



Women Mystics in Medieval Islam: Practice and Transmission

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Islam is no exception to the commonplace that women seem to have played a minor role in the elaboration and transmission of spiritual doctrine in the three monotheistic religions. But as a result of widespread ignorance of the history of Islam, even amongst believers themselves, it is often somewhat hastily upheld that the position of Islam has

always been radically misogynist, as if women had never been given the slightest prominence in its history. And yet the role played by women, or the position they have often acquired with difficulty, has not followed a smooth course throughout nearly fifteen centuries of Islamic history.¹

The aim of this paper is to

study the position of women in a specific context: that of the spiritual masters and mystics of Islam who, for purposes of simplification, can be grouped under the generic term of Sufis.² This study will be limited chronologically to medieval times, and in particular to the pivotal period of the tenth century, even if there will be cause to mention women who lived earlier or later. Finally, focus will be placed on religious practices and teaching work, and consequently on the mission of spiritual transmission which these women undertook throughout their lives.

Sources

First the sources on which this study is based. Of particular note is a book dating from the end of the tenth century entirely devoted to Sufi women, which proves that women played an important role in Sufi circles from very early on. At least, their role was important enough for an author, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021),³ who recorded the teachings of Sufi spiritual masters, whether men or women, to write a book containing portraits of eighty-two women. Admittedly, the succinct biographical notices generally give incomplete information about their spirituality. Nonetheless, information can be gleaned from the text on how these women, who originally came from Ḥurāsān or Iraq, were perceived by their contemporaries. Subsequently, similar works

devoted entirely to women were few and far between but some do exist; the place occupied by women in hagiographic or historiographic literature is variable and often modest or very modest. In biographical dictionaries, some earlier authors did give a significant place to women as in the voluminous work entitled *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* d'Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) which includes five hundred women mostly from the prophetic period. Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1039), a contemporary of Sulamī, who was one of his masters, only included a few pages on women in *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, his great encyclopaedia, despite the hundreds of notices throughout the ten volumes and even then the thirty or so women in question all lived in the days of the Prophet. In contrast, a work by Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200) entitled *Ṣifat al-safwa* lists figures who were considered worthy of serving as models of piety from the beginning of Islam and amongst them are to be found a large number of women, mostly Sufis, totalling approximately two hundred and fifty out of more than one thousand. Yet he was accused of misogyny in other works and he was extremely critical about Sufis in his book entitled *Talbīs Iblīs*. Furthermore, he did not omit to criticise the work of his predecessor, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, which he nonetheless used as a source of inspiration. However, a good many women remain anonymous and the truth is that despite the large number of entries only a mea-

gre amount of information is given about each woman. It is of interest to determine whether the attitudes of the men who wrote the history of Sufism and its saints changed in the course of time. Admittedly, towards the sixteenth century, Šā'rānī's (d. 973/1565) bibliographical compendium of saints entitled *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra* devoted no more than a few scant pages to a total of fifteen or so women. Munāwī (m. 1031/1621), who was his disciple, did not follow his master's example and even if he did not give particular prominence to women as they only represent thirty-five entries,⁴ he did at least treat them as men's equals. Later, the *Ġāmi' karāmāt al-awliyā'* written by a contemporary author, Nabhānī (d. 1350 /1931), appears no more generous in his treatment of women.⁵ All in all, authors in the tenth and eleventh centuries seem to have given greater visibility to women than later hagiographic writers did even if in numerical terms women remain marginal. This visibility certainly corresponded to a social reality which was to change gradually. But it is not only a question of the times. The case of Šā'rānī and Munāwī, who lived at the same time, cast a very different light on women and demonstrates that the emphasis placed on women in hagiographic literature is also a question of an author's individual sensitivity. A great many authors explicitly admit absolute equality between men and women in spiritual matters.⁶

But there is a certain gap between theory and reality, which is far from being peculiar to Islam.

Exemplary figures

But to return to the Middle Ages. There are special cases, which include that of Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya,⁷ who lived in the eighth century and consequently during the period that gave rise to Sufi streams of thought and who is the very first mystical figure of Islam and one of the greatest. If the historical woman is difficult to pinpoint, she is in fact of little importance as this woman, who is at the origin of the passionate and exclusive love which can be shown for God, disappears behind 'the homage paid to feminine sanctity',⁸ to quote P. Lory. It is to be noted that she is the only woman whose name was quoted and mentioned three times in one of the very first treatises on Sufism by Kalābādī (d. 380/990) even though he spares little space for women in his work. Yet the introductory chapter, which sets out to define the origin of the term Sufi, ends by relating a meeting during which the great Egyptian master Dhū l-Nūn is given a formal yet poetic lecture on Sufism by a woman who admittedly remains anonymous. This can nonetheless be taken as a sign that the author recognises the contribution made by women to constructing this spirituality.⁹

One particular woman illustrates the position occupied by

women and the role they played in Sufi circles during the eleventh century, namely Fāṭima bint Abī ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (391–480/1001–1088). Her father Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Daqqāq was a well known Sufi in Nishapur and the master of a major figure in medieval Sufism, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Quṣayrī (376–465/986–1072), author of the *Risāla*, a handbook on Sufism which has remained to this day a key reference for the study of Sufism. Daqqāq gave his daughter in marriage to Quṣayrī who was to become head of the convent he had founded for Sufis. The couple had remarkable descendants, many of whom became renowned scholars and Sufis. Fatima was thus described as ‘The daughter of the master, the wife of the master and the mother of masters’. Of particular note is the fact that Fatima comes from a mystic and learned background extending over several generations. Even if it is often the case, Fatima, who is described in our sources as ‘the pride of the women of her time’, owes her fame to more than her family background. She not only exists through lineage or marriage but also in her



own right through her personality, which is certainly exceptional. From her early years when she was still an only child, her father gave her his full attention, as much as he would have given to a boy. He set up sessions of mystical teaching for her; she learnt the *Koran* by heart and mastered the art of Koranic commentary. Contact with the great scholars who came through Nishapur or visited her father made a scholar of her and she was allowed to transmit had-

ith, which was no small privilege. Her longevity resulted in her hadith dictation sessions being highly valued towards the end of her life as she transmitted the teachings of the great figures of the past. She is consequently described as *ṣayḥa* in our sources as her authority particularly in the field of hadith and her radiant spirituality drew recognised scholars who came to listen to her alongside her children and grand-children.¹⁰ Although she was a member of the city's aristocracy, she nonetheless completely detached herself from worldly goods and devoted her time to worship, spiritual exercises and teaching and, later on, to her children who inherited her radiant fervour. One might object that she was a special case. It seems that she was not, as several other examples are to be found in the city of Nishapur. One example is Faḥrawayh bint 'Alī (d. 313/925–6),¹¹ one of the wives of Abū 'Amr b. Nuḡayd (d. 366/976). The latter was a reputed Sufi and traditionalist; he was the grandfather of Sulamī, our main source on Sufi women at this time. He recognised her worth saying 'What I gained from my companionship with my wife Faḥrawayh was no less than what I gained from my companionship with Abū 'Uṭmān (al-Ḥīrī)'. As this master is one of the greatest spiritual figures in the city, this is no small compliment. He had a daughter 'Ā'iṣa¹² (d. 346/957), about whom Sulamī writes that her prayers were always answered,

thereby indicating her high degree of spirituality. But she in turn had a daughter; Sulamī tells us that she imposed on herself the constraint of not leaving her house for fifty years so as to give herself fully to God. These few examples are corroborated by numerous other examples which show that these women follow their own spiritual paths independently and that their teachings are perpetuated after their death in accounts which are to be found in hagiographic works. Our knowledge of Nishapur is well documented, but the same cannot be said for all cities in the Muslim East. It is consequently difficult to tell whether Nishapur is an exception or not as regards the position and role of Sufi women in the society of their time.

Fāṭima of Nishapur (d. 223/838) is another major figure of sanctity who lived in the province of Ḥurāsān in the ninth century.¹³ Sulamī considers her to be a great Gnostic and far superior to all the other women of her time. It should be pointed out that she frequented some of the greatest names of Muslim mysticism and in particular Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 260/874). He often visited her and said of her 'I have never mentioned a mystic station to Fatima which was unknown to her'. There is also the Egyptian Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/859); he recognised her as one of God's saints, the noblest woman he had ever met; he simply confessed 'Fatima is my master' – a

strange admission coming from a master with such a reputation and noted in our sources as being of great importance. Although little remains of the historical person, these two testimonies sufficed for her to be included amongst the great saints and earned her a place in a large number of hagiographic works. She died in Mecca where she lived but it would seem that Dhū l-Nūn met her on one of her occasional visits to Jerusalem, thereby proving that these women travelled in response to constraints unknown to lesser mortals.

Nowadays it would appear surprising that women could practice peregrination (*siyāḥa*), even if it was more marginal for women than for men. Peregrination is a sort of wandering aimed at acquiring knowledge, which certain masters saw as an essential step on the spiritual path.¹⁴ Consequently, women did travel; they travelled alone for long periods of their lives regardless of the dangers on the roads. Thus we know from Sulamī that Umm al-Faḍl came to Nishapur in the second half of the tenth century and that all the great masters of the city came to listen to her, including prestigious scholars who occupied the highest positions in the city, such as Abū Sahl Ṣu'lūkī (d. 369/980). When Sulamī described her as 'unequalled in her times in eloquence, knowledge and spiritual states', he linked sanctity with knowledge. Umm al-Faḍl travelled widely from city to city to seek knowledge and transmit it, turning

her wanderings into a form of asceticism. Our sources relate something she said to a learned gathering, possibly the religious elite. This illustrates the lessons a woman could give her equals and her participation in the city's social life: 'Be careful not to use your occupations for the comfort of your souls when you think you are seeking knowledge'.¹⁵

Another woman is worth mentioning: Umm 'Alī, a woman of princely extraction, with a strong personality. She chose her own husband, Aḥmad b. Ḥiḍrawayh (d. 240/854–5), forcing him to ask her father for her hand.¹⁶ Her father accepted as he hoped to benefit from the blessings of his future son-in-law who was a well-known spiritual master but who had acted reluctantly. She also forced him, by way of a dowry, to take her to Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī to ask him to marry them. When they were in his presence, she unveiled her face and started talking with him. But this free behaviour stopped the day he noticed that her hands were painted with henna. She informed him that since he had looked at her his spiritual companionship was henceforth unlawful. This shows the rigour of a woman who refused to overstep the law despite an appearance of freedom. When they were about to leave, her husband asked the master, Abū Yazīd, for some advice, as was customary. Abū Yazīd suggested he learn spiritual chivalry (*futuwwa*) from his wife, an attitude based on

altruism and sincerity. Here is another unusual and paradoxical situation as Ibn Ḥiḍrawayh was a master who was well-known for his futuwwa. Was it because he followed Abū Yazīd's advice to the letter? Whatever the explanation, this woman spent her fortune on the poor and on her husband's disciples, supporting him in his role of spiritual master. They were an exceptional couple, but they are not the only case in which husband and wife are reputed for their sanctity and their knowledge of the spiritual path.¹⁷ When they settled in Nishapur, she met the great masters of the day and in particular Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād, who might have been the founder of a particular stream of Muslim spirituality called 'People of Blame' (*Malāmatiyya*). He was so impressed that he admitted 'I had always detested women's conversation until I met Umm 'Ali. Then I knew that God's gnosis may be given to whoever He wishes'. This demonstrates that women participated in the learned discussions held in literary or spiritual circles. It might seem surprising that the entries on her husband in hagiographic works devote almost as much space to her as to her husband. It is all the more surprising when one knows that his biographers claimed he had one thousand disciples, all of whom had reached the end of their spiritual path. It is not difficult to image that his wife played a decisive role in this spiritual influence.

Rābi'a bint Ismā'il al-Šāmiyya,

who died in Jerusalem in 229/843–4, has some points in common with Fāṭima. She too was the wife of a great Syrian master Aḥmad b. Abī al-Hawārī (d. 230/845) who lived in the ninth century. She too was rich and spent all her wealth for her husband and his disciples with enthusiasm; she admitted to him 'I do not love you as a husband but as a brother'. Her life was completely turned towards acts of worship and she was accustomed to a rigorous form of asceticism; the duties of marriage weighed heavily on her, so much so in fact that she gave her husband money for him to take a second wife. She did not show the slightest jealousy and even went so far as to cook meat for him to give him strength before he went to join his other wife. Admittedly it was an unusual case; moreover, Rābi'a's spiritual master, who was a woman, severely criticised Aḥmad as she considered it was unfitting for a spiritual man to share his affections between several wives.¹⁸

It can be seen from these examples that a commitment to the spiritual path sometimes runs in the family. Lineages are formed and knowledge and sanctity are transmitted from one generation to the next like heirlooms which are to be conserved and made to fructify. But 'management of spiritual wealth' such as may be found at the time concerns first and foremost the transmission of knowledge: knowledge of Sufism but also of hadith or Koranic

exegesis, and possibly the bequest of a school as in the case of Quṣayrī's family. This knowledge goes hand in hand with certain personal qualities and education (*tarbiya*), a field in which women actively participate in addition to occupying a central place in the transmission of knowledge. When economic issues appear later, with the development of brotherhoods and *zawiya*, and above all with a saint founding a spiritual lineage, they are linked to the transmission not only of spiritual wealth but also of various material goods and property.¹⁹

Fāṭima bint 'Abbās al-Baġdādiyya, who died in Cairo in 714/1315, is worth mentioning even if she lived in a later period. She was devout, erudite and a Sufi, but that is not what makes her different. What is unusual is that she was a *Mufti* and as such she had the right to give her opinion on legal matters, an eminently masculine function. It is certainly the reason why the sources mention her school of law, the Hanbali school, reputed to be the strictest of all, which is quite exceptional in the case of a woman. But that is not all: from the pulpit in a mosque she harangued the women, and even the whole population according to one source. It is said that the scholars of the day were struck by the extent of her knowledge and even the great Ibn Taymiyya, a finicky critic of Sufi doctrines, praised her intelligence and the intensity of her meditation. She had an extraor-

dinary power of persuasion over a female audience. This explains why she had a large number of female disciples, both in Damascus and Cairo. She got them to learn the *Koran* by heart and she relentlessly urged them to come to God. Indeed, she believed that God's love could be found through subservience to the Law and by acting in the interest of one's fellow creatures.²⁰

Marginal women

Some women had exceptional spiritual experiences which led them to live on the fringe of their society. It was a man, a famous man in fact, who brought them out of their anonymity. One example is Fāṭima of Cordova, a saintly woman who had a great spiritual influence over Ibn 'Arabī to whom we are indebted for the meagre biographical information that is available. In his youth the great Andalusian master was in service to her when she was almost a hundred years old; at that time, her face was that of a young girl of fourteen and he did not dare to look at her. If ordinary mortals took her to be simple-minded, Ibn 'Arabī reports miracles which testify to the perfection of her spirituality.²¹

Rayḥāna al-Maġnūna is one of those mystics whose experience of divine love has drawn them into states of rapture or madness. She probably lived in the eighth century in the region of Bassora in Irak but there is very little historical in-



Photo courtesy of Sousan Khayam

formation about her. Hagiographic sources have singled out her sublime words. But it is possible to deduce from these short accounts that men from ascetic circles in Bassora spent whole nights in her presence benefiting from the teaching she may have given in the course of her nocturnal prayers, as she was renowned for the rigour of her vigils.²² This is yet another unusual situation which demonstrates that the spiritual authority acquired by some women put them on an equal footing with men; their womanhood was no obstacle to their influence in contexts where social conventions were more flexible.

At the same time, and in the same region, another woman, known by the one enigmatic name of Ša'wāna, appears to have been at the

head of a maḡlis, a more or less regular gathering of disciples around a scholar or a master, either in the mosque or in houses. She had a very beautiful and particularly musical voice; she spoke in public, adorning her sermons with recitations possibly of the Koran. She had considerable impact on her audience, especially when she spoke of death in a throttled voice. Indeed, hers was a particular form of devotion, marked by attrition, a characteristic she shared with other ascetics, both men and women. Tears would stream down her face sometimes making her words totally incomprehensible to her disciples.²³

Conclusion

Islam consequently has no

lack of saintly female figures. Yet until very recently, oriental studies, a largely male-dominated field, followed in the steps of Muslim histori-

the great metropolis of Nishapur offered an environment which enabled women to participate actively in the spiritual life of the city, at least

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ographers by showing little interest in the question. It is perhaps not by pure chance that their relative anonymity came to an end thanks to ... women. The pioneer works are those written by Margaret Smith, Anne-marie Schimmel and Nelly Amri.

Numerically speaking, the women who are most frequently mentioned in our sources lived in the first two centuries of Islam. In the same way as men, women who lived in the days of the Prophet enjoyed a special and unparalleled status which stems from the privilege of having seen God's messenger. Then come the numerous women who played a role in the expansion of asceticism and the different forms of itinerant lifestyle: some participated in collecting hadith or in developing the legal sciences. When Sufism appeared and started expanding, women committed themselves to spiritual matters.

Around the tenth century,

for those belonging to a certain elite: teaching, debates or studies, they undertake the same activities as men. But Bassora, Baghdad, Damascus or Cairo are not outdone, as the examples above have illustrated. Thus women are seen to travel so they can study and become recognised and re-

spected masters. On occasion they can lecture men; they have disciples, both male and female; they give financial support to the development of a Sufi group around a master. They devote themselves to serving the very poor and spend their fortunes to further the cause of God. Another noteworthy fact is that Sufi women come from all social classes, from princes to servants.

They have a place both inside and outside the home. They resist their husbands even if the latter are recognised spiritual masters and claim their right to lead a contemplative vocation.²⁴ In Sulamī one is struck by the fact that several women are presented in situations which give them the upper hand over their husbands. As a result their husbands who are nonetheless eminent masters appear in a less flattering light. The greatest masters may stand in awe of the learning of one woman, of the virtue of another, of the pow-

er of love that drives another, of the endurance another might show in exercises of mortification. Women as they are shown at the end of the tenth century have no reason to be jealous of men, but they nevertheless differ in at least one respect: the lack of information about them. Their spiritual teaching and practice have come down to posterity but their personality lacks historical depth as the subject is avoided. As a result very little bibliographical information is available.

'The Greatest Master' Ibn 'Arabī clearly stated: masculinity or femininity are accidents that make no difference to the essence of human nature which is one. All means to reach perfection are consequently open to women just as they are to men. From the point of view of the Andalusian master it is not a simple doctrinal statement. His biography shows the decisive role played by women on his spiritual path and in his writings. He thus stated that the most perfect contemplation of God which man may experience comes through a woman. But for the *ṣayḥ al-akbar*, the highest form of sanctity is that incarnated by the *Malāmattiyya*, anonymous spiritual figures who are unknown to men; their heart is sealed by God and He alone can penetrate it. According to M. Chodkiewicz 'the features of the malāmī are to be found in the figure of Mary as represented in Islamic literature based on the *Koran* but the terms used there are often similar to those

used by the Gospels or its Christian exegeticists: the figure of Mary is that of a '*ābida*,—*ancilla domini*—she is totally subjected to God's will and vowed to silent worship'.²⁵ The malāmī shares a common destiny with women: the former must hide his spiritual states from his fellow creatures, while the second must hide her femininity from men. With Mary as the prototype of sanctity, female sanctity gradually acquired a form of anonymity in Islam. In fact our sources contain a great many 'anonymous servants' who have lost everything including their name. This may well be the reason why an author such as Sulamī said so little about the women whose spiritual teachings and practices he recounted. Everything else was private and had to be concealed from his readers.

NOTES

- 1 See Annemarie Schimmel, 'The Feminine Element in Sufism', appendix II to *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1975.
- 2 On the question of Sufi women, see R. Cornel, *Early Sufi Women*, Louisville, 1999 and Arezou Azad, 'Female Mystics in Medieval Islam: The Quiet Legacy', in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 56, 2013: 53–88.
- 3 The title of the book is *Dikr al-niswa*

- al-muta'abbidāt al-ṣūfiyyāt*. See R. E. Cornell, *Early Sufi Women*, Fons Vitae, Louisville, 1999 and the French translation of the text entitled, *Femmes soufies*, trad. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Andreucci, Paris, Entrelacs, 2011. For an analysis of the text, see J.-J. Thibon, *L'œuvre d'Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (325/937–412/1021) et la formation du soufisme*, Damas, Ifpo, 2009: 330–9.
- 4 It is nonetheless significant that twenty-eight lived in the second century of the Hegira. It would seem that sanctity was particularly common amongst female ascetics in the early days of Islam.
 - 5 For a more detailed history of hagiographic works and the position each attributed to women see, Nelly et Laroussi Amri, *Les femmes soufies ou la passion de Dieu, Saint-Jean-de-Braye*, Editions Dangles, 1992, ch. 2 and M. Chodkiewicz, 'La sainteté féminine dans l'hagiographie islamique', in *Saints orientaux*, D. Aigle éd., Paris, 1995: 99–115, in particular 101–2.
 - 6 Al-Ḥiṣnī (d. 830/1426) and his *Kitāb siyar al-sālikāt al-mu'mināt*, entirely devoted to women is a good example of this, as is al-Ḥurayfiš (d. 801/1398) author of *Al-rawḍ al-fā'iḳ*, quoted by Nelly and Laroussi Amri, op. cit., 57–8. In this work, the author states in the introduction to the section on women that God 'has associated pious women and pious men and that in women can be found the same spiritual states, renunciation, perfection and piety as in men', quoted by M. Chodkiewicz, op. cit., 102.
 - 7 For further details, see Margaret Smith, *Rabi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*, Cambridge, 1928.
 - 8 'Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya' in *Les femmes mystiques*, éd. Audrey Fella, Paris, Lafont, 2013: 809.
 - 9 See *Doctrine of the Sūfīs*, trans. A. J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1991, reprint of 1935 first edition, 11.
 - 10 For a list of her disciples and transmitters, see Francesco Chiabotti, *Entre soufisme et savoir islamique : 'Abd al-Karīm al-Quṣayrī (376–465 /986–1072)*, doctoral thesis, Université de Provence, 2014:104–6.
 - 11 See R. E. Cornell, *Early Sufi Women*, 176–9.
 - 12 See R. E. Cornell, *Early Sufi Women*, 184–5.
 - 13 For further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Fātima de Nichapour', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 369–70.
 - 14 But there are a great many examples of such women, such as Umm Hārūn al-Dimašqiyya, who was in the habit of travelling once a month on foot from Damascus to Jerusalem, see Nelly Amri, 'Umm Hārūn al-Dimašqiyya' in *Les femmes mystiques*, 928–9.
 - 15 For quotations and further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Umm al-Fadl al-Wahtiyya', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 925–26.
 - 16 It should be pointed out that late sources call her Fāṭima, which can give rise to a possible confusion with Fāṭima de Nishapur and some Western scholars consider that the two women were in fact only one, as for example R. Deladrière or A. Schimmel; for further details see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Umm 'Alī', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 364–6.
 - 17 Another famous case is that of Ḥakīm Tirmidī and his wife.
 - 18 For further details, see Jean-Jacques

Thibon, 'Rābi'a bint Ismā'il al-Shāmiyya', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 926–28.

19 On this question see *Family Portraits with Saints, Hagiography, Sanctity and Family in the Muslim World*, ed. by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen & Alexandre Papas, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen Band 317, Berlin, Écoles des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales & Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014.

20 For further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Fâtima bint 'Abbās al-Bagh-dādiyya', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 926–28.

21 For further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Fâtima bint Ibn al-Muthanna de Cordoue', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 368–9.

22 For further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Rayhâna al-Majnûna', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 826–8.

23 For further details, see Jean-Jacques Thibon, 'Sha'wana', in *Les femmes mystiques*, 866–8.

24 Rābi'a al-Azdiyya who chastised her future husband, a reputed ascetic from Bassora, when she allowed him to see her for the first time, after making him wait a certain length of time: 'Oh lustful one! What did you see in me that aroused your desire? Why don't you ask a lustful person like yourself to marry you?' see R. E. Cornell, *Early Sufi Women*, 128.

25 See M. Chodkiewicz, op. cit., 113.