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## The Qalandar in the Persianate World: the Case of Fakhrod-din ‘Arāqi

The mystical poetry of Fakhrod-din ‘Arāqi (d. 1289) has been considered to be unparalleled; he has been celebrated as the most eloquent spokesman of divine love in the history of Persian literature. His literary production is above all distinguished by the depth and audacity of its unbridled esoteric speculations and the intensity and brilliant color of its religious expression. As a disciple of Sadrod-din Qonavi, he was the first writer to introduce the speculative teachings of the Andalusian master Ebn ‘Arabi in the Persian language. He composed Sufi love poetry in the tradition of Sanā’i and ‘Attār, and also wrote *Lama‘āt* (The Divine Flashes), a commentary on Ebn ‘Arabi’s *Fusus ol-hekam* (The Seals of Wisdom) in elegant Persian prose. Due to his creative talent and the synthesizing character of his spiritual vision he made a fecund contribution to Sufi mysticism. My task in this paper is to draw attention to a feature of ‘Arāqi’s production which has so far been largely neglected by modern scholarship, namely the genre of *qalandariyāt*.<sup>1</sup> My examination

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Credits: fig. 1. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, no. 57.51.30. Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum, New York; fig. 2. MS Ouseley Add. 24, f. 79b. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; fig. 3. MS Ouseley Add. 24, f. 119r. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>1</sup> The literary aspects of the genre have been treated with specific reference to ‘Attār and Sanā’i by H. Ritter in *Das Meer der Seele. Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Fariduddin ‘Attār* (Leiden 1955), 487–491, and by J. T. P. de Bruijn in “The Qalandariyāt in Persian Mystical Poetry. From Sanā’i and

is based on a close reading of selected passages of his *Divān* (Collected Lyrics), which are analyzed by initially taking into consideration hagiographical accounts about his life.<sup>2</sup> Before exploring the *qalandariyāt* poems, it is however necessary to look at the religious and historical background against which this genre emerged and developed. In this respect, my essay will initially examine the Qalandari phenomenon, its spiritual doctrine and practice, in the context of medieval Persia, and then give attention to it as a distinct literary type.

### The Qalandar: Deranged Vagabond and Fool for God's Sake

While the Qalandars made its way into literature, the word was known as the designation of a group of mystics in the Persianate world who distinguished themselves from common people by their unconventional way of life. Their origin has not yet been determined, but the existence of individual Qalandars in Khorasan (north-eastern Iran) in the early eleventh century is clearly attested. The word *qalandar* is first encountered in a quatrain of tenth century poet Bābā Tāher-e 'Oriyān ("the naked") and in a short treatise entitled *Qalandar-nāma* (The Qalandar Book) ascribed to 'Abdollāh Ansāri (d. 1088–9) of Herat.<sup>3</sup> Abu Sa'id

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Onwards" in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism* (London 1992), 75–86.

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript entitled *Moqaddema* [Introduction] provides most of what is known about 'Arāqi's life. The author of the biography is anonymous, but the text is written down in the manner and style of 'Arāqi's own period. 'Abdol-Rahmān Jāmi (d. 1492) based his information about 'Arāqi in *Nafahāt ol-ons* [The Lives of the Friends] on this introduction. The *Moqaddema* is included in 'Elmi Darvish's edition of 'Arāqi's complete works.

<sup>3</sup> Bābā Tāher's quatrain describes the Qalandar as a homeless vagabond, who depends completely on divine providence:

Abi'l-Khair (d. 1048) is also reported to having recited a few quatrains that affirmatively depict the Qalandar as a homeless wanderer and fierce visionary.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the word passed into Arabic from the Persian *kalandar* ("ugly and ungainly man") indicates a Persian origin.

From early eleventh century, the Qalandars were known as mystics who had withdrawn from the world and practiced poverty. Acting upon the Quranic (3:137) command, "Journey in the land!", they led the life of obsessive vagrants. They regarded the outward journey as a symbol of the inner, spiritual journey, and were homeless and nameless and had no family. The Qalandars rejected bookish knowledge, and therefore, never established a closely reasoned doctrinal scheme, their teachings being rather centered around a common esoteric orientation. The fifteenth-century writer 'Abdol-Rahmān Jāmi characterizes their religious attitude in his hagiography *Nafahāt ol-ons* (The Lives of the Friends) as consisting of inner contentment, tranquility of the heart and prevention of self-conceit.<sup>5</sup> Similar to mainstream Sufism, the Qalandars comprehended the divine attributes (*sefāt*) as means to grasp God's essence (*zāt*) and reflected on His names through invocation (*zeker*). They were in fact peculiar in their continuous invocations of God.

The Qalandars focused themselves upon the fullness of reality, which they considered to be revealed in all of creation through God's names. Attracted by the beauty and grandeur of God's manifestation, they

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I am the debauchee that they call Qalandar. / I have no provision, no refuge or harbor.

During the day, I travel around your district. / At night, I go to bed with my head on your soil.

Bābā Tāher 'Oryān, *Divān-e she 'r-e Bābā Tāher-e 'Oryān-e Hamadāni* [Collected Lyrics of Bābā Tāher-e], ed. V. Dastgerdi (Tehran 1361/1982), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. F. Meier, *Abū Sa'id-i Abū'l-Hayr (357–440/967–1049). Wirklichkeit und Legende* (Tehran/Liège 1976), 494–516.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abdol-Rahmān Jāmi, *Nafahāt ol-ons* [The Lives of the Friends], ed. M. Touhidipur (Tehran 1336/1957), 14–15.

yearned for spiritual realization through two essential divine aspects: beauty and majesty (*jamāl o jalāl*). The Sufi master Shehābod-din Abu Hafs Sohrawardi (d. 1235) used the term *qalandar* in his '*Avāref ol-ma'āref*' (The Benefits of Gnosis) in a derogatory style applying it to "people so possessed by the intoxication of 'tranquility of the heart' that they respect no custom or usage and reject the regular observances of society".<sup>6</sup> In the thirteenth century, the influential Qalandari master Jamālod-din Sāvi (d. 1232) identified five principles of the Qalandari path, which according to him collectively correspond to the term *qalandar* itself: contentment, gentleness, repentance, godliness and self-discipline.<sup>7</sup>

The Qalandars were known for their unconventional appearance. They used to shave the head, the beard, the moustache and even the eyebrows in order fully to reveal the physical beauty of the face. They dressed in unusual and strange garments, usually a mantle or a simple blanket over the body, and sometimes in the skins of lions and leopards, presumably to inspire fear among rustic people. Sometimes they even appeared naked, not as a sign of sexual promiscuity, but rather of deep spirituality: nudity being a symbol of primordial beauty.<sup>8</sup> The characteristic of shaving the hair, the moustache and the beard clearly point to a Buddhist influence, probably from the Mahayana tradition. The early Qalandars were probably Buddhist converts to Islam, inspired by their prior religious background, or alternatively they maintained their beliefs

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<sup>6</sup> J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford 1971), 267.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Khatib-e Fārsi, *Qalandar nāma. Sirat-e Jamālod-din Sāvi* [Qalandar Book. The Life of Jamālod-din Sāvi], ed. H. Zarrinkub (Tehran 1362/1983), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Shamsod-din Ahmad Aflāki, *Manāqeb ol-ārefin* [The Virtues of the Gnostics], 2 vols, ed. T. Yazıcı (Tehran 1983) 412; and È. Feuillebois-Pierunek, *A La Croisée des voies célestes. Faxr al-din 'Erāqi. Poésie mystique et expression poétique en Perse médiévale* (Tehran 2002), 238.



Fig. 1. Portrait of a Qalandar wearing a primitive fur. Inscription in Persian. First quarter of the 17th century, Deccan.

and way of life under a Muslim disguise.<sup>9</sup> Their way of dressing, while by no means uniform, was distinct enough to make them stand out in a

<sup>9</sup> Cf. D. A. Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism", *East and West* 40:1/4 (1990), 43–77. As testified by the hagiographer Khatib-e Fārsi, the Qalandars revered the Indian ascetics and held their religious rituals in high esteem. Khatib-e Fārsi, *Sirat* (as note 7 above), 41. Many practices taken from the Hindu sages, such as yoga exercises, celibacy and vegetarianism,

crowd. In company, some of them also used to carry various implements, such as a drum or a standard. Their characteristics usually also included the perforation of ears for the insertion of iron rings as a symbol of penitence (see fig. 1). Men and women gathered together openly among them, and the latter did apparently not veil themselves or live secluded. The Qalandars stood outside social structures and were not “tainted” by any legal obligations to family or to a religious community. As such, they remained within society but were free from its constraints.

The principles of the Qalandari doctrine most probably had their origin in the teachings of the Malāmātiya (“the people of blame”), which appeared in Khorasan in the ninth century. The doctrinal foundation of the Malāmātiya has been attributed to Abu Sāleh Qassār (d. 884), a Persian artisan of Nishapur. Faridod-din ‘Attār relates several episodes from Qassār’s life in his hagiography *Tazkerat ol-ouliyā* (The Lives of the Saints).<sup>10</sup> Qassār’s basic credo contained a strong element of self-reproach professing that all outward appearance of piety, including good deeds, is display. Due to their excessive emphasis on inner sincerity, the Malāmatis did not themselves produce any corpus of ideas in written form. Qassār and his disciples sacrificed their worldly reputation and concealed all virtuous acts of supererogatory worship so as to avoid the danger of self-pride and hypocrisy. In their struggle against the desire for social respect and the approval of men, they kept secret their spiritual states and instead made themselves objects of blame (*malāmat*).<sup>11</sup> They

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were adopted by some Qalandars. Cf. Trimmingham, *The Sufi* (as note 6 above), 98.

<sup>10</sup> Faridod-din ‘Attār, *Tazkerat ol-ouliā* [The Lives of the Saints], ed. M. ‘A.-V. Qazvini (Tehran 1370/1991), 349–352.

<sup>11</sup> The main source for the study of their doctrine is the *Resālat ol-malāmātiya* [Treatise on the Malāmatis] by ‘Abdol-Rahmān Solami (d. 1021), himself a native of Nishapur. The Malāmāti movement appears to have represented a sharp reaction to the effusive public demonstrations of religiosity associ-

believed that public blame directed against them would have a great effect in making their devotion sincere. Typical is the story told by Jāmi in the *Nafahāt ol-ons*:

One of them was hailed by a large crowd when he entered Herat. The crowd tried to accompany the great saint, but on the road he publicly started urinating in an unlawful way so that all of them left him and no longer believed in his spiritual rank.<sup>12</sup>

The Qalandars adopted the fundamental orientation of the Malāmāti way and displayed utter inversion of social conventions, public appearances being a matter of indifference. But in contrast to the Malāmāti emphasis on inward sobriety and obedience to the religious law, they intentionally transgressed the norms and values of society. Due to their cynicism in social behavior and antinomian attitude to religious matters, there are important differences between these two manifestations of Persian mysticism in their notion of religious practice: “The distinction between the *malāmāti* and *qalandari* is that the former hides his devotion and the latter externalizes and even exploits it, going out of his way to incur blame”.<sup>13</sup> The Qalandars gradually came to prevail over the Malāmāti tradition, since no prominent individuals are identified as Malāmātis after the tenth century.<sup>14</sup>

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ated with a group called Karrāmiya that flourished in Persia until the Mongol conquests. The Karrāmiya received its name from Mohammad Karrām (d. 869) and was known for its excessive pietism and emphasis on ascetic self-mortification. Cf. S. Svirī, “Hakim Tirmidhi and the Malāmāti Movement in Early Sufism”, in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi* (London 1993), 583–613.

<sup>12</sup> Jāmi, *Nafahāt* (as note 5 above), 264.

<sup>13</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi* (as note 6 above), 267.

<sup>14</sup> Some Malāmāti elements, such as the practice of silent invocation and the avoidance of a distinctive garb, were absorbed into the Naqshbandi Sufi order, which enjoyed great popularity in Transoxania and Khorasan during

The Qalandars stood outside the social hierarchy and were completely detached from the mass of the population. They did not however seek solitude or thrive in seclusion, but were constantly on the move, bringing with them disorder and disruption. Notorious for their coarse behavior and blameworthy attitude, the Qalandars attempted to destroy all customs (i.e. *takhrib-e 'ādāt*) by committing unseemly, even wicked acts, not as an exit out of society but in order to conceal the sincerity of their actions from the public view.<sup>15</sup> By overturning conventions they strove to expose the hypocrisy of the established order and question its values. They not only showed no interest in the ordinance of religious law but also were indifferent to following obligatory religious rules. For the Qalandar, holy foolishness was an ingenious way to fight spiritual pride rather than an attempt at moral instruction. Even a highly spiritual person, one who has truly renounced the vanity, pride and acquisitiveness, could still yield to the temptation of pride in his or her accomplishments. Yielding to this temptation is of course tantamount to canceling out virtue and returning the would-be saint to common hypocrisy and sinfulness.

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this period. The spiritual orientation of the Malāmatis also had an influence on Sufi masters such as Ebn 'Arabi (d. 1240).

- <sup>15</sup> Shehābod-din Sohravardi, master of the Sohravardi order, criticized the Qalandars for their libertinism and antinomian practices. Considering them as an institution exploited by charlatans, he clarifies that those in his time who took the dress of the Qalandars to indulge in debaucheries are not to be confused with true Qalandars. A subtle balance between the mundane and spiritual was essential to the Qalandari way of life, and when the morality of individuals with Qalandari affiliation degenerated, the name itself became associated with immoral acts, such as fornication, homosexual conduct and kissing women and boys. The Sufi master 'Abdol-Qāder Gilāni (d. 1166) uses the name in condemnation in his *Fuyudāt al-rabbāniya* [Emanations of Divine Grace], which deals with principles of Muslim faith. Cf. Trimingham, *The Sufi* (as note 6 above), 268.

The ultimate purpose of the Qalandari path was to reach a spiritual position where no importance is attached to either praise or blame. The human being constantly had to struggle against both desire for divine reward and for approval by man to preserve the perfect tranquility of the heart. Aware of this psychological paradox, the Qalandars invented a special way of behaving to prevent the development of self-pride. By committing blameworthy actions that discredited them in the eyes of the crowd, they were prevented from feeling prideful about their accomplishments. ‘Arāqi’s life contains several episodes that fit the tradition of the Qalandars. According to the anonymous biographer of the *Moqaddema*, his first encounter with them occurred in Hamadan, when he was seventeen. The Qalandars held one of their moving meetings at a neighborhood gathering in the center of town. They recited poetry and performed ritual dances in a spiritual concert, inspiring people with their holy idiocy. With sweet melody they chanted the following verses:

*mā rakht ze masjed be kharābāt keshidim / khatt bar varaq-e zohd o karāmāt keshidim. ...*

We have moved our bedrolls from the mosque to the ruin. / We have scribbled over the pages of asceticism and miracles.

We sat in the ranks of lovers in the Magi’s lane / and drank a cup from the hands of the debauchees of the ruin.

We will spread out in heaven like the flag of fortune, / if the heart beats the drum of decency after this.

We have passed much beyond self-denial and mystical stations, / since we have carried the cup of hardship from all such states!<sup>16</sup>

‘Arāqi was overwhelmed by inner joy from observing the ecstatic Qalandari congregation. As the story goes, “love’s flame caught at the haystack

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<sup>16</sup> Fakhrod-din ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt-e Divān-e Shaikh Fakhrod-din Ebrahim Hamadāni motakhales be ‘Arāqi* [The Complete Works of ‘Arāqi], ed. M. ‘Elmi Darvish (Tehran 1377/1998), 21.

of his reason and consumed it”.<sup>17</sup> He tore off his turban and was received by the Qalandars, who welcomed him as one of themselves, shaving his hair and eyebrows. After this event, he passed his time as a homeless vagrant until he met Bahā’od-din Zakariyā of Multan, the master of the Sohrawardi order, who initiated him on the Sufi path (see fig. 2). Inspired by the Qalandari outlook, ‘Arāqi continued to act upon its ethos during his whole life. The author of the *Moqaddema* relates several instances where he subjected himself to public blame and censure so as to attain the condemnation of people rather than their veneration. When already a venerable master in Tokat, he could, for instance, be found joking and playing with teenagers.<sup>18</sup> He was known for his inclination toward companionship with beautiful young boys. On one occasion, a group of children were leading him around by a string, which he held in his teeth, making him run hither and yon, and otherwise gleefully tormenting him.<sup>19</sup> Reliable information concerning ‘Arāqi’s life reveals that he considered social respect as one of the most dangerous pitfalls on the spiritual path. He habitually preferred socializing with drunkards and outcasts to the company of governors or viziers. He provided for poor people and protected outcasts from the sometimes brutal hand of the rulers.<sup>20</sup>

‘Arāqi’s aspiration to free himself from the world and its passions whilst living in the world is illustrated in a famous episode, which took place in Cairo during his later life. The ruler of the Mamluk Empire, Mansur Saifod-din Kaloun (d. 1289), had him appointed as chief Sufi master (*shaikh ol-shuyukh*) of Egypt, and then ordered all the notables of the land to attend the court in honor of the occasion:

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 21.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 36–37.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 27–32.



Fig. 2. Fakhrod-din 'Arāqi and the Qalandars on the road to Multan.  
From a manuscript of the *Majāles ol- 'Oshshāq* (Congregation of  
Lovers), dated 1552.

Next morning a thousand Sufis were present at the court together with all the notables and religious scholars of Egypt. The sultan commanded that ‘Arāqi should be mounted on a horse and clothed in a robe and a hood of honor. ‘Arāqi was alone mounted that day and all the notables walked on foot at his stirrup. When ‘Arāqi saw all this, the thought suddenly entered his head that no other man of the age had ever been treated with such respect. He realized that he was in danger of being overcome by his own ego. He immediately ripped off his hood and turban and placed them on the ground before him. The crowd watched in stunned silence as he sat there, till, after a few minutes, he picked up the turban and hood and put them back on his head. The crowd began to titter. “How could such a man deserve such rank?, whispered someone. “He is a madman!” “He is foolish!”; and all of them began to ridicule him. “Why did you do such a thing?” demanded the vizier. ‘Arāqi answered: “Hold your tongue. What do you know?” The news of this scandal was at once carried to the sultan. Next day he sent for ‘Arāqi and asked him for an explanation. “My carnal soul overcame me,” he replied. “If I had not acted in this way, I should never have escaped from the consequences of my self-pride.” This incident only increased the sultan’s faith in him.<sup>21</sup>

The Qalandars were madly in love with God, and like most pure lovers, foolish in the eyes of the sophisticated, urbane world. But irrespective of the radical nature of their outrageous behavior, they were not madmen allegedly venerated as holy men or saints masquerading as fools, only appearing to be mad. The Qalandars were mystics outwardly behaving in a careless manner according to the conventional standards of society, but inwardly they pursued a religious ideal, enlivened by the experience of God’s beauty and majesty. As such they cultivated a highly personal spiritual life epitomized in humility and poverty. In contrast to another

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 36.

group of the period called the *‘oqalā al-majānin* (wise fools) who claimed to be rebels against God, the Qalandars did not feign madness; instead they were sincerely inspired and “enraptured” by God.<sup>22</sup> Their joyful ecstasies were due not to speculative absorption but to spontaneous “attraction” made sincere by God. People regarded them compassionately as invested with the role of representatives of God in the wayward world. If harmless, they were excused and freed from religious duties. Islamic law acknowledges the privileged position of the insane, and the madman or woman is not subject to the Quranic punishments.

In the context of ordinary life, the appearance of the Qalandars was a part of the realia of the Middle Ages, when mysticism was pervasive in Persianate societies. The role of the Qalandars for the milieu was the elements of love, humility, and foolishness. Unlike ascetics and hermits, their proper element was a neighborhood gathering, the marketplace and above of all the ruins (*kharābāt*) on the outskirts of town. The ruins were from an early period onwards known as a disreputable location enclosing unlawful institutions, such as taverns, brothels and gambling-houses. In such surroundings they were truly at home, amusing people with their conversation, music and dance.

They sang, shouted, cried and prophesied. Some of them behaved in a more undignified way by abusing passersby.<sup>23</sup> As Helmut Ritter points

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Feuillebois-Pierunek, *A La Croisée* (as note 8 above), 224–227. The *‘oqalā al-majānin* represented a phenomenon in ordinary life as well as a literary figure. The term gradually assumed the meaning “holy fools”, but the wise fools did not invariably have the connotation of mystics. Cf. M. W. Dols, *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford 1992), 376.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Attār relates a story about an Arab merchant who visited a ruin in Persia. He was accompanied into a tavern by a group of Qalandars who made him drunk and then made him lose all his possessions on gambling. The Qalandars ridiculed him and then threw him out of the tavern. When the Arab returned to his native soil he did not recall anything about the incident except the pleasant voices of the Qalandars chanting: “Come in! Come in!”

out, the Qalandars had a particular impact on the lowest strata of society, on outcasts such as beggars, drunkards and prostitutes.<sup>24</sup> In the village community it was believed that they possessed mysterious powers and were in some way in contact with the supernatural. Their vagrancy and dislike for settled life was a sign of their closeness to God. What at first sight appeared to be mental illness was interpreted as sign of profound wisdom: these two contradictory characteristics were assumed to coexist in the Qalandar and became a hallmark of his sanctity.<sup>25</sup> By claiming a dehierarchized world and challenging the boundaries of ordinary social conduct, their behavior evoked veneration as well as fear.

The Qalandars did not initially form a strictly organized movement or party but rather represented a religious orientation embodied in a broad spectrum of eclectic beliefs and practices. Their activities were confined to the larger Persianate world and to individuals, unattached to any recognized Sufi master or initiatic line. The historian Ahmad Maqri-zi (d. 1442) records that about 1213 Persian Qalandars first made their appearance as a large movement, equivalent to other Sufi orders, in Damascus.<sup>26</sup> The new transformation was introduced by Jamālod-din Sāvi who can be considered as the most prominent reviver of the Qalandari way. Sāvi systematized the general principles of the order, now called the *qalandariya*, and adopted a few innovative practices, such as the initiati-

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At this moment, he had experienced true love and, in the words of ‘Attār, he had become divinely “annihilated”, both in the literal and figurative sense. Faridod-din ‘Attār, *Manteq ot-tair* [The Speech of the Birds], ed. Z. Forughi (Tehran 1347/1968), 179–180.

<sup>24</sup> H. Ritter, “Muslim Mystics Strife with God”, *Oriens* 5 (1952), 1–15.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. ‘A.-H. Zarrinkub, “Ahl-e malāmat va rāh-e qalandar” [The Malāmati People and the Qalandar’s Way], in ‘A.-H. Zarrinkub (ed.), *Be yād-e ostād Bad‘i’oz-Zamān Foruzānfar* [Festschrift Bad‘i’oz-Zamān Foruzānfar] (Tehran 1354/1975), 61–100.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Trimingham, *The Sufi* (as note 6 above), 267.



Fig. 3. Sufis dancing in a spiritual concert (*samā'*). From a manuscript of the *Majāles ol-'Oshshāq* (Congregation of Lovers), dated 1552.

on formula.<sup>27</sup> Under his direction the order spread westward and penetrated into Anatolia. Shamsod-din Aflāki mentions the existence of a Qalandari hospice (so-called *langar*, “anchor”) in Konya during the time of Jalālod-din Rumi (d. 1273).<sup>28</sup> He gives account of the friendly relations between Rumi and the Qalandari master Joulaqi Niksāri, and also relates about Qalandars participating in Rumi’s spiritual concerts (*samā’*) (see fig. 3).<sup>29</sup> While the Qalandars were condemned for their strong antinomian trend by Muslim theologians and Sufis, such as Shehābod-din Sohravardi and ‘Abdol-Qāder Gilāni, the fact that they were tolerated indicates a high level of acceptance in the most influential circles of medieval Persianate society.

### Qalandari Themes in ‘Arāqi’s Poetry

The impact of the Qalandari way of life on medieval Persian poetry can hardly be overestimated; it is traversed through and through by its paradoxes. The Qalandars contributed to it a model of behavior and, more importantly, a set of assumptions about man, the world and God. As de Bruijn has demonstrated convincingly in the case of Sanā’i, far from all Persian poets adopted the Qalandari lifestyle even if their poetry to some extent was absorbed in its ethos.<sup>30</sup> As far as literary genre is concerned, the *qalandariyāt* became the designation of a category of poems characterized by the use of provocative motifs connected with antinomian (*ebāhi*) mysticism. The poets invented a cluster of motifs that celebrates intoxication and debauchery, and idolizes spiritual and physical vagrancy above common wisdom. The name *qalandariyāt* was not selected by

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Khatib-e Fārsi, *Sirat* (as note 7 above), 41–42. Sāvi established continuous voyaging as obligatory and introduced the custom to wear a type of sackcloth (*joulaq*).

<sup>28</sup> Aflāki, *Manāqeb* (as note 8 above), 596.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

<sup>30</sup> de Bruijn, “The Qalandariyāt” (as note 1 above).

the poets themselves in order to distinguish it as a distinct section, but it was coined by contemporary philologists to be used as designation for a literary genre. The poets classified their poems exclusively according to prosodic forms.

In Persian literature, the Qalandar is depicted as a prototype of characters, as a model of the perfect man. His holiness and sanctity is always made clear from the context and the deliberate transparency of his behavior notwithstanding the fact that the imagery of Persian poetry contains a great amount of ambiguity. The first poet who used the Qalandar as a central motif in a cluster of related themes was Abo'l-Majd Majdud Sanā'i (d. 1131) of Ghazna. On the evidence from Sanā'i's biography, de Bruijn claims that his *qalandariyāt* should be considered as an essential element of homiletic discourse, closely associated with the poet's function as a private preacher. De Bruijn further asserts that the various notions of piety envisaged in the genre demonstrate that *qalandariyāt* encompass a much wider range of religious concepts than can be included under the name "Sufism".<sup>31</sup> After Sanā'i, the major themes related to the genre became part of the general stock of imagery for Persian poets, and the word *qalandar* was always used with a positive connotation. Jalālod-din Rumi sets, for instance, up the Qalandars as the very embodiment of virtue and piety. He portrays their mystical station as beyond annihilation (*fanā*) in God, which some mystics consider as the highest station on the spiritual path. The Qalandar is not even the category of created beings as a lover, but he is a mirror of the transcendental beloved. In one famous poem, Rumi sings:

*simorgh o kimiyā o maqām-e qalandari / vasf-e qalandar-ast o qalandar  
az-u bari. ...*

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<sup>31</sup> J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry. The Interaction of Religion and Literature in Life and Works of Hakim Sanā'i of Ghazna* (Leiden 1983), 247.

The Phoenix, alchemy and Qalandari station / are descriptions of the Qalandar, but he is indifferent to these words.

They say I am a Qalandar and this does not seem likely. / Since the Qalandar is uncreated.

His path is above godliness. / He is neither a servant nor a prophet!<sup>32</sup>

‘Arāqi’s poetry reflects a broad spiritual vision and a highly stimulated emotionality. He is particularly famous for his ability to express the most profound mystical teachings in an elegant but emotive style. His language is distinguished by its rhythmic musicality and vivacity, being devoid of vulgarism and intricate learned allusions. ‘Arāqi’s *Divān* consists predominantly of conventional mystical love poems, which reveals the essential affinities of his work with that of Sanā’i, ‘Attār and Rumi. A fairly small quantity of ‘Arāqi’s verses display the characteristics of *qalandariyāt* very clearly.<sup>33</sup> Their subject matter is always distinguished by a relatively uniform set of symbols even if the prosodic form is often closely associated with the imagery of love and intoxication. The fact that the *qalandariyāt* poems are as a rule easy to identify indicates that the genre had acquired a rather fixed set of symbols in the middle of the thirteenth century.

‘Arāqi is probably the most outspoken poet of the antinomian *ghazal* (lyrical poem of generally 7–9 lines). His *qalandariyāt* poetry is marked by a unique blend of antinomian thematic features and a rich symbolic imagery. The dominant motif is the *kharābāt*, an infamous district on the

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<sup>32</sup> Jalālod-din Rumi, *Kolliyāt-e Shams-e Tabrizi* [Collected Lyrics of Rumi], ed. B.-Z. Foruzānfar (Tehran 1371/1992), poem 3006.

<sup>33</sup> The *Divān* consists of about 5,800 lines of which approximately 250 contain explicit elements of the *qalandariyāt* genre. The majority of ‘Arāqi’s *qalandariyāt* poems are *kharābāt* poems, i.e. poems in which the term *kharābāt* plays a major part as far as subject is concerned.

outskirts of town frequented by beggars, rascals, prostitutes and debauchees. The ruins house the wine taverns and the gambling houses, and it was here, outside the city walls beyond the civilized world, that the illicit wine commerce came to pass in medieval Persia. In ‘Arāqi’s poetry, wine drinking and gambling are mentioned among the entertainments offered in the *kharābāt*. From an early period onwards, the *kharābāt* was also used as synonymous to a brothel.<sup>34</sup> In mystical literature, the *kharābāt* acquired a symbolic meaning above the literal meaning, referring to an environment where the true mystic is at home: the location of man’s annihilation in God. In a short treatise on mystical vocabulary, called the *Estelāhāt* (Terminology), ‘Arāqi defines the mystical meaning of *kharābāt* as symbolizing the lover’s total surrender to the beloved. The debauchees of the *kharābāt* are described as supreme lovers who have cut off the dominance and inspection of discursive reason from mystical understanding.<sup>35</sup> He also provides a clarification of the mystical meaning of other terms such as wine, tavern and intoxication, which are connected to the ruins. By preserving the concreteness of the ordinary context, the *kharābāt* is both a symbol of sensuous affection and mystical love, of worldly disrepute and spiritual realization:

*dar ku-ye kharābāt kas-i rā ke niāz-ast / hoshiāri o masti-ash hame ‘eyn-e namāz-ast. ...*

In the lane of the ruins, what do you have need of?  
 Drunkenness and sobriety alike are all the same prayer.  
 There, no one accepts the coin of righteousness and self-denial.  
 The good currency of that street is what you need.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. de Bruijn, *Of Piety* (as note 31 above), 5; and ‘A.-H. Zarrinkub, “Kharābāt” [The Ruins], *Yaghmā* 7:5 (1955), 225–229.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 426. ‘Arāqi refers to the ruins in one quatrain as the *kharābāt-e fanā* (the ruins of divine annihilation), a term which Najmod-din Dāya Rāzi (d. 1221) was the first to speak of in its mystical sense. Cf. ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 377.

None but the drunkard knows the secrets of the ruins.  
 How could the sober unveil the mysteries of that district?  
 Once I witnessed the drunkenness of the debauchees of the ruins,  
 I realized that other work than theirs is purely allegory.  
 Do you seek entrance to the shrine of love?  
 Come, sit in the tavern, for the trip to Kaaba is long.  
 Beware, do not traverse the path toward defeat,  
 since there are many ups and downs on the path of love.  
 A heartbreaking cry suddenly arose from the taverns.  
 I know not what is reasonable in the whispering of love.  
 What is the mystery behind the locks of the beautiful ones?  
 Since the Sultan is in constant raptures of beholding his servant's  
     locks.  
 The light from the faces of the beauties, which sparkled your good-  
     ness,  
 has set the souls of all fervent lovers in flames.  
 They refused me entrance at first at the tavern.  
 So I went to the monastery and found an unlocked door.  
 But then I heard a voice from within the tavern crying, “‘Arāqi!  
 Open the door for yourself, for the tavern's gate is open!”<sup>36</sup>

Some of ‘Arāqi's *qalandariyāt* poems are marked by the presence of a narrative or sometimes no more than an anecdotal trait, which is typical for the *ghazal*. In these poems the first line sets the mood of the poem, which is roughly followed through in all the lines. The anecdote usually centers on the poet's visit to the *kharābāt* the previous night, which according to ‘Arāqi, symbolizes the alchemical aspect of God's grandeur (*kebriyā*).<sup>37</sup> The poet is afflicted by love and leaves the civilized world to

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 100–101.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

experience the everyday life of the ruins in the company of the debauchees.<sup>38</sup> In the following poem, the poet describes how he was received in the ruins:

*kardam gozar-i be meykade dush. / sobha be-kaf o sajjāde bar dush. ...*

Yesterday I made a visit to the tavern  
with a prayer bead in my hand and a rug on my shoulders.  
The elder welcomed me at the gate of the ruin saying:  
“No one here will buy deception, so don’t persuade anyone to buy!  
Give me your rosary and receive the wine cup.  
Give me your mantle and put on the blanket.  
Why were you in the cloister for vain?  
Come, sit in the tavern and drink some wine!  
If you call to mind the beauty of the cupbearer,  
you will forget both your soul, heart and religion.  
If you witness the image of his face in the wine,  
you will be ruined and lifeless without wine ...”<sup>39</sup>

As de Bruijn correctly points out in the case of Sanā’i, the sensuality and coarseness of the *qalandariyāt* genre is not in contradiction to its mystical and symbolic intention. While de Bruijn avoids clarifying the mystical meaning of Sanā’i’s poetry in relation to the genre, he does have a preference for a figurative interpretation of his antinomian verses. Focusing on the homiletic character of the poet’s discourse, de Bruijn suggests that the ambiguous, even shocking, nature of the poet’s antinomian imagery principally “served to enhance their effect on the public to whom these poetical sermons were addressed”.<sup>40</sup> The evidence of ‘Arāqi’s biography illustrates that his *qalandariyāt* poetry did not originate in the context of delivering public sermons, but rather in the context of his encounters in

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 141, 149.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 162–163.

<sup>40</sup> de Bruijn, “The Qalandariyāt” (as note 1 above), 85.

daily life. Some early poems, which date back to his formative years, are direct reflections of antinomian practice, but the largest part was intended as mystical songs recited during ritual dance sessions performed in the Sufi establishments of Multan and Tokat. In contrast to mainstream literary life, which mainly centered around the courts, the *qalandariyāt* poetry seems in fact to have had its origin in the popular song tradition. In the *kharābāt* milieu, the songs were chanted publicly and were subsequently integrated into mystical literature by way of the Qalandari poets. In the end, the *qalandariyāt* were almost completely absorbed by Sufi poetry and its mystical ethos.

Even if ‘Arāqi was attracted to the taverns with their wine, conversation and music, and ridiculed the Sufi institutions with their submission to an exacting master, he was not a mystic simply as a matter of course. Being a disciple and eventually a distinguished master on the Sufi path with strong Sohrawardi associations, his poetry is a highly idiosyncratic expression of Sufi doctrines and ideas. While his antinomian verses about wine, wrongdoing and pleasure reflect a deep-rooted Qalandari affinity, these statements were never aimed as proclamations of plain libertinism.<sup>41</sup> ‘Arāqi does not adopt the *qalandariyāt* in a strictly symbolic sense, but preserves a subtle harmony between the possibilities of transcendental and profane allusions. The tendency to regard the religious and the profane as essentially different and separable was for him almost non-existent, since the allegorical ultimately is considered as a ladder to the divine. While his religious discourse in the *Lama‘āt* remained within the framework of the revealed law, his biography indicates that some of his antinomian poems are expressions of real experiences.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This is evident from ‘Arāqi’s own treatise on Sufi vocabulary, called *Estelāhāt*, in which he gives an explanation of the mystical meaning of some characteristic antinomian motifs.

<sup>42</sup> In his *Lama‘āt* ‘Arāqi explores the various dimensions of the exoteric law. Rejecting the possibility to actualize mysticism outside the boundaries of

‘Arāqi’s *qalandariyāt* are, as far as the form is concerned, intrinsically connected to wine imagery. The poet celebrates intoxication and adopts wine, which in the Quran (76:21) is described as the pure drink of paradise, as a symbol for spiritual drunkenness. As ‘Arāqi explains in the *Estelāhāt*, wine represents the last station of the mystical path, and as a symbol of love’s supremacy over intellect, it is the state of spiritually perfected people. Since the inner wisdom of wine drinking is superior to the devout prayers of ascetic piety, the fools in the tavern are superior in wisdom to the intellectual scholars.<sup>43</sup> In the tavern, which sometimes seems to refer to a real tavern and sometimes is used as a symbol for the mystical congregation, there is true conversation in contrast to the self-centered speech of respectful Sufis.<sup>44</sup> In ‘Arāqi’s poetry, the liberal, but socially corrupted, debauchee (*rend*) is closely associated with wine imagery. He is a notorious drinker who is stuck on wine and represents the paragon of virtue. Like the Qalandar, he has broken all past repentance and habitually brings the crowd’s blame upon himself.<sup>45</sup> ‘Arāqi uses the word *malāmat* in the ordinary sense of “blame”. In one poem, he tells the blamer not to blame him, since he is unaware of conventional customs and manners.<sup>46</sup>

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the revealed law, he instructs the mystic to keep away from all morally illicit behavior. ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 411.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 429, 98.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 91. In the *Estelāhāt*, ‘Arāqi defines the tavern as a “location of worship” and wine intoxication as “absorption of God’s most beautiful names”. Cf. *ibid.*, 434.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 109, 295. From various expressions such as *rend-e qallāsh* (rascal debauchee), *qalandar-e qallāsh* (rascal Qalandar) and *rend-e qalandarkish* (debauchee of Qalandari faith), it is evident that the terms *rend*, *qalandar* and *qallāsh* are used as parallel terms and more or less refer to the same figure. Cf. *ibid.*, 109, 132, 153, 160, 186, 283.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 98.

The *qalandariyāt* are also mingled with references to an imaginary mixture of Zoroastrian themes (so-called *kofriyāt*), a usage that is attested already in the poetry of Abu Mansur Daqiqi (d. ca. 970/80). In ‘Arāqi’s poems, the Magi elder (*pir-e moghān*) is portrayed as the proprietor of the Magian domain, the center of the wine commerce. He is referred to as the chief of the wine-sellers and the debauchees (*kharābā-tiyān*) and also refers to sun worship as an element of the Magian cult.<sup>47</sup> By identifying the Magi with the tavern and wine drinking, ‘Arāqi turns the Magian cult into an alternative mode of piety. It is very likely that he and other Persian poets in adopting this set of symbols to express their spiritual intoxication were informed that intoxication was a part of the ancient Zoroastrian religious ritual. The word *mogh* derives from the Middle Persian *magū/mōg*, which was the designation for Zoroastrian priests in Sasanian Persia. The Magis were primarily reputed for religious learning and legal responsibilities. As director of fire temples, they were in charge of divine ceremonies, founded fires and sealed contracts for fires and testaments.<sup>48</sup> Imagining the Magian cult as an alternative mode of piety centered around the unrestrained atmosphere prevailing at the tavern, ‘Arāqi defies the respectable piety of common believers. He ridicules at the pietism of the mosque and the Sufi cloister and condemns the ascetic (*zāhed*) for his dutiful habits and sinful hypocrisy. In his view, renouncing the world is equivalent to unbelief, and honest drinkers are superior to dishonest abstainers.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 98, 141, 151, 235, 282.

<sup>48</sup> For the Zoroastrian background of wine imagery in Persian poetry, cf. E. Yarshater, “The Theme of Wine-drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry”, *Studia Islamica* 13 (1960), 43–53.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 91, 92, 98, 132, 160, 171, 186, 208, 270. In the *qalandariyāt* genre, terms derived from religious vocabulary, such as *namāz* (obligatory ritual prayer) and *tasbih* (rosary), have a negative meaning.

According to ‘Arāqi, the ascetic as well as the common man is unfamiliar with the mysteries of intoxication and intimate conversation. The tavern is thus only open to a few initiates, those with warm, luminous hearts, who have freed themselves from all repute (*nām o nang*).<sup>50</sup> To free oneself from all reputation is evidently the main attribute of the Qalandar, who is commonly described as a disreputable reveler who prefers intoxication to sobriety.<sup>51</sup> In its mystical meaning, the word *qalandar* symbolizes the lover who is detached from the crowd and strives for God’s beauty and majesty. His outer appearance is worthy of blame but his inner state is happy, and he is content with the tranquility of the heart. A frequent expression in ‘Arāqi’s poetry is the word *qalandarvār* (“like a *qalandar*”), which refers to a certain conduct or bodily posture related to wine drinking and dancing.<sup>52</sup> In the following poems, which provide an impression of some symbols belonging to the *qalandariyāt* genre, the poet exhorts the spiritual initiate to break his past repentances and to follow the way of the Qalandar:

*pesar-ā rah-e qalandar sezaḍ ar be-man nemāyi / ke derāz o ḍur didam  
rah-e zohd o pārsāyi. ...*

O disciple! Enter the Qalandar’s way if you are my friend.  
Since the way of asceticism and austerity is long and tedious.  
O disciple! Take the Magian’s wine if you are my friend  
and purify us from all sternness and austerity.  
Bring the cup of Magian’s wine for me to drink.  
I have liberated myself from all deceitful repentance.  
If there is no pure wine then bring me the dusk of sorrow,

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 102, 141, 187.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 152. It is documented that Qalandars consumed wine and the use of hashish was evidently widespread among them. Cf. Feuillebois-Pierunek, *A La Croisée* (as note 8 above), 238; and Zarrinkub, “Ahl-e malāmat” (as note 25 above), 82.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 46, 93, 130.

since the eye of the heart finds light in dark pain.  
 Pour the wine for me, since I have abandoned all routine.  
 In asceticism, I found nothing virtuous, only pose and self-delusion.  
 For a moment, the wine made me forget time's sorrow.  
 The wine alone makes us do away with time's sorrow.  
 When I am drunk from the cup; what is the difference of Church and  
     Kaaba?  
 When I have abandoned myself; what is the difference between union  
     and separation?  
 Do not break your oath, since I have broken my repentance again.  
 Speak to my broken heart. Say: "How are you?" and "Where are you?"  
 I knocked at the door of the ruins. A voice invited me from within  
     saying:  
 "O 'Arāqi! Cross the threshold, since you are our friend."<sup>53</sup>

*dar souma 'a nagonjad rend-e sharābkhāna. / sāqi bedē mogh-i rā dard-e mey moghāna. ...*

The debauchee of the tavern does not go well with the cloister.  
 O cupbearer, give him the pain of the Magian wine!  
 Enter the Qalandar's path in the company of drinkers!  
 Show the gambler the way to the gambling house!  
 May you subdue every idol you worshiped like penitence.  
 May you surrender your soul like a drop in gratitude.  
 Flee your home, like Phoenix, into the wilderness.  
 Fly from yourself and transcend your own abode.  
 Rise above existence and abandon all self-worship.  
 Do away with the good and bad of time in drunkenness.<sup>54</sup>

'Arāqi's poetry is also characterized by frequent allusions to the practice of contemplating divine beauty in the faces of handsome boys (so-called

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 239–240.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 212.

*shāhed-bāzi*). In Persian poetry, the term *shāhed* (“witness”) is used for the beautiful beloved as a “witness” of divine beauty. On account of the Prophetic tradition “I saw the Lord in the most beautiful form”, the beautiful youth early on became an ideal of human beauty in Muslim literature. The first Persian poet who rendered a mystical meaning to the *shāhed* symbolism was Ahmad Ghazālī (d. 1122), who deeply influenced ‘Arāqi’s understanding of the human and divine dimensions of love. ‘Arāqi had an inclination toward the companionship of beautiful boys and was notorious for the practice of gazing upon the divine presence in the faces of youths. In the words of Edward Browne, he is “a typical Qalandar, heedless of his reputation, and seeing in every beautiful face or object a reflection, as in a mirror, of the Eternal Beauty.”<sup>55</sup>

The practice of *shāhed-bāzi* was condemned on moral grounds by a number of Muslim writers, such as Ebn ‘Arabi and Shehābod-din Sohravardi. While some argued that gazing at handsome boys is identical to pederasty, ‘Arāqi considers the subject from a metaphysical perspective. He contemplates the entire creation as one great mirror, or a large number of mirrors, reflecting God’s beauty and beneficence. In the *Estelāhāt*, ‘Arāqi defines the term *shāhed* as synonymous to manifestation of divine beauty and asserts that the mystic participates in the very act of divine love through the process of visionary experience.<sup>56</sup> Once the mystic is completely absorbed in love, he or she is capable of contemplating beauty in the human beloved as a divine manifestation. In ‘Arāqi’s poetry, the beautiful youth is a symbol of primordial beauty and perfection. The youth reveals the inner, hidden meaning of the veil of forms (*parde-ye surat*) to the mystic. The poet glorifies his beautiful looks, his pure eyes and sweet lips, which incite the loving soul to mystical nostalgia and

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<sup>55</sup> E. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia. Volume II: The Tartar Dominion (1265–1502)* (Cambridge 1920), 132.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Arāqi, *Kolliyāt* (as note 16 above), 430.

rapture.<sup>57</sup> In the following poem, ‘Arāqi celebrates the beautiful youth as a “witness” of eternal beauty:

*ey rend-e qalandar-kish mey nush o-ze kas ma-andish. ...*

O debauchee of the Qalandari faith! Drink the wine and forget one and all!

Imagine that you have all you do not, because the poor heart is in rapture.

How could the heart cure its own afflictions in ecstasy?

Enter the ruins and sit down in front of the sweet, beautiful youth.

For how long will you think of unbelief and belief? Look at his sweet lips!

Witness the truth of Islam and the Christian faith in his face and his locks.

I said: “I have searched and rescued myself from the snares of misfortune.

I have tied my heart in the beautiful youth, drunk of his remembrance.

Whilst suffering the loss of my heart, how could I care for repentance?”<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusions

In this study, we have examined the Qalandari phenomenon, its spiritual doctrine and practice, in the context of medieval Persia with specific reference to ‘Arāqi’s lyrical poetry. As a social phenomenon, the origin of the Qalandar is not fully undetermined, but the concept made its appearance in Persian literature in the early eleventh century as a paragon of

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 81, 213, 294. As ‘Arāqi explains in the *Estelāhāt*, the face and locks of the beloved symbolize the revealed beauty and hidden identity of God’s manifestation in the world. Cf. *ibid.*, 427.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

spiritual virtue. In contrast to mainstream Sufi mysticism, the Qalandars never established a closely reasoned doctrinal scheme, but their teaching was centered around a common esoteric orientation emphasizing inner contentment, tranquility of the heart and prevention of self-conceit. Notorious for their coarse behavior, the Qalandars attempted to destroy all customs by committing wicked acts, not as an exit out of society, but in order to conceal the sincerity of their actions from the public view. By overturning conventions they strove to expose the hypocrisy of the established order and question its values. For the Qalandar, holy foolishness was not primarily an attempt at moral instruction but an ingenious way to fight spiritual pride.

On the evidence of his biography and religious teachings, there can be no doubt about the importance of the Qalandari doctrine for 'Arāqi himself. Reliable information concerning his life reveals that he considered social respect as one of the most dangerous pitfalls on the spiritual path. The quintessence of his notion of piety is man's absolute nothingness before God and ultimate annihilation (*fanā*) in the divine attributes. 'Arāqi's criticism of conventional piety and excuse of scandalous behavior constitute the central tenet of antinomian Qalandari mysticism: outwardly he behaved in a foolish manner according to the conventional standards of society, but inwardly he pursued a religious ideal, inspired by experience of God's beauty and majesty. In fact, he is probably the most outspoken poet of the *qalandariyāt* genre and his poetry is traversed through and through by its paradoxes. Marked by a unique blend of antinomian thematic features and a rich symbolic imagery, his poems preserve a subtle harmony between the possibilities of transcendental and profane allusions. In this respect, he became a perfect model for Persian literature, influencing Hāfez and Sa'di, undisputed masters of the *ghazal*, and inspiring many other writers of the following centuries.