
The Tariqa's Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

The Origins of *Tarīqas*¹⁾

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Abstract

The first *tarīqas* are said to have been founded in the 12th century by several Sufis. However, the individual aspects of *tarīqas* such as *silsilas*, schools and Sufi orders have their origins in the pre-*tarīqa* period, and the substantial contribution of the alleged founders of early *tarīqas* to their formation is dubious. Therefore, the emergence of *tarīqas* is to be regarded as a continuation and integration of existing traditions, rather than the invention of a new style of Sufism. Yet another aspect of the emergence of *tarīqas* is the formation of identity. The *tarīqas* as well as the concept of *tarīqa* itself were formed by Sufis who identified themselves as the successors of the alleged founders.

Introduction

Sufism in the formative period up to the beginning of the 10th century is characterized by its diversity. Having no standardized theory, Sufis, or ascetics, were going their own ways, and consequently their thoughts, practices and styles of life were very diversified. Theoretical refinement and composition of Sufi literature from the 10th century to the 12th century, however, gave Sufism uniformity in some degree. Most Sufis have since then shared the basic concepts and practices of Sufism represented by terms such as *maqām*, *ḥāl*, *fanā'*, *ḍikr*, *samā'* and so on.

The *tarīqas*, formed from the 12th century on, brought another type of diversity to Sufism. The Arabic word *tarīqa* whose original meaning is 'way' implies in the context of Sufism the meaning 'Sufi's way' and sometimes denotes Sufism itself. Since the 12th century, the word *tarīqa* has had a new implication.²⁾ The significance of the master-disciple relationship in Sufism brought Sufis the sense of belonging to their masters' schools ideally and to their organizations actually, both of which are called *tarīqas*. Therefore, *tarīqa* in this sense doesn't mean 'Sufi's way' generally but 'a specific Sufi's way' particularly. Such *tarīqas* are said to have been founded firstly in the 12th century by

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2) For the transformation of the concept of *tarīqa*, see a simple but appropriate explanation by Knysh [2000: 302].

celebrated figures such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġīlānī (d. 1166), Abū al-Naġīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī (d. 1182) and so on, and they are regarded as the founders of the Qādiriyya, the Suhrawardiyya, the Rifā‘iyya *ṭarīqas* respectively. Although scarcity or lack of contemporary sources makes us skeptical about the reality of foundation by these alleged founders,³⁾ it is generally approved that the *ṭarīqa* style of Sufism emerged in about the 12th and 13th centuries [Schimmel 1975: 244ff.; Baldick 1989: 69ff.; Knysh 2000: 172ff.; Geoffroy 2003: 154ff.], regardless of whether the alleged founders were the real ones or not. But what does the foundation of a *ṭarīqa* mean? What were the things which were innovated in the period? The questions are inevitably complicated by the multiplicity of elements composing *ṭarīqas*. A *ṭarīqa* is a group of Sufis who share 1) genealogy (*silsila*) and spiritual ancestors, 2) doctrine and practice, 3) organization. Of course these elements are closely connected but a group of Sufis viewed from the one aspect doesn’t always correspond to a group viewed from the other. So when we consider the formation and history of *ṭarīqas*, *ṭarīqas* in general or individual *ṭarīqas*, the above mentioned aspects should be treated separately and analytically. In this paper I attempt to reconsider the formation of *ṭarīqas* in the history of Sufism by examining the origins of above mentioned three elements of *ṭarīqas* in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period and comparing them with their conditions after the ‘emergence’ of *ṭarīqas*.

1. Early *Silsilas*⁴⁾

Silsila, whose original meaning is ‘chain,’ means Sufi genealogy. The significance of the master-disciple relationship in Sufism made Sufis strongly interested in their spiritual ancestors and they comprehended these links as genealogies. When did Sufis begin to do this? The earliest known *silsila* is found not in Sufi literature but in Ibn al-Nadīm’s *al-Fihrist*, a catalogue of books in 10th century Baġdād:

Muḥammad b. Ishāq said: I read in the handwriting of Abū Muḥammad Ġa‘far al-Ḥuldī, who was one of the leaders of the Sufis and a pious man and an ascetic, and I heard him tell of what I read in his handwriting as follows: I received from Abū al-Qāsim al-Ġunayd b. Muḥammad. He told me, “I received from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sarī b. al-Muġallis al-Saqāṭī. al-Sarī received from Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī. Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī received from Farqad al-Sanġī. Farqad received from al-Ḥasan

3) For example, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġīlānī’s role in the emergence of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* is either approved or rejected by scholars [Baldick 1989: 71-72; Knysh 2000: 183]. As for the Suhrawardiyya, it is generally accepted that not the alleged founder Abū al-Naġīb al-Suhrawardī but his nephew Šihāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234) was its actual founder [Trimingham 1971: 34; Baldick 1989: 72; Sobieroj 1997: 784; Knysh 2000: 203].

4) For early *silsilas* discussed below, see also [Trimingham 1971: 261ff.; Massignon 1975: v. 2, 114].

al-Baṣrī. al-Ḥasan received from Anas b. Mālik. al-Ḥasan met seventy soldiers of the Battle of Badr.” [Ibn al-Nadīm 1871-2: v.1, 183]

The expression ‘I received from (*‘abadtū ‘an*),’ with the supposed object ‘instruction’ or *birqa* (cloak) as its symbol, means ‘I am a disciple of.’ The usage of the verb is very common in later *silsilas*, so this is to be regarded as an early example of *silsila*.⁵⁾ Thus we know that in the 10th century the chain of master-disciple relationships had been already described as genealogies.

The first known Sufi literature which contains *silsila* is Quṣayrī (d. 1074)’s *al-Risāla*:

And Ustād Abū ‘Alī used to say, “I received this way from (*‘abadtū hādā al-tarīq ‘an*) al-Naṣrābādī. al-Naṣrābādī from al-Šiblī. al-Šiblī from al-Ġunayd. al-Ġunayd from al-Sarī. al-Sarī from Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī. Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī from Dā‘ūd al-Ṭā‘ī.” [Quṣayrī 1418/1997: 297]

Quṣayrī’s *al-Risāla* was very popular in the Islamic world. Written in Ḥurāsān in Arabic, the treatise was also read in the Arab world, and it was soon translated into Persian,⁶⁾ which made it more accessible. Its popularity allows us to assume that the concept of *silsila* has been shared since the early stage of the history of Sufism.

Some early Sufi biographical works also contain *silsilas*. Muḥammad b. Munawwar composed a biography of his spiritual and natural ancestor Abū Sa‘īd b. Abī al-Ḥayr (d. 1046) entitled *Asrār al-tawḥīd* and dedicated it to the Ghorid sulṭān Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. Sām (r. 1163-1203). It contains Abū Sa‘īd’s *silsila* up to the Prophet Muḥammad [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 26, 32-33]. The Biography of Abū Ishāq al-Kāzarūnī (d. 1033) by Abū Bakr al-Ḥaṭīb (d. 1109), whose original Arabic version has been lost and only the Persian translation from the 14th century exists today, also contains Kāzarūnī’s *silsila* [Maḥmūd b. ‘Uṭmān (in Meier 1948): 25-26]. These *silsilas* also suggest the antiquity of the concept of genealogy in Sufism although their composition dates may leave room for consideration.

In the meantime, the oldest existing *silsila* composed within a *tarīqa* is the Kubrawī one. Mağd al-dīn Bağdādī (d. 1219), an immediate disciple of the eponymous founder of the Kubrawiyya Nağm al-dīn Kubrā (d. 1221), describes the Kubrawī *silsila* in one of his treatises:

5) Dodge [1970: 455-456] erroneously interprets this passage ‘I took [the following list of ascetics].’

6) Quṣayrī’s *al-Risāla* was translated into Persian by his immediate disciple [Tarğuma-yi *Risāla-yi Quṣayrīya* 1370š./1991-2: 1].

He (i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad) clothed (i.e. gave the *ḥirqa* to) ‘Alī, and ‘Alī clothed al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Kumayl b. Ziyād, and Kumayl clothed ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sūsī, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Nahrağūrī, and he clothed Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṭmān, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Ṭabarī, and he clothed Abū al-Qāsīm b. Ramaḏān, and he clothed Abū al-‘Abbās b. Idrīs, and he clothed Dāwūd b. Muḥammad known as Ḥādīm al-fuqarā’, and he clothed Muḥammad b. Mānkīl, and he clothed Šayḥ al-warī Ismā‘īl al-Qaṣrī, and he clothed our master Abū al-Ğannāb Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Šūfī (i.e. Nağm al-dīn Kubrā), and he clothed me.

The genealogy (*tarīqa*) of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is more famous because most of the *ḥirqas* are related to al-Ğunayd, and he is related to his uncle al-Sarī, and he is related to al-Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī, and he to Dāwūd al-Ṭā‘ī, and he to Ḥabīb al-‘Ağamī, and he to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

However, I read the writing of al-Šayḥ al-Imām Šihāb al-dīn Abū Ḥaḥṣ ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī, one of the authorities on this theme. He wrote in a letter to one of his disciples whom he had dressed in the *ḥirqa* describing the succession of the *ḥirqa* up to al-Ğunayd and after that described only the companionship.⁷⁾ Masters other than he fix the *ḥirqa* and describe the succession of the *ḥirqa* genealogically (*musalsalan*) up to the Prophet. [Mağd al-dīn al-Bağdādī: ff. 62b-63a.]

As Bağdādī died in 1219, before his master’s death in 1221, this *silsila* can be considered to have been already established in the lifetime of the founder. Furthermore, as cited above, according to Bağdādī other masters such as Šihāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī also had their own *silsilas* at that time although they are not found in contemporary sources.⁸⁾ Thus we can confirm directly or indirectly that the *silsilas* of at least some of major early *tarīqas* were established in their founders’ period.

However, there is no essential change in the style of the *silsila* before or after the period of the early ‘founders’ of *tarīqas*. Also as to its function, the fact that multiple affiliation lingered after the period suggests that *silsilas* could not be sufficient to fix the belonging of the Sufis.⁹⁾ Therefore,

7) The term ‘companionship (*suḥba*)’ means relatively loose master-disciple relationship without succession of *ḥirqa*.

8) Most of the earliest known *silsilas* of *tarīqas* are of the 14th century. The Suhrawardī *silsila* is found in the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa [Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 1853-8: v. 2, 48-50]. The Qādirī *silsila* was recorded by Šams al-dīn al-Dunaysirī (d. 1356) [Makdisi 1970].

9) For example, a Kubrawī Raḏī al-dīn ‘Alī Lālā (d. 1244) is said to have received *ḥirqas* from 124 masters [Čāmī 1370/1991: 438]. Even in the 20th century a regulation was needed to prohibit the multiple affiliation [Gilsenan 1973: 69, 238].

as concerns *silsila*, which is just a basic element of *ṭarīqa*, the formation of *ṭarīqa* doesn't mean any particular innovation but merely a continuation of the existing tradition.

2. Diversity of Schools

The second aspect of *ṭarīqa*s is doctrinal diversity, namely, schools. The master-disciple relationship represented by *silsilas* is at the same time the course of succession of original doctrines and practices. Needless to say, Sufism had various theories and styles from the earliest stage of its development. The famous traditions “The number of the ways to God is the same as that of stars” or “The number of the ways to God is the same as that of human beings” [Sulamī 1406/1986: 383, 472] denote the variety when cited in the context of Sufism. But when and how did Sufis began to regard the doctrinal variety as ‘schools (*maḍāhib*)’? Among authors of early Sufi literatures Huḡwīrī (d. 1072 or 1076) was the most conscious of it:

*Chapter on the differences among their (i.e. Sufis’) sects, schools, sayings, discourses and narratives*¹⁰⁾

As I have already mentioned in the account of Abū al-Ḥasan Nūrī, they are divided into twelve groups, of which two are to be rejected and ten are to be approved. Each one of them (i.e. the latter) has a good deed and a praiseworthy way in its practices and a subtle manner in its contemplations. Although they vary in the deeds, practices, contemplations and exercises, they agree on *uṣūl* and *furū'* of *šar'* and *tawḥīd*. ... Therefore, I would like to briefly divide the explanation of that, and explain the basic doctrine of each one. ... Muḡsibiyya: followers of Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārīṭ b. al-Asad al-Muḡsibī ... [Huḡwīrī 1384š./2006: 267]

The schools enumerated by Huḡwīrī are the following: the Muḡsibiyya, the Qaṣṣāriyya, the Ṭayfūriyya, the Ğunaydiyya, the Nūriyya, the Sahliyya, the Ḥakīmiyya, the Ḥarrāziyya, the Ḥafīfiyya, the Sayyāriyya and the Ḥulūliyya. All of them except the last one which is derived from the ‘incarnation (*ḥulūl*)’ are named after their founders. Although the substantiality of these schools is dubious, we know that at least the concept of ‘schools’ existed in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period of Sufism, and what was more, with the denomination of *-iyya* type named after their founders, which is very common in later *ṭarīqa*s.

On the contrary, doctrinal originality and the *-iyya* type name cannot be found clearly in early

10) The original text of the title of the chapter is as follows: *bāb fī farq firaqi-him wa-maḍāhibi-him wa-āyāti-him wa-maqāmāti-him wa-ḥikāyāti-him*.

‘founders’ of *ṭarīqas*. Discrepancies between founder and his successors about doctrine and practice are not unusual.¹¹⁾ Even considering the Rifā‘iyya which is famous for its peculiar and eccentric practices, there is no evidence that its founder Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī himself was doing such practices.¹²⁾ With exceptions such as the Kubrawiyya, who had the original doctrine about the practice of seclusion (*ḥalwa*) based on ‘the eight rules’ which has already been described in Kubrā’s treatise,¹³⁾ most of the early *ṭarīqas* cannot be distinguished from each other according to their founders’ teachings. Therefore most of early ‘founders’ of *ṭarīqas* cannot be regarded as the inventors of the original doctrines and practices which evidently characterize them.

The *-iyya* type names, which are also common in schools other than Sufism, as well as *nisbas* of *ṭarīqa*, were used very rarely concerning early *ṭarīqas* either by themselves or by others. They can be found in sources as early as the 13th century,¹⁴⁾ but only scarcely even in the 14th century.¹⁵⁾ The classification of *ṭarīqas* under the *-iyya* type names is nothing other than a later innovation. Even in the later period it is quite arbitrary whether branch *ṭarīqas* are called by newly created names or not.¹⁶⁾ Therefore, the denomination hardly contributes to understanding the formation of *ṭarīqas*.

In addition, Sufi teachings weren’t passed on only through *silsilas*. Literary works by Sufis were read broadly regardless the authors’ *ṭarīqas*. Works of Abū al-Nağīb al-Suhrawardī and Šihāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī were manuals of not only the Suhrawardī *ṭarīqa* but also any Sufis.¹⁷⁾ One of the treatises of Nağm al-dīn Kubrā had its commentators later in the Naqšbandiyya and the Ḥalwatiyya.¹⁸⁾ Ğalāl al-dīn Rumī (d. 1273)’s literary legacy has been quite common among Sufis, or people in general, who comprehend Persian.

Of course Sufi teachings were by no means homogeneous in spite of these assimilative factors.

11) For example, see [Baldick 1989: 72; Paul 1998: 18-30].

12) Ḍahabī (d. 1349) [1418/1997: v. 2, 139] states that ‘satanic’ practices such as entering fire, riding lions and snake-charming were innovated since the Mongols had seized Iraq and Rifā‘ī and his sound followers had nothing to do with them. Margoliouth [1994: 525] points out that the practices had already been recorded by al-Tanūkhī (d. 994).

13) The rules of seclusion was characteristic of the early Kubrawiyya but was later adopted also by other *ṭarīqas* such as the Tīğāniyya [Radtke 2005].

14) Ibn Ḥallikān (d. 1282) [n.d.: v. 1, 171-172] says, “The group of Sufis known as the Rifā‘iyya and the Baṭā‘iḥiyya is related to him (*wa-al-ṭā‘ifa al-ma‘rūfa bi-al-riḥā‘iyya wa-al-baṭā‘iḥiyya min al-fuqarā’ mansūba ‘ilay-hi*).”

15) Ḍahabī [1419/1999: 273] calls Abū al-Ḥasan al-Šāḍilī “šayḥ al-ṭā‘ifa al-šāḍilīyya” and uses also the word “al-Rifā‘iyya” [1419/1998: 118]. But such denominations are not popular in the sources of the 14th century.

16) For example, the Qādiriyya has relatively kept its name while the Ḥalwatiyya has many branch *ṭarīqas* with original names.

17) For example, see the treatment of them in a Kubrawī treatise [Yaḥyā Bāḥarzi 1345š./1966-7: 357].

18) Kubrā’s *al-‘Uṣūl al-ašara*, his most popular treatise, was not only translated into Persian by a Kubrawī ‘Alī Hamadānī (d. 1385) but also commented on by a Naqšbandī ‘Abd al-Ġafūr Lārī (d. 1506) in Persian and a Ḥalwatī (Ğalwatī) Ismā‘il Ḥaqqī Bursawī (d. 1724) in Ottoman Turkish.

Doctrinal characteristics, or at least tendencies, of *ṭarīqas* did and still do exist. However, it is to be noted that Sufi teachings have always been between assimilation and dissimilation. The *ṭarīqas* as schools have been no doubt a latter factor but not the decisive one, especially in their formative period.

3. Emergence of Sufi Orders

Affiliation to a *ṭarīqa* means not only ideal affiliation to a certain genealogy and succession of doctrines but also membership of an actual organization, namely, a Sufi order.

The concept of ‘Sufi order’ has some ambiguity which causes scholars to hesitate to use the words.¹⁹⁾ Firstly, even if affiliated to the same *silsila*, Sufi orders as organizations are usually independent of each other or connected only loosely. So it is a misunderstanding that there are orders which organize local subsidiary organizations. In other words, for example, it is not the generic Qādirī order but the individual Qādirī orders that exist. In addition, the definition of ‘order’ itself which distinguishes it from the more primitive form of Sufi circles is also ambiguous. So the validity of consideration in the emergence or origin of Sufi orders depends entirely on its definition. However, evident Sufi orders had already been formed in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period perhaps even in its narrowest definition.

For example, the followers of the famous 10-11th centuries Ḥurāsānian Sufi Abū Sa‘īd b. Abī al-Ḥayr were well organized. Leadership of the order was succeeded by descendants of the founder, just like most of the later Sufi orders.²⁰⁾ The solidity of the way of succession is to be regarded as a requisite for continuous organizations.

Furthermore, the order had branch orders:

When Šayḥ (i.e. Abū Sa‘īd) came back from Nīšāpūr to Mayhana, he gave his green woolen garment to this Šayḥ Bū Naṣr and said, “You should go back to your homeland and put up our flag there.” Šayḥ Bū Naṣr stood up and came to Širwān following Šayḥ’s instruction. He built there a *ḥānqāh*, which still exists and is known by his name. [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 134]

Šayḥ Bū ‘Amr spent three days and nights with our Šayḥ. Then he asked permission to return and visit to the Holy Place and the presence of Šayḥs. Our Šayḥ said, “You should go to Bušhiwān.

19) For example, Baldick [1989: 73-74] rejects the usage of ‘order’ in comparison with Christian monastic orders.

20) For his family, see [Meier 1976: 384-402, 517-525]. For the heredity in Sufi orders in general, see [Yajima 2005].

You are our deputy in the region. ... When he reached Bušhiwān, there was—and now there is his *ḥānqāh*—a chamber which had already been converted into a *ḥānqāh*. Šayḥ Bū ‘Amr settled in the *ḥānqāh*. People of Bušhiwān and region of Nasā came and came together to him. [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 154]

The spread and development through branch orders like this is typical of *ṭarīqas* as Sufi orders.

The order even had stipulated regulations:

Our Šayḥ said to Bū Bakr Mu’addib, “Stand up and bring me an ink bottle and paper so that I may tell you some of the rules and practice of the members of the *ḥānqāh*.” When the ink bottle and paper were brought, our Šayḥ said, “Write as follows: ‘Know that in the practice and rules of the members of the *ḥānqāh* there are ten duties which they should impose upon themselves following the custom of the People of the Bench (*Aṣḥāb-i ṣuffa*). ... Firstly, they should keep their clothes clean. ... Secondly, they should sit in places or spots properly. ... Thirdly, they should perform prayers together at the beginning time. ... Fourthly, they should perform prayers in the night. ... Fifthly, they should perform a lot of asking forgiveness and invocation. ... Sixthly, they should recite the Qur’ān as much as possible in the dawn and not talk until the sun rises. ... Seventhly, they should be occupied in *wird* and *dīkr* between the night prayer and going to bed. ... Eighthly, they should receive the needy, the weak, and anyone who participated with them and take on their burden. ... Ninthly, they should not eat anything without sitting together. ... Tenthly, they should not leave without permission of each other.’” [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 316-317]

Although the existence of regulations is sometimes regarded as a criterion of the emergence of *ṭarīqas* [Baldick 1989: 74-75; Knysh 2000: 175-176], it is noteworthy that stipulated regulations did exist in the Sufi organization in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period.

Thus a Sufi organization which can fairly be regarded as an ‘order’ had been already formed in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period. A similar organization was formed also by Aḥmad of Ğām (d. 1141) and his descendants.²¹⁾ Meanwhile, the contribution of the alleged founders of *ṭarīqas* to the organization of continuous orders is doubtful. It is not beyond dispute whether ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġilānī actually organized Sufis or not, and even whether he was really a Sufi.²²⁾ Although it is indisputable that Nağm al-dīn Kubrá instructed many Sufis at his native Ḥwārazm and his disciples retained the Kubrawī

21) For the organization of Aḥmad of Ğām and his descendants, see [Ando 1994].

22) For the dispute, see [Knysh 2000: 183].

silsila in Central Asia and Iran, there is no evidence that his organization in Ḥwārazm survived his death.²³⁾ Therefore the ‘founders’ of *ṭarīqas* cannot be regarded either as the founders of orders or as the inventors of the style of Sufi order.

4. Formation of Identity

As described above, by the times of the ‘founders’ of *ṭarīqas* the principal elements of *ṭarīqas* was already in existence and there was no essential change in them before and after that period. Therefore the emergence of *ṭarīqas* is to be regarded not as the invention of a new style of Sufism but as the integration of existing elements and their fixation. In addition, the ambiguity of the contribution of the ‘founders’ to the formation of *ṭarīqas* suggests that their substantial foundation was done by later Sufis gradually. These processes were at the same time the formation of the identity of *ṭarīqas*.

Sufis formed the identity of their *ṭarīqa* by distinguishing themselves from others. In the Sufi literature composed in the early formative period of *ṭarīqas* their consciousness of distinction is frequently observed. Nağm al-dīn Kubrā says with confidence, “The number of the ways to God is the same as that of human spirits. Our way which we are about to explain is the nearest way to God” [Nağm al-dīn Kubrā (in Molé 1963): 15]. However, such confidence was not always expressed openly, and most Sufis were cautious when they declared the superiority of their own *ṭarīqas*.

For instance, *Bahğat al-‘asrār* of al-Şaṭṭanawfī (d. 1314), the earliest biographical work on ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġilānī, says:

al-Şayḥ Muḥyī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir was asked, “If someone regards himself as yours but does not take your hand²⁴⁾ nor wear the *ḥirqa* for you, is he regarded as one of your followers?” He answered, “Although it is an unpleasant way, God accepts and forgives the man who joins to me and regards himself as mine. He is regarded as one of my followers. My Lord promised me that my followers, the people of my teaching (*madḥabī*) and everybody who loves me will enter Paradise.” [Şaṭṭanawfī 1330/1912: 100-101]

Thus, while compulsory affiliation is avoided, the superiority of his *ṭarīqa* is still insisted. Similar ambivalent modesty is also found in a treatise of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (d. 1309), one of the early Şāḍilī masters:

23) Nağm al-dīn Kubrā is said to have been martyred in the Mongol invasion. The legendary story of his martyrdom itself is dubious but it is presumable that the disorder brought by the Mongols damaged his organization.

24) In Sufi terminology the phrase ‘to take someone’s hand’ means the formal acceptance of the şayḥ as a guide.

His (i.e. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Šāḍilī's) way (*ṭarīq*) is that of supreme richness and great attainment. He used to say, "The master doesn't seek your obedience (*taba'*). The master seeks your relief." Under his hands grew Maḡribians such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Šiqqilī who was a great faithful person as well as 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥabībī who was a great saint. ... His *ṭarīqa* is connected to al-Šayḥ 'Abd al-Salām b. Mašīš. And al-Šayḥ 'Abd al-Salām is connected to al-Šayḥ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī, then one-by-one to al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. [Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh 1413/1992-3: 90-91]

Thus among the claims of the superiority of the Šāḍilī *ṭarīqa*, abstention from seeking obedience from its disciples is inserted. In declaring the superiority of their own *ṭarīqas* such restraints seem to have been needed. On the contrary, open confidence would have been disliked. In a collection of sayings of 'Alā' al-dawla Simnānī (d. 1336), a famous Kubrawī master, the following complaint of one of his disciples is mentioned:

A *darwīš* began to tell a story about Šayḥ Ṣafī al-dīn who was in Ardabīl and said, "He is compelling us to stay there, always recruiting students and boasting of the abundance of his disciples. He says, 'No one else but me is the master. Everyone must come here to receive my instruction.' " The master (i.e. Simnānī) said, "Our period is a strange one. I have been always seeking news of him and they say that he directs disciples to eat *ḥalāl* food and to do *dīkr* of God. Because of these two ways I favor him." [Siġistānī 1366š./1987-8: 132]

Ṣafī al-dīn of Ardabīl (d. 1334), whose *ṭarīqa* grew into the Safavid dynasty about two centuries later, is regarded as blameworthy for his arrogance and exclusiveness. Although Simnānī speaks in defence of Ṣafī al-dīn for his compensatory virtues instead of criticizing him, Ṣafī al-dīn's exclusionary policy itself was certainly regarded as undesirable.

At first glance these passages seem to be evidence that Sufis at that time weren't so exclusionary about the affiliation of their disciples, but their negative attitude to sectarianism itself suggests that such a tendency was prevalent among the Sufis of the day. Rather, sectarianism was so prevalent that criticism of it was just a suitable expression of their sincerity. Somewhat paradoxically, the anti-exclusionary attitude itself was a method of distinguishing themselves exclusively from other selfishly exclusive *ṭarīqas*. Although such a subtle interpretation of sources may not be beyond dispute, it is in any case undeniable that Sufis at that time were strongly conscious of *ṭarīqas* other than their own. It is nothing other than the manifestation of the identity of the *ṭarīqas*.

In addition, the veneration of the spiritual ancestors, especially the alleged founders, also

seems to have contributed to forming the identity of *ṭarīqas*. No ‘founder’ of a *ṭarīqa* has not been venerated as a saint. Sufis have honored their spiritual ancestors through their mausolea and hagiographies. Rituals dedicated to the founders were significant practices of most *ṭarīqas* and could be more effective in forming their identity than the doctrines which, as mentioned above, did not have distinct originality and consistency. The baseless or quasi-baseless attribution of the founder-ship to the ‘founders’ should be comprehended in this context. Moreover, the ‘benefit (*baraka*)’ of the founders as saints could appear more attractive than the Sufi teachings of the *ṭarīqas*. The Badawiyya (or Aḥmadiyya) typically depends on the veneration of its eponymous founder Aḥmad al-Badawī of Ṭanṭā (d. 1276) as its attraction.

The *silsilas*, schools and organizations in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period had also given identity to Sufis in some degree but neither strictly, nor continuously. As the concept of *ṭarīqa* emerged, the identity converged around *ṭarīqas* integrating the existing elements, and it became popular for Sufis to regard themselves as belonging to certain *ṭarīqas*. The significance of the emergence of *ṭarīqas* in the history of Sufism was in the role of identifying units of Sufis.

Conclusion

The principal elements of *ṭarīqas* have their origins in the pre-*ṭarīqa* period, namely, as far as attested by sources, in the 10th and 11th centuries. The emergence of *ṭarīqas* was not an innovation but a succession, or at best, a promotion of the elements. Most alleged founders of *ṭarīqas* themselves played no substantial role in the formation of the *ṭarīqas*. A more significant role of the ‘founders’ was that of the core of the identity of *ṭarīqas* which were formed later. The early *ṭarīqas* were formed not by the ‘founders’ at one time but gradually by Sufis who identified themselves as their successors. The process was not only the formation of individual *ṭarīqas* but also that of the concept of *ṭarīqa* itself. So the identity, which was attached to the existing elements, is to be regarded as yet another ‘origin’ of *ṭarīqas*.

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