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The Tariqa's Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

Shaykh Succession in Turkish Sufi Lineages (19th and 20th Centuries): Conflicts, Reforms and Transmission of Spiritual Enlightenment

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Abstract

This article examines the question of the succession of the Sufi shaykhs as heads of a lodge (*tekke*) or as great masters of a lineage (brotherhood) in the Ottoman Empire in 19th and 20th centuries and shows that there was an important difference between the rule of hereditary succession followed by the tekkes from the beginning of Ottoman history to the classical period (16th-17th century) and the same rule which spread in the 19th century. This study investigates the two principles upon which the legitimacy for succession is established and the heated controversies and quarrels around it. These two principles are: 1. hereditary succession (*evladiyet* in Ottoman Turkish), which was in general the rule within Sufis orders; and, 2. succession by discipleship, on grounds of learning or other merits. This study demonstrates that the principle of hereditary succession was well cultivated in the Centralized Sufi Orders (Mevleviye, and Bektaşiye) and in some Mother-Lodges of other lineages (e.g. Kâdiriye), and that there were some famous Sufi families which had strengthened this principle and became genuine spiritual dynasties (e.g. Mevlevî, Halvetî). Conversely, some Sufi lineages, like the Nakşibendiye, were inclined to favour the succession by discipleship. The second section of this study focuses on the drastic contestation of the principle of hereditary succession by open-minded and reformist Sufis since the beginning of the 19th century and particularly in the first decades of the 20th century. It analyses the reform of the hereditary succession, especially the measures adopted by several organisations, like the "Council of Shaykhs" (Meclis-i Meşayih) in the mid-19th century, and the project, never implemented, of a "Sufi School" (Medresetü'l-Meşayih) for the education of the sons of the Shaykhs in the beginning of the 20th century.

1. Hereditary Succession *versus* Discipleship Succession among the Ottomans. An overview

From ancient times the legitimacy of the succession of an Ottoman Sufi shaykh, as the head of a lineage or of a lodge (*tekke*) was based upon two principles; the first was hereditary succession

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(*evlâdiye/evlâdiyet* in Ottoman Turkish) which was in general the rule within Sufis orders. It implied that a son succeeded his father. Also there was what I label an "indirect hereditary succession," when a shaykh is succeeded by one of his brothers, or by a descendant of a former shaykh of the tekke (grandson, *hafîd*) or by his son-in-law (*damad*). The second principle was the succession by discipleship (*halife*), on the grounds of learning or other merits, or if the shaykh had no child. Discipleship succession usually equated with "spiritual succession" (as opposed to "physical succession") since the new shaykh was in most of the cases one of the best disciples (*halife*) of the late shaykh from whom he had received the *baraka* (spiritual blessing or mystical power). So *baraka* can be passed on from a shaykh to a disciple in a legitimacy-preserving way as it is from a shaykh to his son.

Hereditary succession is legitimised by: (1) the connection of the shaykh-family with the Prophet for the shaykh is considered an heir of Muhammad; (2) the saintly character of the founder of the tekke and of all his descendants; (3) the transmission of the mystical power (*baraka*) which is inherited by the son of the shaykh and transmitted to all his descendants. I should also mention the case of Uwaysî shaykhs (quite rare), initiated by a dead shaykh through their dreams. However, this phenomenon is negated by some major shaykhs like Ahmad Sirhindî (17th century) who advocated initiation by a living shaykh [Buehler 1998: 93].

If we look at the *silsila* (line of succession) of several tekkes of the Ottoman Empire, we notice that although hereditary succession was in general the rule from the beginning, usually stipulated in the *vakfiye* (foundation deed) of the tekke,[1] succession by discipleship was respected by an important number of tekkes. However a lot of tekkes in the course of the centuries have moved frequently from one principle to the other. The reasons for this are varied and unknown in almost all the cases when we don't have detailed biographies of the shaykhs. Actually, the majority of the tekkes belong to this last category. I think that several tekkes would have loved to have followed one of these two principles permanently but they were unable to defend their choice and shifted continuously, over time, from one principal to the other. Conversely, the tekkes which had adhered to the same principle from the beginning up to 1925 are worthy of interest and we must investigate their history and lineage.

The researches I have made on the *silsila* of some tekkes of the major Sufi brotherhoods and on Sufi biographies led me to develop a set of remarks and to formulate some hypotheses on the question of the shaykh succession process in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century to the present

1) See for ex. the history of the Ali Baba tekke at Sivas which was directed by a shaykh dynasty for five centuries. [Savaş 1992: 52; Yediyıldız 1980: 160].

day.[2)]

1.1 *Centralized Sufi Orders and Mother-Lodges*

Some orders have adopted a centralized organisation since their origins that has had several effects on the shaykh succession process. This was the case with the Mevleviye order which has actually followed two ways. From its establishment up until the present day, the Mevlevî mother-lodge at Konya has been kept strictly in the hands of the Mevlâna family. However, while the shaykhs of the other *mevlevihane* were appointed by the head of the lineage (*çelebi*), it is surprising to see that several *mevlevihane* have, for brief periods, followed the principle of hereditary succession, particularly in the last decades of the 19th century (the best example is the tekke of Yenikapı, Istanbul, which respected the principle of succession by discipleship from the beginning of 17th century to the end of 18th, and then followed the principle of hereditary succession from this date to the beginning of 20th century). This is remarkable because the Mevleviye was the only order in which talented shaykhs could become the shaykhs of several tekkes, one after the other, during their lifetimes. It was something like a professional career and these competent shaykhs were appointed by the *çelebi* to the more prestigious *mevlevihane* of the Empire, usually starting in a little town and achieving their career goal in the great mother-lodges (*asitane*) like Alep, Afyon, Gelibolu or Istanbul.

Furthermore, at the end of the 19th century, some *mevlevihane* (in Manisa for ex.) were special places where future *çelebi* were enrolled to study the way to rule a Sufi lodge before being initiated as the head of order [Tezcan 1984; Küçük 2003: 210-212].[3)] This means that it should have been quite difficult in general for a shaykh dynasty to take control of a *mevlevihane* for centuries (unless this family was close to the *çelebi*, and with the exception of several lesser *mevlevihane* founded in 19th century[4)]). This is confirmed by the fact that the mother-lodge of Konya had the authority to change the principle of succession followed in a *mevlevihane*. This is exemplified by the *mevlevihane* of Gaziantep whose *vakfiye* stipulated that its *postnişin* must be descendants of the founder; a condition which had been abolished by the *çelebi* by the end of the 19th century [Küçük 2003: 272].

The Kâdirîhâne of Istanbul (mother-lodge of the Rûmiye sub-order of the Kâdiriye), founded by İsmâ'il Rûmî in 17th century, was also a centralized institution, which appointed the Kâdirî shaykhs (Rûmî branch) of the whole Empire. İsmâ'il Rûmî died without a son and his successor, Halîl Efendi (himself a disciple of Rûmî's master in Baghdad), married Rûmî's daughter. From that time the

2) My analysis of these tekke *silsila* is based on [Tabûbzâde Derviş Mehmed Şükrî İbn İsmâil 1995; Zâkir Şükrî Efendi 1980]. Shaykhs' biographies are quoted below.

3) The appointment by a shaykh of his son in another tekke in order that he learn this job before succeeding him is a tradition cultivated in some other tarikas.

4) For ex. the tekke of Hanya (Creta, Greece); see [Kara İ. 1997].

Kâdirîhâne adhered to the hereditary principle and has been directed up to the present day by Halil's descendants. We should like here to mention that the famous "Bayt al-Jîlânî" in Hama (Syria) and the mother-lodge of the Kâdiriye in Baghdad have also strictly respected the principle of hereditary succession from their founding up to the present time.[5)]

The situation is totally different with the Bektaşiye order, even though it also had a centralized administration represented by a mother-lodge in the village of Hacıbektaş (Central Anatolia). In fact, the administration of this mother-lodge was divided between the Bektaşi master, the Dede, and a *çelebi* who had authority over the Kızılbaş/Turkomans (then Alevi) tribes in the rural districts of the country. The *çelebi* lineage—which is not a Sufi order—strictly respected the hereditary principle as the *çelebi* claimed descent from Hacı Bektaş, the founder of the lineage. In contrast, the Dedebaba lineage (Bektaşiye) asserted that Hacı Bektaş had no descendants other than "children of the spiritual way" (*yol evlâdı*), and adopted the rule of celibacy. So the leaders of this tarikat to which all the bektaşî tekke of the Empire were linked only respected the principle of succession by discipleship. In the 19th century the Bektaşi tekkes were directed in general by shaykhs appointed by the Dede, but several of them fell under the direction of shaykh dynasties. Hereditary succession (precisely male succession) was clearly defended in the *vakfiye* of the Bektaşi tekke of Izmir (Karadut Tekkesi) in 1875: "from male sons to male sons..." (*evlâd-ı zükûrumun evlad-ı zükûrumdan aslihî postnişin ola*) [Ülker 1987: 25].

1.2 *Other Sufi Orders, Shaykh-Families Strategies*

Some other Ottoman Sufi orders weren't centralized organisations but their mother-lodges sometimes played the role of such an organisation and forced the tekkes linked to them to accept shaykhs that they appointed. The Halvetiye order in general followed both principles of succession (tekke of Kocamustafa Paşa; tekke of Merkez Efendi; tekke Nureddîn Cerrâhi), unlike the Nakşibendiye for example which preferred succession by discipleship (tekke of Ahmed Buhârî), but several of its tekkes also had shaykh dynasties. Regarding the Halvetiye tarikat, one of the most important brotherhoods in Ottoman history from the 16th century to the 20th century, I would like to make some comments related to one of its main tekke, actually the mother-lodge (*asitane*) of the major suborder (Sünbüliye) of this lineage, the tekke of Kocamustafapaşa (16th century). The *silsila* of this tekke followed both principles, sticking with hereditary succession only in the 19th century as did the majority of the tekkes. However, before this period, the hereditary principle never resulted in a shaykh dynasty, as only one or two sons succeeded their fathers. Let me also mention that in the 16th century two

5) See [Khenchelaoui and Zarcone 2000].

shaykhs gave up their positions and left Istanbul [Velikâhyoğlu 1999: 195, 198]. Furthermore it is striking that five shaykhs, before being appointed as shaykhs of Kocamustafapaşa, had been, as a rule, former *postnişin* of the Halveti tekke of Balad Ferruh Kethüdası (Istanbul), and this tradition was respected for more than four centuries [Velikâhyoğlu 1999: 221]. The reason for this close link between these two tekke for such a long time is as yet unanswered: my hypothesis is that the Sünbülî shaykhs wished to have experienced shaykhs as the future shaykhs of their mother-lodge, and decided to select one tekke to fit to this purpose. This must also have been the aim of Merkez Efendi, a great master of this lineage, who appointed his own son, Ahmad, to the tekke of Baba Nakkaş, in order to prepare his son to succeed him [Velikâhyoğlu 1999: 190]. Later, the tekke of Balad Ferruh Kethüdası would have become the place for this instruction.

Obviously, a study of shaykh's biographies will permit us to have a better understanding of the strategies followed by shaykhs, uncles, sons and grandsons to take the control over tekkes during these centuries. For instance, a study by Mustafa Erdoğan of a dynasty of shaykhs which ruled for 180 years (18th-20th century), the *mevlevihane* of Yenikapı (Istanbul), shows that the Konya mother-lodge had continuously supported the shaykh family composed of prestigious and talented Sufi masters, and systematically appointed all his descendants to the function of *postnişin* of this tekke. I should also mention a study of the tekke of İmrahor (Halvetiye order) by Nathalie Clayer and Nicolas Vatin which analyzes in detail the emergence of a shaykh-family in the 19th century in one of the oldest tekke of Istanbul [Clayer and Vatin 1995]. Attention also has to be paid to the extension of the families' networks outside the family circle and towards the other Sufi milieus: let me quote three examples. The first concerns the classical period; Merkez Efendi (16th c.), shaykh of the tekke of Kocamustafapaşa, married the daughter of the tekke of Etyemez (Istanbul) and appointed his son-in-law as shaykh of another tekke [Velikâhyoğlu 1999: 181, 188]. The second example was in the 18th and 19th centuries: the shaykh Ebûbekir Dede (d. 1775) of the Yenikapı *mevlevihane* married the daughter of the shaykh of the *mevlevihane* of Galata; the daughter of Abdülbâkî Nâsır Dede (d. 1821) (Yenikapı *mevlevihane*) married the cook (*aşçıbaşı*—the number two position in the same tekke) [Erdoğan 1998]. And the last example: the shaykh Ahmed Muhyiddin (d. 1901) (Kâdirîhâne, Istanbul) married the daughter of the shaykh of the Halveti tekke of Merkez Efendi [Yücer 2003: 350].

Furthermore there were shaykh-families who had authority over more than one tekke. Such was the case of the Mevlevî Safi Mûsâ family (18th c.). Its first member, Safî Mûsâ Dede, was appointed as shaykh of the *mevlevihane* of Yenikapı, and later to the *mevlevihane* of Galata. His sons and grandsons and one of his sons-in-law succeeded him in both tekkes, and another son became the

shaykh of the *mevlevihane* of Kasımpaşa (Istanbul) [Muslu 2003: 339-343].

1.3 *Observations and Analysis*

Bearing in mind the above comments, I'd like to make the following observations:

— It is quite rare to find a family lineage controlling a tekke from the beginning up to their closure in 1925. From documentary evidence, it is clear that the tekkes were successively controlled by several shaykh-families, one, two or more; the most striking example in Istanbul being that of the old tekke of Koruk, Istanbul (set in the beginning of 16th c.) which has passed through the hands of seven different families.[6)]

— In some tekkes, the move from the principle of hereditary succession to that of discipleship must have been motivated by the absence of any male or female descendants of the last shaykh, in which case a new line was set up by a *halife* of a former shaykh, or by a *halife* of a reputed figure of the tarikat to which the tekke belonged. However, in some cases, this *halife* could have been imposed by the mother-lodge or by a respected contemporary representative of the tarikat.

— Sometimes a tekke following the discipleship principle seemed to adopt the hereditary principle with the "second builder" (*bani-i sani*) of the tekke, considered as a bright figure in the history of the tekke (tekke of Uşşaki; tekke of Emir Buhârî).

— The absence of a dynasty of shaykhs must have been the consequence of the shift of the tekke from one tarikat to another, or from one suborder to another suborder of the same tarikat (ex. the tekke of Emir Buhârî at Fatih which passed from the Nakşibendiye to the Halvetiye).

— Some tarikat were purely hereditary (Mevleviye, Kâdiriye) and others were based strictly on discipleship (Nakşibendiye, Bektaşiye). This fact has affected the way the tekkes linked to these tarikats were ruled, but no necessarily (the mother-lodge of Konya for example usually supported hereditary succession in the *mevlevihane* and permited some shaykhs to set up dynasties, although it wasn't a general rule).

— A new phenomenon occured in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries when the great majority of the

6) See his history in [Zarcone 1994; Clayer 1994].

tekkes adopted the principle of hereditary succession. Furthermore, the creation of the "Council of Shaykhs" (Meclis-i Meşayih) in the mid-19th century, a governmental institution designed to put the tekkes under closer surveillance, brought with it a limitation on the shaykhs' autonomy, appointing and dismissing many of them (see below).

From this I can venture, though tentatively, the following analysis:

— I feel that there is an important difference between the rule of hereditary succession followed by the tekkes from the beginning of Ottoman history to the classical period (16th-17th century) and the same rule which spread in the 19th century. The first period was characterized by the emergence of tarikats ruled by prestigious masters and *halife* whose transmission of baraka was indisputable. At this time, establishing a lineage or a tekke based on hereditary succession implied the institutionalization of a holy lineage and the sons of the shaykhs were still, spiritually speaking, the heirs of their fathers. Quite contrarily, from the end of the 18th century, after Sufism had drastically declined, the new tekke dynasties weren't "saint-families" but "shaykh-families" only. More precisely, the major difference lies in that the founders of these new Sufi dynasties were not "Sufi mystical saints," albeit active propagators of Sufi lineages, bright ulamas and prolific writers, but shaykhs only. For most of them, their origins were not traceable to a lineage or tekke founding-saint. Apart from this, we must also differentiate between the shaykh dynasties themselves at the end of the Ottoman Empire. I would distinguish two categories of family dynasties; the first one is composed of very educated and learned shaykhs (prolific writers, artists and musicians etc.), trained in medrese such as at the *mevlevihane* of Yenikapı or at the tekke of Kocamustafapaşa. The second category is composed of uneducated shaykhs whose names have never or rarely entered the shaykhs' biographies.

— The multiplication of tekkes controlled by shaykh-families in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries must have been a reaction to the decline of Sufism and tarikats, since there were less talented Sufi figures and shaykh-families had a more worldly interest in controlling a tekke, that is the appropriation of a tekke, its ownership and its economic power (some tekkes were very rich institutions). Also the economic situation of the tekkes was, since the beginning of the 19th century under threat because their endowments had fallen under the control of a government ministry. Loosing the control of a tekke for a shaykh-family meant loosing its means of making a living. Previously—as it was pointed out in the *vakfiye*—the shaykhs reserved for their sons and descendants the right to succeed them not only as shaykhs (*postnişin*) of the tekkes, but also as administrators (*mütevelli*) of the *vakıf*. A great

number of the tekkes at this time were identified with a "holy family" rather than with a spiritual lineage. This fact is confirmed by the mixing of the tekke *silsilename* with a family genealogical tree (*seçere*), particularly in the case of minor tekkes (major tekke were closer to the spiritual lineage), like for example the tekke of Şeyh Mehmed Şemsî.[7] The spiritual goal of the tarikat was then eclipsed and replaced by devotion to a holy lineage. This phenomenon reflects a more advanced state of the degradation of Sufism.

—According to Trimingham, "the hereditary principle, although it frequently led to the succession of incompetent or worldly men, was an important factor in holding the order together" [Trimingham 1971: 173]. In the Ottoman Empire, we can notice how the Mevleviye and the Kâdiriye-Rûmiye have preserved their unity. On the contrary, some orders like for example the Halvetiye have split up into several suborders since there wasn't any major family to maintain the unity. But what about the tekkes? Confronted by the decline of Sufism and tarikats in the 19th century, was the adoption of hereditary rule also a factor in holding the tekkes together?

A Turkish researcher, Hür Mahmut Yücer, has developed an interesting analysis regarding the implementation of the principle of hereditary succession in the 19th century; he has noticed that some tekkes have strictly followed this principle, while some others put restrictions on its implementation. I agree with him about this. Thus Yücer opposes an "absolute rule of hereditary succession" (*mutlak evlâdiyet*) to a limited one (*mukayyed evlâdiyet*) [Yücer 2003: 88], and asks very relevant questions among which some are worthy of interest: How was the principle of hereditary succession implemented and did every tekke follow the same rule? What was the average of the tekke which didn't respect this principle? Had the sons appointed to the function of shaykh already started to learn how to be a shaykh or were they appointed only after years of study and having been recognized as mastering this job? Was the directorship of the tekke vacant when the son of the defunct shaykh was studying or was it ruled by another Sufi master during this time? etc. All these questions constitute a program of research and show us how complicated this topic is. Attention also has to be paid to the succession quarrels (*post kavgası*) between the successors of a shaykh;[8] in some tekkes the sons were classified according to different factors: for example in the case of a tekke in

7) From Sâmî Gözcüoğlu, "Silsilanâme-yi Ahî ve hulafâ-yı Qâdirî," manuscript 1920-1942, private collection Th. Zarcone (this manuscript belong to a set of other manuscripts coming from the library of the tekke of Şeyh Mehmed Şemsî that I bought from a Turkish bookseller in Istanbul in 1987; all bear the seals of the shaykhs Mehmed Şemsuddîn (d. 1813-14) and Mehmed Muhyiddîn (d. 1862-63).

8) See [Kara M. 2005: 324-325].

Anatolia in the 16th century the sons of the shaykhs were depicted as a "first degree son" and a "second degree son" (*derece-i evvel*, *derece-i sani*) [Savaş 1980: 52]. Regarding the other possible candidates coming from lateral branches of the shaykh-family, they were also categorized as a "son from the female branch" (*evlâd-i inas*) or a "son from the male branch" (*evlâd-i zükûr*) [Savaş 1992: 52].

Further research needs to be done on all the tekkes of the Empire in order to confirm or correct these analyses and to make the points clearer. Several questions are unanswered such as how to determine the exact administrative power of some mother-lodges (tekke of Kocamustafapaşa; tekke of Merkez Efendi, etc.). Furthermore, the detailed study of the biographies of all the shaykhs, of their families, and of prominent shaykh-dynasties will give us greater understanding of the move from one succession principle to the other. So, this chapter is somewhat in the nature of a very provisory analysis rather than the full working out of a theme.

2. Reforming the Hereditary Succession of Shaykhs in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and 20th Centuries

2.1 *The Criticism of the Shaykh Hereditary Succession Principle and Its Reform*

During the 19th century and especially in the beginning of the 20th, Sufism and tekkes experienced a critical period. They were several attempts to reform the Sufi institutions and the principle of the hereditary succession of the shaykh was strongly criticized. There were at least three reasons for this.

Firstly, from outside the Sufi milieu, several modernist thinkers and politics regarded Sufism as an archaic institution and as one of the factors which have led Islam and the Empire into a decline. These thinkers fiercely attacked Sufism and the tekkes particularly in the first decades of 20th century. Let me quote for example Celâ Nûrî İleri (d. 1939), who saw Sufism as "drug and morphine" (*esrar ve morfin*) [Kara M. 1980: 273]. A quite interesting analysis comes from the historian Osman Ergin (1893-1961) who regrets the disappearance of the bright Sufi shaykhs of the Ottoman classic period, and who equated the contemporary ignorant Sufi shaykhs brought to their office through hereditary succession with the third class of ignorant ulamas (*ulema-yi rüsum*). Like the shaykhs, these ulamas were supporting their own sons to enter, even as a child, the career of the medrese. Ergin called this category of uneducated shaykhs, *meşayih-i rüsum*... [Ergin 1977: 232-233, 238].[9] On another hand, Ziya Gökalp (d. 1924) preferred to encourage the shaykhs to read the classical books of Ghazalî and Kusheyrî to help themselves in reforming their tekkes and experiencing the old way of being a Sufi.[10]

Secondly, criticism came from the Sufis themselves, who admitted that Sufism had entered a

9) On the expression *ulema-yi rüsûm*, see [Pakalın 1983: 544].
10) In his article "Tekkeler" (1909), transliterated in [Kara M. 2002: 57-58].

dark age. In the first decades of the 20th century, Hüseyin Vassaf (d. 1929), a prolific writer on tekke history and a Sufi shaykh himself, emphasized the decline of Sufism and of the tekkes which had lost their social, religious, moral and artistic influence on Ottoman society; "Nowadays, he said, every thing has disappeared except the formal performance of rituals" (*Elyevm bir takım usullerin icra-yı suriyesinde başka bir şey kalmadı*) [Vassaf 1990: 25]. Consequently, several voices called for a reform of the tekke institution and the method of shaykh succession. It was obviously, I believe, a reaction to the spreading of shaykh-dynasties that were ruling the great majority of the tekkes in the 19th century.

Thirdly, hereditary succession was presented by many authors as one of the main reasons for the decline of Muslim mysticism. In 1913 for ex. Yusuf Ziya, a biographer of the Mevleviye, wrote about Sufi dynasties that were composed of very educated and talented shaykhs, like at the *mevlevihane* of Yenikapı, against dynasties of rapacious and ignorant Sufis. He agrees also that in numerous cases the rule of hereditary succession brought the tarikats to their end [*Yenikapı Mevlevihanesi*. n.d.: 62]. The rule of hereditary succession which was the focus of almost all the critics, Sufis or not, was referred to by the expression *beşik şeyhliği*, "shaykh from the cradle," an expression which is not an exaggeration if we consider, for example, that at the end of the 19th century the shaykh of the *mevlevihane* of Amasya was succeeded by his two-year old son (!) [Küçük 2003: 255] And there are other examples.

The first notable change in the life of the tekke appeared in 1811 when, according to a *ferman* by Sultan Mahmûd II, the endowments (*vakıf*) of the tekkes were brought under the administration of the government (Imperial Ministry of Endowments). At the same time, it was decided that the shaykhs would be appointed by the mother-lodge of the tarikat to which they belonged (actually, the place where the saint of the lineage was buried), with the permission of the Şeyhülislâm. Also, it was stipulated that the candidate to succeed to a shaykh must be competent. The government interferences in the administration of the tekkes continued with two other *ferman* in 1836 and in 1841.[11)]

Then, in 1866, a "Council of Shaykhs" (Meclis-i Meşayih), composed of the most reputable shaykhs of Istanbul, was set up in order to gather all the tekkes of the Empire under a central institution to be responsible before the Şeyhülislâm. The Council was particularly active in the last years of the Empire. Especially, in 1918, it published several memorandum and regulations. Since 1866, the Council has interfered not only in the administration of the tekke and in the appointment of shaykhs, but also in the interpretation of Sufism and in regulating its rituals. The tekkes were

11) For more details see [Kreiser 1985: 88f.; Yücer 2003: 651-660].

divided into "official tekkes" (*tekâya-yı resmiye*) and "private tekkes" (*tekâya-yı hususiye*). The Council reinforced the links of the tekkes to their mother-lodges, called "central tekke" (*merkez tekke*), through which the Council orders and recommendations were implemented. The tekkes fell totally under the control of a centralised and governmental institution. It is striking that the Council of Shaykhs stated that every tekke in the Empire must be represented by a "central tekke," actually a *pir-evi* where the founder of the lineage or of the sub-order of a lineage had his mausoleum. Among these "central tekkes" (their number was 35 in 1881; reduced to 15 in 1915-16) were the major tekkes of the Empire: tekke of Kocamustafapaşa, tekke of Merkez Efendi, Kadirîhane, tekke of Ahmet el-Buhârî, etc. Other tekkes were considered independent of any lineage; this was the case of the five *mevlevihane* of Istanbul and of some tekkes of the Nakşibendiye order, mostly linked to Central Asian or Indian lineages (tekke Özbek and tekke Hindi).[12)]

Among the numerous recommendations and regulations adopted by the Council of Shaykhs, some concerned the appointment of shaykhs and the reform of the principle of hereditary succession. Actually, the Council didn't openly reject this principle, but tried to have it implemented under special conditions.

There is little documentation about the exact policy of the Council regarding the appointment of shaykhs in the second part of the 19th century. We know only that every appointment of a shaykh needed to be accepted by the Council and validated by the Şeyhülislam office (Meşihât). The candidate was obliged to pass an exam in order for the Council to access his knowledge of religious sciences and of the rules and practices of the tarikat (*ulûm-i diniye ve vezaif-i tarikat*) and then he could be proposed for election to a *postnişin* position [Aydın 1998: 99]. Let me remark that in the *vakfiye* (1895-96) of the Bektaşi tekke of Bursa (Ramazan tekkesi) it is mentioned that the *mütevelli* or the administrator (shaykh ?) of the tekke must be elected by the twelve senior dervishes [Kara, M. 1993: 69] (in Bektaşi ritual there are twelve *post* or offices).

From the "Regulation for appointment" (*Tevcih-i Cihad Nizamnamesi*), published in 1913, the candidate for the position of shaykh of a tekke was required to pass an exam (*imtihan*). This exam was composed of several questions dealing with Arabic grammar, articles of faith (*akaid*), prayers (*ibadet*) and Sufi and tarikat etiquette and rules. Moreover, the candidate who planned to be a commentator of hadith (*muhaddis*) or of the *Mathnawî* (*mesnevihân*) had to pass a complementary

12) For more details on the Council of Shaykhs see [Kara, M. 1980: 298-315 (with the texts of all the regulations of the Council, pp. 389-416); Gündüz 1983: 195-196, 203-216; Zarcone 1993: 139-143; Albayrak 1996: vol. V; Aydın 1998: 93-109, 2003; Kara, İ. 2002: 185-214].

exam.[13] For instance, the son of the shaykh of the Halveti tekke of Kocamustafapaşa, Mehmed Razî (1889-1978), successfully passed this exam in 1915 and became shaykh [Velikâhyoğlu 1999: 233]. In other cases, the appointment of shaykhs depended on the status of the tekke to which they belonged; in the case that the tekke was depicted by the Council as an "official tekke," the candidate had to pass the exam to be appointed. In case of a "private tekke," the appointment had to conform to the regulations mentioned in its *vakfiye,* and then all the dervishes of the tekke would elect the new shaykh [Albayrak 1984: 198].

This system of exams set up by the Council of Shaykhs was strongly attacked by a famous Sufi of Bursa, Mehmed Şemsüddîn Misrî (d. 1936), head of the Misrî Tekke and author of several books. His denunciation of this system occurred in 1924 when the medreses were closed by the Turkish Republic and only one year before the tarikats were completely abolished. Misrî noticed that the tekkes were under threat from the medrese teachers (*müderris*), who being without work, tried to be appointed as shaykhs. So Misrî stated, first that the exams imposed by the Council, particularly the exam to determine proficiency in Arabic, while it was not a bad idea, was not the best way to select a shaykh, since the essential requirement for a shaykh is his mystical experience (*ehl-i hal*). Misrî then pointed out that several medrese teachers had obtained false diplomas to be shaykhs and that they were criticizing the traditional shaykhs for their ignorance of Arabic. In their opinion it would have been better to replace the shaykhs with medrese teachers (*müderris*). In opposition to this, Misrî asserted that only the knowledge of Turkish was a requirement for shaykhs, since their disciples were Turks, and because they knew the Sufi traditions (*usûl-i tarikat*) which are written in Turkish by heart and above all because only shaykhs had the ability to teach the "science of mystical experience" (*ilm-i hal*). Misrî also added that several *müderris* were only attracted by the precious properties of the tekkes [Kara M. 2001].

Apart from this, there are some cases where the Council of Shaykhs didn't respect its own regulations and appointed shaykhs without paying attention to the *vakfiye* of the tekke; for example the Nakşibendî tekke of Mustafa İsmet Efendi (Istanbul), which had elected Shaykh Ahıskali Ali Haydar (1870-1960) according to the Council's regulations, saw its decision rejected by the Council under the influence of the Young Turks' government. In his place the Council appointed Shaykh Mustafa Hak, the Unionist deputy of Bursa. The dervishes of the tekke complained without success, and it was only in 1919, after a change of government, that Ahıskali's election was recognized [Albayrak

13) To my knowledge, Sadık Albayrak and Bilgin Aydın are the only historians who have mentioned and made a brief analysis of this regulation [Albayrak 1984: 198-199; Aydın 1998].

1984: 199-203].[14] There was another case in 1909 where the Council acted more as a political body and dismissed the Mevlevî *çelebi* Abdülhalîm to replace him with Veled Çelebi (İzbudak), another member of the Mevlâna family and, more importantly, a Unionist closer to the government. In 1919, after complaints by Abdülhalîm Çelebi, all the shaykhs of the *mevlevihane* of the Empire gathered and elected Abdülhalîm as the new *çelebi* (57 votes for Abdülhalîm against 12 for Veled) [Albayrak 1984: 203-206].[15] In both examples, it appears clearly that the Council was a puppet in the hands of the Young Turks whose aim was to control the Sufis and to appoint sympathizers to their ideas as heads of the tekkes.

2.2 *A "Sufi School" for the Sons of the Shaykhs*

During the Second Constitutional Regime (İkinci Meşrutiyet), two independent Sufi organisations were set up by prominent shaykhs of Istanbul and brought several propositions for the reform of the tekkes and of the Sufi life. Among the propositions of one of these organisations, the "United Sufi Society" (Cemiyet-i Sufiye-i İttihadiye, 1909-10), which was close to the Young Turks, there was a fierce attack on the principle of hereditary succession. Ahmed Muhtar (1871-1955), as the president of this society, stated in the "second general recommendation" of the regulations adopted by the society (published in *Muhibbân*, the journal of the United Sufi Society in 1910) that: "one cannot inherit the position of shaykh in the way that a son inherits tangible goods from his father. Competency and capacity are required. If the son of an educated shaykh doesn't study he will be ignorant. When his father dies, his knowledge of the science will not be passed on to his son, because his science is not in the form of tangible goods, (...) and because the succession is actually a spiritual heritage."[16] Then Muhtar quoted two examples in the history of Sufism to confirm his opinion. He wrote that Şeyh Mansûr el-Betayıhî, the Pole (*Qutub*, supreme spiritual leader) of his time, and uncle of Ahmed Rifa'î (12th century), had preferred to transmit the *hilâfet* to Ahmed Rifa'î instead of his own son. Similarly, Muhtar wrote that Mevlâna appointed Hüssâmeddîn as his successor instead of his own son, Veled, who was to be appointed as *çelebi* only after Hüssâmeddîn's death. Muhtar then concludes, "In the tarikat heritage is indeed spiritual. One cannot obtain privilege by virtue of family ties, age, position, or professional skills. Only competency, capacity and spiritual attainment

14) On the tekke of Mustafa İsmet and Ahıskali Ali Haydar, see [Fatsa 2000: 97-101; Albayrak 1996: vol. 1, 316-317].

15) See also [Gölpınarlı 1983: 177-181].

16) *Meşîhat ve hilâfet emval ve emlak gibi pederden evlâda intikal edemez? Ehliyet ve liyakat ister. Alim bir pederin çocuğu okumazsa cahil kalır. Pederinin vefatiyle ilmi ona intikal etmez.(...) Çünkü hilâfet emr-i manevîdir* ("Cem'iyet-i Sufiye'den," *Muhibbân* 1: 9, 18 (cemaziülevvel 1328/1910): pp. 74-75). This text is edited in modern Turkish in [Kara M. 2005: 240-241].

are acceptable conditions."[17] Obviously, the United Sufi Society advocated the complete suppression of the principle of hereditary succession.

Instead of the suppression of the principle of hereditary succession, the Council of Shaykhs would have preferred, as I have mentioned above, to maintain it under special conditions and, in some cases, to replace it by an election. However, in order to fight one of the main factors for which the principle of hereditary succession has been criticized for centuries, i.e. the "shaykh from the cradle" (*beşik şeyhliği*), some Sufis proposed to set up a special school (Medresetü'l-Meşayih) for the training of the sons of the shaykhs. Its instigator was Celâleddîn Dede (d. 1908), one of the last shaykhs of the *mevlevihane* of Yenikapı. However it was Tahir ül-Mevlevî (1877-1951), a great figure of Turkish Sufism in the 20th century, a Mevlevî shaykh and a prolific writer, who found it useful, 10 years later, to remind his contemporaries who were interested in such a project of the ideas of Celâleddîn Dede. Facing the question of the decline of the tekkes as a result of the full implementation of the principle of hereditary succession, Celâleddîn said: "Although there are several things to be done, we must decide first of all, whether to abolish the hereditary succession of the shaykh (*evlâdiye*), or to open a special school for the education of the sons of the shaykhs." Celâleddîn, himself the member of a shaykh dynasty, then pointed to one of the worse consequences of the abolition of the *evlâdiye*. He said that if the son of a shaykh-family didn't succeed his father, his family would be force to leave the tekke and to start a new life subject to severe financial hardship.[18] So, in his opinion, the first option was unacceptable. Regarding the second option, Celâleddîn proposed that a school should be opened with the financial support of all the tekkes of Istanbul. Its program would be composed of the teaching of Arabic, Persian, Islamic law (*fikh*), doctrine (*akaid*), and Quranic commentaries (*tefsir*). It should also include the reading of the *Fusûsü'l-Hikem* and the *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiye* of Ibn Arabî, of the *Mesnevî* of Rûmî and of other Sufi books, and the studying of the legends of the saints (*menakıb*) and of Sufi terminology (*ıstılahat-ı sufiye*). Concerning the teachers, they should be dervishes or shaykhs or scholars both bright and spiritual. He proposed that the examinations in this school needed to be very rigorous and the pupils, if they succeeded, were to be presented with a diploma (*şehadetname*). Only with this diploma, rather than with a *hilâfetname*, could the son of a shaykh succeed to his father [Tâhir ül-Mevlevî 1914].[19]

The project of creation of this Medresetü'l-Meşayih was presented in several meetings of the

17) *Evet, tarikatta veraset manevîdir. Kurb-i nesli nazar-ı itibara alınmaz. yaşa, başa, mesleğe, mevkiye bakılmaz. Ehliyet ve kabiliyet şart olmakla beraber işaret-i maneviyenin zuhuru de lazımdır* ("Cem'iyet-i Sufiye'den," *Muhibbân* 1: 9, 18 (cemaziülevvel 1328/1910): pp. 74-75).

18) See [Barnes 1986: 94].

19) This article is published in modern Turkish [Aydın 1998: 104-106; Kara M. 2002: 60-61].

Ministry of the Evkaf in presence of the minister Hayrî Bey, of the Şeyhülislâm Mûsa Kazîm and the head of the Council of Shaykhs and of other shaykhs and representatives of the Ministry of Education. Celâleddîn's main idea was accepted: only the young men who graduated from such a school with a *şehadetname* could be appointed as shaykh of a tekke, but no final decision was taken and the project was soon abandoned.

An article published in the journal *Ceride-i Sufiye*, which reflected the opinion of a group of Sufis, criticized the idea of a "School of Shaykhs" and advised the minister of the Evkaf to be cautious in supporting such a project. The writer of this article agrees that "the wrong principle of hereditary succession was the major obstacle for the dissemination of knowledge" (*Evlâdiye usûl-ı sakimi bizde neşr-i irfana en birinci engel olmuştur*), but he added that the students registered in this school would learn only a "knowledge for fit for the garbage dumps and the science of the ignorant" and that "all the images drawn by his intelligence and the letters written with the ink of his thoughts would be cleaned by the water of oblivion." The writer was implying here, "If this student were to become a gnostic!" (*'ârif-i billâh*). This last sentence was ironic since actually the writer didn't really think that this was possible. More, in his opinion, the idea of a "school of Sufism" was quite unthinkable (*binaenaleyh tasavvufun mektebi olamaz*) [Tâhir ül-Mevlevî 1913].[20] Celâleddîn, the instigator of the school, didn't ignore this point when he wrote: "Dervishism is not characterized by talk and speech but by spiritual enlightenment" (*dervişlik kalden ziyade halden ibarettir*).

To summarise, to the opponents of the project of the School of Shaykhs, even if the son of a shaykh could be educated as a mulla it didn't mean that he would be made a Sufi shaykh. The reading of Sufi literature and the studying of Sufi rules and principles are but worldly knowledge about Sufism; with this knowledge the student could become a scholar specialized in Sufism but not a shaykh. Otherwise expressed, the school can teach a Sufi leader how to rule a brotherhood and the basis of Sufi literature but it cannot teach them the spiritual blessing (*baraka*) and the way to transmit it. The quality of a spiritual master and head of a tekke could only be obtained through esoteric transmission or by spiritual enlightenment (*hâl*). It would be better to master these two kinds of knowledge.

The shift from discipleship succession to hereditary succession as a consequence of a general decline in Sufism wasn't just an Ottoman phenomenon since it also appeared in the entire Muslim world. Arthur Buehler in his book on the Indian Naqshbandiyya demonstrates how the "directing-shaykhs" had been supplanted by what he calls "mediating shaykhs," that is, "shaykhs who had

20) This text is published in latin script in [Aydın 1998: 108].

abandoned the spiritual practices and display of spiritual energy used by their directing-shaykh predecessors." And, by the beginning of the 20th century, these "mediating shaykhs" had adopted the practice of choosing their lineal descendants as their principal spiritual heirs [Buehler 1998: 187-189], like the Ottomans.

There is no remedy in reforming the tekke or in teaching the sons of the shaykhs in schools influenced by the European educational model with "mediating shaykhs" as teachers. These schools only deal with the intellectual qualifications of the students, not with their spiritual qualifications. That means that there is no other way to teach the displaying of baraka, other than through a "school of initiation," that is to say in a tekke with "directing-shaykhs." But a directing-shaykh is not necessarily an educated shaykh, for in classical Sufism, the real shaykh, the gnostic, could be uneducated, if we consider the example of the Prophet Muhammad who presented himself as unable to read and write (*ümmi*). From this we must conclude that the solution to the problem of the decline of Sufism and of the degeneration of Sufi succession will neither be resolved by reforming the Sufi institutions, the tekke, nor by the education of the sons of the shaykh, as it was pointed by some Ottoman Sufis, but through the transformation of the personality of the shaykh himself; if he is a true shaykh, that is a gnostic or a "directing-shaykh," his sons and/or his disciples (*halife*) will also be real shaykhs and will guarantee the transmission of true spiritual enlightenment (*hal*).

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