

PERSECUTION AND CIRCUMSPECTION IN SHATTARI SUFISM
In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Debate and Conflict*, ed. Fred De Jong and Berndt Radtke.
Islamic History and Civilization. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999.

by

Carl W. Ernst

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Copyright © Carl W. Ernst; not to be reproduced without permission

What happens to a Sufi order when one of its foremost leaders is persecuted and charged with heresy? This question, which may be framed with respect to a number of Sufi leaders over the course of Islamic history, has a special interest in connection with the Shattari Sufi order. This group, which was established in the South Asian subcontinent in the late fifteenth century, had a colorful history that was closely intertwined with the political fortunes of the dynasties of northern India. Its membership spread to western India and the Deccan, and then via the Hejaz it was exported to Southeast Asia. The Shattari order was known especially for its emphasis on meditative techniques, and this gave it a characteristic style. Most Sufi orders defined themselves by initiatic lineages that went through Junayd, the Baghdadian master of "sober" Sufism. In contrast, the Shattaris derived their authority from chains of transmission that went to the Khorasanian ecstatic, Bayazid Bistami. The extent and impact of the Shattari order has not yet been adequately assessed; most of the texts that detail the history of the order are unpublished.¹ Little scholarly work has been directed to this topic; a few articles written several decades ago focused on Shattari activity in northern India, and some work has also been done on Shattaris in the Deccan.² A single dissertation, written in Aligarh in 1963, has attempted a reconstruction

¹An exception is the Arabic translation of the Persian meditation manual by Muhammad ibn Khatir al-Din ibn Khwaja al-`Attar [Muhammad Ghawth], *al-Jawahir al-Khams*, ed. Ahmad ibn al-`Abbas (2nd ed., 2 vols., Egypt: Muhammad Rif`at `Amir, 1393/1973).

²See Khaliq Ahmed Nizami, "The Shattari Saints and Their Attitude towards the State," *Medieval India Quarterly* III (1950), pp. 56-70; Syed Hasan Askari, "A Fifteenth Century Shattari Sufi Saint of North Bihar," *Proceedings of the 13th Indian History Congress* (1950), pp. 148-57; M. M. Haq, "The Shattari Order of Sufism in India and Its Exponents in Bengal and Bihar," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 16 (1971), pp. 167-75; Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton University Press, 1978); Muhammad Yousuf Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in the Carnatic 1710-1969* (Madras: Hafiza House, 1974); id., "Sufi Presence in South India," in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, ed. Christian W. Troll, vol. II, *Religion and Religious Education* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1985), pp. 73-85; Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (2 vols, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers pvt. Ltd., 1983), II, 151-73.

of the history of the Shattaris.³ Biographical sources for the Shattaris are relatively abundant, however, and so an initial effort can be made here to analyze their reaction to the problem of persecution.⁴

The material used for this study suggests that persecution of the Shattari leader Muhammad Ghawth was based upon ecstatic statements that he made regarding his spiritual status. As in other cases of this kind, going back to the trial of al-Hallaj, the exact circumstances of the persecution are hedged around with hagiographical interpretations that make it hard to evaluate precisely, although it is clear that political considerations are always relevant in cases of religious persecution.⁵ Also comparable to the case of al-Hallaj is the encouragement of a climate of circumspection in the wake of persecution. Conspicuous conformity with shari`a-based norms of behavior characterized Shattari activity in the generations following upon Muhammad Ghawth, just as it did for tenth-century Sufis after the execution of al-Hallaj. Perhaps because multiple initiation into different Sufi orders was a norm from an early period for Shattari masters, the criticism of Muhammad Ghawth encouraged them to maintain, at least publicly, a more conservative profile that might be viewed as "the Qadiri option." This kind of self-censorship reached its apparent limit in the case of the Shattari master Burhan al-Din Raz-i Ilahi. He is said to have turned some disciples over to a shari`a court for execution, because they ecstatically identified their master as God. Subsequently we look in vain for any Shattari Sufis who emulate publicly the ecstatic claims of Muhammad Ghawth. In this case, persecution may have actually succeeded in suppressing the most extravagant claims of ecstatic Sufism.

THE PERSECUTION OF MUHAMMAD GHAWTH

Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari is believed to have been born 7 Rajab 907/16 January 1502, and he died on 14 Ramadan 970/7 May 1563.⁶ In his youth, he spent about thirteen years meditating and practising asceticism in the lonely fortress of Chunar (now in eastern U.P.). He witnessed the conquest of the great fort of Gwalior by Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (probably around 925/1520), after he had been advised in a vision to move to that location.⁷ Although he was approached with gifts by Ibrahim Lodi, Muhammad Ghawth was critical of the sultan because the latter had imprisoned a number of powerful nobles, and friendship between the two became impossible; the result of the saint's

³Qazi Moinuddin Ahmad, "History of the Shattari Silsilah," Ph.D. dissertation (Aligarh, 1963). Regrettably, many of the manuscripts listed in this study are no longer in existence.

⁴The sources include a biography of Muhammad Ghawth by Fadl Allah Shattari, *Manaqib-i Ghawthiyya*, Urdu trans. Muhammad Zahir al-Haqq (Agra: Abu al-Ma`ali Steam Press, 1933). This rare lithograph, consulted at the University of the Punjab in Lahore, has been translated from a Persian MS in the khanqah of Shaykh Wajih al-Din `Alawi in Ahmedabad, which apparently covered the life of Muhammad Ghawth up to 941/1534-35, the remainder being added by the translator on the basis of "well-known books" (p. 80). A standard hagiography of the Mughal period with considerable material on the Shattaris is Muhammad Ghawthi Mandawi, *Adbkar-i abrar, Urdu tarjuma-i gulzar-i abrar*, trans. Fadl Ahmad Jewari (Agra: Matba`-i Mufid-i `Amm, 1326/1908; reprint ed., Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1395/1975); the original Persian text has never been printed, and I cite to it according to the Urdu translation except for a few sections for which I had access to manuscripts. Another source that is indispensable for this topic is the detailed modern hagiography by Sayyid Muhammad Muti` Allah Rashid Burhanpuri, *Burhanpur ke Sindhi awliya', al-ma`ruf ba-tadbkaira-i awliya-yi Sindh* (Karachi: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1957). For later Shattaris in Arabia, see F. Wüstenfeld, "Die Çufiten in Süd-Arabien im XI. (XVII.) Jahrhundert," *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaftern zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse*, 30/1 (1883).

⁵See my *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, SUNY Series in Islam (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), and my "From Hagiography to Martyrology: Conflicting Testimonies to a Sufi Martyr of the Delhi Sultanate," *History of Religions* XXIV (May, 1985), pp. 308-27.

⁶Fadl Allah, p. 76.

⁷Fadl Allah, p. 33; Khwajah Nizamuddin Ahmad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, trans. B. De, Bibliotheca Indica, 300 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1911; reprint ed., 1973), I, 401-2.

displeasure was that the Mughals defeated the Lodi forces at Panipat in 932/1526.⁸ That same year Muhammad Ghawth, who was living in Gwalior, interceded with the emperor Babur on behalf of Tatar Khan, the rebellious governor of Gwalior.⁹ Further dealings with the Mughals on the part of Muhammad Ghawth included pleading the case of another rebellious noble, Rahim Dad, in 936/1530.¹⁰ In another case the following year, the saint cursed a rebel named Bayazid the Afghan, who had devastated a nearby town, and within a few days the malefactor was executed by Babur.¹¹ Muhammad Ghawth's elder brother Shaykh P'hul (or Bahlul), another Shattari master, became the chief Sufi adviser to Babur's successor Humayun at this time. So closely intertwined did P'hul become in politics that he lost his life in the service of Humayun, when he was executed in Bengal by the rebellious Mirza Hindal. With such close relations to the Mughals, it is not surprising to learn that Humayun's defeat by Sher Shah Suri in 947/1540 led to problems for Muhammad Ghawth, resulting in his departure for Gujarat that same year. His exile in Gujarat would last over sixteen years, until the restoration of Humayun.¹²

Hagiographers indicate that the first hint of persecution had arisen on the part of advisers to Sher Shah.¹³ A disciple named `Ali Sher Bangali simply observed that Muhammad Ghawth "had seen the internal evil of the Sur Afghans."¹⁴ A later hagiographer, `Abd Allah Khwishagi, writing in 1096/1685, specified that Sher Shah's advisers had objected to a treatise in which Muhammad Ghawth described his ascension (*mi`raj*) into heaven, along the lines of the famous ascension of Abu Yazid al-Bistami; the audacious claims that the shaykh made about his encounters with God and numerous prophets and saints were apparently viewed as serious enough to deserve capital punishment.¹⁵ Although here and elsewhere the offending treatise is called simply *Risala-i mi`raj* (or *The Treatise on Ascension*), the correct title is *Awrad-i ghawthiyya* (*Litanies of the Ghawth*), and it is available in two manuscripts in Calcutta.¹⁶ While much of the text is devoted to explaining the characteristic Shattari meditation techniques, and the initiatic genealogies in which the author was confirmed, the lengthy closing portion indeed contains a remarkable account of the spiritual training of Muhammad

⁸Fadl Allah, pp. 40-41, 44.

⁹Fadl Allah, pp. 42, 58-61; this is far more circumstantial than the laconic account in *ahiru'd-din Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi, *Babur-nama (Memoirs of Babur)*, trans. Annette Susannah Beveridge (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 [1922]), pp. 539-40.

¹⁰Babur, pp. 688 n. 2, 690.

¹¹Fadl Allah, p. 43; Babur, p. 677.

¹²Fadl Allah, p. 66, states that the exile was 18 years. He also notes that Muhammad Ghawth built a mosque in Ahmedabad dated 963/1556.

¹³Fadl Allah, p. 65.

¹⁴Ghawthi, p. 309.

¹⁵Rizvi, II, 157-58, quoting `Abd Allah Khwishagi Qasuri, *Ma`arij al-wilayat*, MS Adhar collection, Punjab University Library, fol. 543a. For Khwishagi and his hagiography, see Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi, *Abwal u athar-i `Abd Allah Khwishagi Qasuri*, Silsila-i Matbu'at-i Dar al-Mu'arrikhin, 3 (Lahore: Muhammad Shams al-Din, 1391/1972), pp. 80 ff.

¹⁶Muhammad Ghawth, *Awrad-i ghawthiyya*, MS 446 Curzon Persian, and MS 1252 Persian, both in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

Ghawth by his master Shaykh Zuhur Hajji Hudur, culminating in a detailed description of his ascension experience.¹⁷ We do not know precisely what actions the Suri regime took against the shaykh, but his prudent departure for Gujarat temporarily put him out of danger.

The second phase of the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth began after his arrival in the kingdom of Gujarat. When he reached the city of Ahmedabad, problems began. The scene was described in vague though dramatic terms by his disciple `Ali Sher Bangali:

Here some short-sighted scholars and ignorant dervishes began to search for an excuse for their enmity toward him. By linking him with expressions they neither knew nor understood, they only succeeded by this means in making his pure and luminous heart more illuminated. Staying in that place was unpleasant for him. On a certain occasion good tidings came from heaven, that the reason for emigration [to Gujarat] has vanished, and the occasion for opposition has arisen. Hearing this, he departed for Gwalior.¹⁸

A modern hagiographer, the editor of Fadl Allah, is somewhat more circumstantial:

During the time of his stay in Gujarat, certain incidents took place, the story of which event has, like it or not, apparently been well told. The reason for this can be described as follows. He had expressed himself with ecstatic sayings (*shathiyat*), that is, spiritual realities in the style of his lofty imagination, in extremely clear words. The understanding of these was considerably beyond the masses, and beginning with those ignorant folk, such a quantity of hostility was generated that the religious scholars, the learned, and even the sultan of the age were necessarily included.¹⁹

Both of these accounts fall into the vagueness of stock hagiographical narrative; all that they do is to connect Muhammad Ghawth with unknown accusers and to portray him as a model mystic. Ghawthi reports that some of the local scholars became opposed to Muhammad Ghawth, leading one of them to send his son to spy on the shaykh.

Since the short-sighted people of Gujarat were infatuated with his reputation, therefore through envy and lack of insight they began to turn against Ghawth al-Awliya'. Among them Shaykh `Abd al-Muqtadir Banbani sent his younger son confidentially into the Ghawthiyya Khanqah with instructions to be present at all times, in order to take note of the words and deeds of Ghawth al-Awliya' that were objectionable, and to convey those deeds to his superiors for their consideration. It is said that this spy one day said [to Muhammad Ghawth], "This least of disciples has been hopeful of instruction for some time." The answer came [from the shaykh], "The goal of wayfaring is advancement. God willing, you can work in the faqirs' kitchen; this will produce the influence of instruction." Finally, after a few days, a strong attraction overcame him, and his eyes saw reality, so that in all states and in all stations he repeated this phrase continually, "When this is the state of the hypocrite, what do you say to the person who lays his secret at the threshold of this perfect saint?"²⁰

Thus the saint's spiritual power foiled this underhanded attempt to undermine his position, as the would-be spy became a disciple. Muhammad Ghawth appears to have thrived in Gujarat, and we find reference to his presence at different

¹⁷ *Anrad-i ghanthiyya*, MS 1252, fols. 107-30.

¹⁸ Ghawthi, p. 309.

¹⁹ Fadl Allah, p. 65.

²⁰ Ghawthi, p. 288.

times in the cities of Broach (950/1543-4) and Ahmedabad (951/1544-5).²¹ One of his last actions there was to build a mosque, which is dated by a commemorative verse to 963/1556.²²

It was left for a secular chronicler, the Mughal courtier Bada'oni, to give a fully detailed narrative of the controversy in Gujarat, in which Muhammad Ghawth was accused by the notable scholar `Ali al-Muttaqi (885-975/1480-1567). In this controversy the shaykh was defended by another scholar, Wajih al-Din `Alawi, who in the course of the dispute ended by becoming a Shattari disciple.

When Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth went from Hindustan to Gujarat, in the reign of Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat, Shaykh `Ali al-Muttaqi, one of the greatest Shaykhs, most influential religious leaders and greatest sages of that time, wrote a *fatwa* for the execution of Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth, and the Sultan abrogated it at the instance of Miyan Wajih al-Din. When Miyan Wajih al-Din went on the first occasion to the Shaykh's house he was powerfully attracted by his face, and tore up the *fatwa*, and Shaykh `Ali came, beside himself (with rage), to the Miyan's house, and rent his clothes and said, "Why do you assent to the spread of heresy, and to a schism in the faith?" He answered, "We follow the letter and the Shaykh the spirit. Our understanding cannot reach his perfections and (even), as far as the letter of the law goes, no exception, by which he could be pronounced blameworthy, can be taken to him." And this was the cause of the great faith which the Sultans and rulers of Gujarat had in Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth, and of his deliverance from that position of peril. (The Miyan) from that time repeatedly said in assemblies, "One ought to obey the letter of the law after the manner of Shaykh `Ali al-Muttaqi, and the spirit after the manner of my spiritual guide" (i.e., Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth).²³

In this version, we are not told what was the precise cause of `Ali al-Muttaqi's wrath, but a new dramatic twist is furnished by Wajih al-Din `Alawi's decision to become a follower of Muhammad Ghawth. In other respects this narrative echoes other famous persecutions from Sufi hagiography, such as the abstention of Ibn Surayj from judging the case of al-Hallaj, or `Attar's mythical portrait of Junayd's response to the final trial of al-Hallaj.²⁴ A later Shattari text, `Aqil Khan Razi's *Thamarat al-hayat* (1053/1643-4) also relates another incident, in which `Ali al-Muttaqi while in Ahmedabad suspiciously inquired about a copy of Ibn `Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam* that was being read by Shaykh Lashkar Muhammad `Arif, a disciple of Muhammad Ghawth. When Shaykh Lashkar briefly responded with the essence of Ibn `Arabi's teaching on the divine unity, `Ali al-Muttaqi was satisfied with his answer, and he respectfully told his own disciples that this kind of man was worthy of the knowledge of divine realities.²⁵

A question arises, however, concerning `Ali al-Muttaqi's participation in this inquisition. He had been favored with the attention of the sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah (r. 932-43/1526-37), though he was reluctant to accept gifts from

²¹Ghawthi, pp. 362, 427.

²²Fadl Allah, p. 66.

²³Abdu-'l-Qadir ibn-i-Mulukshah al-Badaoni, *Muntakhabu-'l-tawarikh*, trans. Wolsley Haig, Biblioteca Indica, 97 (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal), III, 71-72 (text, III, 44), with slight spelling changes. This account, from the article devoted to Wajih al-Din `Alawi, contrasts with the absence of any mention of persecution in the separate notice given by Bada'oni to Muhammad Ghawth: "After the rebellion in India, when Sher Shah began to oppress Shaykh Muhammad, he betook himself to Gujarat where also he brought princes and rulers under the yoke of subjection to him and belief in his teaching, so that all alike were ready to do him service" (ibid., III, 8; text, III, 5).

²⁴See *Words of Ecstasy*, pp. 102-3, 131.

²⁵`Aqil Khan Razi, *Thamarat al-hayat*, MS 1278 Persian, ASB, Calcutta, fols. 61b-62a.

the latter. Some of `Ali al-Muttaqi's biographers report that he departed from Gujarat when Humayun's armies first began their invasions of that territory in 941/1534, and that after his arrival in the Hejaz, he remained there for the next thirty years.²⁶ Others say that he left India for Arabia later on, in 953/1546-7.²⁷ The curious thing is that only Bada'oni refers to `Ali al-Muttaqi's role in the affair. `Ali al-Muttaqi's principal biographer, `Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith, does not seem to mention `Ali al-Muttaqi in connection with the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth, either in the brief notice devoted to `Ali al-Muttaqi in the comprehensive dictionary of saints, *Akhhbar al-akhyar*, or in the monographic biography of `Ali al-Muttaqi and his successor `Abd al-Wahhab al-Muttaqi, *Zad al-muttaqin*.²⁸ A history of Gujarat completed in 1022/1613, the *Mir'at-i Sikandari*, simply lists the names of `Ali al-Muttaqi and Muhammad Ghawth together, as famous religious figures of the reign of Sultan Mahmud (r. 943-61/1537-54), without indicating that there was any conflict between the two.²⁹ Ghawthi mentions the participation of Wajih al-Din `Alawi and Hamid Lar in defending Muhammad Ghawth with "answers both traditional and rational," but he fails to name any of the shaykh's persecutors.³⁰ `Ali al-Muttaqi is said to have returned temporarily to Gujarat during the reign of Mahmud, which would have enabled him to confront Muhammad Ghawth.³¹ From an *ijaza* document signed by `Ali al-Muttaqi it is established that he was back in Mecca by 961/1554, so the incident of persecution would have to have taken place by then.³² We can compare `Abd al-Haqq's reticence on this subject to his reluctance to discuss the martyrdom of the early Chishti Sufi Mas`ud Bakk, a subject that was broached more openly by `Abd al-Haqq's disciple Muhammad Sadiq.³³ `Abd al-Haqq's discreet silence can probably best be explained in terms of his strategy as a hagiographer interested in emphasizing shar`i norms.

In any case, after the years of exile in Gujarat, Muhammad Ghawth finally returned to northern India after 963/1556, when Humayun briefly reasserted his authority, and Akbar was crowned emperor after Humayun's untimely death.³⁴ Muhammad Ghawth was received with general acclaim in Delhi and Agra. When he approached Akbar for an interview in 966/1558-9 in Agra, according to Bada'oni, he immediately aroused the enmity of the chief *sadr* (official in charge of

²⁶M. Hidayat Hosain, "al-Muttaqi al-Hindi," EI², VII, 800-1.

²⁷Ghawthi, p. 402.

²⁸`Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi al-Bukhari, *Akhhbar al-akhyar fi asrar al-abrar*, ed. Muhammad `Abd al-Ahad (Delhi: Matba`-i Mujtaba'i, 1332/1913-4), pp. 257-69; the unpublished *Zad al-muttaqin* is summarized by Rizvi, II, 319-27.

²⁹Edward Clive Bayley, *The History of India as told by its own Historians: The Local Muhammadan Dynasties--Gujarat*, ed. Nagendra Singh (reprint ed., New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1970), p. 441.

³⁰Ghawthi, p. 345.

³¹Rizvi, II, 321.

³²Ali al-Muttaqi, Arabic *ijazat nama* in Shadhiliyya, Madyaniyya, and Qadiriyya orders; MS 52 Arabic, acc. no. 239, Jamia Millia Islamiyya, New Delhi, fol. 247a, dated 18 Sha`ban 961/19 July 1554 in Mecca.

³³See my "From Hagiography to Martyrology" for details.

³⁴Ghawthi, p. 298, says this occurred in 963/1556; Bada'oni (trans., III, 8; text, III, 5) says that Muhammad Ghawth's departure from Gujarat for Agra occurred in 966/1558-9, and that he witnessed the shaykh riding amid a great throng of people in Agra's bazar. This roughly agrees with the statement of Fadl Allah (p. 66), that Muhammad Ghawth spent eighteen years in Gujarat.

charitable trusts), a Suhrawardi Sufi named Shaykh Gada'i. Bada'oni interpreted this enmity as entirely based on Shaykh Gada'i's professional jealousy. In any case, this set the stage for the third phase of persecution of the Shattari master. Due to Shaykh Gada'i's promptings, the regent Bayram Khan introduced in court with ridicule the claims Muhammad Ghawth had made about his ascension, once again evidently in allusion to *Anrad-i ghanthiyya*.³⁵ The shaykh retired in some discomfiture to Gwalior, which had recently been reconquered by the Mughals from Sher Shah's forces. He could be comforted, however, by the immense revenues that had been designated for his support, doubtless with the approval of Akbar.³⁶ Muhammad Ghawth had a final meeting with Akbar when the latter came hunting in the region of Gwalior, and had his curiosity aroused by tales of the fine cattle kept by the shaykh. At this meeting, Muhammad Ghawth took the hand of the young king in the ritual of Sufi initiation, offering to become his spiritual guide. Akbar treated this as a joke, however, and his minister Abu al-Fadl regarded the shaykh and his pretensions with scorn.³⁷ Muhammad Ghawth remained in Gwalior, training disciples in Shattari exercises, until his death in 970/1563.

From the details summarized above, several points emerge with considerable force. First, although some accounts are vague about what actually aroused the opposition to Muhammad Ghawth, his ascension experience has been cited as the text that scholars regarded with suspicion in all three reported instances of persecution, first by the Suri regime, then by the sultan of Gujarat, and later by the regent of Akbar. Second, in all these cases the fortunes of Muhammad Ghawth were dependent on his close personal relationship with the Mughal rulers; all commentators, whether friendly or hostile to the shaykh, agree that he had an extraordinary influence over many political figures. His persecution by Sher Shah is clearly understandable as directed against a Mughal supporter, while his principal accuser in Gujarat, `Ali al-Muttaqi, had been allied with a Gujarati sultan opposed to the Mughals. In the last instance, it appears that Akbar's good-natured regard for the brother of one of his father's spiritual advisers saved Muhammad Ghawth from the hostility of Shaykh Gada'i and Bayram Khan. Third, while Muhammad Ghawth was threatened in all these instances, he was an extremely influential and powerful man, and he emerged unscathed from the attempts of his opponents. His brother Shaykh P'hul only lost his life because he fell afoul of a purely political quarrel. Fourth, the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth was an unusual event, in that none of the rulers or scholars who opposed the Shattari master was opposed to Sufism in principle. The Suris, the Gujarati sultans, and the Mughals were all generous patrons of Sufism. Muhammad Ghawth's critic `Ali al-Muttaqi had in his childhood been initiated into the Chishti order, and later on while studying hadith in Arabia he had also been initiated into the Qadiri, Shadhili, and Madyani orders. Nor was `Ali al-Muttaqi hostile to ecstatic Sufism on principle. Through his Chishti master Baha' al-Din Shah Bajan, `Ali al-Muttaqi had a connection with the Chishti martyr Mas`ud Bakk, whose writings he frequently quoted, even translating one work by Mas`ud Bakk from Persian into Arabic.³⁸ He thus can hardly be characterized as an opponent of Sufism, although he was a spirited critic of the Mahdawi movement. Thus, if we wish to understand the "anti-Sufi" issue in the case of Muhammad Ghawth, it must be sought in his ascension narrative, which will be discussed further below. For the moment, let me suggest that

³⁵Bada'oni, II, 28-29 (trans.), II, 34-35 (text); Sukumar Ray, *Bayram Khan*, ed. M. H. A. Beg (Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1992), pp. 175-77.

³⁶Bada'oni (ibid.) estimates the shaykh's income at 100,000 rupees, a huge sum.

³⁷*The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl*, trans. H. Beveridge (Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1977), II, 133-35 (text, II, 88-89).

³⁸See the biography of `Ali al-Muttaqi in *Nuzhat al-khawtir*, IV, 234-44. `Ali al-Muttaqi quotes Mas`ud Bakk in his *Jawami` al-kalim fil mawa`iz wal-bikam*, also known as *al-Jawahir al-thamina*, a miscellany with quotations from Ansari, Sa'di, Husayni Sadat, Mas`ud Bakk, and others; cf. MS 1254 Persian, Asiatic Society, Calcutta. `Ali al-Muttaqi translated the *Minhaj al-`arifin* [i.e., *Mir'at al-`arifin*] of Malik-zada Mas`ud [Bakk] into Arabic under the title *al-Nash al-wafi lil-qalb al-shafi*, MS Punjab University, Lahore, Sherani 3923/871/6, cat. II, 262, no. 1452.

the kernel of unacceptable statement lies in the claims of Muhammad Ghawth to have gone even beyond the level of Bayazid Bistami.

CIRCUMSPECTION IN THE LATER SHATTARI ORDER

We search in vain for any immediate effects of the persecution upon Muhammad Ghawth himself, in terms of any kind of alteration of his teachings. When Humayun wrote to express his concern about the troubles Muhammad Ghawth was undergoing as an exile, the shaykh shrugged them off as unimportant in his reply.³⁹ Although Muhammad Ghawth revised his meditation handbook *Jawahir-i kbams* at the request of his disciples in 956/1549, correcting all known copies in the process, this appears to have been unrelated to any external political concern.⁴⁰ Khwishagi suggested that the initial persecution (under the Suri regime) was aimed at the ascension narrative in *Anrad-i ghanthiyya*, and he further maintained that Muhammad Ghawth later adopted a conciliatory stance regarding this controversial text, which he clarified by saying that his ascension was only in spirit and not bodily like that of the Prophet.⁴¹ In what appears to be a version of the same story, Ghulam Sarwar (who often cites Khwishagi) in 1280/1864-5 wrote that Wajih al-Din `Alawi advised Muhammad Ghawth to take a variable position, according to whether the scholars were against him or not; if they supported him, he should maintain that his ascension veritably occurred during wakefulness, but if they opposed him, he should say that it took place during a dream.⁴² Against this view suggesting a *taqiyya*-like dissimulation, we may note the observation found in one source that Muhammad Ghawth wrote *Anrad-i ghanthiyya* at age forty-three, three years after his arrival in Gujarat; in that case, the problems that the shaykh had with Sher Shah had nothing to do with the ascension treatise. If this is correct, it suggests that the report of Khwishagi about the Suri persecution of Muhammad Ghawth may have erroneously read back the controversy over *Anrad-i ghanthiyya* into an earlier, purely political persecution.⁴³

Nonetheless, among the successors of Muhammad Ghawth, a distinctly conservative shari`a-oriented pattern became the norm. While most early Shattari writings by Muhammad Ghawth and his contemporaries are collections of esoteric meditation practices, later Shattari Sufis, particularly those located in the city of Burhanpur, increasingly focused on obligatory shari`a worship and Qur'anic and hadith studies. This conservative trend was already evident in Wajih al-Din `Alawi (1504-1589), the jurist who preserved Muhammad Ghawth from persecution in Gujarat and then became his disciple. Wajih al-Din's Sufi writings learnedly expound Sufi metaphysics in contrast to Ash`ari theology, but he pointedly avoids or mutes controversial topics in these discussions. For example, his mystical treatise *al-Haqiqat al-Muhammadiyya* makes an ingenious distinction between the legislative and gnostic aspects of prophecy, but Wajih al-Din is quick to assert that prophecy is always superior to sainthood, thus avoiding any heretical suggestion that would

³⁹Ghawthi, pp. 292-94.

⁴⁰Some have suggested (Haq, p. 174; Nizami, p. 59) that the *Jawahir-i kbams* came in for severe criticism by religious scholars, but this appears to be a confusion with *Anrad-i ghanthiyya*.

⁴¹Khwishagi, *Ma`araj al-wilayat*, fol. 553b, in Rizvi, II, 158.

⁴²Ghulam Sarwar, *Khazinat al-asfiya*, pp. 333-34.

⁴³Fadl Allah, p. 76.

denigrate the Prophet. One of his sources for this doctrine, interestingly enough, is Bayazid Bistami, to whom the name of Ibn `Arabi is also joined.⁴⁴ Making the point about the superiority of prophecy establishes his conservative credentials, while at the same time he marks the centrality of the saint (Bayazid) who is the pivotal figure in the standard Shattari lineage. It should be recalled that Bayazid's ecstatic sayings that seemed to infringe on the status of the Prophet had previously been sanitized by popularizers of Sufism such as `Attar.

The contrast between Muhammad Ghawth and his more conservative disciples may be seen in an incident that took place when he met Tahir Muhammad Muhaddith, a pious scholar who later became a devoted disciple. "His glass is so pure and fine," remarked the shaykh. "How wonderful it would be to fill it with wine!" This scandalized the scholar, who was not yet accustomed to hearing Sufis use the name of "the mother of iniquities," though he eventually got used to it.⁴⁵ After spending some time in Berar, Tahir Muhammad (d. 1004/1595-6) settled in Burhanpur in 982/1574-5, where he composed works based on the classical Sufi writings of Qushayri, Makki, and Ghazali, along with digests and indices of works on hadith.⁴⁶ Only one of his writings hints at ecstatic sayings; his *Riyad al-salihin* contains three sections: the first contains explanations of hadith, the second comments on the sayings of Sufi masters (including `Abd al-Qadir Jilani, Ghazali, Abu Talib Makki, Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, and, curiously enough, `Ali al-Muttaqi), and the third deals with the expressions and allusions of "the masters of unification and ecstasy, the people of love and gnosis" (such as Ibn `Arabi, `Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani, Sadr al-Din Qunawi, "and other followers of *wahdat al-wujud*").⁴⁷ Although the last section appears to be potentially controversial, it becomes clear from comparison with other Shattari works that articulation of the *wujudi* metaphysics associated with Ibn `Arabi was standard among nearly all Shattari authors. Evidently, in India the views of Ibn `Arabi were not regarded as problematic at this time.

Another disciple of Muhammad Ghawth was Lashkar Muhammad `Arif (d. 993/1585), who came from a warrior clan; he guided Sufis for many years in Ahmedabad before coming to Burhanpur at the end of his life. Shaykh Lashkar exhibited a degree of piety toward the Prophet Muhammad that was remarkable. He stated that it is easy to reach God, but quite difficult to reach the level of the Prophet. The reason is that one must attain the most perfect of all attributes to come close to the Prophet, but God manifests in all degrees of creation and is therefore more easily accessible.⁴⁸ Shaykh Lashkar was the subject of a lengthy debate among his followers, concerning an anecdote told by his saintly daughter Bibi Rasti. This daughter is also known as Bubu Rasti, and it is after her that the Burhanpur neighborhood of Rastipura is named. In a gathering that took place in 1013/1605, which included several leading Sufis and the Mughal minister `Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, she described how her father reached an indescribable state, which he later revealed was the station of Bayazid Bistami.⁴⁹ It was only by God's grace, he told her once he recovered his senses, that he did not repeat the famous utterance of Bayazid, "Glory be to me" (*subhani*). He reflected that it is better to say,

⁴⁴Wajih al-Din `Alawi, *al-Risala al-musamma bil-haqiqat al-Muhammadiyah*, ed. with Urdu trans. Muhammad Zubayr Ghulam Nabi Qurayshi (Ahmadabad: Sarkhej Rawda Committee, 1385/1966), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁵Rashidi, pp. 5-6, citing *Kashf al-haqiq*, fol. 3.

⁴⁶Ghawthi, pp. 426-33, enumerating eight writings, with a long excerpt from a Qushayri-style *tafsir* on pp. 427-32.

⁴⁷Ghawthi, p. 433.

⁴⁸Ghawthi, p. 362.

⁴⁹Khan-i Khanan and his son Darab Khan also attended on the lectures of Bibi Rasti on Sufi classics such as `Iraqi's *Lama`at*; see Rashidi, p. 51.

"Glory be to him" (*subhanahu*), or some variation, to avoid the error of lese-majesté committed by Bayazid. Muhammad Ghawthi, author of *Gulzar-i abrar*, was quite cognizant of the delicacy of this situation. He himself offered a more nuanced interpretation:

When the Sufi with the aid of annihilation in the journey of ascension removes the created garment of the body and enters the divine dress, and his goal becomes his own transcendence, then at that time there is need for interpreting and explaining his verbal utterance of "Glory be to him." And if he utters the cry of "Glory be to me," that is not improper, since that is in fact his goal. Therefore, on account of the superiority of saying "Glory be to him," both explanations apply.⁵⁰

This tentative approval of the "Bayazidian rank" was first put forward by the chief disciple of Shaykh Lashkar, `Isa Jund Allah. Using Ibn `Arabi's *Fusus* as a model, `Isa would have taken al-Hallaj to a higher state than the qualification with divinity that led to his ecstatic utterance, "I am the Real"; that higher state (reminiscent of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's criticism of Ibn `Arabi) was qualification with created existence.⁵¹ Both in the report of the debate over Shaykh Lashkar's Bayazidian temptation, and in the highly ambivalent reflections by `Isa, we can see a reluctance to approve of ecstatic states without grounding them in approved metaphysical theories.

Shaykh `Isa Jund Allah (d. 1031/1622), a nephew of Tahir Muhammad, was generally an irenic soul. He wrote primarily on meditation techniques employing the Arabic names of God, plus a couple of treatises commenting on the metaphysics of *wabdat al-wujud*.⁵² When a dispute over hadith between religious scholars threatened to erupt into a heresy accusation, he persuaded `Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan to send the heresy-hunting scholar on pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵³ Nonetheless, such was the harmonious atmosphere established by the Faruqi kings in Burhanpur prior to the Mughal conquest that `Isa like many other local Sufis supported the Faruqis against Akbar. But the Mughals finally succeeded in taking the Faruqi fortress of Asir by strategem and treason in 1010/1601. Consequently Akbar planned to exile `Isa to Agra for a time, along with other dissident Sufis, on the pretext of requesting him to give spiritual instruction to the army; fortunately, the prayers of the shaykh were answered and he did not have to suffer this ordeal for long.⁵⁴ This seems to have been a fairly mild persecution, if we can call it that, and it was a political affair unrelated to Sufism per se.

The trend toward greater shar`i conservatism continued with Shaykh `Isa's children. `Isa's son Baba Fath Muhammad Muhaddith is known primarily for his devotional writings on ritual prayer. When `Isa's future successor in Burhanpur, Burhan al-Din Raz-i Ilahi, came to `Isa seeking instruction, he was offered two choices: a letter of introduction to the *sadr* if he sought money and land, or study with Fath Muhammad if he sought religious learning; since Raz-i Ilahi sought knowledge of the names of God, he remained with `Isa.⁵⁵ Fath Muhammad wrote over a dozen

⁵⁰Ghawthi, p. 364.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 365-66; this section quotes extensively from the section on Noah in Ibn `Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam*.

⁵²Rashidi, pp. 63-73, provides a list of works, with a short treatise entitled *Risala-i daqiqa* on pp. 74-80.

⁵³Rashidi, pp. 45-46.

⁵⁴Rashidi, pp. 55-57, 106-7. On the report of `Isa's disciple and *mafuzat* recorder Farhi, these dissident Sufis were put under the authority of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's successor, Mir Muhammad Nu`man Naqshbandi.

⁵⁵Rashidi, p. 41, citing *Rawa'ih al-anfas*, p. 13.

treatises on ritual prayer and meditation, along with some short summaries of *wahdat al-wujud* in the form of creeds. He also wrote on the determination of the correct direction of Mecca from Burhanpur, for purposes of ritual prayer.⁵⁶ These are only a few examples of the later Shattari order after Muhammad Ghawth. Richard Eaton has remarked with reference to Wajih al-Din `Alawi and his disciple Sibghat Allah (the translator of the *Jawahir-i khamis* into Arabic), that these later Shattaris exhibit the characteristics of the "scholastic" and the "puritanical reformist" rather than the extravagant ecstatic.⁵⁷ While these terms may have to be modified to some extent when it is possible to give a fuller account of the teachings of these Sufis, the basic contrast seems to be correct.

Does this move to shar`i conservatism constitute a response to persecution? Evidence drawn from the life of Burhan al-Din Raz-i Ilahi (d. 1083/1673) suggests that this was in fact the case. This shaykh was drawn into the succession struggle between two claimants to the Mughal throne, Dara Shikuh and Awrangzib. Raz-i Ilahi was by temperament a strict ascetic, and a conservative scholar. He was also opposed to performance of flute music if it led to dancing.⁵⁸ His writings consist of a credal commentary (*Sharh-i amantu billah*), a testament, and several collections of discourses recorded by disciples. He was very reluctant to form any connection with members of the court. When the noble Shayista Khan once joined the shaykh at Friday prayers, Raz-i Ilahi retired afterward to perform his prayers over again, remarking to a disciple that the presence of a noble (*amir*) in effect made his prayers nugatory.⁵⁹ So when Awrangzib came to the retreat of Raz-i Ilahi disguised as an ordinary person, accompanied by the legal scholar Shaykh Nizam (compiler of the legal work *al-Fatawa al-`Alamgiriyya*), Raz-i Ilahi was reluctant to acknowledge him in any way. There are two conflicting accounts of the outcome of this meeting. According to the historian Khwafi Khan, Awrangzib requested the aid of the saint in his struggle against Dara Shikuh, on the grounds that the latter had said that Islam was the same as infidelity (*kufr*). In this version, Raz-i Ilahi gave the prince a blessing, and Shaykh Nizam predicted victory for Awrangzib. Another historian, Ma`muri, reports instead that the shaykh refused to become a partisan in the succession dispute.⁶⁰ One is tempted to speculate that Khwafi Khan stretched the story to fit a royal historiography. In any case, if Raz-i Ilahi was approached by Awrangzib to take sides on an ostensibly religious issue, it may well have sensitized him to the problems of persecution. The most striking example of his conservatism occurred when one of his disciples, Shaykh Nur Ramz-i Ilahi, began to shout aloud the phrase, "Burhan is God Most Great," and others joined in the chant. According to Khwafi Khan, the shaykh warned the disciples to desist, and when they continued, he handed them over to the qadi for execution.⁶¹ This would indeed be an internalization of the persecution initially visited upon Muhammad Ghawth, but in this case it was much more successful than the persecution of the earlier saint. Here the spiritual status of the saint was not proclaimed by the saint himself, but by his disciples. Unlike the case of the ambiguity of Shaykh Lashkar about his own "Bayazidian rank," here Raz-i Ilahi rejected outright the suggestion of his disciples that he was

⁵⁶Rashidi, pp. 70, 118-42, with a short *mathnawi* poem presented on pp. 143-50.

⁵⁷Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, pp. 60, 206.

⁵⁸Rashidi, pp. 322-23.

⁵⁹Rashidi, p. 296.

⁶⁰Anees Jahan Syed, *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al Lubab* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1977), p. 83 with n. 11.

⁶¹K. A. Nizami, "Sufi Movement in the Deccan," in H. K. Sherwani and P. M. Joshi, eds., *History of Medieval Deccan (1295-1724)* (2 vols., Hyderabad: The Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973-4), II, 194, quoting *Muntakhab al-lubab*, II, 554.

identical with God. A verse by the shaykh seems to recall this incident: "Burhan is the proof of God, yet he is nothing but an intercessor of the beloved; I saw that the master is the outer form of God, and God is his inner form."⁶² Local narrative sees Raz-i Ilahi as strictly conforming with the expectations of sanctity in his encounter with Awrangzib. It is popularly believed in Burhanpur that the tomb of Raz-i Ilahi was built by order of Awrangzib, and that the sum for the base of the tomb was taken from the emperor's earnings from the sale of his knitted hats and copies of the Qur'an; since the dome, however, was to be built with funds taken from the imperial treasury, the saint rejected that donation as contrary to Islamic law, and the present dome was accordingly financed otherwise.⁶³

What is especially curious is that very little evidence survives in Shattari writings regarding the original persecution of Muhammad Ghawth. At one time a document describing the accusations against Muhammad Ghawth was reported to be in the Pir Muhammad Shah library in Ahmedabad, but the current custodians have no record of it. In an extended commentary on this question, Muhammad Zubayr Qureshi remarks that there is an account of the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth and the role of `Ali al-Muttaqi in a hagiography entitled *Mukhbbar al-amliya'*, but it is not yet clear if this contains any material not already known from other sources.⁶⁴ Qureshi observes that the disciples of Muhammad Ghawth wrote many works preserved in manuscript, "Yet no one refers to the encounter of Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliari [with his accusers]. They observe discreet silence. It is strange."⁶⁵ If the suggestions made above are correct, it seems that Shattari masters subsequent to Muhammad Ghawth preferred to forget altogether about his persecution. It was an unpleasant episode, and they did not wish to revive it as a martyrology.

CONCLUSIONS

What was controversial enough to lead to the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth? I have proposed above that it was the claim of attaining a spiritual state beyond that of Bayazid Bistami that provoked outrage. Naturally political conditions also needed to be such that persecution of a Sufi saint was worth the trouble it might otherwise cause for a ruler. The Mughal struggles with other Indian dynasties furnished the political occasion for such persecution. A brief comparison with other cases within the Sufi tradition affords several instances where the status of Bayazid Bistami became the standard against which mystics measured their experiences. The biographies of Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz (d. 606/1209) record only a single instance of judicial doubt regarding his many striking spiritual claims. This doubt arose when a scholar found the passage in Ruzbihan's autobiographical work *Kashf al-asrar* where Ruzbihan described himself sitting on a mountain top, clinking glasses with God, and tossing roses down to the plain where Bayazid Bistami and other Sufi saints looked on enviously. The scholar's doubts were removed, however, when Bayazid Bistami appeared to him in a dream to confirm the truth of Ruzbihan's vision.⁶⁶ Another notable example of using Bayazid Bistami as a

⁶²Rashidi, p. 333.

⁶³Rashidi, pp. 354-56.

⁶⁴This title, ascribed to Mawdud Lala Chishti, is noticed by Storey (I, 1059, no. 55) in a single Bombay MS (Mulla Firuz 14), but Qurayshi knows of another copy in a Chishti shrine in Ahmedabad.

⁶⁵Personal communication, letter dated 13 February 1995.

⁶⁶See my forthcoming study *Ruzbihan Baqli: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*, Curzon Sufi Series, 4 (London: Curzon Press, 1995).

mystical standard to be exceeded is Ibn `Arabi, who viewed Bistami with intense ambivalence; while he considered some of Bistami's formulations to be evidence of a supremely advanced state, he also criticized the boasting (*fakhr*) that is inherent in ecstatic expressions (*shathbiyyat*), in this way putting himself in a position superior to that of Bistami.⁶⁷ To take a case slightly after the time of Muhammad Ghawth, we may consider Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, who explicitly claimed a spiritual status that exceeded both Abu Yazid and Ibn `Arabi, observing that their claims were based on improperly interpreted experiences that his own teachings clarified; his critics in turn charged him with arrogance. In addition, his apparent claim to exceed the rank of Companions of the Prophet such as Abu Bakr was pretext enough to cause Sirhindi to be imprisoned by the Mughal emperor Jahangir.⁶⁸ The basic principle that caused offense in these claims is that the ecstatic vaults over the "horizontal" authenticity afforded by historical tradition through approved Sufi lineages. With direct access to God as its own verification, "vertical" authenticity can dispense with the validation of historical tradition. That is the ultimate challenge offered to established religion by ecstatic Sufis.

A search for other causes for the persecution of Muhammad Ghawth fails to provide convincing alternatives. The Shattari order, as we have seen, was very insistent on performance of normal shar`i ritual, and in this respect it did not differ from most of the established Sufi orders. The philosophy of Ibn `Arabi, though perhaps restricted to circles of capable students, was retained as the basic theoretical framework for mystical Islam by nearly all the Shattari masters.

Some may suggest that the interest of Muhammad Ghawth in yoga was controversial, since he is known to have translated the Arabic version of a hatha yoga treatise into Persian under the title *Bahr al-bayat*. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that anyone made objections to yogic practice on religious grounds during the lifetime of Muhammad Ghawth. The net effect of the yogic practices discussed in Shattari texts had little relevance to any Hindu theology. The disciples of Muhammad Ghawth were agreed that his treatment of yogic disciplines had basically Islamicized them.⁶⁹ Succeeding generations of Shattaris continued developing specialized meditations that owed little to any integral yogic tradition. In the recollections of Raz-i Ilahi, there remains little residue of the intense interest in yoga characteristic of Muhammad Ghawth. The only incident that Raz-i Ilahi relates concerning yoga is a story in which Muhammad Ghawth was bitten on the thigh by a snake; such was the saint's power that the snake immediately died. A yogi who observed this event recognized the shaykh as a perfected *siddha*.⁷⁰ This anecdote retains nothing of yogic practice, but simply perpetuates the hagiographic formula in which Sufis outperform yogis in thaumaturgy. Similarly, Shaykh `Isa once told a disciple to seek his next master by visualization, whether he appeared to be a proper Sufi shaykh, a wild qalandar, or a yogi.⁷¹ Here the yogi functions simply as a stock comparison, to signify that which is least conventional for Sufi disciples; `Isa would even approve of a disciple studying with a yogi if that would help the disciple advance.

⁶⁷See my "The Man without Attributes: Ibn `Arabi's Interpretation of Abu Yazid al-Bistami." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn `Arabi Society* XIII (1993), pp. 1-18.

⁶⁸Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), pp. 28, 60, 88, 62-68, 94-96; Ghulam `Ali Azad Bilgrami, *Subhat al-marjan fi athar Hindustan*, ed. Muhammad Fadl al-Rahman al-Nadwi al-Siwani (Aligarh: Jami`at Aligarh al-Islamiyya, 1972), I, 131-137.

⁶⁹For a full discussion, see my *The Pool of Nectar: An Islamic Interpretation of Yoga* (SUNY Press, forthcoming).

⁷⁰Rashidi, pp. 313-14, citing *Rawa'ih al-anfas*, fo. 380.

⁷¹Rashidi, p. 46.

The early Shattaris may have been aware of the potential tendency of their ecstatic approach to strain relations with the historical traditions of Islam. The tendency to provide a legitimizing multiple lineage for Shattari masters is found already in biographical accounts of the founder of the Indian branch of the order, `Abd Allah Shattari (d. 832/1428-9), who is credited with Qadiri and Kubrawi initiations.⁷² Likewise Baha' al-Din Ansari (d. 921/1515) was known as a Qadiri with a Shattari affiliation (*mashrab*).⁷³ Muhammad Ghawth himself claimed fourteen separate initiations in different Sufi orders. As a tentative observation concerning this phenomenon, I would propose that multiple initiation was a way of maximizing historical validation by tradition, by claiming as many possible avenues of contact with the founding figures of Sufism. The fact that this might be achieved by purely internal Uwaysi contacts is the homage that spontaneous ecstasy pays to historical tradition. In any case, a review of the history of the Shattari order in the century after Muhammad Ghawth provides a striking portrait of retreat from the bold claims of spiritual ecstasy. In the aftermath of repeated criticism and persecution of their chief organizer, later Shattari masters modulated the natural tendency of ecstatic experience, and muted the urge to engage in boasting contests with the founding figures of mysticism. Persecution is always a political act, and its power can be internalized to the point of self-censorship. The circumspection of the later Shattaris would seem to be evidence of the power of persecution to modify public behavior.

⁷²*Nuzhat al-khanatir*, III, 100-1, citing *Majma` al-abrar* and *Gulzar-i abrar*.

⁷³ Abd al-Haqq, p. 198.