Yogic-Ṣūfī Homologies: The Case of the "Six Principles" Yoga of Nāropa and the Kubrawiyya

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> "Don't look for an outer place of solitude;
> The body itself is a divine mansion (*maṇḍala*).
> Don't look elsewhere for the deity;
> The mind itself, unborn and unperishing,
> Is the family Buddha and guru."
>
> Siddharājñī

> "However much the angels examined the form of Adam, they were unable to discover the compendium of mysteries that he in truth was."
>
> Najm al-Dīn Dāya al-Rāzī

Yoga, in Eliade's definition, is "the effectual techniques for gaining liberation,"[1] i.e., liberation from illusion (Sansk., *māyā*, Tib., *sgyu mal*) and the great vortices of contingent existence (Sansk., *saṃsāra*, Tib., *'khor-ba*). It is not immediately clear how such a model might relate to Islam, a religious system articulated in terms of the radical answerability of the creature to the Creator within a framework of sacred law (Arabic, *al-sharī'a*). Yet insights might be gained from an heuristic suspension of the dichotomy of an Islamic paradigm of servanthood and an Indic one of liberation. Concepts of transcendental law arguably inform the Indic "liberation" traditions (whether Buddhist or Hindu), as expressed, for instance, in ideas like *dharma* and the inexorable mechanisms of *karma*; equally, a concept of liberation informs the Islamic legal paradigm, as expressed, for instance, in the deep concern of Islamic ethics with personal and societal salvation (Arabic, *najāt*) — an individual and collective transfer to Paradise. In addition to framing yoga as a project of emancipation, Eliade defines it above in terms of methods or "effectual techniques," and a yogic reading of Islam in such terms seems similarly fertile. Islam's nomocratic model is not unrelated to *karma-yoga*, the yogic methodology based on righteous activity. Moreover, the Islamic *nomos* — the revealed codes of the *Sharī'a* — itself emerges from the (so to speak) "yogic" praxis of the Prophet, such as his methods of prayer, fasting, vigil, seclusion, and his entry into visionary states. The law assumes these elements to the extent that they formed the

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original matrix and instrumentality of its revelation. This leads to a historical duality, enshrined in the distinction of exoteric clergy (*ʿulamāʾ al-ẓāhir*) and esoteric clergy (*ʿulamāʾ al-bāṭin*) — repositories of the two aspects of the Prophetic legacy. The *nomos* aspect was safeguarded and explored by the Muslim legists or exoteric clergy, while the "yogic" aspect was primarily safeguarded and explored by the Ṣūfīs or esoteric clergy.

Within the vastly complex Ṣūfī traditions in question, it is probably in the order (*ṭarīqa*) known as the Kubrawiyya that Ṣūfism's yogic trend emerges most clearly. Though this was undoubtedly stimulated by certain historical factors, it is here argued that direct appropriation, importation, and textual transmission of teachings from non-Islamic sources had a merely marginal role in the Kubrawī phenomenon — against the diagnostic reflex of earlier European language scholarship in its project of exposing "origins," and source-investigation. Of course, textual materials from the Buddhist and Hindu world did presently make their way into Arabic and Persian.[2] But this explanation seems as crude as it is tidy. Less clear-cut, but surely more decisive, was the cumulative impact of an internal, "organic" development of Islamic mysticism, through which there had been a gradual elaboration of relevant elements (e.g., ascetic and meditational techniques, analysis of visionary apperceptions, and thaumaturgy, in contrast with, say, purely ethical aspects). That the proximity of Indic yogic traditions, but also Turkish shamanistic and Iranian Mazdean cultures, predisposed eastern Ṣūfism to elaborate such features, while likely, should not be simply viewed as a process of "borrowing." Rather, the challenge of these competing models perhaps provoked local Ṣūfī teachers to stress and explore these possibilities intrinsic to the Islamic tradition itself, possibilities rooted in the Qurʾān, early Muslim tradition, dimensions of the Prophet's own spirituality, and in their own tested experience as Muslim mystics.

The stimulus to develop comparable *internal* virtualities intensifies after the triumph of the Mongols and in particular their Iranian branch, the Īl-Khāns. The Kubrawiyya's formative milieu is the Īl-Khānid empire, in which, for the best part of the 13th–14th century CE (AH 7th–8th century), the Iranian regions witnessed an unprecedented intrusion of Buddhist scholars and practitioners (Persian, *bakhshī*, pl. *bakhshiyān*, from Sanskrit *bhikṣu*, "mendicant") from centers to the east. There are, for example, records of inter-religious debates (Arabic, *munāẓarāt*) held at the court of the Īl-Khān emperor, Arghūn (regnat AH 683-90/1284–1291 CE), who was strongly committed to Buddhism (designated *Shakmūniyya* in contemporary Arabic and Persian sources, i.e., the doctrine of Śākyamuni).[3] These *bakhshiyān* represented traditions we would now consider a Tibeto-Mongol form of Buddhism, but which in the period in question had not yet become extinct in its original Indian habitat. Though the major north Indian Buddhist universities of Nalanda and Vikramaśīla had been destroyed by Muḥammad b. Bakhtiyār al-Khaljī as early as 1203 CE, some *bakhshiyān* close to the Īl-Khāns are known to have had connections with Indian centers of learning, such as a certain Bakhshī Parinda who had particular influence on Arghūn himself.[4] This Parinda is on record as part of a monastic community in Somnāth on the Kāthiāwār coast of Gujerat.[5]

While Parinda was apparently respected by and even friendly with the great Kubrawī sheikh ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336), the Kubrawiyya were far from universalistic (*a fortiori*, syncretistic) Ṣūfī currents and were instead staunch promoters of Islam's claims to exclusive validity. This is borne out by the case of numerous Kubrawī masters: from the death in Khwārazm of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, the order's very eponym and founder, fighting the pagan Mongol forces in 618/1221, to pronouncements by his disciple Najm al-Dīn Dāya al-Rāzī (d. 654/1256) in his *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, to denunciations of rival faiths by the aforementioned ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī in texts like his *Chihil Majlis*, to the three missionary journeys of ʿAlī al-Hamadānī (d. 786/1384) to Kashmir, where he is credited with decisively establishing Islam against Hindu and Buddhist competition. These and many other examples emphasise for us that the extraordinary yogic affinities of the Kubrawiyya have little to do with intellectual porosity or any obvious "open-mindedness" within this *ṭarīqa* to the Indic yogic traditions confronting it. But the striking comparability of Kubrawī mysticism with the rich tradition of Tibetan yoga is not pure coincidence. As suggested, it was probably partly stimulated by Buddhist competition in the Īl-Khānid context, yielding forms of spirituality which, while deeply, indeed self-consciously, Islamic in their roots, were also unusually comparable with Buddhist yoga.

The tradition of Buddhist yoga which seems especially relevant to this comparison is articulated in terms of six sub-topics, six *dharmas* or principles (Tib., *chos drug*) — probably emerging from earlier Indian paradigms of "six-limbed yoga" (Sansk., *Ṣaḍanga-yoga*). The "six principles" yoga is in fact traditionally viewed as a legacy of the Indian *Mahāsiddhas* ("great adepts," Tibetan, *grub chen*). It is in particular believed to have been derived from the Indian adept Tilopa (988–1069 CE), who had been the disciple of a female bodhisattva, the Bengali courtesan Barima. Tilopa next transmitted it to another Bengali with whose name the system is chiefly associated, Nāropa (1016–1100 CE), who passed it to the great Tibetan scholar of Sanskrit, Marpa Lotsawa ("the translator," 1012–1097 CE). The latter would in due course become the teacher of the famous Tibetan sage Milarepa. A body of Tibetan works on "Nāropa's six yogas" would grow over time, for example, "The Three Inspirations" by Tsongkhapa Chenpo (i.e., "the Great," 1357–1419 CE).[6] Using the Tibetan nomenclature, the six yogas are generally listed as: (1) *gtum mo* (literally "fierce lady"), the Tibetan equivalent of awakening the *kuṇḍalinī*, albeit with significant variations; (2) *sgyu lus* (illusory body yoga); (3) *rmi lam* (dream yoga); (4) *ʿod gsal* (clear light yoga); (5) *ʿpho ba* (consciousness transference); and (6) *bar do* (yoga of the "in between" state, i.e., death).

A strong affinity emerges in the very conceptual foundations of both this "six principles" yoga and Kubrawī Ṣūfism. The philosophical foundations of the former in part lie in the Yogācāra school, which with the Madhyamaka school constitutes one of the two great movements in Mahāyāna thought. For argument's sake, let us propose the basic utility of viewing the "six principles" yoga system as, in certain specific ways, an *empirical* exploration of earlier Yogācāra philosophy.[7] A good example of this is the

famous Yogācāra doctrine of the "three bodies" (*Trikāyavāda*). In historical context this emerged as a typology of buddhas, a "Buddhology," co-ordinating historical buddhas (i.e., the *nirmāṇa-kāya*, or "conjured body") and their unearthly equivalents (i.e., the *saṃbhoga-kāya*, or "bliss body"), as different epiphanies of ultimate reality (i.e., the *dharma-kāya*, or "law body"), within a single whole. The centrality of the idea of the "body" (*kāya*) in this Buddhology is highly in tune with broader yogic forms of thought. The idea must nonetheless be stripped of its conventional somatic connotations of contingency and limitation, and *kāya* is significantly sometimes glossed in Yogācāra texts simply as "basis" or "support" (*āśraya*). In an expressive metaphor, the three bodies have also been presented as aspects of a limitless ocean and its entire, recursive system: "The *Dharma-Kāya* is symbolized — for all human word-concepts are inadequate to describe the Qualityless — as an infinite ocean, calm and without wave, whence arise mist-clouds and rainbow, which symbolize the *saṃbhoga-kāya*; and the clouds, enhaloed in the glory of the rainbow, condensing and falling as rain, symbolize the *Nirmāṇa-kāya*."[8]

Next, when we shift to the Tantric context of the "six yogas," this Yogācāra theory is typically transposed into the sphere of operative spirituality and the potential *experience* of the would-be adept. It becomes, in other words, a datum of Tantric empiricism. This is borne out by the Tibetan nomenclature, which speaks of "taking the three *kāyas* as the path" (*sku gsum lam ʿkhyer*). What is specifically involved is the technique of the "nine blendings" or mergings, central to the "six yogas." In this method the yogin (Tibetan, *rnal ʿbyor pa*) achieves successive mergence (Tib., *sbyor*) with, i.e., realization of, the three bodies in his or her three primary states of waking, dream-sleep, and death ($3 \times 3 = 9$).[9]

The distinctively substantial and "somatic" character of this Yogācārin and Tantric discourse has a definite affinity with Kubrawī ways of thinking, throughout the Ṣūfī order's history and its representative texts. In its general approach, cosmology *and* soteriology in effect become a kind of *somatology*. That is: both the map of the universe and the means of escape from it are conceptualised as deeply related to the form of the Ṣūfī's body. In later, more speculative Kubrawī discourse, these relations are carried through in elaborate schemata, but even at the order's inception, in the radically experience-based mysticism of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā himself, the trend is clear. The latter's extraordinary analyses of visionary experience often focus on the presence within the Ṣūfī adept's body of this or that "precious substance" (or "priceless jewel," Arabic, *jawhar nafīs*). These substances have an on-going, existential link with their transcendental origins (or "mines," Arabic, *maʿādin*) with which they yearn to be completely reunited.[10] In this perspective, salvation and mystical realization amount to the merging or re-union of the part with the whole (Arabic, *īṣāl al-juzʾi ila ʾl-kull*).[11] The individual body of the mystic is a miniature epitome of the totality of reality and can thus become a supernatural organ for perceptual contact with that totality. In one astonishing, and typically mysterious, statement, Kubrā says: "The mystical traveller will similarly sense the generation of lights from the whole of his body and the veil

will possibly be withdrawn from the entire selfhood, so that *with all of the body you will see the All*!"[12]

This distinctive mysticism continues in Najm al-Dīn Dāya Rāzī's *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād* ("The Path of God's Servants"), a major Persian treatment of Kubrawī teachings which, in view of its last, fifth, section, even amounts to a blueprint for a wider sacred society. In this aspect of his book, Dāya discusses the different ways various social classes may maximize God-consciousness through their particular callings — whether royalty, politicians, merchants, farmers or artisans. Be that as it may, the somatic focus so typical of the Kubrawiyya is very clear in numerous earlier chapters of the text, such as: "The Creation of the Human Frame," "The Attachment of the Spirit to the Frame," "The Wise Purpose of the Attachment of the Spirit to the Frame," and "The Cultivation of the Human Frame."

Thus, the human form (*qālab-i insān*) is the vessel of the ultimate mysteries in Daya's teaching, as he says: "However much the angels examined the form of Adam, they were unable to discover the compendium of mysteries that he in truth was (*na-mīdānistand ki īn chi majmūʿa-īst*)."[13] In Dāya's characteristically Kubrawī approach, the exterior human form is a pathway to the transcendent and ultimately leads, through its successively interior cortices of the soul and the heart, into the unimaginably vast "realm of spirits" (*malakūt-i arwāḥ*). The outermost cortex of the frame is in turn the agent of acts in the world, be they righteous or evil. The ethical complexion of human behaviour can thus be analyzed by him in powerfully "yogic" terms. Good acts are the final issue of a trajectory which has led from the divine, to the spiritual world, to the human heart, to the psyche, to the physical body, and finally into the external world. Part of the function of virtuous actions is however to maintain the supernatural pathway through which they have travelled; they are thus in a sense *both* product and cause of the said pathway. For the gradual impact of their neglect and of performing bad deeds, is nothing less than the *obstruction* of the channel to the transcendent.

Dāya presents the dynamics of these processes in his chapter on "the Cultivation of the Human Frame," as if discussing the findings of an empirical investigation: "God Almighty has opened a path from the *malakūt* of spirits to the heart of His servant, laid down another path from the heart to the soul, and made a third path from the soul to the bodily frame. Thus every gracious aid that comes to the spirit from the world of the Unseen is passed on to the heart; then some part of it is given to the soul by the heart; and finally some trace of it is bestowed by the soul on the bodily frame, causing a suitable deed to appear there. If, conversely, some dark and carnal deed (*ʿamalī ẓulmānī-yi nafsānī*) should appear on the bodily frame, a trace of its darkness will affect the soul; then blackness will be transmitted from the soul to the heart; and finally a covering will come to the spirit from the heart, veiling its luminosity like a halo around the moon. Through this veiling, the path connecting the spirit to the world of the Unseen will become partially closed (*rāh-i rūḥ bi-ʿālam-i ghayb basta shud*), so that it will be unable fully to contemplate that world and the gracious aid that it receives will decrease."[14]

The "empirical" quality of the above partly lies in the way that Dāya formulates these processes in terms of the radiation and obscuration of light. In chapter 17, in the third part of the *Mirṣād*, he embarks on an involved discussion of the lights, or photic epiphanies, inwardly experienced by the Ṣūfī. The entire discussion gives expression to a defining feature of the Kubrawiyya: their cultivation, and close analysis, of visionary experiences of light. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's *Fawāʾiḥ* directly prefigures this discussion of Dāya's, and Simnānī will in due course carry the same analysis even further. Ultimately, it is God who is communicating *Himself* through this perceptible medium. As our author says: "The light that is derived from God's lights and witnessed by the heart serves to make God known to the heart: He makes Himself known by means of Himself (*taʿrīf-i ḥāl-i khud ham bi-khud kunad*)".[15] God has here entered into the scope of the Ṣūfī's perception, albeit outside any prior norms of sensory perception. Dāya in fact states that forms, loci and colorations of these mystical lights "derive from the pollution of vision by the veils of the human attributes. When the lights are seen by pure spirituality, none of these attributes remains, and a colourless and formless radiance (*talaʾluʾī bī-rang wa shakl*) becomes visible."[16]

This statement has striking parallels in Tibetan teaching. The greatest divinity of Bön, the pre-Buddhist shamanism of Tibet, is called "the White Light" (*gShen lha ʿOd dkar*, pronounced *Shenlha Okar*). Recall, too, that one of Nāropa's six yogas is designated "clear light yoga." In addition, the "primal clear light" (Tibetan, *ʿod gsal*) has a crucial role in the "Tibetan Book of the Dead" (*Bar do thos grol*, i.e., *Bardo Thödol*), the text par excellence of "*bardo* yoga," the yoga pertaining to posthumous realities and to how the soul is to negotiate them. In the *chikhai bardo*, the first of the three afterlife states or *bardos*, the soul is said to be confronted by "the Clear Light of Reality, which is the Infallible Mind of the *Dharma-Kāya*."[17] The text states: "Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable Light . . ."[18] The deceased individual is presented with the opportunity to merge with this light and thus completely attain salvation from the revolutions of *saṃsāric* existence, though this is rarely possible, in which case the individual withdraws into experiences of subordinate, coloured lights such as the dull bluish-yellow light of the human world.[19]

The pointed concern of Tibetan spirituality in general, and Nāropa's yogas in particular, with mystical cognitions of light, is one of its greatest similarities with the Kubrawiyya. The concern with photism seems distinct from the wider, essentially tropological, interest in light that is found in much mystical discourse, and has been noted by eminent modern scholars of both traditions. Thus Tucci declared of the former: "In the entire course of the religious experience of Tibetan man, in all of its manifestations from Bön religion to Buddhism, a common fundamental trait is evident; photism, the great importance attached to light, whether as a generative principle, as a symbol of supreme reality, or *as a visible, perceptible manifestation of that reality*; light from which all comes forth and which is present within ourselves."[20] On the other hand, Corbin has proposed that the Kubrawiyya's heightened interest in inner light and its

actual experience, amounted to a specific departure in the history of Sufism: "It seems that Najmoddīn Kobrā was the first of the Ṣūfī masters to focus his attention on the phenomena of colours, the coloured photisms that the mystic can perceive in the course of his spiritual states. He took great pains to describe these coloured lights and to interpret them as signs revealing the mystic's state and degree of spiritual progress . . . This is not to say that [the Kubrawiyya's] predecessors were unfamiliar with visionary experiences. Far from it. But the anonymous short work of a shaykh (which must have been written later than Semnānī, since it refers to him by name) bears witness to an 'orthodox' teacher's alarm at what seemed to him an innovation."[21]

The emphatically perceptual (especially photic) character of the mysticism found in both Tibetan yoga and the Kubrawiyya, complements a basic philosophical premise common to both, and neither tradition can be understood in the absence of the framework in question. Namely, a premise of *idealism* frees both systems to approach the transcendent as substantial in this way, and to treat it as an experience or "percept." It is precisely their shared assumption of the primacy of consciousness which allows them to approach transcendental and ultimate reality in this daring manner, *without* thereby reducing it to the material. For them, there simply *is* no objective materiality — only forms of consciousness. Everything is a consciousness event, inseparable from mind and characterized by interiority.

Thus, as mentioned earlier, Tibetan yoga has discernible roots in the major Mahāyāna philosophical orientation known as Yogācāra. The latter is above all distinguished by its emphasis on the primacy of consciousness, and is sometimes also known as the Consciousness School (Sansk., *Vijñānavāda*) or "Consciousness-only School" (Sansk., *Cittamātrā*, Tib., *sems tsam pa*). Perhaps the most characteristic of all its teachings is that of the presence of some sort of ultimate noetic ground, generally referred to as *Ālaya-Vijñāna*, "storehouse consciousness." It is true that earlier Western comparisons of Yogācārin teaching with European idealism have now been criticized on various grounds.[22] Some scholars, however, still insist on the validity and explanatory value of this parallel.[23] The comparison's validity partly depends on whether it is based on the "orthodox" Yogācāra of Sthiramati (d. 570 CE) or the "unorthodox" Yogācāra of Dharmapāla (d. 561 CE). The former insists on the fundamental emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of both external objects *and* consciousness — the teaching of non-substantive consciousness (*nirākāra-vijñāna-vāda*).[24] The latter however advocates a doctrine of substantive, or "real" consciousness (*sākāra-vijñāna-vāda*). Mind is here viewed as the positive ground of all "external" events and the data of experience — an interpretation which lends itself to comparison with certain types of idealism, which has a long history in European thought.[25]

At any rate, that some variety of idealism is assumed in Tibetan yoga seems clear in its representative texts (I focus here especially on the *Bardo Thödol*). When the individual is confronted by the welter of visionary events in the second realm of death, the so-called *chönyid bardo*, the *Thödol* advises that the following verse be repeated to oneself:

". . . May I recognize whatever [visions] appear, as the reflections of mine own consciousness;
May I know them to be of the nature of apparitions in the *Bardo*:
When at this all-important moment [of opportunity] of achieving a great end,
May I not fear the bands of Peaceful and Wrathful [deities], mine own thought-forms."[26]

In fact, the *Thödol* states that the very key to transcending *saṃsāric* existence is to realize that all such experiences are internal, and are inseparable from mind: "O nobly-born, if though dost not now recognize thine own thought-forms, whatever of meditation or of devotion thou mayst have performed while in the human world — if thou hast not met with this present teaching — the lights will daunt thee, the sounds will awe thee, and the rays will terrify thee. Shouldst thou not know this all-important key to the teachings, — not being able to recognize the sounds, lights, and rays, — thou wilt have to wander in the *Sangsāra*."[27]

Towards the end of the *Thödol*, the arrival of the soul's judge, the Lord of Death or Yama-Rāja (Tib., *ʿchi-bdag)* is described. Although an awesome, indeed terrifying, being, he is in reality an epiphany of none other than the boundlessly compassionate Avalokiteśvara (Tib., *spyan ras gzigs*, i.e., "Chenrezig"). In his cross-questioning of the dead individual about his or her deeds in life, Yama-Rāja has recourse to a supernatural technology which the text calls the Mirror of Karma "Wherein every good and evil act is vividly reflected. Lying will be of no avail."[28] Islamic tradition of course also describes the unfaltering accuracy of the moral record with which the deceased is confronted. But the particular correspondence of the "veridical reflector" mentioned in the Tibetan account with the episode now generally termed the "life review" reported by countless modern survivors of clinical death, is intriguing. Be that as it may, the *Thödol* still insists: "Apart from one's own hallucinations, in reality there are no such things existing outside oneself as Lord of Death, or god, or demon, or the Bull-headed Spirit of Death. Act so as to recognize this."[29] This "idealism" is thus the recurring refrain of the *Thödol*, and even in its closing stages it recommends the following meditation in the last of the death-realms mentioned, the *sidpa bardo*: "Lo! All substances are mine own mind; and this mind is vacuousness, is unborn, and unceasing."[30]

The Kubrawī masters advocate a remarkably similar idealism, starting with their founder, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. The latter's *Fawāʾiḥ* is replete with accounts of overwhelming visionary experiences, yet states in one passage, without equivocation: "Know that the soul, the devil, and the angel are not things external to you (*laysat ashyāʾa khārijatan ʿanka*), but *you are them* (*bal anta hum*). Likewise heaven, earth and the sedile (*al-kursī*) are not things external to you, and neither is the garden of paradise, hellfire, death and life. They are simply things within you (*innamā hiya ashyāʾu fīka*), and if you travel spiritually and become pure, you will see that clearly, God willing."[31] This explicit idealism — unusual in an Islamic context — recurs in a variety of ways in the texts of Kubrā's spiritual progeny. Najm al-Dīn Dāya in the *Mirṣād* presents the same basic point of view in a number of passages. For instance, in the third part of the work,

in chapter 18, Dāya discusses "Unveiling and its Varieties." This is a major discussion of the mystical application of the multifaceted Islamic concept of veiling. For Dāya, the entire constitution of greater reality is an ordered series of veils, in accordance with the prophetic saying (*ḥadīth*): "God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. If He were to draw them aside, the glories of His face would consume everything which beheld Him."[32] Dāya states that these veils or obstacles refer to nothing less than "all the different realms of this world and the hereafter," but he immediately goes onto propose that they are in fact internal to the human being: "These seventy thousand realms exist in man's own nature (*īn haftād hazār ʿālam dar nihād-i insān mawjūd ast*); he has an eye corresponding to each realm by means of which he beholds it, insofar as it is unveiled to him . . . Man consists in a union of these realms."[33]

Simnānī, for his part, expresses a similar viewpoint in one of his most distinctive re-interpretations of Ṣūfī principles. The venerable Ṣūfī (originally Hermetic and Neoplatonic) principle of the homology of the human being and the universe, the microcosm and the macrocosm, is captured in the formula: "The universe is a great human being and the human being is a little universe" (*al-kawnu insānun kabīrun wa'l-insānu kawnun ṣaghīrun*).[34] But Simnānī daringly inverts the structure of this relationship. For him it is not that the human being is a little world corresponding with, and contained by, the greater world outside, but the other way around. The human being is the greater world which contains the external universe — the outside is inside! As Jamal Elias expresses Simnānī's inversion: "Although the physical realm appears to be larger than the spiritual one, the reverse is true. The physical world, with its visible and invisible dimensions, souls and horizons, and everything else that is with it, is a microcosmic human being, while the human being is a macrocosmic world. The spiritual realm, which is the world that lies within the body, is the macrocosm of the physical world, and the physical world, which appears to be larger than the body, is a microcosm."[35] Simnānī's perspective here is clearly a permutation of Kubrawī idealism, with external reality as content, and human consciousness as container.

Kubrawī Ṣūfism and Tibetan Yoga not only bear comparison in theoretical premises like these, but also in their actual spiritual practices. In particular, total isolation and special breathing techniques are emphasised in both. In one passage of his *Fawā'iḥ*, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā records in some detail his own, initially unsuccessful, entry into spiritual retreat (*al-khalwa*). He discovered through his own experiences that the success of this method (which he later describes as a spiritual "furnace," *kūra*),[36] depends on one's absolute resolution and on the thoroughness of one's isolation. In the end, Kubrā's *khalwa* only went well when he threw himself into it as if irreversibly, as a prefiguration of his own death: "I said: 'At this very moment I am entering the grave, and will not be raised from it till Resurrection Day. This last bit of clothing is my shroud. So if thoughts of leaving my retreat gain ascendancy, I will rip the clothes from my body to shreds so as to be ashamed in front of people and not leave'. Thus my garment was the walls of my retreat-cell."[37] In fact, he records that he only left his isolation when urged by his master. Najm al-Dīn Dāya, in the chapter on *khalwa* in his *Mirṣād*, emphasises the

need for complete darkness and sensory deprivation, and explains that this is the precondition for gaining admittance to the realm of "the unseen" (*ghayb*): "The room must be small and dark, with a curtain drawn over the door so that no light or sound penetrates. The senses will then cease functioning — seeing, hearing, speaking, and walking — and the spirit, no longer preoccupied with the senses and sensory phenomena, will direct itself to the world of the unseen. Moreover, once the senses have ceased functioning, the misfortunes that assail the spirit through the apertures of the five senses will be effaced by means of *zekr* [divine invocation] and the negation of stray thoughts. The veils that derive from the senses will fall; the spirit will gain familiarity with the unseen (*wa ān naw'-i ḥijāb nīz bi-nishīnad wa rūḥ-rā bā-ghayb uns padīd āyad*); and its familiarity with men will cease."[38]

Khalwa is thus pivotal in the Kubrawī method. As Dāya puts it: "Know that the foundation of wayfaring on the path of religion and of attaining the stations of certainty is seclusion, withdrawal, and isolation from men. All the prophets and saints devoted themselves to seclusion at the beginning of their state, and persisted in it until they reached their goal."[39] The architecture of the Kubrawī convent (*khānqāh*) seems to reflect the central role of *khalwa* in the order's method. It is noteworthy that the important Kubrawī centre known as Ṣūfiyābad-i Khudādād, which was built by Simnānī in his hometown of Simnán in Iran, still stands — albeit minus its dome. A special, sealed chamber known as the "dark room" (*tārīk khāna*), distinct in construction and location from the tiny dervish-cells below, is accessible by a stairway. It is windowless, and the entrance door, when closed, cannot even be detected from outside. The entire purpose of the environment is to isolate the resident completely from normal sensory in-puts. The intention here is virtually identical with that of the "dark retreats" of the Tibetan tradition, especially intended for yogic practices pertaining to inner light. In Tucci's words: "The hermits of this school [*rNying ma pa*] have themselves enclosed in cells or caves into which not even the smallest ray of light can enter. Such caves for hermits are called 'dark retreats' (*mun mtshams*). Their occupants perform a special type of yoga which equates the mind (*sems*) with light (*'od gsal*) . . . They hope that through this practice the inner light will break forth from the mind which is of the same nature as it and illuminate everything with its shining radiance."[40]

Apart from isolation, the foundation of the yogic practice which Tucci mentions here is the technique of breath control known as "pot-shaped breathing" or "vase breathing" (Tib., *bum ba can,* Sansk., *kumbhaka*). This is described in elaborate detail in the relevant texts. The terminology refers to the shape, during breath-retention, of the yogin's abdomen. Air which has been inhaled gradually through the nostrils, is compressed there and is visualised as filling the two side channels of the subtle body, *rasanā* (i.e., *piṅgalā*) and *lalanā* (i.e., *iḍā*). The procedure ends with the gathering of the vital breath from these channels, into the central, spinal channel (*avadhūti* or *suṣumṇā*), the very "road to *nirvāṇa*."[41] The technique, which is combined with the visualisation of mantric syllables, is enjoined as the preliminary for the arousal of "inner heat" (Tib., *gtum mo*), and also for others of the six yogas. As one might expect, the

regulation of breathing (Persian, *habs-i dam*) is similarly vital to the spiritual disciplines of the Kubrawiyya. Simnānī, in particular, seems to have been responsible for modifying the invocatory technique of his teacher Nūr al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾinī, to bring it in step with the rhythm of the systolic and diastolic phases of respiration. These rhythms are to be minutely controlled in conjunction with the various phonic elements of the Islamic testimony of faith (Arabic, *shahāda*), which is considered the ideal invocatory formula. As Elias recapitulates: "This formula [*lā ilāha illa ʾLlāh*, 'no god, but God'] should be uttered in four beats: (i) With all his strength, the mystic should exhale the *lā* from above the navel. (ii) He should then inhale the *ilāha* to the right side of the breast, (iii) then exhale the *illā* from the right side to the left, (iv) and then inhale the *Allāh* to the physical, pineal heart (*dil-i ṣanūbarī-i shakal*) which is on the left side of the breast. This causes the energy of the word *Allāh* to reach the heart and burn all desires contained therein. From this pineal heart, which is simply a piece of flesh and the abode of the animal spirit, a window is opened to the real mystical heart. From here the light of faith shines forth."[42]

The reference to "the real mystical heart" in this passage is vital. It refers to the cardiac subtle center (*al-laṭīfa al-qalbiyya*) in the human chest. This is, in fact, one of a complex, sevenfold series of "subtle substances" or centers (*laṭāʾif*) which Simnānī explores in his writings. There is no leeway here to enter into the details of this mystico-physiological scheme, which is probably the main historical legacy of the Kubrawiyya to Ṣūfī doctrine, especially in the orders of the eastern sector of Islam. The features of this extraordinary system have been presented by Corbin, Elias and others.[43] Simnānī's theory is a major step in the graduated historical development of the term *laṭīfa*, involving its ever greater elaboration and wider application. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's works assume an older, simpler scheme of *laṭāʾif* which is fourfold, namely, the heart (*al-laṭīfa al-qalbiyya*), the spirit (*al-laṭīfa al-ruḥiyya*), the intellect (*al-laṭīfa al-ʿaqliyya*), and the mysterium (*al-laṭīfa al-sirriyya*). In Najm al-Dīn Dāya Rāzi's mysticism a fifth center, the arcanum (*al-laṭīfa al-khafiyya*), is presented. This is located between the eyes at the forehead. Two more centers are then employed in Simnani's teaching, namely, the lowest, basal center (*al-laṭīfa al-qālabiyya*) and the highest, cranial center (*al-laṭīfa al-ḥaqqiyya*, literally "the subtle substance pertaining to the Real," i.e., to God).

Each of these paranormal organs involves a photism of distinct color which is perceptible to the adept. Moreover, Simnānī co-ordinates each level with particular meta-cosmic realities from whose "emanations" they are in fact generated, and also with various human societies and categories. An example is the basal center which results from dominant emanations of the divine throne (*al-ʿarsh*), and is represented by human beings capable of speech but otherwise at a level close to animality.[44] Moreover, insofar as each center is identified with a given Qurʾanic prophet in a chronological development from Adam to Muḥammad, both the Qurʾān and the sacred history to which it alludes can be interpreted employing the Simnānian system of *laṭāʾif*.[45] In all this, the applications of the system are seen to be potentially inexhaustible in scope, taking in

occult physiology, cosmology, spiritual anthropology, sacred history, and scriptural hermeneutics. The system later becomes part of the teaching and methodology of orders like the Naqshbandiyya in the Indian Subcontinent, and is further expanded by figures like Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1625 CE) and Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (d. 1762 CE) with his demandingly complex, three-tiered model with fifteen elements.[46]

In its basics, this distinctive mystico-physiological system is strikingly close to what is found in the six yogas of Nāropa. Again, there is a gradual historical exploration of a core idea: that of the presence, and transformational potential, of various supernatural plexuses inherent in the human body. Rather like the pre-Simnānī system we find in Kubrā's texts, Tibetan yoga mainly uses an earlier, simpler, fourfold series of centers (*padma*, or *cakra*), which has yet to undergo expansion into the complex sevenfold system familiar in later Hindu Tantra. At the navel is located the "Wheel of Emanation," in the center of the chest is the "Wheel of Truth" or "Wheel of Phenomena," at the throat is "Wheel of Enjoyment," and at the crown of the head is the "Wheel of Great Bliss." But a further *cakra* is sometimes included at the genitals, called the "Wheel of the Preservation of Bliss," and even a series of four from the navel to the genitals.[47] In short, the basic elements of the classic, *cakra*-based physiological structure, are already referred to in Nāropa's six yogas: the right, left and central channels; the ganglia or "knots" (Sansk., *granthi*, Tib., *rtsa mdud*) where the side channels intersect periodically with the central channel; the *cakras* themselves, which are four or rather more in number; the association of various colors and shapes with each *cakra*, visualized as spoked wheels or lotuses with different numbers of petals; and the linkage of each to some particular mantric syllable.[48]

A feature of the classic *cakra* system which is seemingly "notable by its absence" in Nāropa's six yogas — also in the Kubrawī system of *laṭā'if* — is the famous idea of a feminine, coiled, lightning-like energy (*kuṇḍalinī*). Though the imagery is already referred to in rather earlier Śaivite texts such as the 8th century CE *Śrī Tantrasadbhāva*, it remains mysteriously absent from Tibetan yoga. Where the Nāths and other Hindu yogins framed the process in terms of the awakening of this snakelike energy, then its ascent and trans-piercing of the *cakras* (*ṣaṭcakrabheda*), till it emerges through the "aperture of Brahma" (*brahmarandhra*) at the crown of the head, Nāropa and his commentators like Tsongkhapa, instead prefer to think of the process as a melting of the "bodhimind substance." Through visualizing the form of the subtle body, mantric syllables and persistence in vase-breathing, the said substance is melted within the various channels and is brought into the head. From the crown *cakra* is then aroused the first of four kinds of ecstasy, and so on, down through the other three main *cakras*.

Nevertheless, it is not hard to see the presence of *kuṇḍalinī*, despite the absence of the nomenclature, which suggests that these different mystico-physiological systems indeed articulate a similar or identical experience. The Tibetan terminology clearly refers to a volatile, feminine energy — the name for "inner heat" yoga (as mentioned earlier) being *gtum mo* ("fierce lady"), in turn translating the word *caṇḍālī*, from Sanskrit

√*caṇḍ*, "to be wrathful." Details in the relevant texts also use images which are tantalizingly suggestive of *kuṇḍalinī*. They speak of an internal entity akin to a vertical stroke in Tibetan script (Tib., *a thung,* the "half Ah" or "short Ah"), situated four fingers below the navel, "in hair-like outline, floating, and half a finger in height, of reddish brown colour, hot to the touch, undulating and emitting like a cord moved by the wind the sound of 'Phem! Phem!"[49]

Then through the appropriate visualisations and breathing exercises, the experience unfolds in steps, according to the same text, as follows, ". . . from the hair-like short-A[h], a flame of fire, half a finger in length and very sharp-pointed, flareth up. Think that the flame is endowed with the four characteristics, [of the median nerve as visualized, namely, perpendicularity, transparent brightness, redness, and vacuity]; and that it resembleth a revolving spindle. Think that with each such breathing the flame riseth up half a finger higher; and that by eight such breathings it reacheth the navel nerve-centre. With ten such breathings, all the petals of the psychic-nerves of the navel-centre will have been filled with psychic-fire. With ten more breathings, the fire moveth downward and filleth all the lower parts of the body, even to the ends of the toes. From there with ten more breathings, it burneth upward and filleth all the body up to the heart psychic-centre. With ten more breathings, the fire passeth up to the throat psychic-centre. With ten more breathings, it reacheth the crown of the head."[50] Discussions like this one show quite forcefully that although the *kuṇḍalinī* is formally absent from the Tibetan six yogas system, it is substantially present. The entire description above gives expression to the idea of arousing a fulgurant, snakelike power in the adept's abdomen, and then its ascent, through perseverance in breath-control, into higher and higher centers in the body.

What then of the Islamic analogue of this yoga, i.e., the mystico-physiological system of the *laṭā'if* employed by the Kubrawiyya and their successors? Pertaining as it does, to a religious universe quite distinct from that of these Indic models, we should not expect to find any parallel of *kuṇḍalinī* which is as conspicuous as the one above.[51] Yet the formal, civilizational separation also heightens the significance of any comparable features. Even a relatively inexplicit parallel will demand attention and be disproportionately suggestive of a single, coherent body of experience underlying these discrete mystical traditions.

In drawing out a possible correspondence, the aforementioned Kubrawī "idealism" and emphasis of internality must be borne in mind. This relocates Kubrawī accounts of external, cosmic flights to God-realization, *within* the adept. Moreover, in some of these accounts, the soul itself (Arabic., *nafs,* literally "breath") — the very *lebensgeist*, with its ambiguous passions and energies — is said to constitute the means of ascension. As such, the Ṣūfī's soul is not infrequently equated with the quasi-animal upon which the Prophet Muḥammad journeyed through the layers of heaven to his encounter with the godhead in the paradigmatic event known as *al-Mi'rāj* ("the Ascension"). This entity, the very instrumentality of ascension and God-realization, is significantly referred to even in the earliest sources as *al-Burāq,* an obscure diminutive from the Arabic verb

√*ba-ra-qa*, "to shine" or "to flash" — the noun *barq* meaning "lightning." The epithet could, in other words, be rendered as "the little lightning flash." All this seems provocative in the present context.

In short, Kubrawī texts which speak of the process of realisation, drawing on that unsurpassable archetype of journeys to God in Islamic tradition, the Ascension of Muḥammad, read oddly like accounts of *kuṇḍalinī yoga*. The return of the spirit through higher and higher stages, to its own realm — a microcosmic reditus — cannot be brought about *without* the medium of this ambiguous, even chthonic, *lebensgeist*-energy, spoken of as the Ṣūfī's own "little lightning flash" or Burāq. A good instance of this association of ideas is the following, from Dāya:

"The soul [*nafs*] will quit the station of commanding and come to that of tranquillity, and become a mount for the pure spirit. Traversing the stages and stopping places of the lower and higher worlds, Borāq-like (*Burāq ṣifat*) it will bear the spirit to the elevation of the Highest of the High, to the lofty degree of the distance of Two Bowstrings, and thus to become fit to receive the summons of 'Return to thy Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing [Qur'ān 89:28].'

This feeble and powerless one says:

> Once bestial temper turns from thy soul
> The bird of thy spirit returns to the nest.
> The vulturelike spirit strives to ascend,
> Alights on the king's arm, and turns to a falcon.

The spirit, when returning to its proper world, has need of the Borāq of the soul, for it cannot go on foot. When it came to this world, it was mounted on the Borāq of the inhalation (*Burāq-i nafkha*): "and I inhaled in him of My spirit [Qur'ān 15:29]." Now, when it is to leave for the other world, it needs the Borāq of the soul to convey it to the [upper] extremity of the realm of the soul. The soul, in turn, has need of the two attributes of passion and anger in its journeying, for it cannot move either upward or downward without them . . ."[52]

With Dāya's involved reference here to the Prophet's *Miʿrāj*, the discussion comes full circle: the prospect of an original "yogic" dimension to Islam. To repeat the idea with which we began: for historical reasons that include the stimulus of Buddhist competition, this on-going dimension comes to fullness in the Kubrawiyya, but has deep roots reaching back seven hundred years earlier to the spiritual life of the Prophet. The latter's Ascension is of course an event of unique magnitude from the Muslim viewpoint. But in the context of this discussion and its main hypothesis, it stands out as a central example of a *topos* within the *Sīra* literature which is open to a radically "yogic" interpretation. By way of conclusion, a small but demonstrative sample of the relevant features of the Ascension narrative may be mentioned.

Statements traced to his young wife ʿĀ'isha indicate that some Muslims have consistently viewed the *Miʿrāj* event as spiritual, and not necessarily the corporeal flight envisioned by the mainstream tradition: "The apostle's body remained where it was but

God removed his spirit by night."[53] The role of the creature called al-Burāq in the sources, has already been noted. It is spoken of in the *Sīra* as having a face with partially human features, and is now often thought of, and depicted as, female. As if to confirm the power and volatility of its nature, traditional narrations state that the Prophet initially experienced difficulty in mounting al-Burāq but succeeded with the archangel Gabriel's assistance.[54] In this, there may be some analogy with the notion of harnessing the *kuṇḍalinī*. The Prophet is next led up through a stepped series of levels, beyond the cosmos and into the divine presence — again suggesting the ascension by stages, of *kuṇḍalinī*. The now prevalent, later formulations of *Laya-Yoga* view *kuṇḍalinī* as rising through a seven-fold set of *cakras*, and the Prophet's journey was also specified, from the earliest accounts, as mounting through seven levels of heavens, which indeed constitute the cosmology assumed by the Qur'ān. Muḥammad's upward journey is moreover said to have involved the ascent of an extremely fine ladder which extends through a gateway. The ascent of this ladder is significantly identified in the sources as prefiguring the process of dying. As the Prophet himself is quoted: ". . . a ladder was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches. My companion[55] mounted it with me until we came to one of the gates of heaven . . ."[56] Compare the idea, so central to the subtle physiology of yoga, of the aforementioned ultra-fine central pathway known as the *suṣumṇā* or in Buddhist equivalents as *avadhūtī* (Tib., *Uma-tsa*). To traverse this subtle pathway, the "gateway of Brahmā" (Sansk., *Brahmadvāra*) must also be passed through at its lower extremity.[57] The *Thödol* and other texts indeed state that this is the same route that is taken in death.[58]

Fear of "parallelo-mania" prevents further pursuit of such echoes. But one particularly suggestive pronouncement by the Prophet concerning his *Miʿrāj* experience may be noted by way of completion. In transmitting contemporary discussions of how the *Miʿrāj* was a fully real event despite apparently occurring at the time of sleep, Ibn Isḥāq quotes Muḥammad's remarkable statement: "My eyes sleep while my heart is awake" (*tanāmu ʿaynāya wa qalbī yaqẓān*).[59] The assertion is also found elsewhere in the *Sīra* as one of a series of responses by the Prophet Muḥammad to Jewish rabbis who were cross-questioning him: "[The rabbis said] 'Tell us about your sleep.' [The Prophet replied] 'Do you not know that a sleep which you allege I do not have is when the eye sleeps but the heart is awake?' [The rabbis replied] 'Agreed.' [The Prophet continued] 'Thus is my sleep. My eye sleeps but my heart is awake.' "[60] Here, the state of "cardiac wakefulness" is crucially claimed by Muḥammad as his norm, and not just his mode of consciousness on the Night of the Ascension. There are in fact statements to the effect that such is the permanent consciousness of prophets in general.

These allusions are of great interest in the present context. The Prophet is, incidentally, quoting one of their own scriptures to the Jewish scholars — in fact one of the most exquisite and mystical Biblical texts of all, the Song of Songs (Hebrew, *Shīr ha-Shīrīm*). The words there are spoken by the beautiful Shulamite girl and refer to the heightened, in fact permanent, nature of her awareness of her royal lover: "I sleep, but

my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night . . ."[61] By a transference of meaning, the Shulamite's erotic longing refers to a prophet's or realised mystic's permanent consciousness of the divine presence, maintained even in the state of physical sleep. This perpetual awareness is also, of course, an ultimate goal of yoga (whether Hindu or Buddhist). A fundamental tripartite distinction is made in yogic discourse between the states of waking (*jāgrat*), dream-sleep (*svapna*), and deep sleep (*suṣupti*). Beyond these is the state of super-consciousness — the goal of the transformational disciplines of yoga — known as the "fourth" (*turīya*).[62] Muḥammad's statements about his permanent inward wakefulness, even in states of sleep, can thus be read as expressions of his realization of the *turīya*. The Tibetan Buddhist analogue of these ideas is found pre-eminently in dream-yoga (Tib., *rmi lam*) and its mastery, leading to the awareness of the primal clear light (Tib., *'od gsal*) beyond either sleep or waking consciousness: "If one attain mastery of this process, then, whether in the sleeping-state or in the waking-state, one realizeth both states to be illusory; and all phenomena will be known to be born of the Clear Light, and phenomena and mind will blend."[63]

Endnotes

1. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1990), 3.

2. A surprising number of Buddhist texts were already circulating in Arabic translations in the relevant period. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Hamadhānī in his famous *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, completed in 704/1305, states that eleven Buddhist works were available in translations in Iran, including various Mahayāna sutras. Texts pertaining to yoga, *sensu stricto*, are another matter. These seem to be mainly Hindu in background and only available to a Muslim readership from a much later period, under the Mughals and Safavids. A notable exception is the Arabic version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* by al-Bīrūnī (d. 442/1050). See S. Pines and T. Gelblum, "Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's Yogasūtra," *Bulletin of the School or Oriental and African Studies* [*BSOAS*], vol. 29, no. 2 (1966), 302–325; S. Pines, T. Gelblum, al-Bīrūynī and Patañjali, "Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Translation of the Second Chapter and a Comparison with Related Texts," *BSOAS*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1977), 522–549; S. Pines, T. Gelblum, al-Bīrūnī and Patañjali, "Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Translation of the Third Chapter and a Comparison with Related Texts," *BSOAS*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1983), 258–304; and S. Pines, T. Gelblum, al-Bīrūnī and Patañjali, "Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Translation of the Fourth Chapter and a Comparison with Related Texts," *BSOAS*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1989), 265–305. In a series of articles, Carl Ernst has detailed the history of the availability of yoga traditions and texts to Sufis, most notably the "Pool of Nectar" (*Amṛtakuṇḍa*), replete with details of the practices of the Nāth yoga tradition in particular, including breath-control techniques. However, Ernst in fact rejects as a later fiction the account that it was first translated into Persian and Arabic as early as 1210 CE in Bengal by a certain Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandī and a scholar-yogin called Bhṛgu. The version known as *Baḥr al-Ḥayāt* by Muḥammad Ghawth Gwāliyārī (d. 1563 CE) was from an Arabic translation produced considerably later than this date, by an anonymous Muslim scholar aided by another scholar-yogin named Ambhuanāth. See "Putative Literary Transmission of the Pool of Nectar" in C. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amṛtakuṇḍa* Translations," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13:2 (2003), 199–226, especially 203–4. Also see C. Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15:1 (2005), 15–43. Also see his "Being Careful with

the Goddess: Yoginis in Persian and Arabic Texts," in P. Chakrovorty and S. Kugle (eds.), *Performing Ecstasy: The Poetics and Politics of Religion in India* (forthcoming). A third major yoga text to mention is the *Yoga Vaśiṣṭha* (*Jug Bāsisht*) which was, again, only available to a Muslim readership in a later period — translated from Sanskrit into Persian by Niẓām al-Din al-Pānipatī in the late 16th century CE at the behest of the Mughal emperor Jahāngir while still crown prince. Presently it was even commented on by a major "Indophile" figure from the School of Isfahan, Mīr Findiriskī (d. 1641 CE) in his *Uṣūl al-Fuṣūl*. The Indian Mughal prince, Dārā Shikūh (d. 1659 CE) was in turn responsible for a number of translations of Hindu sacred texts, notably the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-Gītā.

3. In Persian it was also sometimes called *dīn-i shāmkunī* (sic., with metathesis).

4. Simnānī, *Chihil Majlis*, ed. N.M. Hirawí (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Adíb, 1987), 84.

5. Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ʿAlāʾ ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), note 16, 18. Somnāth is better known as the Hindu (in fact Śaivite) complex which was sacked and looted by Maḥmūd of Ghazna in 416-17/1025-6. Some Buddhist presence at Somnāth was noted long ago in scholarship on the Hindu site, e.g., W. Postan, "Notes of a Journey to Girnar," *Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal* 7:2 (1838), 865–87, cited in R. Thapar, *Somanatha* (Verso, 2005), 21. However, it seems more likely that the name Somnāth, as the 13th century Parinda's monastery, is a mistake. Is it possible that the contemporary Buddhist center in question was instead the great monastery of Somapura in Bengal, a major center of Tantric Buddhism, visited by many Tibetan monks, and in fact the home for many years of the great 11th century CE Tantric scholar Atiśa? Somapura seems to have survived into the 13th century CE, tolerated (if neglected) by the Hindu Sena dynasty, and falling outside the territory conquered by the aforementioned Muḥammad b. Bakhtiyār al-Khaljī when he killed the last Sena king, Lakṣmaṇa Sena.

6. Translated by G.H. Mullin, *The Six Yogas of Naropa* (Ithaca and Boulder: Snow Lion Publications, 1996).

7. The link of Nāropa's "six principles" yoga with Yogācāra thought is supported by the fact that the six yogas are mainly associated with the Kagyu sect (Tib., *bkaʾ brgyud*) whose practices and doctrinal perspective owe much to Yogācāra. Modern Kagyu teachers have indeed overseen a series of English translations of texts by the great 4th century CE founder of Yogācāra, Asanga. However, the complex history of the doctrinal affiliations of the various schools prevents an unqualified attribution of the six yogas to Yogācāra premises. Thus, one of the main authorities in the six yogas through his aforementioned book "The Three Inspirations," was Tsongkhapa Chenpo (d. 1419), founder of the reformist Geluk-pa who officially uphold the superiority of the Madhyamaka over the Yogācāra school.

8. W.Y. Evans-Wentz (ed.), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 11.

9. Mullin, *op. cit.*, 36–39.

10. F. Meier (ed.), *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-Ǧamāl wa Fawātiḥ al-Ǧalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957), para. 60, 28.

11. "The [internal] substance only witnesses its own origin, it only wills its own origin, and it only feels nostalgia for its own origin" (*innaʾl-jawhara lā yushāhidu illā maʿdanahu wa lā yurīdu illā maʿdanahu wa lā yaḥinnu illā ilā maʿdanihi*). *Ibid.*, para. 11, 5.

12. *Wa yaḥussuʾl-sayyāru tawalludaʾl-anwāri min jamīʿi badānihi ka-dhālika wa rubbamā yukshafuʾl-ḥijābuʿan kulliʿl-anāniyyati fa-tarā bi-kulliʿl-badani al-kulla. Ibid.,* para. 66, 31.

13. Hamid Algar (tr.), *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return: A Sufi Compendium by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, known as Dāya* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1982), 103.

14. *Ibid.*, 179.

15. *Ibid.*, 298.

16. *Ibid.*, 295.

17. W.Y. Evans-Wentz (ed.), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 92.

18. *Ibid.*, 96.

19. It may be noteworthy that many modern accounts of "near death experiences" mention approaching an apparently identical radiance which, while brighter than any light hitherto seen by the physical eye, is yet un-dazzling. Attempts have been made to explain this through the progressive disinhibition of neuronal activity in the visual cortex of the brain, as a consequence of anoxia. S. Blackmore, *Dying to Live: Science and the Near-Death Experience* (London: Grafton, 1993), 81 ff. An objection to this might be that Sufis and yogins systematically cultivate, and report having, the same photic experience while alive — the precise point of "clear light yoga' (*'od gsal*) in the six yogas system, being for the adept to move beyond the semblant (i.e., visualized) clear light, and to experience actual clear light." See Mullin, *op. cit.*, 81 ff.

20. G. Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, tr. G. Samuel (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 62–63. Italics mine.

21. H. Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, tr. Nancy Pearson (New Lebanon: Omega Publications, 1994), 61. The brief anonymous treatise referred to by Corbin had been studied over a century earlier by Fleischer, *Ueber die farbigen Lichterscheinungen der Sufi's*, according to the Leipzig Ms. 187: *De veriis luminibus singulorum graduum Suficorum propriis*. See *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 16 (Leipzig, 1862), 235–241.

22. E.g. A. Wayman, "A Defense of Yogacara Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 46, number 4 (October 1996), 447–476.

23. E.g., J.L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

24. Sthiramati's *nirākāra-vijñāna-vāda* was basically compatible with the "void doctrine" (*Śūnyavāda*) of the Madhyamaka school, and was presently synthesised with it by Śāntirakṣita (d. 788).

25. For a recent collection of studies on the history of idealism in Western philosophy see Stephen Gersh and Dermot Moran (eds.), *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). Yogācāra tends to have been particularly compared with the subjective idealism of George Berkeley (d. 1753). Idealist trends continue in surprising quarters. Some recent theories in science propose that the substratum of the physical universe may in fact be some kind of consciousness. E.g., David Bohm has suggested that the "implicate order" of reality (as distinguished by him from the "explicate order") is *mind-like*. He identifies it with the Schrödinger wave field. P. Pylkkanen (ed.), *The Search for Meaning* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1989), 59.

26. Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 103.

27. *Ibid.*, 104.

28. *Ibid.*, 166.

29. *Ibid.*, 167.

30. *Ibid.*, 182.

31. Meier, *op. cit.*, para. 67, 32.

32. The *ḥadīth* is found in slightly different forms in the collections of Muslim, Ibn Māja and Ibn Ḥanbal. See A.J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane 2eme edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1: 424.

33. Algar, *op. cit.*, 304–5.

34. The 6th century CE philosopher Olympiodorus of Alexandria, for example, employs this notion in his commentary on Plato's *Gorgias*. But the idea seems to have received its first clear formulation in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, where it occurs in a variety of ways. See e.g., *Libellus* VIII, which speaks of "man, who has been made in the image of the cosmos." W. Scott (ed. and tr.), *Hermetica* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 176–7.

35. Elias, *op. cit.*, 68.

36. Meier, *op. cit.*, para. 135, 64.

37. *Ibid.*, para. 124, 59.

38. Algar, *op. cit.*, 280.

39. *Ibid.*, 279.

40. Tucci, *op. cit.*, 157–8.

41. Mullin, *op. cit.*, 150 ff.

42. Elias, *op. cit.*, 127. Elias is paraphrasing a section of Simnānī's *Risāla fatḥ al-mubīn li-ahl al-yaqīn.*

43. Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, tr. Nancy Pearson (New Lebanon: Omega Publications, 1994), especially 124 ff. Also J. Elias, *op. cit.*, especially chapter 5, 79 ff.

44. Elias, *op. cit.*, 81.

45. Simnānī presents this elaborate framework for interpreting scripture in his introduction to the major Qurʾān commentary co-authored by him, Dāya and Kubrā. See Paul Nwyia (ed.), "Muqaddima tafsīr al-qurʾān li-ʿAlāʾ ad-dawla as-Simnānī," in *al-Abḥāth* 26 (1973–77), 141–157.

46. See Marcia K. Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's Theory of the Subtle Spiritual Centers: A Sufi Model of Personhood and Self-Transformation," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, (Jan., 1988), 1–25.

47. ". . . The three energy channels are envisioned as running up the center of the body, with the chakras at the four upper sites: crown, throat, heart and just below the navel. One can also visualize four lower chakras, beginning at the navel and going down to the tip of the jewel. Beginners generally work primarily with the four upper chakras, and most texts on the Six Yogas do not give much detail to the four lower ones." Mullin, *op. cit.*, 64.

48. Mullin, *op. cit.*, 143.

49. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (Varanasi/Kathmandu: Pilgrims Publishing, n.d.), 192.

50. *Ibid.*, 193.

51. Significantly, even in later translations of yoga-related texts into languages like Persian, there is a trend for Sanskrit or Hindi terms for *kuṇḍalinī* to be simply transliterated — suggesting the lack of any clear parallel concept in Muslim languages. E.g. The Persian *Kāmarupa Seed Syllables*: speaks of drawing ". . . *shakti* up from the navel with magical imagination and thought." See Ernst, "Being Careful with the Goddess."

52. Algar, *op. cit.*, 197–8.

53. See, e.g., Alfred Guillaume (tr.), *The Life of Muḥammad*: A Translation of *Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 183.

54. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, 182.

55. The companion here referred to is seemingly Burāq, but is usually taken to be the Archangel Gabriel.

56. *Utiya biʾl-miʾrāji wa lam ara shayʾan qaṭṭu aḥsana minhu wa huwaʾlladhī yamuddu ilayhi mayyitukum ʿaynayhi idhā ḥaḍara fa-aṣʿadanī ṣāhibī fīhi ḥattā ʾntahā bī ilā bābin min abwābi ʾl-samāʾ* . . . Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1408/1987), 4 vols., vol. 2, p. 54. For the English as here quoted, see Guillaume, *Life of Muḥammad*, 185.

57. Referred to, for example, in the *Ṣaṭcakra Nirúpana*. The *Brahmadvāra* is defined as "the entrance and exit of kuṇḍalinī in her passage to and from Shiva." A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (London: Luzac, 1919), part 2, 13.

58. The *Bardo Thödol* thus speaks of death as the release of the vital force from the median nerve, through the "aperture of Brahmā." Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 91–2. It is perhaps noteworthy that the close association of "out of body experiences" with "near death experiences" has become a commonplace of modern parapsychological and thanatological research.

59. Guillaume, *Life of Muḥammad*, 183.

60. *Ibid.*, 255. The statement is also found expressed in the third, rather than first, person, for example in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Kitābal-Tawḥīd*: "*tanāmu ʿaynuhu wa lā yanāmu qalbuhu*."

61. Song of Solomon 5:2.

62. The *Turīya* is described as "peaceful, auspicious and non-dual" (*śāntaṃ śivaṃ advaitam*). Maṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1.7.

63. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, 223.