



Excerpt from Sufism and The Way of Blame

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Chapter Five: The Earlier “Way of Blame.”

J.G. Bennett was convinced that Gurdjieff’s greatest influence came from a group of proto-Naqshbandis in Central Asia; a brotherhood later verified by Hasan Shushud as the Khwajagan or “Masters”. As we have also seen, Idries Shah implied that his own perspective was influenced by the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya. Moreover, the father of Idries, Sardar Iqbal Ali Shah, was also known to have contacts among Afghan Sufis, some of whom (according to Darr) were still active members of the Khwajagan.

Hasan Shushud, a rather enigmatic Sufi in Istanbul, had disguised his former affiliation with the Naqshbandiyya and with another group that referred to itself as the Nuriyya-Malamatiyya (in Turkish, Nuriyye-Melamiyye). As already noted, he had revealed that he had a rather low opinion of Gurdjieff as a “thief of the tradition.” It is hard to tell which tradition Shushud was referring to, although he probably meant the Khwajagan, or the malamatiyya, or both of them comingled together.

A common element that tied together Gurdjieff, the Shah family, Bennett, and Shushud was that all of them referred to the Masters of Central Asia. All of them also posited that the Khwajagan had functioned as a rather elite group within greater Sufism; yet all of them, with the exception of Shushud, seem to have deviated from the central teachings of Sufism which emphasized the nothingness of Man next to God. Instead, the followers of Gurdjieff, Bennett, and Idries Shah would all continue to promote a form of occult elitism that emphasized a “hidden hierarchy” in Sufism. This, we have seen, was composed of super-humans who operated beyond, behind, or outside of, normative Sufism and Islam; and this idea, as we have also seen, was inimical to the original teachings of the Khwajagan.

Ibn al-Arabi had also referred to a hierarchy among saints at the pinnacle of which were the “blameworthy” (*malamiyya*). But rather than promoting a form of elitism, he and other classical Sufis claimed that malamatis hid themselves among the common people. A question that remains is whether or not the Khwajagan and the “people of blame” were somehow associated with each other, and if so whether or not they shared common characteristics. To attempt to answer this question requires a less fantastical examination of the malamatiyya and the Khwajagan, both of which appear to be separate. So, to begin with, what was the original “path of blame?”