

Prophet is said to have declared that whoever entered Abū Sufyān's house would be safe (Ibn 'Asākir, 23:447–54). Abū Sufyān was doubly honoured after the battle of Ḥunayn (8/629), when he and his sons Yazīd and Mu'āwiya, were given a large share of the spoils, as Abū Sufyān was among the *mu'allafa qulūbuhum* ("those reconciled in their hearts," al-Mas'ūdī, 2:297). Abū Sufyān lost one eye in the conquest of al-Ṭā'if (8/629) and the other in the battle of Yarmūk (13/634). He is reported to have been the Prophet's governor of Najrān at the time of the Prophet's death, although some stories place him in Medina at the time and add that he was disappointed at the election of Abū Bakr instead of his closer kinsman 'Alī (Ibn 'Asākir, 23:464–5). Abū Sufyān died in Medina, some say at the age of eighty-eight, but most probably at the age of ninety-four in between 32 and 34/c. 654, during the reign of caliph 'Uthmān. Abū Sufyān's abilities as a leader, which were not lost on the Prophet, were passed on to his children. He was used by the Prophet as an emissary on several occasions, and his children rose quickly under Islam. One of them, Mu'āwiya (r. 41–60/661–80), became a leader of the nascent Muslim community at a time of great crisis and would later establish the Umayyad dynasty.

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## Abū Ṭālib

**Abū Ṭālib** (d. c. 619 C.E.) was the son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim and Fāṭima bt. 'Amr of the Makhzūm of Quraysh, and a full brother of 'Abdallāh, the father of the prophet Muḥammad. He was reportedly born thirty-five years before Muḥammad. His proper name was 'Abd Manāf. His sons Ṭālib, 'Aqīl, Ja'far, and 'Alī, were born to him by his wife Fāṭima bt. Asad of the Banū Hāshim. After the death of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Abū Ṭālib inherited from him the offices of *siqāya* and *riḡāda* (providing water and food for the pilgrims). His eldest son, Ṭālib, reportedly participated in the battle of Badr (2/624) on the side of the Quraysh and disappeared there (Ibn Sa'd, 1:121); however, it is also reported that when Abū Ṭālib died, his sons Ṭālib and 'Aqīl inherited from him (Ibn Sa'd, 1:124).

A few traditions describe Abū Ṭālib's pagan conduct and his demand that his nephew Muḥammad take part in the worship of the idols of Quraysh (Ibn Sa'd, 1:158). He is also said to have objected to the Islamic manner of prayer (prostration) and to have stated that he disliked a position in which his backside was higher than his head (Ibn Ḥajar, 7:235). However, most traditions revolve around the support he extended to his nephew, as he was Muḥammad's closest relative and guardian, after the death of Muḥammad's parents, 'Abdallāh and Āmina, and of his grandfa-

ther ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Abū Ṭālib is said to have been present at the meeting between the twelve-year-old Muḥammad and the Christian hermit, Baḥīrā, who identified Muḥammad as the forthcoming Arabian prophet. The meeting took place during one of Abū Ṭālib’s trade journeys to Syria, and, following the monk’s advice, Abū Ṭālib took it upon himself to protect his nephew as much as possible. After Muḥammad began receiving revelations, Abū Ṭālib is said to have supported his nephew against the harassment of the Meccan infidels of the Quraysh, although according to most sources he never embraced Islam himself. The persecution on the part of the Quraysh reached its peak with the boycott of the entire clan of Hāshim, together with the Banū al-Muṭṭalib. Their boycotted kinsmen are said to have found refuge in the *shīb* (“ravine”) of Abū Ṭālib. This boycott took place seven years after Muḥammad’s first revelation and lasted until the tenth year. Numerous poetic verses in support of Muḥammad are attributed to Abū Ṭālib. The Quraysh are said to have refrained from harming the Prophet as long as his uncle was alive (Ibn Sa‘d, 1:124).

Much as he reportedly loved Muḥammad, the traditions say that Abū Ṭālib was unable to detach himself from the tribal heritage of the Quraysh. The apparent distress these conflicting loyalties caused him comes out in traditions describing his death. The Prophet is said to have urged him to pronounce the *shahāda* (testimony of faith) and embrace Islam before he died, but the leaders of the Quraysh, who were also present at his deathbed, prevented him from doing so. Some traditions, however, claim that he was heard whispering the *shahāda* just before he died. Abū Ṭālib reportedly died ten years after the first revelation, at more than eighty years of age; he was buried in the Meccan cemetery of al-Ḥajūn (al-

Balādhurī, 2:791). Some say that his death occurred one month before the death of Khadija; others say one month later.

His fate in the next world is discussed extensively in the sources, often in close association with the fate of Muḥammad’s parents and grandfather. A tradition recorded in Ibn Sa‘d (1:122) says that Muḥammad wanted to ask God to forgive his uncle, but the verse was revealed that forbids believers from asking forgiveness for the sins of any polytheist, even their closest relatives (Qur’ān 9:113). Nevertheless, Muḥammad is said to have interceded with God for Abū Ṭālib, who will be granted some relief in hell, by being removed from the deep fire to the shallow one (Ibn Sa‘d, 1:124). The view that he actually gained access to Paradise as a result of Muḥammad’s intercession, or even that he died as a full Muslim, can be found in some Shī‘ī sources. According to Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, this view was shared by some Mu‘tazilī scholars, but he himself was never fully persuaded by their arguments.

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## Action (*ʿAmal*), in Šūfism

Action (**ʿAmal**, pl. *aʿmāl*), in the Šūfī tradition, means “works” tradition and refers to definable religious or spiritual praxes performed in definite mystical or moral contexts. In most instances, such acts are seen to be coordinative with “knowledge” (*ʿilm*), as per the oft-quoted *ḥadīth*, “To him who acts by what he knows, God bequeaths knowledge of what he did not know” (al-İṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut 1988), 10:13). As far as *ʿamal* is concerned, Šūfī discourse has generally rejected the relative separation of knowledge and action in relation to meaningful engagement with Islamic revelation (e.g., al-Sarrāj, *K. al-lumaʾ*, 100; al-Makkī, part 31; pseudo-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, 78–83; al-Hujwānī, *Kashf*, 11–21; Abū l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *K. ādāb al-murīdīn*, 16, 22). Whereas legists have generally understood *ʿilm* as discursive knowledge of revelation and *aʿmāl* as the explicit praxes which it prescribes (e.g., the “pillars of Islam”), in drawing a distinction between discursive and intuitive knowledge, Šūfī theoreticians have tended to differentiate between *aʿmāl al-jawāriḥ* (external works, lit., works of the limbs), as explained in the rational jurisprudential sciences (*ʿulūm al-fiqh*), and *aʿmāl al-qalb* (internal works, lit., works of the heart), as explained in their own supra-rational sciences (*ʿulūm al-qulūb*).

Among the interrelated strands of mystico-ascetic discourse associated with the formative period of Šūfism, the earliest systematic discussion of *ʿamal* is found

in the works of the influential proto-Šūfī theologian, moraliser, and psychologist of Iraq, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857). In the system of scrupulous introspection (*muḥāsabat al-naḥs*) elaborated in his *Kitāb al-riʿāya li-ḥuqūq allāh* (“The book of observing God’s due”), and further, in his *Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb* (“Questions concerning the actions of hearts”), the detailed psychological analysis of actions plays a significant part. Al-Muḥāsibī draws a firm distinction between “actions of the heart” and “actions of the limbs.” His treatment of *ʿamal* assumes three foci, namely: that without proper intention (*niyya*), sincerity (*ṣidq*), and purity of dedication (*ikhlas*), action is itself essentially worthless; that works done in secret are superior to those done openly; and, that only sustained and measured attention to the performance of inward, rather than outward, actions ultimately addresses the problem of the spirit’s estrangement from God. Examples of such actions include cultivating a firm inner conviction (*iʿtiqād*) of modesty (*tawāduʿ*), circumspection (*ḥidhr*), patience (*ṣabr*), commitment (*tafwīd*), and negating all worldly hopes and attachments (al-Muḥāsibī, *Masāʾil*, 127). The image of the Šūfī busying himself with hidden inner acts, often to the point of exceeding his performance of external works, is common in early Šūfī literature (e.g., Anonymous, *K. ādāb al-mulūk*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Beirut 1991), 30–1).

While this internalising attitude towards action is clearly reflected in anecdotes and sayings attributed to Šūfī paragons from the late-second/eighth through the early-fourth/tenth centuries in Šūfī biographical compendia, normative Šūfī literature produced between the late-fourth/tenth through the final quarter of the fifth/eleventh centuries treats the concept of *ʿamal* somewhat unevenly. Two orientations can