khwājagānī figures. Yet they did not live in Mawaranahr, and they all predated the person who seems to have formed the core of the Khwājagānī thought system, ʿAbd al-Khāliq Ghijduwānī. Thus, I am arbitrarily drawing a line at Ghijduwānī as the “beginning” of the “Khwājagān”, although I find it likely that he would not have known this and in fact many people who might thus be construed as being part of this “order” might also find this a difficult proposition. Why, then, am I drawing this distinction?
Because it seems to me that these figures are being employed in ways that the figures who are more closely connected to Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam in time and space are not.

One of the most prominent among these “pre-Khwājagānī” figures is Junayd, “Ṣayyid al-ṭaʾīfā” (prince of the group, or of the Šūfis). Junayd, who died in the early tenth century CE, is, like Ghazālī two centuries later, someone who tried to find a path between “Ṣūfī” and “shariʿa-minded”, although we ought not presume to find too bright a line between these two groups. Although we often now hear of constructions of “sober” and “intoxicated” Šūfis during the time of Junayd being in two diverging thought systems, there were commonalities among them, and Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam in various treatises seems to pick and choose among the differing understandings.58 Thus in Samāʿiyya, Junayd, the archetype of a “sober” Šūfī, advocates samāʾ, which Samāʿiyya presents as disturbing his detractors because of its more ecstatic qualities.

To contextualize Junayd within Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s work, one may examine how he is presented in other treatises. Junayd is mentioned in Ms. 1443 in only a few treatises; although he appears prominently in Samāʿiyya, he is briefly mentioned in Tanbih al-salāṭin (more on this below), Shaybiyya, and in ʿIlmiyya. Junayd appears with such prominence in Samāʿiyya, in fact, that we might suppose that he had written about samāʾ, but nothing of the sort has come down to us.59 Biographical dictionaries in which I have looked have also not mentioned Junayd’s practice of samāʾ, yet Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam presents Junayd as being the first to realize that samāʾ was necessary to bring those he


59 This does not mean, on the other hand, that there might not have been something circulating in Central Eurasia which purported to be by Junayd on samāʾ but I have seen no evidence for this.
wanted to lead to “the path of this group.”

Qušayrī’s discussion of samāʿ, mentions Junayd, but uses different anecdotes than does Makhdūm-i Aḥzām. Ibn Taymiyya, whose treatise on samāʿ is generally in opposition to any ecstatic forms, mentions Junayd only in passing. So, why Junayd on this issue and almost solely on this issue?

Junayd’s context is richly textured: he lived in a time when there were many controversies between “sober” and “intoxicated” understandings of mystical approaches, in a time when the political authorities were being activist in suppressing “heretics”, and in a time “now” (in Makhdūm-i Aḥzām’s time) understood as being formative in the development of the mystical practices that Makhdūm-i Aḥzām knew. For instance, in one of Junayd’s works, he discusses three stages of fanā; these are also found in Makhdūm-i Aḥzām (and doubtless hundreds of other manuals for Sufism as well), where they are linked with three levels of discipleship. Yet Junayd as an authority is not linked to these. Junayd is frequently used in Şūfī literature to contrast to Abū Yazīd Bīstāmī and al-Ḥallāj, both of whom Makhdūm-i Aḥzām also mentions (but not in this treatise).

Jāmī links the two figures closely; while in his entry in the Nafaḥāt on Junayd, neither Bīstāmī nor al-Ḥallāj is mentioned (nor samāʿ), in the entry on al-Ḥallāj, Junayd seems to

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60 Ms. 1443, II/22b, Kattakhanov II/19a.
63 Makhdūm-i Aḥzām discusses the three types of fanā in four treatises: Ms. 1443, XIII/222b; XX/287b; XXI/298b, and Kattakhanov, XXVII/312a. Of these, the most complete discussion is in XIII, Zikriyya, which comes closest to the presentation Junayd gives, as translated in Ali Abdel Kader, The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd. A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic with an Edition and Translation of his writings, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series (London: Luzac & Company, 1962), 175.
pop up in nearly every anecdote. It could well be that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam felt these circumstances, particularly when arguing largely with shariʿa-minded religious scholars, were also reflected in his own time. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam opens Samāʿiyya with an anecdote about a gathering Junayd was leading, and uses it to present someone erroneously opposing Junayd, and follows it with “he who is without a shaykh, his shaykh is Satan. Thus we might conclude that as Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam saw it, Junayd was a figure who the ‘ulamāʾ would not contradict, although the anecdote as presented has no apparent connection to samāʾ specifically.

In fact, it would seem, from our one mention of Junayd in Tanbīh al-salāṭīn, that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam might have had precisely in mind the distinction between Junayd and al-Ḥallāj. Our mention of Junayd in this treatise, precisely at the point where Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam is developing the issue of how the king (pādshāh) needs to be enlisted for the Ṣūfīs, comes in the recounting a different version of the story of al-Ḥallāj-affiliated Ṣūfī’s denunciation, with the name of Junayd standing in for al-Ḥallāj.

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64 A thorough study has yet to be done on this, but see, for instance, Gerhard Böwering, "Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy," in Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 1999); Darshan Singh, "Attitudes of al-Junayd and al-Hallaj towards the Sunna and the Ahwāl and Maqāmāt," Islamic Culture LVIII, no. 3 (1984).


66 Ms. 1443, II/16a.

67 This story does not appear in the Nafahat under either Junayd or al-Hallāj.

68 See Qamar-ul Huda, "Reflections on Muslim Ascetics and Mystics: Sufi Theories on Annihilation and Subsistence," Jusur 12 (1996): 22 where the presentation almost exactly matches what Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam gives. There is no variation across the manuscripts I have available to me concerning the names given for this anecdote in this treatise. The same anecdote also appears in Adab al-sālikīn, ms. 1443/f. 80b, where one of the names seems to have been misread (Luri for Nuri), but the details otherwise remain the same.
Interestingly, this time the king’s qažī recognizes the protagonist’s (Ghulām al-Khalil) folly and the Ṣūfis are saved; Ghulām Khalil is shot full of arrows. This mirrors, although does not exactly repeat, an anecdote that appears in Qushayri’s *Risāla*, a handbook on Sufism, written in Arabic in the thirteenth century. It’s uncertain whether or not the king(s) toward whom the treatise was directed was expected to perceive this – al-Ḥallāj could have been saved, as Nūrī was, were the king’s qažī only more perceptive – but theoretically readers who were involved with Sufism would have understood what the shifting meanings were intended to present. By substituting Junayd for al-Ḥallāj, perhaps Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam wanted to present a trope, a figure whose sobriety was above reproach. Perhaps he was only repeating what he’d read in Qushayrī. It is also possible that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam was creating a hypothetical world, where, as Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband has been credited with repeating, “if one of the children of ʿAbd al-Khāliq [Ghijduwānī] had been there, Maṉṣūr [al-Ḥallāj] would not have been hanged.” There is little to suggest that the Junayd in *Samāʿīyya* is also not a trope. Some things are given a strange twist, for instance an anecdote about Junayd going to Farghana to collect a singing girl from a dead acquaintance. Interestingly, Junayd had a colleague named al-Farḡānī, who was apparently living in Baghdad; Farghana has long been associated with superb singers, so the two ideas have apparently been combined, with our trope of sobriety enjoying the singing of our (local, no less) representation of vocal beauty.

There are three other figures to whose writing Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam either refers

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69 Qushayri.

other than those in the immediate Khwājagān silsila: Žū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn ʿArabī. Neither Ghazālī nor Ibn ʿArabī turn up in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s silsilas, although Žū al-Nūn does. 71 Žū al-Nūn’s quotations are often used in Ṣūfī writings; his name comes up again and again in popular Ṣūfī works like al-Qushayrī’s Risāla and ʿAttār’s Taẓkirat al-awliyā’. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam has used him solely as an authority for samāʿ; his name also comes up in ʿIlmiyya, but ʿIlmiyya may or may not be Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s own work. 72 For instance, he provides his audience with Žū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī’s definition for samāʿ: “The divine phenomena (ward) that prod the heart toward the Real. He who listens to it truly achieves true realization and he who listens to it through his carnal soul (nafs, base self) apostatizes.” 73 This quote also appears in Qushayrī’s chapter on samāʿ, where it is also an answer to the question “what is samāʿ”. 74 Yet other authors, notably ʿAttar, have used translations into Persian of the same quote as an answer of Žū al-Nūn’s to “what is wajd (ecstasy)”. 75 Jāmī’s entry on Žū al-Nūn in the Nafahat discusses neither samāʿ nor wajd, other than to mention that Žū al-Nūn left an “impression” on samāʿ. 76 This would seem to imply that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam is not trying to work from hagiographic sources, but from more doctrine-based sources, although it is

71 Žū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī is mentioned in ʿIlmiyya in ms 1443 on folio 392b. Although work should be done to compare the various mss. on this treatise, I have not seen either of the other two figures mentioned in ʿIlmiyya in other mss. that I have examined.

72 See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of the problems involved with this.

73 Ms. 1443, II/24a, 31a, Kattakhanov ms., II/20a, 26b. Translation from Arabic by Alexander Knysh.

74 Qushayri, 467.


76 Jāmī, 32.
not clear to me which ones; his approach seems to be to pick and choose those his audience will find most acceptable. The authorities used in these polemical works are among those whom most (but not all) shari‘a-minded religious scholars of his time would have found standard, perhaps acceptable for their ubiquity.

Imām Muḥammad Ghazālī appears in this treatise as a rare direct reference of a source, as Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam quotes for about a folio of Samāʿiyya a part of Ghazālī’s Kīmiya-i Saʿādat. The only other mention of Ghazālī in ms. 1443 is also in the context of a textual reference; Since we can look at editions of the same source and compare it to Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s text, we can make some inferences about how he was seeking to use the material he had at hand to make his case. The section which is clearly drawn from Kīmiya-i Saʿādat is consistent (but not exactly the same) across the two major manuscript branches of Samāʿiyya; this seems to suggest that if nothing else, no later copyists tried to augment what Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam included, for Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s selection has one very large omission (amounting to almost three full pages in the printed edition of Ghazālī’s text) and other smaller excisions. That this is a knowing, thoughtful inclusion from Ghazālī and not just a paraphrase is evinced by the fact that the writing style and language shifts for the duration of the selection; “vay (he/she), which is rarely used in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s writing, is common in this selection, as is “andār”.

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77 Ms 1443, II/32a-34a; Kattakhanov II/28a-29a.
78 Ghazali is mentioned in Samāʿiyya and Tanbih al-salāṭin, where a Khwājagānī figure mentions his book (without naming it). Ms. 1443, X/172b.
79 We cannot know that whatever codex Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam had of Ghazālī exactly matched our edition; it seems clear in some instances that the language in the edition that I will be referencing here has been “modernized” – “andār” has been changed to “dar” (both meaning “in”), but it is otherwise considered a reliable reference. It is not, however, a perfect scholarly edition, with variations across many manuscripts.
The excerpt from *Kīmiya-i Saʿādat* comes late in the treatise of *Samāʿiyya*, before a final section that discusses “intoxication” with anecdotes from Rūmī. While we might expect some kind of summary at this point, the selection from Ghazālī is the beginning of his section on *samāʿ*, which opens with oft-repeated metaphors: “God is the secret that burns within in the heart of man in the same way that fire [is concealed] in stone, so when the stone strikes iron, the fire becomes evident and shoots into the steppe.” Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam includes this opening section in full, with only limited changes in verb tenses and forms. The first major omission from his selection comes right after the words, “*Samāʿ* is in three parts”. In our edition, what follows are three major sections (*qism*), most of which are then broken into smaller parts. What follows in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s text is actually from the fourth part of the third section; either Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam had a defective codex that was untroubling in its lack of three clear parts, or he elected not to include the other major sections.

What did Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam leave out? The first section, “*qism awwal*”, provides a short discussion, and then an anecdote of ʿĀʾisha and the Prophet and some “blacks” who were playing. The hadith shows the Prophet permitted the playing, watching it with ʿĀʾisha; Ghazālī draws from this five inferences. Although one of these inferences echoes one used in *Samāʿiyya* – why would he (in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s anecdote, Khwaja

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80 Ms. 1443 II/31b-34a, Kattakhanov II/28a-29a.


83 Ibid. The term used by Ghazālī is “zangi”.

Aḥrār\textsuperscript{84} in Ghazālī’s, Muḥammad) do it if it were not allowed? – the others, which tend to echo the “place, time, companions” structures that Lewisohn outlines\textsuperscript{85} do not appear in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām’s argument. One, in fact, that the playing was “in the mosque”\textsuperscript{86} (and this is why it was permitted), would seem to have been a good reason for Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām to have included it, since he is disputing with shariʿa-minded religious scholars yet he does not. Also included in the first part (\textit{qīsm awwal}) is well-known hadith of Abū Bakr telling the girls to stop singing and Muhammad telling him it was all right.\textsuperscript{87}

Perhaps Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām did not include it because it was so well known it was useless as a point of argument, but nonetheless, the omission, particularly since he is already quoting from a source that employs it, is striking.

The exclusion could not have occurred in order to exclude some of the family of the Prophet, for ʿĀʾisha appears in other treatises – notably \textit{Asrār al-nikāḥ}, the Secrets of Marriage – as do ʿAlī and Fāṭima in other treatises.\textsuperscript{88} Abū Bakr also appears elsewhere in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓām.\textsuperscript{89} ʿĀʾisha’s appearance in \textit{Asrār al-nikāḥ} serves to portray her as the Prophet’s close companion and wife (Khadija also appears here first in the same

\textsuperscript{84}Ms. 1443 II/29b, Kattakhanov, II/24b.
\textsuperscript{85}Lewisohn.
\textsuperscript{86}al-Ghazālī, 359.
\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., 360.
\textsuperscript{88}ʿAlī is mentioned in ms. 1443 in the following treatises: VII/134b; VIII/144a; XIX/270b; XXI/298a; XXII/320a; XXV/340b; XXVII/367b; XXIX/382b, 384a, 386b, 387a; Fāṭima is mentioned in VII/134b, 135a, 135b; XI/175b; XXIX/378b, 386b, 387a, 389a; ʿĀʾisha is mentioned in I/9b, 13a and XXIX/383a.
\textsuperscript{89}References to Abū Bakr can be found on the following folios in Ms. 1443: II/17b; IV/90a; V/96a, 98b, 99a, 99b; VII/134b, 135b; X/175b; XV/238b, 239a, 239b; XVII/248a, 248b, 249a, 249b, 253b; XX/277a; XXI/296a; XXII/312b, 319b, 320a; XXV/347b; XXIX/382a, 382b, 383a, 383b, 385a.
regard).\textsuperscript{90} Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s omission of this strong argument for \textit{samāʾ}, particularly, as we will see below, given what might be the strength of the textual sources, leaves us with a question.

The second part, \textit{qism dawwām}, which Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam did not include from Ghazālī, discusses how one who cannot separate himself from his desire for women or boys\textsuperscript{91} – notably not “women and children”, as Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam usually puts it, meaning family, but here a sexual desire for women and boys seems to be indicated – is likely not accidental in its lack of inclusion. Of course those who cannot control their lust are not allowed to partake of \textit{samāʾ}; Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam has mentioned this, almost in passing, earlier, although without referring quite so clearly to a desire for boys.\textsuperscript{92}

The third part, which starts not quite two pages after the beginning of this excision, immediately begins by breaking its discussion into four kinds (\textit{nawʾ}).\textsuperscript{93} These four parts discuss particular kinds of verbally expressive music, with music here broadly defined. This \textit{qism} breaks these verbal musics into different types: 1) those which inspire people to make the Hajj or do battle; 2) lamentations; 3) expressions of happiness; and 4) expressions from “the limits of love (\textit{ʿishq}) of God”.\textsuperscript{94} It is perhaps surprising that none of these were even summarized by Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam; although the first of these seems to be completely outside the perspective we find in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam, who does not speak of going off to battle, the second in particular is the topic of an entire treatise, \textit{Bukāʾiyya}, by Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam, and the weeping he associates with \textit{fanāʾ} (annihilation

\textsuperscript{90} Khādīja is mentioned in I/13a; XXIX/384a.
\textsuperscript{91} al-Ghazālī, 360.
\textsuperscript{92} Ms. 1443, II/25b, Kattakhanov, II/21b.
\textsuperscript{93} al-Ghazālī, 360-362.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 361.
in God) and therefore samāʾ. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam seems to have assumed the expressions of happiness – he mentions that singing at weddings is acceptable – was included.95

After omitting so much, he includes the one section that deals with the most abstract of the permitted singing, that most conceptualized for the purpose of samāʾ. Yet nonetheless, he does not include all of this discussion; several sizable chunks (from several lines to a paragraph) of this section of Ghazālī’s text are omitted as well. The reason for the omission of first sentence that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam drops when he again picks up the third qism is obvious: it says that the letter of the law (rasm) is “mixed” concerning samāʾ “now” (in Ghazālī’s time). Although this is clearly also true in Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s time and place – or else he would not have needed to write the treatise – Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam seems to want to use Ghazālī as a voice for permission. The section immediately following this faṣl (the chapter on samāʾ) in Ghazālī discusses in greater detail what is not permitted in samāʾ; Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam has included none of it.96

The second sentence of Ghazālī’s work that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam omits says, “In the fire (of samāʾ) the heart is purified of impurities; many spiritual exercises do not achieve the result that samāʾ does.”97 Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam would likely have misgivings about placing such a high value on samāʾ. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, he seems to have placed the highest value on suḥbat (companionship, intercourse) as being the “best” of all Şūfī practices. Although these two are not mutually exclusive – one can imagine samāʾ as part of companionship with one’s master – it would seem that Makhdūm-i

95 Ms. 1443, II/29a.
96 al-Ghazālī, 362ff.
97 Ibid., 362.
Aʿẓam is avoiding presenting with Ghazālī’s authority one spiritual exercise over another.

The next omission from Ghazālī is a paragraph in the printed edition that generally presents the disciple/master (*murid/pīr*) relationship and when the master should grant or reject permission to participate in *samāʾ*. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam rarely seems to be addressing other Šūfī masters, so this passage that seeks to coach masters would be useless, especially in the context of trying to convince the shariʿa-minded religious scholars that *samāʾ* needs to be permitted. One might imagine rhetoric that is designed to show these religious scholars that the masters were indeed excluding some of their students, but Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam has not taken this approach.

The last omission is, “If the youth, knowing the pleasures of rulership and authority and command and of having wealth reproaches [the group], how surprising, since he knows the path of play, what path does having wealth bring one to?” Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam follows a path of the acceptance of wealth in general; other treatises seek to draw in both the religious scholars and the political elite. While Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam does not advocate the collection of wealth, he also does not advocate the extreme poverty suggested by many Šūfīs. Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s omission of the sentence indicates that he has no interest in adding variables for wealth into the equation when seeking support for *samāʾ*.

### B. Textual Authorities

The relationship of a Muslim scholar to the textual “facts” of the religion – the Qurʾān and the Sunnah – is always somewhat cloudy, given that these “texts” have been

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98 Ibid., 363.
99 Ibid., 363.
understood from the beginning as being aural before they were written, and their
memorization has always held a place of high regard. Questions of use and legitimation
vary across authors, time and place; we ought, therefore, to be careful with assumptions
we bring when analyzing Makhdūm-i Aʿzam’s use of these types of “authorities”. In part
this discussion has to be shaped by what some consider to be “correct” and/or “proper” in
the context of what he presents; some of what he has included is even surprising in its
breaking away from these positions. This discussion can only begin to scratch the
surface of what could be done to help us understand how individuals like Makhdūm-i
Aʿzam came to understand particular sayings and passages as being authoritative.100

The bulk of the Qurʾānic and hadith references encountered in any treatise occur
near the beginning. This is a common way to situate oneself in many Şûfi texts; one need
only look at any section of Qushayrī’s Risāla,101 virtually all of which begin with a
quotation from the Qurʾān as a starting point for the discussion, even when the continuing
discussion does not refer to it. Other Persianate authors, such as Rāzī, also generally
open chapters or sections with Qurʾānic and then hadith citations.102 Among Makhdūm-i
Aʿzam’s treatises there is a great deal of variation in the number of Qurʾānic references.
Here I mean using a snippet of the Qurʾānic text, sometimes identified and sometimes
not, in the original Arabic. Occasionally, phrases in Arabic that are introduced with

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100 This research would necessarily mean having a much larger body of texts edited, with
complete indices (as in Ansari). I am doing this with the various treatises of Makhdūm-i Aʿzam to which I
have access, but he is only one among dozens of authors.

101 Qushayrī. The English translations do not necessarily provide the full isnad and other
common phrases for Qur’ānic citations cannot be found. For instance, in Wujūdiyya, Makhdūm-i Aʿzām presents a discussion of Moses talking with God. Although the reference is well known, one section that Makhdūm-i Aʿzām refers to as an āyat I cannot find using standard references like Kassis. Part of the problem is that the text is corrupted — although it is repeated, the primary terms are not the same in each reference, and neither term can be found in Kassis — but it seems to be the answer that the Qur’ān does not quite supply, when Moses wanted to see God. Were this an actual Qur’ānic citation, one would image that not only would Makhdūm-i Aʿzām have written it more readily, but that the subsequent copyists would have as well. Other Arabic passages that are introduced as if they were Qur’ānic I have not been able to track down as well. Thus it may be that Makhdūm-i Aʿzām felt it possible to alter Qur’ānic


103 These common introductions can either include “kawaqul taʿala” or a mention in the text that what follows or precedes it is an “āyat”, which Makhdūm-i Aʿzām only uses as a verse from the Qur’ān.

104 See, for instance, Brannon M. Wheeler, Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis (London / New York: Continuum, 2002), 201-06.


106 Ms. 1443, III/54b.

107 Ms. 1443, XIII/195a; XX/286b; XXI/298b-299a. This also appears in the Kattakhanov ms. on XVII/312a. As with the passage with Moses, this also opens with a real Qur’ānic citation and continues with a phrase that is not in the Qur’āns I consulted.
citations in some of his works. Given Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s family history – he gives his own name in the codices I’ve consulted as “ʿAḥmad ibn Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Khwājagī Kāsānī”\(^{108}\), indicating that his father was a Ṣūfī shaykh as well.\(^ {109}\) Thus is would seem that for Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam, and perhaps for his readers as well, these additions to what was considered “Qurʾānic”.

Not all the treatises use Qurʾānic and other Arabic sayings uniformly. For instance, in \textit{Tanbih al-ʿulamā}, we see far more Qurʾān and hadith quoted in support of the author’s arguments, and far fewer presentations of outside authorities, be they Ṣūfī or not. This is, perhaps, as one might expect, for the treatise that says it is directed toward the religious scholars, but one wonders why anything other than citations to these sources would be used. As noted above, we may necessarily draw too bright a line between these two groups; if Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam was assuming that common Ṣūfī sayings would also be convincing, they must have enjoyed some currency even among the religious scholars who presumably were claiming some of the “states” that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s group controlled. The different manuscript branches sometimes contain different references to hadith and the Qurʾān; for example, the \textit{Samāʿiyya} in Kattakhanov manuscript contains, among other additions, an additional quote from the Qurʾān.\(^ {110}\) Many of the quotations are repeated across treatises; most of the Qurʾānic citations from Kattakhanov’s \textit{Bayān-i wāqʿah}, which is not in the 1443 codex, are found sprinkled throughout 1443’s treatises.\(^ {111}\) This occurs in \textit{Tanbih al-ʿulamā} as well; in codex 6646, which largely

\(^{108}\) See ms. 1443, II/17a; VIII/140a; XXII/328a.

\(^ {109}\) The differences between the various titles – \textit{mawlānā}, \textit{shaykh}, \textit{khwāja} – is not clear, if indeed it exists.

\(^ {110}\) Kattakhanov, II/ 22a, quoting LIII:12.

\(^ {111}\) Compare, for instance, Kattakhanov XXVII/312a with ms. 1443, XIII/195a; XX/286b; XXI/298b-299a, or Kattakhanov 310b with ms. 1443, IV/73a; XVIII/265b.
follows the Kattakhanov/501 branch, we see additional Qurʾānic citations, found elsewhere in 1443, but not in that treatise.\textsuperscript{112}

What is the purpose of discussing this? Typically we understand these references, particularly when they are to the Qurʾān, to be rather fixed and “unimaginative”. The assumption is that when a word or phrase comes up, an author will reflexively use a Qurʾānic phrase which seems to fit. Yet we can see that there is more to the use of even just the Qurʾānic citations – to say nothing of the hadiths and the “Ṣūfī sayings” which are ubiquitous. Although to delve deeply into this topic would take us too far afield, there is clearly more to be learned by studying this topic carefully.

\textbf{V. Conclusion}

As we have seen above, some of Makhdūm-i ʿAzām’s works, while not written to present social paradigms, can be used as such by looking at how and against whom he is constructing his arguments. The treatises, starting with \textit{Asrār al-nikāḥ}, seek to construct how a social institution – marriage and gender relations combined here – are to be understood within his particular Ṣūfī community. Although the treatise does not delimit who he is arguing against, by comparing the two major manuscript branches and seeing where each expands a social contract presented as normative, we can see that without limiting men’s social authority, he encourages a perception of women as fully-functioning partners in their social sphere. In \textit{Samāʾiyya}, this circle contracts slightly; the authorial voice notes that we are arguing against some religious scholars who are erroneously prohibiting \textit{samāʾ}. Although this also could be argued against some within the Ṣūfī community, Makhdūm-i ʿAzām does not seem to perceive it in this way, and most of the

\textsuperscript{112} Ms. 6646, XXVI/306a; ms. 1443, III/52a-b; IV/58b; XIX/269a; XX/276b; XXII/315a, has the same citation, XXXIII:72.
arguments he uses are those which are entirely within the accepted practices of earlier Ṣūfis. He even avoids some of the arguments used by earlier Ṣūfis that have been discredited by critics such as Ibn Taymiyya. In this way, he has a better chance of wooing the religious scholars to his point of view, although it does not seem to have been the mainstream perspective in some parts of the developing Naqshbandiyya.

Lastly, in his treatise most directed toward the religious scholars, the voice is soothing and inviting; clearly here he wants to bring the religious scholars into a position of at least tolerance, if not acceptance. At the same time, he is trying to make plain for his own followers the distinction between the “zāhirī” and “bāṭinī” sciences associated with Islam. Although this is a near-constant refrain within Ṣufism, it points to the religious scholars trying to claim for themselves not that the Ṣūfis do not have particular states, but that they, too, have them. Clearly, the group with which Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam associated himself was able to draw readily from the population (and probably elites) at will. Although Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s work rarely mentions specific miracles, miracles, as we have seen, are frequently mentioned, and it is likely this shaping of reality that non-Ṣūfis wished to partake in. Although we have seen how other members of the Khwājagān near the beginning of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s life were focused on mediating with the people through ordinary political means, Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s emphasis seems to have been much more “other-worldly”, although at the same time showing how practices, like having many children and breaking one’s bonds with the world, were “profitable”. We must assume that Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam chose his words with some care, as these treatises were all noted as being written.

Thus we have a man who is living in the world, and yet trying to maintain a detachment from it, paying attention to his wives – if he followed his own advice – and at
the same time disavowing the “attractions” of “women and children”. That Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam’s treatises show a complicated picture should come as no surprise, for he has provided us with many new points of data in the ever-growing graph of knowledge about the Khwājagan/Naqshbandiya.
Bibliography


