

Shi‘i-Sufi Relations: The Imams of the Shi‘a in the Works of the Sufis of Khurasan

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The relation between Shi‘ism and Sufism has been long a matter of discussion among scholars, leading to a spectrum of views: some maintain that the two are identical, and, on the other extreme, some believe that they are totally divergent. However, the love for the Imams of the Shi‘a is shared by all Sufi orders, including the Sufis of Khurasan. As the paragons of spirituality and representatives of Islamic esotericism, the Shi‘i Imams were highly regarded by the Sufis of Khurasan, so much so that their teachings were a major foundation for the formation of different aspects of this branch of Sufism.

This article attempts to show the Khurasani Sufis’ great love for, and devotion to, the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt by referring to the early sources of this school and the sayings of its figures. This fact, on the one hand, points to a basis for the Iranian inclination to Shi‘ism and, on the other hand, further reveals the common ground between Shi‘ism and Sufism.

Keywords: Sufism, Shi‘ism, Shi‘i Imams, Sufis of Khurasan.

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Introduction

With its prominent Sufi figures and writings, Khurasan can be counted as one of the three main centers of Sufism beside Mecca and al-Quds. After mentioning some of the Sufis of Khurasan, Hujwiri writes, “The sun of love and the fortune of the Path is in the ascendant of Khurasan” (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 263). Considering the abundance of Sufi orders in Khurasan in the early Islamic times, some scholars have maintained that Khurasan should be regarded as the birthplace of Sufism (Zarrinkub 1367 Sh, 83).

From the very beginning of Islamic history, Iranians were inclined to Shi‘ism. Salman al-Farsi, an Iranian and a follower of Ahl al-Bayt, marked the beginning of the bond between Iran, Islam, and Ahl al-Bayt. Iranian Shi‘i inclinations further increased by the emigration of Imam al-Rida (a) to Khurasan.

Sayyid Haydar al-Amuli, the well-known Shi‘i mystic, strives in his works, especially in his *Jami‘ al-asrar wa manba‘ al-anwar*, to demonstrate the identity between Sufism and Shi‘ism. He is surprised by the conflict between the Shi‘a and Sufis, because he believes that the origins of both sides are the teachings of Imam ‘Ali (a) and his children (Amuli 1377 Sh, 14, 171). In his view, Sufis are the “learners on the path to salvation” (38-39), true Shi‘is, tested believers, and bearers of the secrets of the Imams (39).

Elsewhere, Amuli explains about the chains of Sufi masters and their links to the Imams. He mentions Sufi masters such as Bayazid Bastami, al-Hasan al-Basri, Shaqiq Balkhi, Ma‘ruf al-Karkhi, Sari al-Saqati, and al-Junayd, relates them to Imam ‘Ali (a), Imam Musa al-Kazim (a), and Imam al-Rida (a), and emphasizes that no one, especially the Twelver Shi‘is, should reject Sufism (Amuli 1377 Sh, 172-73).

In order to demonstrate the same claim, Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi also presents and analyzes several Sufi teachings—such as *wilayah*,

zuhd, honoring the graves, visiting the masters, praying at the graves of Sufi figures, the belief in infallibility, miraculous works, and the intercession of the *awliya*’ (Friends of God), concealment (*kitman*), precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*), and esoteric interpretation—and shows the correspondence between them and the similar concepts in Shi‘ism. Moreover, regarding the chains of masters and disciples (*salasil*) in Sufism, he explains that Sufis trace their masters back to Ahl al-Bayt through four chains: to Imam Ali (a) through Kumayl b. Ziyad, to Imam al-Sajjad (a) through Ibrahim b. Adham, to Imam al-Sadiq (a) through Bayazid Bastami, and to Imam al-Rida (a) through Ma‘ruf al-Karkhi (Shaybi 1982, 1:467-71).¹

The Imams in the Eyes of the Sufis of Khurasan

A major characteristic of the school of Khurasan is the Shi‘i inclination of its prominent founders and masters, such as Fudayl b. ‘Ayyad, Ibrahim b. Adham, Shaqiq Balkhi, ‘Ata’ Khurasani, and Bayazid Bastami. The first Sufis of Khurasan can even be regarded as the disciples of the Imams. Since early Islamic times, love for the Imams made this region a Shi‘i center. Fudayl, who is an outstanding representative of the school of Khurasan and a hadith transmitter from whom Shi‘is and Sunnis have transmitted hadiths, is influenced in his thought and sayings by the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.²

Concepts such as annihilation (*fana*’), trust in God, fear, sorrow, and knowledge, among others, are specially reflected in the words of Imam

1. In his *Living Sufism*, Hossein Nasr has discussed the relation between Sufism and Shi‘ism (Nasr 1382 Sh, 162-86). According to him, since both Sufism and Shi‘ism are rooted in the esoteric side of the Islamic revelation and were inspired, in the early stages of their development, by the same source, they have the same origin (186). Nasiri and Rudgar (1390 Sh) also have shown the influence of the teachings and thought of the Imams of the Shi‘a on the Kubrawiyya.

2. For more details on the thought and sayings of Fudayl, see Radmihr (1383 Sh).

al-Sajjad (a), and the Sufis of Khurasan used the teachings of the Imams in their spiritual wayfaring. In *al-Luma'*, one of the most important and earliest Sufi sources, Abu Nasr Siraj mentions the eminent characteristics of Imam 'Ali (a)—including his unparalleled sayings on *tawhid*, his knowledge (*ma'rifa*), faith, and other noble virtues—and points to the Imam's God-given knowledge, which was exclusive to Khidr but then was also given to Imam 'Ali (a) as well (Nasiri and Karimi 1396 Sh, 207).

The high regard of the Sufis of Khurasan for Ahl al-Bayt, especially for the first eight Imams¹ (a) and the use of their hadiths (see Nasiri 1395 Sh, 275 ff.) show the deep bond between Shi'ism and Khurasani Sufism such that Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari (d. 1019 AH), in addition to devoting many pages of his *Majalis al-mu'minin* to Sufis, states, “The author believes that none of this lofty group were Sunnis” (Shushtari 1376 Sh, 2:5).

According to some definitions of Shi'ism (see Aqanuri 1386 Sh, 93), the Sufis of Khurasan can be considered Shi'is. Sufis pay more attention to the esoteric aspect of religion, and, in that respect, follow the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt. Moreover, since Sufism is essentially linked to esotericism, which is also an important element in Shi'ism, it is probable that some Sufis conducted precautionary dissimulation and concealed their real religious affiliation.

In what follows, based on the evidence that will be presented, we will show the high regard of the Sufis of Khurasan for the Imams, especially for the first eight Imams, as indicating a deep historical bond between Shi'ism and Sufism.

1. The fact that the last four Imams of the Shi'a are mentioned less in Sufi sources may be related to the circumstances in which they lived, such as increasing political pressure on them, being under surveillance by the Abbasid authorities, and the fact that they could not be easily accessible.

Bayazid Bastami

In his *Asrar al-tawhid*, Mihani writes,

Some maintain that the great master Bayazid Bastami (may God sanctify his soul) followed the school of the noble Imam Abu Hanifa the Kufan (may God be pleased with him). However, this is not the case, because Bayazid (may God sanctify his soul) was a disciple of Ja‘far al-Sadiq (may God be pleased with him) and his water carrier. Ja‘far (may God be pleased with him) called him Bayazid Saqqa’ (the Water Carrier). And Bayazid adhered to Ja‘far’s school and followed him. (Mihani 1384 Sh, 35)

Although the idea that Bayazid was a contemporary of Imam al-Sadiq (a) has been questioned (Sahlagi 1384 Sh, 33-34, 38-39, 91), it is noteworthy that Sahlagi quotes on the authority of Shaykh Abu ‘Abd Allah Dastani that “Bayazid served 313 masters, the last of whom was Ja‘far al-Sadiq” (Sahlagi 1384 Sh, 109). Also, in *Tara’iq al-haqa’iq*, various views have been presented, and sometimes criticized, on the relationship between Bayazid and Imam al-Sadiq (a).

Abu Sa‘id Abu l-Khayr

In *Halat wa sukhanan Abu Sa‘id Abu l-Khayr*, the earliest biography of Abu Sa‘id (357-440 AH), the spiritual genealogy of Abu Sa‘id is traced back to Imam ‘Ali (a). His immediate master was Shaykh Abu l-Fadl Hasan Sarakhsi, who was a disciple of Shaykh Abu Nasr Siraj (Tawus al-Fuqara’), who in turn was a disciple of Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-Murta‘ish. Afterwards, Junayd, Sari al-Saqati, Ma‘ruf al-Karkhi, and then al-Hasan al-Basri, who was a disciple of Imam ‘Ali (a),¹ appear in the chain.

Regarding the great love of Abu Sa‘id for the family of the Prophet (s), Mihani reports that one day, Baba Hasan, who was the leader of the

1. “He [i.e., al-Hasan al-Basri] was a disciple of Amir al-Mu‘minin ‘Ali b. Abi Talib—May God honor him—and his virtues do not need explanation” (Abu Ruh 1384 Sh, 62-63).

Sufis at the time of Abu Sa‘id, said, “*Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammad* [O Allah! Bless Muhammad!]” in the *qunut* of his morning prayer. Abu Sa‘id asked why he did not include the family of the Prophet (s) in his prayer. In response, Baba Hasan pointed to the disagreement between the companions in this matter, to which Abu Sa‘id replied, “We do not go to a procession in which the family of the Prophet (s) are not present” (Mihani 1367 Sh, 204).

Abu I-Qasim Qushayri

In his *al-Risala al-Qushayriyya*, in the section on *futuwwa* (chivalry), Qushayri reports that Shaqiq Balkhi asked Imam al-Sadiq (a) about the meaning of *futuwwa*, and the Imam replied, “Futuwwa is to donate when we are given, and to remain patient when we are deprived” (Qushayri 1361 Sh, 363-64). In the same section, Qushayri mentions the story of a person who did not know Imam al-Sadiq (a) and thought that the Imam had stolen his money. So, he asked the Imam to return his money. The Imam (a) gave him one-thousand dinars of his own money. The man returned home and found his money there and realized that he had made a mistake, so he took the money back to the Imam (a) and apologized, but Imam al-Sadiq (a) did not accept the money back and said, “We do not take back what we have given away” (Qushayri 1361 Sh, 363).

In the section on humbleness, Qushayri mentions the story of Imam al-Husayn (a) when some kids invited him to eat some pieces of bread with them. The Imam (a) sat down and ate with them. Then, he invited the kids to his house and offered them food and clothes, and said, “They did better than me, because they didn’t have more than they offered, but I have more than I offered them” (Qushayri 1361 Sh, 223).

Elsewhere, he reports that Imam al-Sajjad (a) was prostrating himself in prayer when his house caught fire. However, the Imam (a) did not stop his prayer. Later, people asked him about that, and the

Imam (a) responded, “The great Fire [i.e., hell] occupied [and distracted] me from this fire” (Qushayri 1361 Sh, 110).

Moreover, in several places, Qushayri mentions some sayings of Imam ‘Ali (a) and some hadiths on his virtues; for instance, he quotes the following: “Paradise yearns for three people: ‘Ali, ‘Ammar, and Salman” (Qushayri 1361 Sh, 582).

Kh^waja ‘Abd Allah Ansari

Kh^waja ‘Abd Allah writes that Ma‘ruf al-Karkhi was the guard of Imam al-Rida (a) and that “it is said that he was converted to Islam by him” (Ansari 1362 Sh, 38). Moreover, in several places, he mentions the sayings of Imam Ali (a) (108, 247, 225). He quotes ‘Arif ‘Ayyar as saying, “Give me the help of God and the sight of Mustafa and Dhu l-Fiqar; I will eradicate Mount Qaf.” Kh^waja then explains, “This is not a defect in ‘Ali; rather, it is a testimony that ‘Ali had those three” (614).

In the section on concealment (*talbis*) in his *Manazil al-sa‘irin*, Kh^waja ‘Abd Allah considers the third concealment (the concealment of the “people of sovereignty over the world”) to belong to Prophets and then to “divine Imams” who come from the *abode of unity* (*wadi al-jam‘*) and inform people of it (Ansari 1355 Sh, 222-23). Although Kh^waja ‘Abd Allah is a strict Hanbalite, no referents can be found for the expression “divine Imams” other than the Imams of the Shi‘a, who are divine leaders coming from the abode of unity in order to guide people to that abode and to be God’s deputies in calling people to Him. Qasani, also, in his commentary on *Manazil al-sa‘irin*, explains that the “people of sovereignty over the world” are Prophets and their inheritors, the true sages who are the deputies of God in calling people to Him (Qasani 1392 Sh, 790-91).

‘Ali b. ‘Uthman Hujwiri

After mentioning the first four caliphs, including Imam ‘Ali (a), Hujwiri mentions the Imams of the Shi‘a until Imam al-Sadiq (a) in a separate section of his *Kash al-mahjub*, entitled “Section on Their Imams from Ahl al-Bayt.” The following are some of the descriptions that he mentions for Imam ‘Ali (a): “The brother of Mustafa, drowned in the sea of affliction, burnt by the fire of love, leader of the Friends and the Chosen ones, Abu l-Hasan ‘Ali b. Abi Talib” (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 101-2). He quotes Junayd as saying, “Our master in the principles and affliction ‘Ali al-Murtada” (102).

Elsewhere, he writes, “And the family of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who are endowed with original [and pre-eternal] purity—each of them has a firm standing in these meanings, and all [of them] were the leaders of this group [i.e., the Sufis]” (105), and then writes about Imam al-Hasan (a): “The sweetheart of Mustafa, the flower of the heart of Murtada, the light of the eye of Zahra” (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 105).

About Imam al-Husayn (a), he writes,

The candle of the family of the Prophet (s), free from bonds, the master of his time, Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (may God be pleased with them both). He was one of the verifiers (*muhaqqiqan*) among the Friends [of God] and the *qibla* of the people of affliction, who was murdered one in the desert of Karbala. The people of this story [i.e., the Sufis] agree upon his truthfulness. He followed the truth until the truth was manifest, but when the truth was lost, he took his sword and did not relax until he sacrificed his dear life in martyrdom for the sake of God Almighty. (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 108)

In addition, he mentions the following about Imam al-Sajjad (a):

The heir of prophethood, the light of the *ummah*, the oppressed master, the blessed Imam, the adornment of the worshippers, and the candle of the Pillars (*awtad*), Abu l-Hasan ‘Ali b. al-Husayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (may God be pleased with them) was the noblest and most pious of the people of his time. (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 110)

Regarding the virtues of Imam al-Sajjad (a), Hujwiri mentions the anecdote of the journey of the Imam and Ahl al-Bayt to Damascus and reports that the Imam likened his and his family’s state to that of the people of Moses and the persecution they faced under Pharaoh. Here, Hujwiri uses the expression “May God disgrace him!” for Yazid (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 113). In addition, he points to the story of the encounter between the Imam and Hisham b. ‘Abd al-Malik in hajj and the famous poem that Farazdaq composed and recited there (113).

Hujwiri praises Imam al-Baqir (a) with the following words: “The proof upon the people of action (*mu‘amala*), the demonstration of the people of vision, the Imam among the descendants of the Prophet, and the chosen one among the offspring of ‘Ali” (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 113), and describes Imam al-Sadiq (a) as follows: “The sword of tradition, the beauty of the Path, the interpreter of knowledge, and the adornment of the chosen ones” (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 116). Moreover, Hujwiri quotes some of the sayings of these two Imams on themes such as asceticism, remembering God and turning away from the others, and knowing Him. He also quotes a moving and eloquent supplication by Imam al-Baqir (a) (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 114-16).

Shaykh Ahmad Namaqi Jami

In the thirty-third section of his *Uns al-ta‘ibin* and also in his *Rawdat al-mudhnibin*, Jami¹ praises the answer that Imam al-Sadiq (a) gave to a question about the meaning of love: “He was asked, ‘What is the meaning of love?’ Now, see what he has answered! Bravo! O he more steadfast than whom has not risen from the house of the Prophet! He said, ‘Love is a divine madness that is not blameworthy or praiseworthy’” (Jami 1355 Sh, 124-25; 1368 Sh, 211).

1. Regarding the religious affiliation of Jami, see Fazel (1373 Sh, 99-112). The author discusses some views on the Shi‘i affiliation of Jami and concludes that he was a Hanafite Sunni but inclined to Shi‘i beliefs.

Elsewhere, in addition to praising the Companions of the Prophet and the first four caliphs, he states that the referent of the phrase “the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down” in Quran 5:55 is Imam ‘Ali (a) (Jami 1355 Sh, 30) and, in the ninth section of the same work, he notes that “The Commander of the Faithful Ali (may God be pleased with him) never worshipped idols in his life” (95).

Kalabadhi and the Commentators of *al-Ta‘arruf*

In his *al-Ta‘arruf li-madhhab ahl al-tasawwuf*, Kalabadhi writes about the first six Imams of the Shi‘a in the section entitled “The Men of Sufism” (Kalabadhi 1422 AH, 21-22). Mustamli Bukhari, in his commentary on *al-Ta‘arruf*, mentions the Imams of the Shi‘a in a very respectful way. He states that the title *Zayn al-‘Abidin* (the adornment of the worshippers) is given to Imam al-Sajjad (a) because of his utmost similarity to the Prophet (s) in his outward and inward aspects, in his sayings, actions, manners, and appearance. He also states that “all the descendants of the Prophet until the Day of Judgment are [linked to the Prophet] through him” (Mustamli Bukhari 1363 Sh, 198). Moreover, he refers to Imam al-Baqir (a) as “the master of his time” and states that “the books of this group [i.e., the Sufis] are full of their [i.e., Imam al-Baqir’s and Imam al-Sadiq’s] sayings” (Mustamli Bukhari 1363 Sh, 198). Mustamli Bukhari calls Imam ‘Ali (a) the “secret of the mystics” and the “owner of the breaths of the Prophets” and believes that the Imam has words of wisdom the like of which is not said by anyone before or after him (Mustamli Bukhari 1363 Sh, 199). He also mentions some of the virtues of Imam al-Hasan (a) and Imam al-Husayn (a) and writes, “Who can talk about the virtues of those who are parts of the Prophet ... and God said about them: ‘Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification’ [Quran 33:33]” (Mustamli Bukhari 1363 Sh, 200).

The title of the second chapter of a summary of *Sharh al-Ta‘arruf*, written by an anonymous author in 710 AH, is “The Names of a Group of Sufi Men,” and the first names that appear in this chapter are those of the Imams of the Shi‘a (*Khulasa Sharh Ta‘arruf* 1386 Sh, 47). Although he accuses “the Rafida” of exaggerating in their love for Ahl al-Bayt, he asks the Nasibis

not to say bad things about Ahl al-Bayt, especially about ‘Ali (may God be pleased with him) since the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to ‘Ali, “You are to me like Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me.” Moreover, he said, “Whoever I am his master, ‘Ali is his master” ... and also, “O ‘Ali! Those who love you are not but pious believers, and those who hate you are not but wretched hypocrites.” He said about Fatima (may God be pleased with her), “She is a part of me,” and said about al-Hasan and al-Husayn (may God be pleased with them), “Al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the two masters of the youth of Paradise, and their father is better than them.” (*Khulasa Sharh Ta‘arruf* 1386 Sh, 115; Mustamli Bukhari 1363 Sh, 462).

Moreover, in the sixteenth section of the book, although, like other Sunnis, he places Imam ‘Ali (a) after the first three caliphs and does not consider it a condition for the caliph to be from Ahl al-Bayt (*Khulasa Sharh Ta‘arruf* 1386 Sh, 138-40), he explicitly states that, in the conflict between Imam ‘Ali (a) and Mu‘awiya, the Imam was right and Mu‘awiya was a transgressor (140).

Hakim Sanayi

The poems of Sanayi in praising the Imams of the Shi‘a are so moving, beautiful, and profound that make the reader doubt his Sunni affiliation. He also has famous poems about dissociation from the family of Abu Sufyan (Sanayi 1368 Sh, 259-62).

Although he speaks about the first three caliphs and about Abu Hanifa and al-Shafi‘i with respect (Sanayi 1368 Sh, 226-44, 272-79),

his harsh criticism of the family of Abu Sufyan, Mu‘awiya, and ‘Amr b. ‘As is not much in line with the mainstream Sunni view. On the other hand, the fervent way in which he praises the family of the Prophet (s), especially Imam ‘Ali (a) and his descendants (Sanayi 1368 Sh, 244-59, 262-71), has been considered by some scholars as indicating his Shi‘i affiliation (see Ja‘farian 1386 Sh, 601-4, 760-67). Shushtri considers the explicit statement of Sanayi as to the superiority of the Imams of the Shi‘a as evidence for his perfect adherence to the Ja‘fari school (Shushtari 1376 Sh, 2:78-79).

Farid al-Din ‘Attar

‘Attar specifically writes about Imam al-Sadiq (a) and Imam al-Baqir (a) in his *Tadhkirat al-awliya*. Although there seems to be no doubt about ‘Attar’s Sunni affiliation, attested by his especial respect for the first four caliphs, all the Companions, and other Sunni figures, he speaks about the Imams of the Shi‘a with great love and devotion. The first figure that he mentions in his *Tadhkirat al-awliya* is Imam al-Sadiq (a), about whom he writes, “The king of the nation of Mustafa, the demonstration of the Prophetic proof, the truthful sage, the sage of verification, the beloved of the Friends, the loved one of the Prophets, the transmitter of [the knowledge] of ‘Ali, the heir of the Prophet, the lover mystic, Abu Muhammad Ja‘far al-Sadiq” (‘Attar 1354 Sh, 12). Afterwards, he quotes some anecdotes about the Imam’s virtues and miraculous works and states that he does not intend to write about the Prophets, the Companions, or Ahl al-Bayt, because that would require a separate book, and he intends to write only about Sufi masters. Nevertheless, he explains that he has written about Imam al-Sadiq (a) in order to seek *baraka* (blessings).

‘Attar ends his book with an account of Imam al-Baqir (a) and his virtues (‘Attar 1354 Sh, 819). There, he quotes the Imam’s lamentation for his grandfather Imam al-Husayn (a):

O my friend! Jacob lost one Joseph, so he (peace be upon him) cried so much that his eyes turned white. Now, I lost ten of my paternal kin—that is, al-Husayn and his people—in Karbala. Am I supposed to do anything less than making my eyes turn white for being separated from them? (‘Attar 1354 Sh, 820)

Moreover, in the beginning of his *Musibat namah*, after eulogizing the Prophet (s) and writing some poems on the virtues of the early caliphs, ‘Attar praises Imam ‘Ali (a), al-Hasan (a), and al-Husayn (a) (‘Attar 1386b Sh, 144-46). The descriptions that he mentions for Imam ‘Ali brings him very close to the Shi‘a (‘Attar 1386b Sh, 144). The fact that, in *Musibat namah* (1386b Sh, 146) and in *Mukhtar namah* (1386a Sh, 90), ‘Attar calls Imam al-Husayn (a) the head of “the ten¹ infallible ones,” and, in *Mantiq al-tayr*, calls Imam ‘Ali “the infallible master” (‘Attar 1386b Sh, 523-24) blurs his Sunni affiliation.

Conclusion

There have been different definitions and types of Shi‘ism since early Islamic times. *Love-based* Shi‘ism can be regarded as one of these types, adhered by those who love Ahl al-Bayt based on the teachings of the Qur’an and hadiths. The sayings of the Sufi masters of Khurasan about the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt clearly show that they are inside the circle of love-based Shi‘ism. Some of them, such as Sanayi, can be even considered Shi‘i in a narrower sense, considering their preference for Imam ‘Ali over the other caliphs.

Whether at least some of the Sufi masters of Khurasan can be regarded as adherents of Imami Shi‘ism needs more investigation. The

1. A question may be raised here as to why ‘Attar speaks of ten infallible ones, whereas, according to Shi‘i beliefs, there are only nine infallible Imams after Imam al-Husayn (a). As a solution to this problem, Shafi‘i Kadkani suggests that ‘Attar probably means that, in a gathering consisting of Imam al-Husayn (a) and the nine Imams after him, al-Husayn (a) is their king (see ‘Attar 1386b Sh, 523-24).

fact that precautionary dissimulation and secrecy are common practices among Sufis and Shi'is makes this investigation difficult. The Imams of the Shi'a continued to be held in high regard by the Sufis of Khurasan in the subsequent centuries, which made the Sufi-Shi'i ties further established. For instance, the masters of the Kubrawiyya expressed their love and devotion to 'Ali (a) and Ahl al-Bayt to such an extent that the possibility of their Shi'i affiliation has become a matter of discussion among scholars.

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