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ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON SUFISM

AL-JUNAYD AL-BAGHDĀDĪ

Chief of the Sect

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Introduction

Often referred to within the Sufi tradition by the honorifics *sayyid al-jā'ifa* ("chief of the sect"), *īā'us al-fuqarā'* ("peacock of the dervishes"), and *shaykh al-mashāyikh* ("master of masters"), with the possible exception of the great seventh/thirteenth-century Andalusian mystic Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), there is scarcely a figure within the collective annals of Sufi history whose image looms as large as that of al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910). Frequently presented as an emblematic representative of the orthodox and "sober" (*ṣāḥw*)—as opposed to the antinomian and "drunken" (*sukr*)—trend within Sufism, Junayd also figures as a key link in the initiatic lineages (*silsila*; pl. *salāsil*) of numerous Sufi orders (*ṭuruq*; sing. *ṭarīqa*).¹ Moreover, the decidedly robust resonance of a distinctly definable repertoire of specifically "Junaydian" articulations of key Sufi doctrines, metaphysical and epistemological concepts, technical expressions, and poetic conventions runs as a thread throughout much of the literature produced by Sufis in later periods. Claiming a name that is just as present in pre-modern Sufi hagiographical and related literatures as in modern representatives of the same, the figure of Junayd has rightfully been given as prominent a place within Western scholarly treatments of Sufism as well.² In short, it is no understatement to assert that any enumeration of the most seminal figures within the history of Sufism would not be complete without the inclusion of Junayd.

The Ṣūfiyya of Baghdad

When viewed from a vantage point which limits itself to the central lands of Islamdom up through the end of the first quarter of the fourth/tenth century, the relationship of Junayd to the history of what eventually came to be referred to as Sufism does not present itself as neatly, nor as clearly, as the later Sufi tradition might lead one to believe. This is to be expected, for not only does this period represent a time of considerable flux in the development of Sufi ideas, practices, and institutions but also our knowledge of its contours, a few instances aside, are largely the result of the programmatic narratives of later Sufi apologists, narratives which have only recently begun to be seriously evaluated by scholars.³ What such evaluations have shown is that the tradition which is typically referred to as "Sufism" (*ṭaṣawwuf*)

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