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<td>引用</td>
<td>アジア・アフリカ地域研究 = Asian and African Area Studies (2007), 7(1): 5-17</td>
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<td>発行日</td>
<td>2007-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2433/80103">http://hdl.handle.net/2433/80103</a></td>
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The Tariqa’s Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

The Origins of Ɂarīqas

YAJIMA Yoichi*

Abstract

The first Ɂarīqas are said to have been founded in the 12th century by several Sufis. However, the individual aspects of Ɂarīqas such as silsilas, schools and Sufi orders have their origins in the pre-Ɂarīqa period, and the substantial contribution of the alleged founders of early Ɂarīqas to their formation is dubious. Therefore, the emergence of Ɂarīqas 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 Ɂarīqas is the formation of identity. The Ɂarīqas as well as the concept of Ɂarīqa 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, hāl, ḍaḥā, ḍākīr, samā’ and so on.

The Ɂarīqas, formed from the 12th century on, brought another type of diversity to Sufism. The Arabic word Ɂarīqa 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 Ɂarīqa has had a new implication. 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 Ɂarīqas. Therefore, Ɂarīqa in this sense doesn’t mean ‘Sufi’s way’ generally but ‘a specific Sufi’s way’ particularly. Such Ɂarīqas are said to have been founded firstly in the 12th century by

* 矢島洋一, International Research Institute for Studies in Language and Peace, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies
Accepted July 9, 2007
1) This paper is based on my presentation at ‘the Workshop on Sufism, Saint Veneration and Ɂarīqa’ held at Karuizawa in September 21-22, 2005. I am grateful to the participants for their useful comments.
2) For the transformation of the concept of Ɂarīqa, see a simple but appropriate explanation by Knysh [2000: 302].
celebrated figures such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī (d. 1166), Abū al-Naʿīm al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), Abū al-Rifāʿī (d. 1182) and so on, and they are regarded as the founders of the Ṭādiriyya, the Suhrawardiyya, the Rifāʿiyya ṭarīqas respectively. Although scarcity or lack of contemporary sources makes us skeptical about the reality of foundation by these alleged founders, it is generally approved that the ṭarīqa style of Sufism emerged in about the 12th and 13th centuries [Schimmel 1975: 244ff.; Baldick 1989: 69ff.; 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. 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 Silsila

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 Bağdād:

Muḥammad b. Isḥāq said: I read in the handwriting of Abū Muḥammad Ḏaʿfar al-Ḥulḏī, 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-Ḡunayd b. Muḥammad. He told me, “I received from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sarī b. al-Muḡallis al-Saqāṭī. al-Sarī received from Maʿrūf al-Karḥī. Maʿrūf al-Karḥī received from Faqrāl al-Saṅgī. Faqrād received from al-Ḥasan

3) For example, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī’s role in the emergence of the Ṭādiriya 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 Abī al-Naʿīm al-Suhrawardī but his nephew Shāh al-dīn ʿUmar 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].

The expression ‘I received from (ʾahādṭu ‘an),’ with the supposed object ‘instruction’ or ḥirqa (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 Qušayrī’s al-Risāla:


Qušayrī’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 Saʿīd 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 Saʿīd’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. ʿUṯmān (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 ṭarīqa is the Kubrawī one. Maǧd al-dīn Baǧdāḏī (d. 1219), an immediate disciple of the eponymous founder of the Kubrawiyya Naǧm al-dīn Kuḥrā (d. 1221), describes the Kubrawī silsila in one of his treatises:

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5) Dodge [1970: 455-456] erroneously interprets this passage ‘I took [the following list of ascetics].’
6) Qušayrī’s al-Risāla was translated into Persian by his immediate disciple [Tarḡuma-yi Risāla-yi Qušayrīya 1370š./1991-2: 1].
He (i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad) clothed (i.e. gave the ḥirqa to) ‘Alī, and ‘Alī clothed al-Ḥasan al-ʿAṣrārī and Kumayl b. Ziyād, and Kumayl clothed ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd, and he clothed Abū Yaʿqūb al-Ṣūsī, and he clothed Abū Yaʿqūb al-Nahraḡūrī, and he clothed Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṭmān, and he clothed Abū Yaʿqūb al-Ṭabarānī, and he clothed Abū al-Qāsim b. Ramaḍān, and he clothed Abū al-ʿAbbās b. Idrīs, and he clothed Dāwūd b. Muḥammad known as Ḥādīm al-fuqārā’, and he clothed Muḥammad b. Mānkīl, and he clothed Shayḥ al-warī Ismāʿīl al-Qasrī, and he clothed our master Abū al-Ǧannāb Aḥmād b. ʿUmar al-Ṣūfī (i.e. Naḡm al-dīn Kubrā), and he clothed me.

The genealogy (ṭarīqa) of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAṣrārī is more famous because most of the ḥirqās are related to al-Ǧunayd, and he is related to his uncle al-Šarīʿī, and he is related to al-Maʿrūf al-Karḥū, and he to Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī, and he to Ḥābīb al-ʿAḡamī, and he to al-Ḥasan al-ʿAṣrārī.

However, I read the writing of al-Šayḥ al-Imām Ǧihād al-dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar 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-Ǧunayd and after that described only the companionship. Masters other than he fix the ḥirqa and describe the succession of the ḥirqa genealogically (musalsalan) up to the Prophet. [Maḡd al-dīn al-Baḡdādī: ff. 62b-63a.]

As Baḡdādī 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 Baḡdādī other masters such as Ǧihād al-dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī also had their own silsīlas at that time although they are not found in contemporary sources. Thus we can confirm directly or indirectly that the silsīlas of at least some of major early ṭarīqās 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 ṭarīqās. Also as to its function, the fact that multiple affiliation lingered after the period suggests that silsīlas could not be sufficient to fix the belonging of the Sufis. Therefore,

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7) The term ‘companionship (ṣuḥbā)’ means relatively loose master-disciple relationship without succession of ḥirqa.
8) Most of the earliest known silsīlas of ṭarīqās are of the 14th century. The Suhrawardī silsila is found in the Rīḥāla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa [Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 1853-8: v. 2, 48-50]. The Qādirī silsila was recorded by Šams al-dīn al-Dunaysīrī (d. 1356) [Makdisi 1970].
9) For example, a Kubrawī Raʾfī al-dīn ‘Alī Lālā (d. 1244) is said to have received ḥirqas from 124 masters [Ǧāmiʿ 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 tariqa, the formation of tariqa doesn’t mean any particular innovation but merely a continuation of the existing tradition.

2. Diversity of Schools

The second aspect of tariqas 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” [Sulańi 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 (maqъibib)’? Among authors of early Sufi literatures Huğwîrî (d. 1072 or 1076) was the most conscious of it:

Chapter on the differences among their (i.e. Sufis’) sects, schools, sayings, discourses and narratives10)

As I have already mentioned in the account of Abû al-Hasan Nûrî, 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 usul and farî of šarî and tawhîd. ... Therefore, I would like to briefly divide the explanation of that, and explain the basic doctrine of each one. ... Muḥâsâbiyya: followers of Abû ‘Abd Allâh al-Ḥârit b. al-Asad al-Muḥâsibî ... [Huğwîrî 1384h./2006: 267]

The schools enumerated by Huğwîrî are the following: the Muḥâsâbiyya, the Qaṣṣâriyya, the Ṭayfûriyya, the Ġunaydiyya, the Nûriyya, the Sahliyya, the Ḥâkîmiyya, the Ḥârrâziyya, the Ḥafifîyya, the Sayyâriyya and the Ḥulûliyya. All of them except the last one which is derived from the ‘incarnation (bulûl)’ 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-tariqa period of Sufism, and what was more, with the denomination of -iyya type named after their founders, which is very common in later tariqas.

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

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10) The original text of the title of the chapter is as follows: bâb ̊ fi ̊ fâq ̱ fîraqi-him wa-maqlîhibi-him wa-âyâti-him wa-maqâmâtî-him wa-âlkâyâti-him.
‘founders’ of tariqas. Discrepancies between founder and his successors about doctrine and practice are not unusual.\(^\text{11}\) 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.\(^\text{12}\) With exceptions such as the Kubrawiyya, who had the original doctrine about the practice of seclusion (halwa) based on ‘the eight rules’ which has already been described in Kubrá’s treatise,\(^\text{13}\) most of the early tariqas cannot be distinguished from each other according to their founders’ teachings. Therefore most of early ‘founders’ of tariqas 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 tariqa, were used very rarely concerning early tariqas either by themselves or by others. They can be found in sources as early as the 13th century,\(^\text{14}\) but only scarcely even in the 14th century.\(^\text{15}\) The classification of tariqas under the -iyya type names is nothing other than a later innovation. Even in the later period it is quite arbitrary whether branch tariqas are called by newly created names or not.\(^\text{16}\) Therefore, the denomination hardly contributes to understanding the formation of tariqas.

In addition, Sufi teachings weren’t passed on only through silsilas. Literary works by Sufis were read broadly regardless the authors’ tariqas. Works of Abū al-Nağīb al-Suhrawardī and Şihāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī were manuals of not only the Suhrawardī tariqa but also any Sufis.\(^\text{17}\) One of the treatises of Nağm al-dīn Kubrá had its commentators later in the Naqšbandiyya and the Ḥalwatiyya.\(^\text{18}\) Ġalāl 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].
\(^{12}\) Ḍahābī (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 tariqas such as the Tīgāniyya [Radtke 2005].
\(^{14}\) Ibn Ḥallikān (d. 1282) [n.d.: v. 1, 171-172] says, “The group of Sufis known as the Rifa‘iyya and the Baṭṭā‘iḥiyya is related to him (wa-al-lā ḫa al-ma‘ rīфа bi-al-rīфа ḫiyya wa-al-baṭṭā‘iḥiyya min al-fuqarā‘ mansūba ‘ilay-hi).”
\(^{16}\) For example, the Qādiriyya has relatively kept its name while the Ḥalwatiyya has many branch tariqas with original names.
\(^{17}\) For example, see the treatment of them in a Kubrawī treatise [Yaḥyā Bāḥarzī 1345š./1966-7: 357].
\(^{18}\) Kubrá’s al-Usūl al-ʿāṣara, 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-Ḡafūr Lārī (d. 1506) in Persian and a Ḥalwarī (Ḡalwātī) Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursawī (d. 1724) in Ottoman Turkish.
Doctrinal characteristics, or at least tendencies, of ṭariqas did and still do exist. However, it is to be noted that Sufi teachings have always been between assimilation and dissimilation. The ṭariqas 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 ṭariqa 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 ṭariqa period perhaps even in its narrowest definition.

For example, the followers of the famous 10-11th centuries Ḥūrāshānīan 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 Buḥāwān.

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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 Bušjiwān, there was—and now there is his ḥāngāḥ—a chamber which had already been converted into a ḥāngāḥ. Šayḫ Bū ‘Amr settled in the ḥāngāḥ. People of Bušjiwān 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 Šayḫ said to Bū Bakr Muʿaddib, “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 ḥāngāḥ.” When the ink bottle and paper were brought, our Šayḫ said, “Write as follows: ‘Know that in the practice and rules of the members of the ḥāngāḥ there are ten duties which they should impose upon themselves following the custom of the People of the Bench (Aṣḥāb-i ṣuffā). ... 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 Qurʾān as much as possible in the dawn and not talk until the sun rises. ... Seventhly, they should be occupied in Ṽird and ḍikr 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. ... Ninethly, 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 Ġām (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 Aḥd al-Qādir al-Ġilānī actually organized Sufis or not, and even whether he was really a Sufi. 22) Although it is indisputable that Naḡm al-dīn Kubrā instructed many Sufis at his native Ḥwārāzm and his disciples retained the Kubrawī

21) For the organization of Aḥmad of Ġām 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. Therefore the ‘founders’ of ṭariqa 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 ṭariqa the principal elements of ṭariqa was already in existence and there was no essential change in them before and after that period. Therefore the emergence of ṭariqa 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 ṭariqa suggests that their substantial foundation was done by later Sufis gradually. These processes were at the same time the formation of the identity of ṭariqa.

Sufis formed the identity of their ṭariqa by distinguishing themselves from others. In the Sufi literature composed in the early formative period of ṭariqa their consciousness of distinction is frequently observed. Nağm al-dīn Kubrá 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 Kubrá (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 ṭariqa.

For instance, Bahgat al-‘asrār of al-Ṣaṭṭanawfī (d. 1314), the earliest biographical work on ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ǧīlānī, says:

al-Šayḥ Muhḥī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir was asked, “If someone regards himself as yours but does not take your hand nor wear the birqa 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.” [Ṣaṭṭanawfī 1330/1912: 100-101]

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

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23) Nağm al-dīn Kubrá 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 ṣayḥ as a guide.
His (i.e. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṣādiq’s) way (ṣāriq) 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 Maqrīzians such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Siqqilī, who was a great faithful person as well as Abd Allāh al-Ḥabībī who was a great saint. ... His ṣāriqa is connected to al-Ṣayh ‘Abd al-Salām b. Mašīṣ. And al-Ṣayh ‘Abd al-Salām is connected to al-Ṣayh ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Madaṇī, then one-by-one to al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. [Ibn ‘Aṭī‘ Allāh 1413/1992-3: 90-91]

Thus among the claims of the superiority of the Ṣādiqī ṣāriqa, abstention from seeking obedience from its disciples is inserted. In declaring the superiority of their own ṣāriqas 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 darwīsh began to tell a story about Ṣayh Ṣafī al-dīn who was in Ardabil 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 hala‘l food and to do dhikr of God. Because of these two ways I favor him.” [Siģistānī 1366/1987-8: 132]

Ṣafī al-dīn of Ardabil (d. 1334), whose ṣāriqa grew into the Ṣafavid 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 ṣāriqas. 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 ṣāriqas other than their own. It is nothing other than the manifestation of the identity of the ṣāriqas.

In addition, the veneration of the spiritual ancestors, especially the alleged founders, also
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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 Tantā (d. 1276) as its attraction.

The silsila, 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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