
Abū Ja‘far Ibn Yazdānyār’s Rawḍat al-Murīdīn: an Unknown Sufi Manual of the Fifth/Eleventh Century



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Abstract

Rawḍat al-murīdīn of Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn Yazdānyār al-Hamadhānī is a distinguished Sufi manual of the early fifth/eleventh century. Though an early Sufi textbook, this work is relatively unknown when compared with other Sufi textbooks written prior to and after it. This article draws on Williams’ edition from 1957 in addition to two manuscripts held in Princeton and Istanbul, in order to examine this early Sufi work and to appraise its contribution to the development of early Sufism. Rawḍat al-murīdīn presents us a unique formula of taṣawwuf that differs essentially from the famous manuals of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries which concerned themselves with Sufi rules of conduct. There is strong evidence to suggest that its author, if not formally a member of Karrāmiyya, was a pro-Karrāmī writer who operated in a historical context where the renunciatory-Karrāmī mode of piety was widely condemned. Unlike the early character of Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār, who lived in the fourth/tenth century and was generally known as an opponent of ecstatic Sufism, the author of Rawḍa seeks to present a comprehensive umbrella of Sufism under which the teachings of al-Junayd co-exist side by side with those of al-Hallāj.

Keywords: Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār; Abū Ja‘far Ibn Yazdānyār al-Hamadhānī; *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*; Sufi manners; sheikh-novice relationship; Karrāmiyya

Introduction

Ibn Yazdānyār is the ‘nickname’ of two different yet little known personalities in the early, formative phase of Sufism. The first is Abū Bakr Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Yazdānyār, the early mystic of Urmiya in north-west Persia who lived in the fourth/tenth century. The second is Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Yazdānyār al-Hamadhānī, who was born in the late fourth/tenth century and was active in the early fifth/eleventh century. While the first is not known to have authored any Sufi work, the latter is the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, a Sufi work that is completely dedicated to Sufi manners and spiritual advice. In referring to this work in *Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, Ḥājīj Khalīfa cites the author’s name not as ‘Ibn Yazdānyār’ but as ‘Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn Aḥmad

Ibn Yazd al-Anbārī.¹ This raises the possibility that the original name of the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* has nothing to do with 'Ibn Yazdānyār'. This speculation, however, is problematic. John Alden Williams was the first to draw attention to *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* in his doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Oriental Studies at Princeton University in 1957. In his work, Williams introduces Abū Ja'far Ibn Yazdānyār very briefly and provides western readers with a critical English translation of Ibn Yazdānyār's *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* based on five manuscripts of the work located in Princeton, Berlin, Paris, Cairo and Istanbul. Williams opens his work with a short introduction wherein he refers to the problems of both the author's name and the date of the book. He indicates that Louis Massignon had informed him that he had 'known the book for forty years, and never happened on an identification of the author'.² Massignon himself had occasionally referred to the text of *Rawḍa* in his *La Passion d'al-Ḥallāj*.³

After consulting available manuscripts including the oldest one in Istanbul, as well as Muslim medieval biographical works, Williams concludes that Ḥājījī Khalīfā had used a defective manuscript in which the author's name was incorrectly listed as 'Ibn Yazd al-Anbārī'. The name appearing in the Istanbul manuscript is 'Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Yazd Anbār', which had been introduced by the original copyist of the manuscript; this referred both to the author as well as to the earlier Sufi figure of Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār al-Urmawī.⁴

Through an examination of the people cited in the text of *Rawḍa*, Williams suggests that the book was most probably written in the first quarter of the fifth century of *hijra*, or before 1033 CE, slightly later than Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) and earlier than Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072).⁵ The text of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* relies heavily on Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988)'s *Kitāb al-luma'*. Williams notes that nearly half of the quotations in *Rawḍa* are found in Sarrāj's work in some form. In many cases, when a particular anecdote is briefly mentioned in *Luma'*, it appears in a longer and more detailed version in *Rawḍa*. Even though the author of *Rawḍa* appears very frequently to copy verbatim from Sarrāj's text, he also appears eager to add considerable new material, whether inserting actual names of Sufi transmitters in places where al-Sarrāj was satisfied with phrases like 'someone said' or when relating a story concerning the behaviour of al-Junayd (d. 298/910) at the *samā'* sessions. While a brief reference to the story is provided in *Luma'*,⁶ a longer reference and more circumstantial account is given to the story in *Rawḍa*.⁷ Notably, the author of *Rawḍa* does not provide quotations from the two renowned Sufi masters of the late fifth/eleventh century, Abū Sa'īd Ibn Abī al-Khayr (d. 440/1049) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī.⁸ Besides the five manuscripts that used by Williams, an additional manuscript

¹Ḥājījī Khalīfā, *Kashf al-zunūn 'an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 932.

²*Rawḍat al-murīdīn of Shaykh Abū Ja'far Ibn Yazdānyār*, edited and translated by John Alden Williams, unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, November 1957, Introduction, p. iii.

³Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, translated from the French with a biographical foreword by Herbert Mason (Princeton, 1982), vol. 1, p. 107; vol. 2, pp. 17, 189.

⁴*Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, Ms. Istanbul, Koprülü (729), 2a (hereafter, *R.I.*)

⁵*Ibid.*, iii-iv.

⁶Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-luma'*, (ed.) R. A. Nicholson (Leiden, 1914), p. 294.

⁷See *Rawḍa*, MS. Princeton, the Garrett Collection (Yehuda 96S), 50b (hereafter, *R.P.*).

⁸In Princeton Ms., for instance, al-Qushayrī is quoted referring to *samā'* (*R.P.*, 31a). This quotation, most probably, is a fabrication of a later copyist of the manuscript.

of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* exists in the Escorial Library (Spain) (No. 206). The author's name there appears as 'Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Anbārī'.

Williams's work was, and still is, the only scholarly attempt to draw attention to *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* and its author. Unfortunately, it has not been followed up by any further research to thoroughly investigate either the Sufi teachings or the components of the distinctive religious reality reflected in the text. Moreover, Williams's translation, on many occasions, is not a precise translation of the original text.⁹ Other questions that remain unanswered through this lack of further research are the following: Why is the text of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, though an early Sufi textbook, less well known or even completely unknown when compared with other famous Sufi textbooks written prior to and after it? Why do contemporary Sufi authors of that time such as Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) or 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Muḥammad al-Khargūshī (d. 407/1016), the author of *Tahdhīb al-asrār*, not refer to the author of *Rawḍa*? What are the major Sufi doctrines of the author of *Rawḍa*, and how can we evaluate the contribution of his work to the early Sufi tradition?

This paper, accordingly, draws on Williams's edition of *Rawḍa* together with the Princeton and Istanbul manuscripts to examine this early Sufi work in great detail, and to appraise its contribution to the development of early Sufism. Special attention is also focused on the communal aspects of early Sufi life as demonstrated in its detailed discussions of *samā'* ceremonies and the ethics of the master-novice relationship. The following discussion also demonstrates that the presence of such communal aspects in the text of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* is very impressive. Its author's frequent references to the ethics that one should preserve in the company of his brothers (*ikhwān*), and the ethics that the novice should follow with his Sufi guide, are examples of what is meant here by 'communal aspects'.

When I came across the manuscripts of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, I found myself asking: Why was this work ignored by the early Sufi and non-Sufi authors? Why has it not been added to the list of the best known Sufi manuals dating from the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries? If we consider the detailed treatments of the relationship between the Sufi sheikh and his novice in the *Rawḍa*, for instance, we see an early version of the famous discussions of this topic that we tend to attribute to Sufi theoreticians of the late sixth/twelfth century. In a previous article, I pointed out the significance of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's testament (*waṣīyya*) to Sufi novices of his days, which appears as the last section in his *Risāla* (though it was originally composed as a separate piece of advice directed to al-Qushayrī's contemporaries). This short yet forceful document provides us with an early version of Sufi systematic discussions of the sheikh-novice relationship which later came to be fully crystallised by Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) in his influential magnum opus '*Awārif al-ma'ārif*'.¹⁰

I would argue, therefore, that Ibn Yazdānyār's *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* is the earliest known Sufi source to deal systematically with the sheikh-novice relationship. When compared with Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-luma'*, Ibn Yazdānyār's work presents a different portrait of *taṣawwuf* that does not completely harmonise with that of Baghdadi mainstream Sufism. As thoroughly discussed by Ahmet Karamustafa, the early Sufis of Baghdad, a Sufi urban elite

⁹See, for instance, his translation of the verses of al-Ḥallāj in *R.P.*, 18b.

¹⁰See Arin Salamah-Qudsi, 'Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's *Waṣīyya* to Sufi Novices: A Testimony to Eleventh Century Sufism', forthcoming in *Le Muséon* 132 (3-4) 2019, pp. 509-534.

that revolved around central charismatic figures, came to be known as *ṣūfiyya*; the most famous of these leaders was al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910). The *ṣūfiyya* developed a distinguished mode of renunciatory piety¹¹ as its great leaders sought to consolidate a high Sufi ethos that consisted of different codes of behaviour and well-defined rules of ethics to govern all Sufis. Even though this ethos was not completely formulated in any written source, it seems that commitment to this ethos was regarded as a sign of loyalty to Baghdadi Sufism, which succeeded in the course of the early third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries to establish its position as the formal and even exclusive protector and mouthpiece of mainstream Sufism. Baghdadi Sufis, the *ṣūfiyya*, presented a particular self-conscious mode of piety that relied basically on a renunciatory, devotional life. Sufi works produced during this period reflected the aspiration of the prominent representatives of the *ṣūfiyya* to portray Sufis as a solid and harmonious group.

This seems to be the main agenda of al-Junayd. His *Rasā'il*, as well as the huge body of statements and anecdotes attributed to him in early Sufi works, leaves a strong impression that this charismatic and pragmatic leader aspired to impose the Baghdadi umbrella over as many people as possible. One of his strategies for achieving this goal was to 'absorb' controversial tendencies from some of his contemporaries and to gloss over any differences with the *ṣūfiyya*. This is the reason why individual voices appear to be very faint in the famous Sufi works of that period. Al-Junayd, for example, while referring to a passionate Sufi character like Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), chose to elucidate many of al-Baṣṭāmī's ecstatic utterances through his own moderate commentary.¹² This is also the case of Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/945) whose controversial statements gain a special reference from Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj.¹³

On the other hand, personalities such as al-Ḥusayn Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (executed 309/922) and Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffārī (d. c. 354/965) could not be absorbed by the Baghdadi institution because their modes of piety were diverse in a way that made them almost impossible for the Baghdadi institution to co-opt. The choice made by the Baghdadi leaders to ignore and sever such figures from their firm core was likely supported by the personal aspiration of these same figures to disassociate themselves from the spiritual monopoly of the Baghdadi elite.¹⁴

Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār demonstrates an interesting form of the relationship between the circle of the Baghdadi Sufis, and the Sufi personalities who made up the Baghdadi monopoly of early Sufism. Abū Bakr al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī Ibn Yazdānyār was an early mystic of Urmīya in north-west Persia. A close reading of early Sufi sources reveals that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār was one of the figures who tried to challenge the high ideal of Sufi solidarity as it was being consolidated by al-Junayd and his contemporaries. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj chooses to devote a separate section of his work to Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār where the former criticises Ibn Yazdānyār and reveals what he considers as Ibn Yazdānyār's attempts to defame

¹¹Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2007), pp. 1–26.

¹²Al-Junayd's commentary was preserved by al-Sarrāj in his *Kitāb al-luma'*, pp. 380–89.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 395–406.

¹⁴On these dynamics in the development of early Sufism see Arin Salamah-Qudsi, *Sufism and Early Islamic Piety: Personal and Communal Dynamics* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 126–151.

the Sufis of Baghdad. Ibn Yazdānyār’s problematic relationship with the Sufis of Baghdad is described as follows:

Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār used to associate with the Sufi masters as well as travel with them [...]. When he became inclined to leadership (*māla ilā al-rī‘āsa*), and started to be fascinated by people’s gathering around him, he started slandering his Sufi masters and accusing them of religious innovation (*nasabahum ilā al-bid‘a*), going astray (*ḍalāla*), committing faults (*ghalat*), and of lack of knowledge (*jahāla*).¹⁵

Ibn Yazdānyār attempted to correspond with certain people in different parts of the Muslim lands in order to warn them of Sufis and to accuse the latter of heresy (*kataba ilā al-bilād yuḥadhdhiru minhum al-‘ibād*). Among the Baghdadi Sufis who were targets of his accusations were al-Junayd, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), Sumnūn Ibn Ḥamza (d. 298/910–911), Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861), and Ja‘far al-Khuldī (d. 348/959).¹⁶

Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī provides us with a separate biographical account of Ibn Yazdānyār while referring to the latter’s controversy with Sufi contemporaries and his attempts to slander them for publicly speaking about Sufi doctrines. Al-Sulamī states that this person had a special Sufi method which included criticising the sayings of certain Sufis of Iraq (*kāna yunkiru ‘alā ba‘ḍi mashāyikhi al-‘Irāq aqāwīlahum*).¹⁷ Another Sufi author of the late fourth/tenth century, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Khargūshī relies heavily on Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār’s detailed discussion of the concept of *ḥayā* (modesty) and its various categories in his *Tahdhīb al-asrār*.¹⁸ Like other Sufi authors, al-Khargūshī refers to Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār on many occasions in his work.

Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār was not the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*. Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī indicates that Abū Ja‘far al-Sa‘īdī Ibn Yazdānyār al-Hamadhānī, who is the author of this work, was born in 380/990, a long time after Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār’s death. In his life, Abū Ja‘far was known as al-Qāḍī. According to al-Dhahabī, he was deaf and very poor, ultimately dying in 472 of *hijra*.¹⁹ The text of *Rawḍa* includes sayings attributed to the early figure of Abū Bakr, and these sayings should be added to others preserved by other Sufi sources in order to reconstruct his unique Sufi teachings.

On one occasion in the *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*’s manuscript, the author quotes the early Ibn Yazdānyār saying that ‘the one who abandons good manners (*adab*) with God will be deprived of Sunna as a punishment, and the one who abandons Sunna will be deprived of religious duties, and the one who abandons religious duties will be deprived of Sufi knowledge (*ḥimnān al-ma‘rifā*)’.²⁰ One basic element of the early Ibn Yazdānyār’s doctrinal system relates to his insistence on the Sufi’s need to conceal his inner states of revelation and avoid publicly expressing those states in full. This idea is also emphasised in his biography of al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*.

¹⁵ Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *Ṣuḥuf min kitāb al-luma‘*, (ed.) A. J. Arberry (London, 1947), p. 10. All English translations of quotations in the article are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, (ed.) Johannes Pedersen (Leiden, 1960), p. 423.

¹⁸ ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī al-Khargūshī, *Tahdhīb al-asrār*, (ed.) Bassām Bārūd (Abū Ḍabī, 1999), pp. 440–445.

¹⁹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām wa-wafāyāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a‘lām*, (ed.) Bashshār Ma‘rūf (Beirut, 2003), vol. 10, p. 344.

²⁰ *R.P.*, 4b.

There is insufficient data in the available Arabic and Persian sources that can provide an answer to the question: Why did Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār criticise the Sufis of Baghdad? Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that instead of ignoring Ibn Yazdānyār in their writings, the Sufis of Baghdad likely chose to make him part of their circle even to the point of defending him and clarifying his good intentions behind his slandering of contemporary Sufis, as al-Sulamī did in his *Ṭabaqāt*.²¹ It seems most probable that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār was not able to agree with the doctrine of union (*tawḥīd*), which revolves around the supreme mystical moment of union with the divine in the Sufi teachings of al-Junayd, al-Shiblī and al-Nūrī. Based on al-Sulamī's and later on al-Qushayrī's notion that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār developed a unique method of practising Sufism (*taṭīqa yakhtaṣṣu bihā*), one can assume that, at a particular point of time, Abū Bakr left Baghdad for his hometown Urmiya 'where he founded his own school, and carried on his polemics'.²²

There also does not seem to be evidence of any kinship between the early Ibn Yazdānyār and the later author of *Rawḍa*. In light of the rarity of the name, Williams indicates that kinship was potentially possible. 'But if this is the case', he goes on to assert, 'it shows how complete was the victory of the Iraqi school' since the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* quotes very frequently and enthusiastically from the great masters of Iraq.²³ This notion needs to be examined through a close reading of *Rawḍa*, and the question of how the Sufi mode of piety of the author of *Rawḍa* differs from both his early ancestors and the Iraqi school.

Rawḍat al-murīdīn: The text and the context

Rawḍat al-murīdīn comprises forty-four sections²⁴ and centres around Sufi rules of ethics (*ādāb*) and the different codes of behaviour it argues should be preserved in the framework of Sufi communal lives. These sections can be divided into the following categories:

1. General Sufi ethics that distinguish Sufis from other Muslims. In this category, the following items are addressed: the importance of the Sufi rules of ethics embedded in a renunciatory mode of piety; the need to conceal one's pious life from people's eyes; the superiority of one's association with Sufi brethren; and the custom of wearing wool.
2. Particular provisions that regulate Sufis' communal life and interrelationships. In this category, the following topics are included: the relationship dynamics and rules of conduct between the Sufi master and his novice as well as *ṣuḥba* and the merits of companionship.
3. Sections that treat *samā'*, the Sufi sessions of listening to music. These need to be treated separately because they form one of the pillars of Ibn Yazdānyār's unique system of thought. The author of *Rawḍa* devotes seven sections to this topic.
4. Sections devoted to certain Sufi ranks such as love (*maḥabba*), knowledge (*ma'rifa*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), silence (*ṣamt*) and contentment (*riḍā*).

²¹Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 424–425.

²²Williams, *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, Introduction, p. iv.

²³*Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. iv–v.

²⁴Unlike the Princeton manuscript, the Istanbul manuscript does not provide numbering of the sections. The five manuscripts of the work consulted by Williams differ slightly in the order in which the sections appear. For a comparison between the order of the sections in these manuscripts, see *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. xliii–xliv.

One of the key notions that frequently appears in the sections dedicated to general Sufi ethics that distinguishes Sufis from other Muslims is the crucial need to fulfil sincerely all rules of ethics in the path towards God; it is a constant assertion that abandoning these rules is explicitly prohibited. Remarkably, the general tone of the work celebrates a renunciatory mode of piety, which draws upon austerity, seclusion and a life of constant roving (*siyāḥa*). The author calls on his fellow Sufis to avoid association with non-Sufis and warns against revealing secret doctrines to non-Sufis as well as accepting any presents and alms from them. True Sufis, according to Ibn Yazdānyār, need to conceal their piety from people’s eyes and to be perfectly committed to the pragmatic practice of *taqiyya*, the prudent concealment of beliefs from others. In one passage, the author quotes from al-Junayd and is translated by Williams as follows:

Beware of selling your conscience for pity and praise, and of mixing with other than your own sort, and drawing near to those who assume the guise of knowledge, for I fear lest you corrupt your consciences and drive the Truth away. I charge you with this.²⁵

In the original text, the first sentence in this quotation reads: ‘*iyyākum an tabī‘ū sirakum bi-rifq wa-madh’*’. The word *rifq*, in my view, indicates alms and presents, so that Williams’s translation does not reflect the early Sufi tradition in which this term originated. *Rifq* and its plural form *arfāq* appear very frequently in early Sufi works of the fourth/tenth century in contexts that treat the controversial custom of accepting alms from wealthy people, especially women, who, by virtue of their support, sought to secure Sufi blessings (*baraka*). According to one famous piece of counsel asserted by the early Sufi masters, a true Sufi would not accept presents from women since ‘accepting women’s support is sign of humiliation and weakness’ (*fi qubūli arfāqi al-niswāni madhallatun wa-nuqṣān*).²⁶

Ibn Yazdānyār’s usage of the figure of al-Junayd here is very logical. If we scan the huge body of statements and anecdotes relating to early Sufi figures, we can conclude that al-Junayd was the most prominent figure who asserted the pragmatic strategy of concealing one’s pious state and abandoning the association with non-Sufis in order to protect this piety. Al-Junayd’s letters provide strong evidence that this assertion lies at the very basis of his Sufi agenda.²⁷ In order to emphasise the Sufis’ need to follow the principle of *taqiyya*, the author of *Rawḍa* cites one tradition according to which the Prophet Muḥammad is said to have predicted the appearance of a group of Muslims who would practise *taqiyya*, provide each other with counsel, and isolate themselves from people’s eyes.²⁸

The most celebrated theme throughout the text of *Rawḍa* relates to the helpfulness of one’s association with one’s Sufi brothers. This is not a mere catchword that the author

²⁵*R.P.*, 7b; Williams’ edition (hereafter *R.W.*), p. 11.

²⁶This statement is attributed to the early mystic of Egypt, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, who is said to have refused to accept a present that Fāṭima of Nishapur sent to him. See Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswā al-muta‘abbidāt aṣ-ṣūfiyyāt*, edited and translated by Rkia Elaroui-Cornell (Louisville, 1999), p. 143.

²⁷Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, *Rasā‘il*, in Ali Hassan 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* (London, 1962), Arabic text, p. 19.

²⁸I did not find this tradition in any *ḥadīth* collection prior to the fifth/eleventh century. The only *ḥadīth* collection that includes it is the *Amālī* of Abū Muṭī‘ Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Miṣrī (d. 497/1104) dated after the period of Ibn Yazdānyār. See: http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?hflag=1&bk_no=1525&pid=894943 (accessed 24 April 2018).

introduces, but rather an impassioned driving force that appears to push the completed text of *Rawḍa* forward. In one passage, for instance, Ibn Yazdānyār refers again to al-Junayd in order to emphasise the idea that mingling solely with other Sufis is preferable over super-erogatory prayer.²⁹

In the first category, Ibn Yazdānyār has a fascinating discussion concerning the custom of wearing wool, the qualifications for wearing it, as well as its different provisions and conditions. From the fifth/eleventh century, al-Qushayrī is the most outspoken on this topic when advising Sufi novices of his day (*al-waṣīyya li-l-murīdīn*).³⁰ The topic under discussion in the text of Ibn Yazdānyār provides extra layers of data that are not embedded in al-Qushayrī's text. Sufis are called 'the people of the wool' (*ahl al-ṣūf*) and that is why they are required to rigorously commit to the five conditions for donning the habit (*al-muraqqa'a*) that revolve naturally around poverty, sincerity and modesty. The habit is an armour of tribulation (*javshan al-balā'*) since its very existence on the mystic's body implies that his sincerity is subordinated to a constant trial. Interestingly, Ibn Yazdānyār severely criticises those who become haughty after wearing the habit. He quotes the following statement of al-Aṣma'ī (d. 216/831): 'An honourable man turned to devotion becomes humble; a base man doing the same thing becomes haughty'. The detailed discussion of wearing wool in *Rawḍa* implies a reality fraught with controversies among the Sufis themselves in relation to how they perceive the true mystic, and to what extent external garb is an indicator for potential initiation into the Sufi community. Critical voices against those who become Sufis solely in name and appearance are documented in early Sufi tradition. Al-Qushayrī in the introduction to his *Risāla* condemns very severely some of his contemporary Sufis who disrespect Muslim law and neglect the very foundations of Sufi elders belonging to the first generation.³¹ Prior to al-Qushayrī, Ibn Yazdānyār is the one most likely to warn against the existence of such false adherents while attempting to suggest his own solution to this essential problem: not to indulge all those who seek to wear the Sufi habit and ensuring this by spreading the difficult regulations related to its wearing.

In one of the first sections in *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*, Ibn Yazdānyār discusses the true nature (*dhātīyya*) of Sufism. This section appears before another one dedicated to the etymological origins of the term *taṣawwuf*. The author of *Rawḍa* quotes many early Sufi figures here, such as al-Shiblī, Sa'ī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253/867), the latter's nephew al-Junayd, and the great master of Shīrāz Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Khaffīf (d. 371/982). Notably, Ibn Yazdānyār quotes two of al-Ḥallāj's statements that relate to the true essence of Sufism. One of these two quotations is embedded in the following famous anecdote narrated about al-Ḥallāj during his incarceration before being executed in Baghdad:

When al-Ḥallāj was asked about Sufism, he answered: "[It is] calcinations of humanity and eliminations [that are the concern] of divinity (*ṭawāmīs wa-dawāmīs lāhūtīyya*)". The questioner said, then: "I said to him: 'Explain this statement'". He [that is al-Ḥallāj] said: "No explanation is possible". I said: "Why did you reveal it to me?". He replied: "The one who knows it [that is the

²⁹R.P., 10a; R.I., 6a.

³⁰Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf* (Cairo, 1940), the last chapter, 'Bāb al-Waṣīyya li-l-Murīdīn', pp. 197–202.

³¹Qushayrī, *Risāla*, pp. 2–3.

meaning] will understand, and the one who does not know it will not understand”. I said: “I beg you to explain it to me”. He, then, recited [the verse]: “Do not defame us in public; here is our finger tinged by lovers’ blood”.³²

More interesting than quoting directly from al-Ḥallāj here are the references made by Ibn Yazdānyār to other statements not made by al-Ḥallāj that, however, include well-known Ḥallājīan terminology. Such is the following statement that Ibn Yazdānyār attributes to Ruwaym Ibn Aḥmad (d. 303/915), the famous Sufi of Baghdad. The reference here is as follows:

Muḥammad Ibn Khaffī al-Shīrāzī is quoted to have said: “I asked Ruwaym Ibn Muḥammad³³ about *taṣawwuf*, and he said to me: “Oh my son! *taṣawwuf* is the destruction of human nature (*fanā’ al-nāsūtiyya*) and the emersion of the divine essence (*ẓuhūr al-lāhūtiyya*)”.³⁴

Both *nāsūtiyya* and *lāhūtiyya* are very well known Ḥallājīan terms even though they appear in statements attributed to others in early Sufis sources.³⁵ Another example appears in the following statement attributed to Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī in *Rawḍa*: ‘God has filled the Sufis with His bright light (*al-Ḥaqq anāra lahum nūran sha‘sha‘āniyyan*)’.³⁶ This statement appears in Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Sahlaḡī’s hagiographical work on the virtues of al-Baṣṭāmī, *al-Nūr min kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*.³⁷ These references leave a strong impression that Ibn Yazdānyār had al-Ḥallāj in mind even when he quoted other Sufis who embedded Ḥallājīan ideas. As I will show in the following discussion, Ibn Yazdānyār, most likely, was predominantly influenced by al-Ḥallāj and his unique mode of piety.

The second category referred to above discusses particular Sufi provisions that regulate communal life and interrelationships among Sufis during Ibn Yazdānyār’s time. The major topic in this category is the relationship between Sufi masters and their novices. The crucial need for a guide is much celebrated by Ibn Yazdānyār: ‘If a man reaches to the highest spiritual ranks and he is granted revelations from the invisible world while he has no master, then this man is regarded as a bastard (*walad zinā*)’.³⁸ The sub-section devoted to the rules of ethics that need to be committed during the period of discipleship is impressively long in the Princeton manuscript while it is missing in the other manuscripts upon which Williams’s edition relies. A close reading of the Princeton’s manuscript folios, which extend from folio 23a to the beginning of folio 38b, raises suspicions regarding their authenticity even without prior knowledge of the absence of the ethics section in

³²R.P., 18b. The English translation is mine. The translation of al-Ḥallāj’s definition of Sufism is based on Massignon (*The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. 3, p. 132). The word *dawānīs* is replaced in some versions of the story by *rawānīs*. Williams’s translation is fraught with mistakes and inaccuracy. Al-Ḥallāj’s verse, for instance, is translated by Williams as follows: ‘These fingertips in joyous henna dipped do not uncover! They are dyed in the blood of a faithful lover!!’. Massignon indicates that *ṭawānīs* and *rawānīs* are two technical terms marking the degree of the ‘mystical death’ which is referred to many times in early Sufi works (see, for instance, Sarraḡ, *Kitāb al-luma*, pp. 357–358).

³³Instead of Aḥmad in both R.P. and R.I.

³⁴See R.P., fol.18b.

³⁵This statement is attributed to Abū Bakr al-Shiblī in Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *Tadhkirat al-awliyā*, (ed.) R.A. Nicholson (Leiden, 1905–7), vol. 2, p. 175.

³⁶R.P., 19a; R.I., 12a (*‘athāra lahum nūran musha‘shi‘an*).

³⁷Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Sahlaḡī, *al-Nūr min kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shataḡāt al-sūfiyya* (Kuwait, 1976), p. 184.

³⁸R.P., 21a.

the other manuscripts. The references to Sufi figures who lived long after Ibn Yazdānyār's time, such as Qaḍīb al-Bān al-Mawṣilī (d. 573/1178) and Abū Madyan Shu'ayb Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī (d. 594/1198), as well as the general tone, emphasise that these folios were taken from another Sufi work. It is still important, however, to ask why the copyist felt that these sections were relevant and ought to be added to the text of *Rawḍa*. What were the affinities that he found between Ibn Yazdānyār's tone and the other late work that also dealt with the master-disciple relationship?

We look to al-Qushayrī's *waṣīyya* at the end of his renowned epistle on Sufism as one of the earliest theoretical teaching sources on the master-disciple relationship. We also attribute to the later Sufi master of Baghdad, Abū Ḥaḍḍ al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) a fundamental role in establishing the doctrinal basis of this topic; four detailed chapters of his *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* are dedicated to sheik-status and to the sheikh-disciple relationship.³⁹ I would argue, then, that Ibn Yazdānyār's detailed discussion of the topic in his *Rawḍa* provides us with the early origins for both the al-Qushayrī and al-Suhrawardī's sources.

On one occasion, in the other work that was copied with *Rawḍa* in the Princeton manuscript, the author asserts that disputing with one's sheikhs is absolutely forbidden: '*al-i'tirād 'alā al-shuyūkhī ḥarām*'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he indicates that the novice is required to obey his master completely, even if the religious knowledge of his master is inferior to his own.⁴¹ Moreover, the novice needs to surrender to his master and to give up his own will in favour of his master's. This novice is called *murīd* (lit. the one who aspires) although he is, in fact, deprived of all traces of his own will; at this level, he aspires to attain a state of perfection that implies the imitation of God Himself (*al-tashabbuh bi-l-ilāh*). To imitate God, the guidance of the Sufi master is crucial. The idea of imitating God resonates with the notion *al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh* whose origins are documented in earlier Sufi sources.⁴² The term *takhalluq* refers to the mystics' attempt to adopt some of the divine attributes and morals in a way that harmonises with the mystics' human abilities and attributes. As many Sufi authors assert, this is the very purpose of Man's creation; this is Man's ultimate function as the successor to God Himself. Al-Qushayrī refers in much detail to the idea of *takhalluq* in his work *al-Taḥbīr fī al-tadhkīr* and presents a survey of the divine attributes that men can adopt.⁴³

All these notions have nothing to do with the original *Rawḍa* although they do correspond to some passages in it. It is clear that during Ibn Yazdānyār's days, the doctrinal system that related to sheikh-hood and discipleship had not yet developed to include the extreme ideas that grant the Sufi sheikh sublime qualities and undisputed authority over his novices. Meanwhile, the authentic sections on the topic in the manuscripts of *Rawḍa* still provide an early kernel of the later fully-established system of thought concerning sheikh-hood and discipleship. According to *Rawḍa*, the Sufi novice is not required to commit himself to only

³⁹On this topic, see A. Salamah-Qudsi, 'Institutionalized *Mashyakha* in the Twelfth Century Sufism of 'Umar al-Suhrawardī', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009), pp. 385–403.

⁴⁰R.P., 25b.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Sahl Ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*, (ed.) Maḥmūd Jirat Allāh (Cairo, 2000), p. 248; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'* (Cairo, 1974), vol. 9, p. 376. From the later period, see, for instance, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Tamhīdāt*, (ed.) 'Affī 'Usayrān (Tehran, 1958), pp. 185, 300.

⁴³Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Taḥbīr fī al-tadhkīr*, (ed.) Ibrāhīm Basyūnī (Cairo, 1968), pp. 20, 95–97.

one sheikh. While later a full commitment to one sheikh came to be a building block of the Sufi institutionalised system of discipleship, venerating one's master is presented here as one among many rules of conduct that the novice is urged to follow, but not as the most central one. Even so, Ibn Yazdānyār cautioned all Sufi sheiks to be aware of their potential to damage their novices; he calls on them to behave cautiously in *samā'* ceremonies and to avoid any ecstatic movements that might be misunderstood by their novices and cause them to go astray and behave illegally.⁴⁴ This notion contradicts the later text that was added to *Rawḍa*.

This author, whose work was added to *Rawḍa*, goes on to relate that it is likely that one Sufi master, by drinking wine in the presence of his disciples, acted illegally or in a forbidden manner. Qaḍīb al-Bān al-Mawṣilī who died about one hundred years after Ibn Yazdānyār is presented here as the example and his antinomian behaviour is reputed to have shocked the people of his time. The text reads:

It is likely to happen that a Sufi master carries a glass of wine and brings it close to his mouth, and, at that moment, God turns the wine in his mouth into honey while the one who observes thinks that this Sufi master drinks wine. Other situations that resemble this example are very common.⁴⁵

The reference made after this passage follows the description of the spiritual state of Qaḍīb al-Bān al-Mawṣilī as it appears in some later Sufi sources. According to this description, a friend of God might be graced with the capacity of appearing in different visual shapes simultaneously. This controversial doctrine arose during the course of the seventh/thirteenth century and onward, and relied very often on the early Islamic story of the angel Gabriel who manifested himself in the shape of Dīḥya al-Kalbī, one of the Prophet's contemporaries known for his beauty.⁴⁶

The authentic part of the text incorporates the following ideas, all of which can be included under the aforementioned second category, that is the category which concerns itself with the regulation of Sufi communal life:

1. A Sufi master is required to return to the roots of his spiritual career once he begins to train a new novice in order to protect the novice from any improper behaviour that would not be fitting for him in his preliminary condition. This idea is echoed in one of al-Junayd's sayings when he was asked about the ultimate rank of the Sufi path (*nihāya*): 'it means returning back to the beginnings'.⁴⁷
2. A Sufi master is required to treat new novices leniently and to exempt them from the strict prescriptions of *zuhd*, the renunciatory mode of life; it is appropriate to give new novices indulgences and exemptions in practising Sufi rituals and austerities as befits

⁴⁴R.P., 41a.

⁴⁵R.P., 26b.

⁴⁶Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), *Naḥāḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, (ed.) Mahdī Pūr (Tehran, 1958), pp. 524–525. Cf. Ṣaḥī al-Dīn b. Abī l-Manṣūr, *La Risāla de Ṣaḥī al-Dīn ibn Abī l-Manṣūr ibn Zāfir: Biographies des Maîtres Spirituels Connus par un Cheikh Égyptien du VIIe/XIIIe siècle*, introduction, editing and translation by Denis Gril (Cairo, 1986), the Arabic text, p. 61 (the story of al-Sheikh Mufarrīj); 'Abd Allāh Ibn As'ad al-Yāfi'ī, *Rawḍ al-rayāḥīn fī ḥikāyāt al-ṣālīḥīn* (Cairo, 1890), p. 105. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī quotes from 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's (d. 729/1329), *al-I'lām* in his reference to this issue in some of his works. See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Sutūṭī, *Kitāb al-ḥawā' li-l-fatāwā'* (Beirut, 2004), Vol. 1, p. 255; *idem*, *al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik*, (ed.) Muḥammad Zughlūl (Beirut, 1985), p. 262.

⁴⁷Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*, in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo, 1967), p. 365.

- their weak spiritual condition.⁴⁸ Leniency with new Sufi novices was, in fact, a pragmatic strategy prominently celebrated by al-Junayd, and later on, by Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 517/1123 or 520/1126) as documented by one of his close disciples, Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168).⁴⁹
3. A novice is required to reflexively obey his master. The anecdote about one novice who threw himself into a fire when his master, as a test, asked him to do so might help explain why the additional text whose focus was on the master-disciple relationship was integrated with the *Rawḍa* manuscript.
 4. *Ṣuḥba*, companionship, is an additional topic referenced in detail by Ibn Yazdānyār, as one of the most prominent aspects of the communal life in early Sufism. On one occasion in *Rawḍa*, the author asserts that religious brotherhood is preferable over the brotherhood of family members.⁵⁰ On another occasion, the following interesting anecdote appears:

Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharwīnī narrated that he saw Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār of Urmiya in his dream,⁵¹ and that he asked him: “what is the most beneficial act in your view?” He [Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār!] replied: “After affirmation of the divine transcendent unity (*tauḥīd*), I did not find anything more beneficial than the companionship with the poor [the Sufis!]”. Then, he [al-Sharwīnī] asked: “which act is the most harmful?” He [Ibn Yazdānyār!] answered: “back biting the Sufis (*al-waqt ‘a fī al-ṣifīyya*). I did not know about any group that is privileged by God more than they (*lam ajid awjaha minhum ‘inda Allāh*). Had I not been granted their blessings, I could have been lost”.⁵²

⁴⁸R.P., fols. 41a–41b.

⁴⁹Suhrawardī, *‘Awārif*, pp. 96–97.

⁵⁰R.P., 45b.

⁵¹In R.P., the text reads: ‘Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharwīnī narrated that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār al-Urmawī saw him in the dream and asked him...’ (R.P., 43b). R.I. reads differentially: ‘Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Sharwīnī narrated that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār al-Urmawī was seen in a dream, he was asked...’ (R.I., 16b). Williams translated the passage as follows, ‘It is told that Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār saw Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Sharwīnī in a dream, and said to him: “What works have you found most beneficial in life?” (Williams’s edition, p. 67), while in the edited text of *Rawḍa* itself, he comments that this later version is not convincing and that it seems more probable that Ibn Yazdānyār was the one who was seen in the dream and was asked about the most beneficial act and the most harmful act (Williams, the edited text, p. 40). This version corresponds also with the manuscript of *Rawḍa* in the Preussische Staatsbibliothek of Berlin (microfilm of Orient. Hdschr, Oct. 75–42) which was moved to the West-Deutsche Bibliothek at Marburg, and is, in fact, preferable over the first for two additional reasons. The first concerns the figure of al-Sharwīnī who was the narrator of the anecdote. Unfortunately, I did not succeed in finding his biography from amongst early biographies and this strengthens the assumption that he was an unknown associate of Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār. The second reason refers to the structural framework of such an anecdote that is very common in early Sufi writings. When someone is quoted recounting a dream that combines two figures who have a short conversation about a particular topic, the narrator himself usually acts as the one who sees the other figure in his dream. Very often, this occurs after the latter’s death, and the narrator asks the deceased a question or two such as: ‘What did God do with you?’, ‘what is the most beneficial act in your eyes?’, or ‘what is the best piece of counsel that you would address to the Sufis?’. Sufi and non-Sufi sources dating from early medieval Islam are fraught with anecdotes of this type. See, for instance, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-muḥaddithīn bi-l-Ṣbahān wa-l-wāridīn ‘alayhā*, (ed.) ‘Abd al-Ghafūr al-Balūshī (Beirut, 1992), Vol. 2, p. 54; Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhann al-hawā*, (ed.) Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (Cairo, 1962), p. 129; Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 154. It seems likely that the original anecdote was phrased in accordance with the above-mentioned translation and that the later copyist of the manuscript, who probably knew about the problematic relationship between Ibn Yazdānyār and the Sufis of Baghdad, thought to introduce some changes to the anecdote to show Ibn Yazdānyār as the one who asks, instead of being the one who answers. For the copyist, condemning the act of slandering the Sufis may not have seemed relevant to Ibn Yazdānyār and that is why the copyist might have ascribed it to the narrator al-Sharwīnī.

⁵²R.P., fols. 43b–44a; R.I., fols. 16b–17a.

At the beginning of the discussion in this paper, I referred to Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār and his problematic relationship with the Sufis of Baghdad. Paradoxically, while this figure was usually known for his harsh words towards Sufis (*al-wuqū‘/al-waqī‘a fī al-ṣūfiyya*), both al-Sulamī and the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* ascribe to him a statement where he himself warns against such spitefulness. It seems that the later Ibn Yazdānyār sought to extol his ancestor and assert that the earlier Ibn Yazdānyār poured scorn on any slander of Sufis and that he enjoyed being in their company and receiving their blessings.

Included in his reference to *ṣuḥba*, the author of *Rawḍa* warns his contemporaries against association with the men of religious science (*ahl al-‘ilm*) whose greediness for leadership and desire for public praise continued to corrupt the pure devotional atmosphere and to demoralise the Sufis as well. Ibn Yazdānyār goes on to assert that a small amount of religious science with a great deal of practice is preferable to a great amount of religious science accompanied by a worldly inclination and greediness of leadership.⁵³

Moving on to the third category, it is worth noting that the author of *Rawḍa* dedicates eight separate sections of his work to *samā‘* ceremonies. This is a considerable number compared with the overall number of sections in the work. Ibn Yazdānyār’s discussions of *samā‘* are influenced by the detailed discussions in al-Sarrāj’s *Luma‘* although they differ in several aspects. Abū Ja‘far Ibn Yazdānyār opens these sections with the announcement that Sufi *samā‘* is permitted (*mubāḥ*) according to Muslim law. The *Qur’ānic* verse on which he bases his discussion is the same verse that al-Qushayrī later uses at the very beginning of his chapter on *samā‘*.⁵⁴ Al-Sarrāj, interestingly, begins his long section dedicated to *samā‘* with another *Qur’ānic* verse.⁵⁵ Some of the anecdotes that appear in *Rawḍa* in long versions are shortened and slightly shifted by al-Qushayrī. One interesting example is the anecdote regarding al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) who is said to have passed ‘near someone who sings something’ according to Qushayrī, while, in the text of *Rawḍa*, al-Shāfi‘ī, is said to have passed near a female slave who was singing a verse of poetry among a group of people.⁵⁶ If singing in wedding parties is permitted, then it is also permitted for the one whose heart experiences a spiritual wedding party.⁵⁷

Rawḍa, furthermore, provides us with exclusive stories that do not appear in any other work. Someone other than the copyist of the Princeton manuscript makes the following comment on the margins of the places where the author introduced such anecdotes: ‘a strange story’ (*ḥikāya gharība*).⁵⁸ One of these anecdotes reads:

Ibrāhīm Ibn Shaybān was quoted to have said: “I heard my master Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maghribī telling: ‘The people of heaven were created from God’s light of majesty. Seventy thousands of the intimate angels (*al-malā‘ika al-muqarrabīn*) were seated between the divine throne (*‘arsh*) and the divine seat (*kursī*) in the yard of intimacy. Their dress is green wool and their faces are like the moon in a night of full moon. Their hairs are like women’s hairs (*‘alā ru‘ūsihim sha‘r ka-sha‘r al-niswān*). They became immersed in ecstasy from the day of creation and they will remain as

⁵³R.P., fols. 46b–47a; R.I., 18b.

⁵⁴Qushayrī, *Risāla*, pp. 166–173 (verses 17–18 of *Sūna* 39).

⁵⁵Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma‘*, p. 267 (verse 1 of *Sūna* 35).

⁵⁶R.P., 48a; R.I., fols. 19a–19b. Cf. Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 167.

⁵⁷R.P., 47b–48a.

⁵⁸R.P., 48a; 48b.

such till the Day of Resurrection. Their cries and moaning are heard by the people of the seven heavens, and they are Sufis of the people of heaven. They jog from the God's throne to God's seat while being almost intoxicated (*shibh al-sukārā*) out of the intensive passion that comes upon them. Angel Isrāfīl is their leader and their mouthpiece. Considering their familial lineage, these are our brothers (*ikhwānūnā fī al-nasab*), and considering their spiritual path, they are our companions'.⁵⁹

This interesting anecdote gives Sufi *samā'* cosmological-metaphysical origins by establishing the idea that angels, the people of heaven, are depicted as both listening to music as well as experiencing passionate states of ecstasy. Angel Isrāfīl is portrayed here as the leader of these intoxicated angels. His traditional function as the angel who blows the trumpet to announce the Day of Resurrection establishes his image as the singer in heavenly *samā'* ceremonies. Meanwhile, the reference to the people of heaven as the Sufis' ancestors allows Ibn Yazdānyār to assert the luminous nature of Sufis, which explains their ontological need to listen to music. By itself, this is an extreme notion. However, if compared with the next anecdote offered by the author of *Rawḍa*, this assertion would definitely be considered as moderate. This anecdote is attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad who cites the story of Adam crying for three hundred years after God had exiled him from paradise. When God asks him about the reason for his crying, Adam answers that he cried because he would no longer be able to watch the angels who used to circumambulate God's throne in seventy thousand lines. Adam, according to the anecdote, describes these angels as:

hairless and beardless (*jurd murd*), their eyes are darkened with kohl (*mukalḥḥalūn*), and they dance passionately and each one of them holds the hands of his fellow while screaming in loud voices: "who strives to equal us when You are our lord? Who strives to equal us when You are our beloved?" When God heard that from Adam, He asked him to look towards heaven so that he could see that these angels were still dancing around the throne and, that is why Adam succeeded to calm down.⁶⁰

In these two aforementioned anecdotes, the author of *Rawḍa* makes use of anthropomorphic traditions that ascribe human attributes to angels. In the early tradition of Islam, as in Judaism and Christianity, angels are usually presented in anthropomorphic forms. The *Qur'ān* itself includes many verses in which angels take supernatural and human forms. In verse 1 of *Sūra* 35 (*Fāṭir*), for instance, angels are described as having wings: '[All] praise is [due] to Allāh, Creator of the heavens and the earth, [who] made the angels messengers having wings, two or three or four'. In other verses, God appears to have conversations with the angels.⁶¹ S. R. Burge, whose *Angels in Islam* focuses on Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik*, indicates that this source includes 'numerous references to angels being in human form or, at the very least, having a number of human characteristics', and that such anthropomorphic images are balanced with images of supernatural or heavenly forms of nature (wings, zoomorphic forms, huge sizes, etc.). This balance explains why angels in Islamic tradition remain more heavenly creatures than human. The

⁵⁹R.P., 48a–48b; R.I., 19b.

⁶⁰R.P., 48b; R.I., 19b. The translation is mine.

⁶¹Cf. verses 16–19 of *Sūra* 19; and verse 1 of *Sūra* 35. The English translation of the above mentioned verse is by A. J. Arberry.

human aspect of their anthropomorphism is not dominant. Out of al-Suyūṭī's collection, 119 ḥadīth traditions refer to angels being in human form or having human body parts.⁶²

Turning back to our text, it appears that Ibn Yazdānyār introduces many components that were known in early angelic traditions. The green colour of the angels' robes, for instance, contributes to differentiate Islamic angelic traditions from their Judaic and Christian equivalents that celebrate white instead.⁶³ The human characteristics of angels in *Rawḍa* are very dominant. In the first tradition, angels have long hair like women, while in the second one they appear as hairless and beardless, with eyes darkened with kohl and possessing human hands which they use to hold each other in what appears like a nonstop *samā'* ceremony around the divine throne. This angelic imagery, especially the one embedded in the second tradition, is very daring in comparison with the anthropomorphic forms known in earlier Muslim traditions.⁶⁴ However, one might argue that referring to angels as beautiful, beardless youths seems less extreme than referring to God Himself as such in the writings of the later controversial Sufi figure, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 526/1131).⁶⁵

Attempts to describe *samā'* as one of the pleasures that await faithful people in paradise are very common.⁶⁶ What the text of *Rawḍa* does, however, is to identify *samā'* as the continuous act of the people of heaven from the day of creation until the Day of Resurrection, as well as to portray the earthly *samā'* of the Sufis as integrated with the heavenly *samā'*.

A third short tradition asserts the deep impact pleasant voices have on listeners. Engrossed by such voices, people are expected to lose their consciousness and thereby become unable to practise their religious duties:

Yaḥyā Ibn Abī Kathīr was quoted to have said that God did not create any heavenly creature whose voice is superior than the voice of Isrāfīl. When he [that is Isrāfīl] starts reciting in the heaven, all people of heaven stop their invocation and glorification of God and starts listening to him.⁶⁷

Following these three stories, the author of *Rawḍa* differentiates between two categories of Sufis taking part in *samā'* ceremonies: 'the Sufis of the spirit' (*fuqarā' rūḥāniyyūn*) and 'the Sufis of the lower soul' (*fuqarā' nafsiyyūn*). This type of classification was provided neither by al-Sarrāj nor by al-Qushayrī. According to Ibn Yazdānyār, Sufis of the first category should be committed to *samā'* while Sufis of the second are not allowed to practise *samā'* at all. Similarly, the custom of *naẓar* (gazing at the singer during *samā'*) is permitted for

⁶²S. R. Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik* (London and New York, 2012), pp. 56–57.

⁶³On the importance of the colour green in Islamic culture, see *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65 and the footnotes.

⁶⁴References to angels taking human forms that are very often associated with great beauty in ḥadīth literature is best manifested in the story of Gabriel who took the form of *Dihya al-Kalbī*. However, the association between angels and beautiful beardless youths in the second tradition above calls to mind the *Qur'ānic* story of the angels whom God sent to Lut in forms of beautiful beardless youths (verse 37 of *Sūra* 54). For an example of treating this story in the works of Muslim commentators of the *Qur'ān*, see Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, (ed.) Sāmī Salāma (al-Riyād, 1999), Vol. 7, p. 480.

⁶⁵On one occasion of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's *Tamhūdāt*, for instance, the Prophet Muḥammad is quoted as having said: 'On the Night of the Ascension I saw my Lord in a form of a young man [...]. Beware of the beardless youth as those have a complexion like that of God (*iyyākum wa-l-murd fa-inna lahum lawnan ka-lawni Allāh*)' ('Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī, *Tamhūdāt*, p. 321).

⁶⁶Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma'*, p. 274.

⁶⁷*R.P.*, 48n-49a; *R.I.*, 19b.

the first category and prohibited for the second. Sufis of the lower soul are very often attracted to beautiful earthly images, and are unable to experience any ecstatic states without contemplating such images (*mushāhadat al-ṣuwar al-muṭfināt*) during *samā'*. This notion calls to mind the doctrine of *shāhid* whose theoretical foundations originated in the early fourth/tenth century work of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī, '*ʿAtf al-alif al-ma'lūf 'alā al-lām al-ma'ūf*'.⁶⁸

The frequent references to al-Junayd throughout the sections on *samā'* allow Ibn Yazdānyār to celebrate the supreme state of those who remain tranquil during the intense states of ecstasy, 'the straight' (*al-mustaḡīm*), as he calls them. Paradoxically, Ibn Yazdānyār quotes from al-Ḥallāj on the same occasion.⁶⁹ Though he alludes to the superiority of 'the straight', the intense ecstatic states of those who are unable to stay tranquil are described by him in detail. These folios contain one of the most detailed discussions of the state of ecstasy (*uajd*) in early Sufi literature. As part of this, the author provides an explanation for the extreme situations in which the attendant of *samā'* dies.⁷⁰ The reference to the *malāmatiyya* group and their avoidance of *samā'* gatherings enables him to assert that all Sufi sectors agree on the provenance of *samā'*; *malāmatiyya* did not reject *samā'* but they were afraid to reveal their inner spiritual states publicly.

In the short section devoted to the rules of conduct during *samā'*, Ibn Yazdānyār urges the Sufi to avoid slandering someone who, under the ecstatic state of *uajd*, acts antinomically, except if the action violates Muslim law. On the same occasion, the author indicates that it is likely that the attendant of *samā'* successfully comprehends the truthful spiritual secrets behind what he hears, even if the singer, or the content of what the singer sings, does not conform to Muslim law: '*wa-ruḥḥamā yastami'u al-mustami'u min bāṭilīn ḥaqqan*'.⁷¹

The *Rawḍa* text indicates that good fragrances are among the significant conditions for holding a *samā'* ceremony. The existence of scent (*ṭīb*) is one of the characteristics of the *samā'* of the people of spirit. One is allowed to share *samā'* with one's companions as well with all these who love Sufis (*al-muḥibbūn lahum*).⁷² This latter notion corresponds with later references to the category of those who like Sufis but who are not spiritually 'mature' or 'strong' enough to totally adopt Sufi discipline. The influential master of Baghdad, Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, refers to those who like Sufis and even attempt to imitate them and attend their ceremonies without being able to be formally initiated into Sufism as *muḥibbūn* and *mutashabbihūn* (lit. imitators [of Sufis]).⁷³ Hand clapping, dancing and screaming amidst *samā'* are all allowed in the Sufi system reflected in *Rawḍa*. The controversial custom of tearing off one's clothing while under an extreme state of ecstasy is given considerable space. Indeed, the author points to the existence of three types of 'tearing off the garments' (*takhrīq al-thiyāb*); the first is delight (*ṭarab*), the second is fear (*khauf*), while the third and the

⁶⁸The controversial practice of *shāhid-bāzī* apparently involved both gazing at beardless youths and dancing with them during *samā'* gatherings. See Lloyd Ridgeon, 'The Controversy of Shaykh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī and Hand-some, Moon Faced Youths: A Case Study of *Shāhid-Bāzī* in Medieval Sufism', *Journal of Sufi Studies* 1 (2012), p. 2. Cf. footnote 74 hereafter.

⁶⁹R.P., 51a–51b; R.I., 21a.

⁷⁰R.P., 51b–52a; R.I., 21b; Cf. R.P., 52b; R.I., 22a.

⁷¹R.P., 53b; R.I., 22b.

⁷²R.I., 23a.

⁷³Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Ādāb al-muḥibbīn*, (ed.) Menahem Milson (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 81. Cf. *Ibid.*, Milson's introduction, [8]–[9].

highest is that of ecstasy (*wajd*). Ibn Yazdānyār explains how the symptoms (‘*alāmāt*’) of these three situations offer different ways of cutting off one’s garment. In *wajd*, the Sufi might tear off his garment’s pockets, and attack everything that comes into his hands (*al-tahaḥjūm ‘alā mā yaqa‘u bi-yadīhi*) while avoiding uncovering his breast (*ṣiyānat mawāḍī‘i al-ṣudūr*). Ibn Yazdānyār’s reference to the necessity of protecting one’s breast alludes to controversial customs such as the act of stripping off the garments of one’s companions during *samā‘*, or even uncovering their breasts under an intense state of intoxication. This behaviour can be seen later on in the case of Awhād al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 635/1237–8).⁷⁴

The last section devoted to *samā‘* in *Rawḍa* refers to particular figures who had reservations concerning *samā‘*. One of these figures, interestingly, is the early Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār. According to *Rawḍa*, Abū Bakr states that one day he joined his companions in a *samā‘* ceremony. When his companions started to dance under the ecstatic influence of music, he decided to imitate them (without being touched by the same ecstatic condition). He then heard an anonymous voice slandering his behaviour and that is why he became frightened and ran away from the ceremony while recognising that he was still too immature to practise *samā‘* like his companions.⁷⁵

By combining this occurrence with the aforementioned references made to the early mystic of Urmiya, we notice a twofold approach towards his character in the text of *Rawḍa*: He is not reputed to have slandered Sufis (he was blessed by the Sufis’ company according to the above mentioned reference), but he should not be counted among the great Sufis of the early period (as the current reference implies in fact).

In the fourth and last category of our thematic classification lay all the sections devoted to certain Sufi ranks. Ibn Yazdānyār opens this category with what are generally regarded as the highest states of grace (*aḥwāl*), the first of which is divine love, and only later he refers to *maqāmāt* (stations). This division of the Sufi path differs essentially from that provided in other Sufi manuals where the discussions usually begin with the *maqāmāt*.⁷⁶ The following are remarks that might be raised in reference to Ibn Yazdānyār’s discussions under this category.

Firstly, with respect to divine love, and different to al-Qushayrī’s detailed treatment of love, Ibn Yazdānyār does not refrain from referring to early female mystics. This can be seen in his quoting the following statement of the famous female mystic of Ubulla, Sha‘wāna: ‘Since I knew God, I have not thought about anything else including paradise and hell’.⁷⁷

Secondly, Al-Ḥallāj’s famous verses in which he celebrates the state of unity with God (‘*anā man aḥwā ...*’ etc.) are introduced here and attributed to Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī in all the manuscripts of *Rawḍa*. These verses imply, according to Ibn Yazdānyār, the situation

⁷⁴Jāmī tells us that Kirmānī believed that ‘true witnessing of God’ should be sought through ‘visionary manifestations’, which is why he used to tear youths’ shirts during *samā‘* parties and press his breast to theirs. This practice is called *shāhid-bāzī* (lit. playing the witness) in Persian literature, as systematically advocated in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī’s *Tamlūḍāt*. Lloyd Ridgeon provides us with a detailed discussion of Kirmānī’s controversial practice of *shāhid-bāzī*, which apparently involved both gazing at beardless youths and dancing with them during *samā‘* gatherings. See Ridgeon, *Controversy of Shaykh Awhād al-Dīn Kirmānī*, p. 2.

⁷⁵R.P., 56a. In the Istanbul manuscript, for instance, the reference is made to ‘Abū Bakr al-Abḥārī’ instead of Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār. All the other manuscripts mention Ibn Yazdānyār (See R.I., 23b).

⁷⁶For a short reference to *maqām* and *ḥāl* as major technical terms and the different definitions given to them by early Sufi authors, see John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism* (Lanham, 2016), p. 292.

⁷⁷R.P., 57b.

of sincere love when the Sufi contemplates his beloved in everything he watches.⁷⁸ Was the reference to al-Baṣṭāmī here intended by the author or just a mistake? I would argue that the author of *Rawḍa* did this purposely. If he had no problem with quoting certain statements from al-Ḥallāj when these did not clearly echo the doctrine of unity, then he would also have had no problem quoting al-Ḥallāj's famous verses on unity when ascribed to someone else. It seems most probable however, that he had a serious problem to explicitly combine references to unity with al-Ḥallāj himself.

Next, the discussion of divine love in *Rawḍa* is distinguished from all famous Sufi works that approach love by its interesting classification of love into six categories: 'lustfulness' (*shahuwāniyya*); 'cordial' (*mavaddatiyya*); 'divine' (*rabbāniyya*); 'love that engages repentance' (*maḥabba taubatiyya*); 'earthy' (*fīniyya*); and 'love that engages divine providence' (*maḥabba 'inā'iyya*).⁷⁹ As far as I know, no similar classification of love is provided in any other Sufi manual around the period of Ibn Yazdānyār.

Finally, the doctrine of absolute dependence on God (*tawakkul*) gains a special reference in *Rawḍa*. A total renunciatory life in which the Sufi abandons work for profit is much celebrated by the author. In one of the sections devoted to *tawakkul*, the author refers to Muḥammad Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869), the founder of the *Karrāmiyya* group, while quoting his definition of *tawakkul*.⁸⁰ Sara Sviri has noted that the *Karrāmiyya* is not mentioned in the early Sufi literature, and that al-Jullābī al-Hujwārī (d. c. 465/1072) is the first Sufi author to refer to one of the *Karrāmiyya*'s teachers, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥarb (d. 234/849).⁸¹ In referring to Hujwārī's work *Kashf al-mahjūb*, it is worth noting that the anecdote attributed to Ibn Ḥarb there implies the author's criticism of both Ibn Ḥarb and his wife who did not refrain from accepting food from the house of a government official. Indeed, because of their behaviour, God punished them through their son, who was conceived the same night that they ate this food and who turned out to be dissolute, putting his father to shame in the presence of guests.⁸² Different from Hujwārī, Ibn Yazdānyār's reference appears to celebrate Ibn Karrām's extroverted mode of renunciation. From al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), we know that Muḥammad Ibn Karrām had many followers and that he 'used to exhibit a great deal of piety (*tanassuk*), fear of God (*ta'alluh*), devotional worship (*ta'abbud*) and asceticism (*taqashshuf*).'⁸³ Though we do not come across additional references to Ibn Karrām in *Rawḍa*, this occasion is still very informative. It seems most probable that Ibn Yazdānyār sympathised with *Karrāmiyya*'s renunciatory worldviews or that he had actually joined one of the *Karrāmiyya* communities in Hamadhān. This sympathy differs essentially from the tendency of early Sufi historians to exclude the *Karrāmiyya* from their ranks, as Wilferd Madelung has

⁷⁸R.P., 59a.

⁷⁹R.P., 60a–60b; R.I., 26a–26b. The latter category might read 'iyāniyya', that is the love that engages witnessing ('iyān) (see R.P., 60b).

⁸⁰R.P., 67a; R.I., 31b.

⁸¹Sara Sviri, 'Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī Movement in Early Sufism', in *The Heritage of Sufism*, (ed.) L. Lewisohn (Oxford, 1999), vol. I; accessed online on the author's website: https://www.academia.edu/419941/Hakim_Tirmidhi_and_the_Malamati_Movement_In_Early_Sufism, 10 (accessed 8 August 2018).

⁸²Aḥ Ibn. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwārī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, edited and translated by R. A. Nicholson (London, 1976), pp. 365–366.

⁸³The English translation from Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya* is by Sara Sviri (See Sviri, *Ḥakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmatī Movement*, internet version, p. 9). This occasion is found in Ṭaj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, Maḥmūd al-Tanāḥī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Hilū (Cairo, 1993), vol. 2, p. 304.

noted.⁸⁴ Thus, at times when the *Karrāmiyya* became almost universally condemned as a heretical sect by the fifth/eleventh century, the author of *Rawḍa* chose to detach himself from the commonly-accepted attitude of his fellows in the world of Islam. In a separate section that was dedicated to *futuwwa* (altruism), Ibn Yazdānyār celebrates Sufi brotherhood and solidarity. Altruism was one of the major principles of the *Karrāmiyya* in addition to disapproval of an active struggle for one's livelihood. The latter, as I have already shown, was also celebrated by Ibn Yazdānyār. The *Karrāmiyya*, as claimed by al-Maqdisī, reached the mountains of Ṭabaristān, in the northern of Hamadhān. There is also a mention of a *Karrāmī madrasa* in Herāt to the east of Hamadhān.⁸⁵ Bearing in mind this evidence, I would argue that the author of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* was a *Karrāmī*-oriented Sufi master who, among other reasons, caused his work to be ignored by the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī-Baghdādī-oriented institution of *taṣawwuf* of his days.

Concluding remarks

The text of *Rawḍat al-murīdīn* presents us with an interesting formula for early fifth/eleventh century-Sufism. Ibn Yazdānyār's attempts to identify his work with al-Junayd and his circle of Baghdadi Sufis coexist alongside the echoes of extreme doctrines revolving around unity and intoxicated love with strong Ḥallājīan characteristics. The majority of Ibn Yazdānyār's controversial doctrines are included in his detailed sections on *samā'*. It is here where we find a great number of statements and anecdotes that celebrate passionate Sufism. There is much evidence in the text of *Rawḍa* that strengthen the argument that its author, if not formally a member of the *Karrāmiyya*, was a pro-*Karrāmī* author. This evidence includes Ibn Yazdānyār's disapproval of an active struggle for one's livelihood embedded in his discussions of the principle of absolute dependence on God (*tawakkul*), the most outspoken characteristic of the *Karrāmiyya* worldview; his celebration of the communal life of Sufis and his detailed treatment of ideals like brotherhood, compassion, mutual aid and solidarity that correspond to the kind of communal life that was normal for active members in *Karrāmī* convents; and finally the author's direct quotation from the early leader of the *Karrāmiyya* that the majority of Sufi authors up to that time chose to completely ignore. This might be one important reason for the neglect of Ibn Yazdānyār and his *Rawḍa* in the writings of the fifth/eleventh century and thereafter. References to *Rawḍa* are found neither in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* from the latter part of the fifth/eleventh century, nor in the renowned Sufi manuals of the sixth/twelfth century such as Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī's *Ādāb al-murīdīn* and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī's *ʿAwārif al-ma'ārif*. In an era when Sufi Islam came to be dominated by the Shāfi'ī-Ash'arī formula, Ibn Yazdānyār chose *Karrāmī*-oriented Sufism. Interestingly, on two occasions, in the section on *futuwwa* (which does not appear in the Princeton manuscript), Ibn Yazdānyār quotes from Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. circa 300/912), to underline his disapproval of working for one's livelihood. According to Ibn Yazdānyār, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī was quoted to have stated that asking for fees after working is a proof of one's lowness (*nadhāla*) and depravity (*khissa*).⁸⁶

⁸⁴Wilfred Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, N.Y., 1988), p. 39.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁸⁶*R.I.*, 26a; 27a–27b.

Besides an active communal life based primarily on compassion, mutual assistance and sincere brotherhood, *samāʿ* and passionate love play a fundamental role in the Sufi formula presented in *Rawḍat al-murīdīn*. Unlike the early character of Abū Bakr Ibn Yazdānyār, generally known as an opponent of ecstatic Sufism, the author of *Rawḍa* seeks to present a comprehensive umbrella of Sufism under which the teachings of al-Junayd exist side-by-side with those of al-Ḥallāj. Intensive ecstatic practices that are likely to occur within *samāʿ* ceremonies are presented as an integral part of such ceremonies that could be rarely avoided.

Rawḍat al-murīdīn is a distinguished Sufi manual of the early fifth/eleventh century. It presents us with a unique formula for *taṣawwuf* that differs from the famous manuals of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries in which Sufi rules of conduct gain a special interest. Behind the text of *Rawḍa*, a renunciatory-*Karāmī* mode of piety overflowing with a complete dedication to *samāʿ* as well as enjoyment of an intimate relationship with both God and one's fellow Sufis is highly celebrated.

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