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<td>矢島 洋一</td>
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Kyoto University
The Tariqa’s Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

The Origins of Ṭariqas

YAJIMA Yoichi*  

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

The ṭariqas, formed from the 12th century on, brought another type of diversity to Sufism. The Arabic word ṭariqa 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 ṭariqa 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 ṭariqas. Therefore, ṭariqa in this sense doesn’t mean ‘Sufi’s way’ generally but ‘a specific Sufi’s way’ particularly. Such ṭariqas 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
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1) This paper is based on my presentation at ‘the Workshop on Sufism, Saint Veneration and Ṭariqa’ 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 ṭariqa, see a simple but appropriate explanation by Knysh [2000: 302].
celebrated figures such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ǧilānī (d. 1166), Abū al-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), Abīmad al-Rifāʾī (d. 1182) and so on, and they are regarded as the founders of the Qādiriya, the Suhrawardyya, the Rifāʿīyya ʿarāʾiqas 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 ʿarāʾiqa 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 ʿarāʾiqa mean? What were the things which were innovated in the period? The questions are inevitably complicated by the multiplicity of elements composing ʿarāʾiqas. A ʿarāʾiqa 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 ʿarāʾiqas, ʿarāʾiqas in general or individual ʿarāʾiqas, the above mentioned aspects should be treated separately and analytically. In this paper I attempt to reconsider the formation of ʿarāʾiqas in the history of Sufism by examining the origins of above mentioned three elements of ʿarāʾiqas in the pre-ʿarāʾiqa period and comparing them with their conditions after the ‘emergence’ of ʿarāʾiqas.

1. Early Silsilas

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. Isḥāq said: I read in the handwriting of Abū Muḥammad Ṭaʿfar al-Ḥulḍī, 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-Ǧunayd b. Muḥammad. He told me, “I received from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sarī b. al-Muğallis al-Saqaṭī. al-Sarī received from Maʿrūf al-Karḥī. Maʿrūf al-Karḥī received from Farqād al-Sanĝī. Farqād received from al-Hasan

3) For example, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ǧilānī’s role in the emergence of the Qādiriya ʿarāʾiqa 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-Naḡīb al-Suhrawardī but his nephew Shāh al-Ḥin ‘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].

The expression ‘I received from (‘ahḍtu ‘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 (d. 1074)’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 sultan Abū al-Ǧaṭīr 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-Ǧaṭīr (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 [Maḫmūd b. ʿUtḥmān (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 Baḡdādī (d. 1219), an immediate disciple of the eponymous founder of the Kubrawiyya Naǧm al-dīn Kubrá (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 [Tārguma-yi Risāla-yi Qušayrīyya 1376š./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-Ṣūsī, and he clothed Abū Ya’qūb al-Nahraḡūrī, and he clothed Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṯmān, and he clothed Abū Ya’qūb al-Ṭabarī, and he clothed Abū al-Qāsim b. Ramaḍān, 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-Ḡannāb Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Ṣūfī (i.e. Naģm al-dīn Kubrā), and he clothed me.

The genealogy (ṭarīqa) of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is more famous because most of the ḥirqas are related to al-Ḡunayd, and he is related to his uncle al-Sarī, and he is related to al-Maʿrūf al-Karḥī, and he to Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī, and he to Ḥabīb al-ʿ Ağamī, and he to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

However, I read the writing of al-Šayḥ al-Imām Šīhāb al-dīn Abū Ḥafs ‘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-Ḡunayd 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. [Maḡd 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 Šīhāb 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 ṭarīqas 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 ṭarīqas. 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,

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7) The term ‘companionship (ṣuhba)’ means relatively loose master-disciple relationship without succession of ḥirqa.
8) Most of the earliest known silsilas of ṭarīqas are of the 14th century. The Suhrawardī silsila is found in the Rīḥa of Ibn Baṭṭūta [Ibn Baṭṭūta 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 Raḍī al-dīn ‘Alī Lālā (d. 1244) is said to have received ḥirqas from 124 masters [Gāmī 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 ṭarīgas 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 (maḏāhib)? 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 usūl and furūʿ of šarʿ and tawḥīd. ... Therefore, I would like to briefly divide the explanation of that, and explain the basic doctrine of each one. ... Muḥāṣibiyya: followers of Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥāriṭ b. al-Asad al-Muḥāṣibī ... [Huḡwīrī 1384š./2006: 267]

The schools enumerated by Huḡwīrī are the following: the Muḥāṣibiyya, the Qaṣṣāriyya, the Ṭayfūriyya, the Ğunaydiyya, the Nūriyya, the Sahliyya, the Ḥakīmiyya, the Ḥarrāzīyya, the Ḥafīfīyya, 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 ṭarīgas.

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 fāq ḵīrqā-him wa-maḏāhibi-him wa-ayāti-him wa- ʿaṣṣāmāt-him wa-ḥikāyātī-him.
‘founders’ of ṭarīqa. Discrepancies between founder and his successors about doctrine and practice are not unusual.\textsuperscript{11} Even considering the Rīfā‘iyya which is famous for its peculiar and eccentric practices, there is no evidence that its founder Aḥmad al-Rīfā‘ī himself was doing such practices.\textsuperscript{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 Kubrá’s treatise,\textsuperscript{13} most of the early ṭarīqas cannot be distinguished from each other according to their founders’ teachings. Therefore most of early ‘founders’ of ṭarīqa 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,\textsuperscript{14} but only scarcely even in the 14th century.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Sīhāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī were manuals of not only the Suhrawardi ṭarīqa but also any Sufis.\textsuperscript{17} One of the treatises of Nağm al-dīn Kubrá had its commentators later in the Naqšbandiyya and the Ḥalwatiyya.\textsuperscript{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.

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\textsuperscript{11} For example, see [Baldick 1989: 72; Paul 1998: 18-30].
\textsuperscript{12} Ḥaḥābī (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 Rīfā‘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).
\textsuperscript{13} The rules of seclusion was characteristic of the early Kubrawiyya but was later adopted also by other ṭarīqas such as the Tīgāniyya [Radrke 2005].
\textsuperscript{14} Ibn Ḥallikān (d. 1282) [n.d.: v. 1, 171-172] says, “The group of Sufis known as the Rīfā‘iyya and the Baṭā‘ibīyya is related to him (ua-al-lī ifa al-ma‘rīfa bi-al-rīfā‘iyya ua-al-bāṭa‘ibīyya min al-fuqarā‘ mansūba ‘ilayhi).”
\textsuperscript{15} Ḥaḥābī \[1419/1999: 273\] calls Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṣāджīlī “ṣayḥ al-tā‘īfa al-saḥālīyya” and uses also the word “al-Rīfā‘iyya” \[1419/1998: 118\]. But such denominations are not popular in the sources of the 14th century.
\textsuperscript{16} For example, the Ḥaḍāriyya has relatively kept its name while the Ḥalwatiyya has many branch ṭarīqas with original names.
\textsuperscript{17} For example, see the treatment of them in a Kubrawī treatise [Yaḥyā Bāḥārī 1345]/1966-7: 357).
\textsuperscript{18} Kubrá’s al-‘Uṣūl al-aṣāra, 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 (Ḡalwaṭī) Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursawī (d. 1724) in Ottoman Turkish.
Doctrinal characteristics, or at least tendencies, of ṣaḥīḥās did and still do exist. However, it is to be noted that Sufi teachings have always been between assimilation and dissimilation. The ṣaḥīḥās 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 ṣaḥīḥa 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-ṣaḥīḥa 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 Ṣayḥ (i.e. Abū Sa‘īd) came back from Nīšāpūr to Mayhana, he gave his green woolen garment to this Ṣayḥ Bū Naṣr and said, “You should go back to your homeland and put up our flag there.” Ṣayḥ Bū Naṣr stood up and came to Širwān following Ṣayḥ’s instruction. He built there a ḥānqāh, which still exists and is known by his name. [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 134]

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

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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 Bušhiwān, there was—and now there is his hāngāb—a chamber which had already been converted into a hāngāb. Šayh Bū’Amr settled in the hāngāb. 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 ṭariqas 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 hāngāb.” 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 hāngāb there are ten duties which they should impose upon themselves following the custom of the People of the Bench (Aṣḥāb-i suffā). ... 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 Qurān as much as possible in the dawn and not talk until the sun rises. ... Seventhly, they should be occupied in ṭird 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 ṭariqas [Baldick 1989: 74-75; Knysh 2000: 175-176], it is noteworthy that stipulated regulations did exist in the Sufi organization in the pre-ṭariqa period.

Thus a Sufi organization which can fairly be regarded as an ‘order’ had been already formed in the pre-ṭariqa period. A similar organization was formed also by Aḥmad of Gām (d. 1141) and his descendants.21) Meanwhile, the contribution of the alleged founders of ṭariqas to the organization of continuous orders is doubtful. It is not beyond dispute whether ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī 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 Ḥwārāzmf and his disciples retained the Kubrāwī

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

Sufis formed the identity of their tarīqa by distinguishing themselves from others. In the Sufi literature composed in the early formative period of tarīqas their consciousness of distinction is frequently observed. Naḡm 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” [Naḡm 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 tarīqas.

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

al-Šayḥ Muḥyī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir was asked, “If someone regards himself as yours but does not take your hand24 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.” [Šaṭṭanawfī 1330/1912: 100-101]

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

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23) Naḡm 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 šayḥ as a guide.
His (i.e. Abū al-Hasan al-Šādilī’s) way (tarīq) is that of supreme richness and great attainment. He used to say, “The master doesn’t seek your obedience (tabā’). The master seeks your relief.” Under his hands grew Mağribians such as Abū al-Hasan al-Siqqilī who was a great faithful person as well as ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥabībī who was a great saint. ... His tarīqa is connected to al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Salām b. Mašīš. And al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Salām is connected to al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Madānī, then one-by-one to al-Hasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. [Ibn ‘Aṭī’ Allāh 1413/1992-3: 90-91]

Thus among the claims of the superiority of the Šādilī tarīqa, abstention from seeking obedience from its disciples is inserted. In declaring the superiority of their own tarīqas 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 halāl food and to do dhikr of God. Because of these two ways I favor him.” [Siğistānī 1366š./1987-8: 132]

Ṣafī al-dīn of Ardabīl (d. 1334), whose tarīqa 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 tarīqas. 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 tarīqas other than their own. It is nothing other than the manifestation of the identity of the tarīqas.

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 foundership 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 Badawīyya (or Aḥmadiyya) typically depends on the veneration of its eponymous founder Āḥmad al-Badawi of Taḥṭā (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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