Contents

Preface page ix
Acknowledgements xvi

Introduction
Scene and Background 1
Recent Scholarship and the Contribution of the Current Book 9
Working Hypothesis, Method and Sources 14

PART I PERSONAL NARRATIVES: EARLY SUFIS AND FAMILY TIES

1 Celibacy, Marriage and Familial Commitments among Early Sufis
   Celibacy and Marriage 25
   Brothers and Sisters 26
   Intergraded Dynamics between Personal-Familial and Communal-Practical Domains 44

2 Female Sufis
   A Particular Female Piety? 53
   Between Praise and Disparagement: Transformations in the Sufi Approach towards Women 56
   The First Flashes of Data: Sulami’s Dhikr al-Niswa 60
   Female Mystics in Later Biographical Collections 77
   Sufi Women in Works of Adab 81

3 Maternal Narratives: Female Sufis as Mothers
   Mothers and Sufism: Some Words of Introduction 83
## Contents

Sufi Mothers 87
The Image of Mothers from Their Offspring’s Perspective 89

4 Sufis as Maternal Uncles 103

**Part II: Communal Narratives: Early Sufis’ Modes of Operating in the Framework of Sufi Communal Lives**

5 Consensually Acclaimed Sufis and Lenient Approaches 123
Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910–911): A Man of Charisma and Leniency 126
Abū Sa’īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or a few years earlier): A Man of Private Austerities 151
Abū Hāfīs al-Ḥaddād (d. c. 265/878–879) of Nishapur 158

6 Marginal Piety: The Case of Niffar (d. c. 354/965) 162
Niffar’s Doctrines in His Mawāqif and Mukhāṭabāt 167
Between Niffar and Other Controversial Figures in Sufi History 180

7 Controversies and Quarrels 187
Between Companionship, Friendship and Mutual Envy and Rancour: Sufi Interpersonal Relationships Contested 188
Challenging Sufis’ Solidarity: The Cases of Ruwaym, Ibn Yazdānāʾīr and Others 191
Encountering Controversies and Quarrels: The Concepts of Munāqara and Niqār 207

8 Companionship with Youth (Ṣubbat al-Abdāth) 215
**Ṣubbat al-Abdāth**: Introduction 216
Major Inquiries 224
Ṣubba in Early Sufi Works 228
The Erotic Colour of Early Ṣubba 236
Tracing Ṣubbat al-Abdāth in the Major Sufi Collections of the Early Period 237
Yūṣuf b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī (d. 304/916–917) and Other Figures 250
Cultivating the Data: A Proposed Analysis 257

Concluding Remarks 262

Appendix 269
Bibliography 273
Index 291