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The Tariqa’s Cohesional Power and the Shaykhhood Succession Question

The Origins of Ṭarīqas

YAJIMA Yoichi

Abstract

The first ṭarīqas are said to have been founded in the 12th century by several Sufis. However, the individual aspects of ṭarīqas such as silsilas, schools and Sufi orders have their origins in the pre-ṭarīqa period, and the substantial contribution of the alleged founders of early ṭarīqas to their formation is dubious. Therefore, the emergence of ṭarīqas 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 ṭarīqas is the formation of identity. The ṭarīqas as well as the concept of ṭarīqa itself were formed by Sufis who identified themselves as the successors of the alleged founders.

Introduction

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

The ṭarīqas, formed from the 12th century on, brought another type of diversity to Sufism. The Arabic word ṭarīqa 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 ṭarīqa 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 ṭarīqas. Therefore, ṭarīqa in this sense doesn’t mean ‘Sufi’s way’ generally but ‘a specific Sufi’s way’ particularly. Such ṭarīqas are said to have been founded firstly in the 12th century by...
celebrated figures such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ǧīlānī (d. 1166), Abū al-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), Abīmālīk al-Rifāʿī (d. 1182) and so on, and they are regarded as the founders of the Qādiriyya, the Suhrwardiyya, the Rifāʿīyya ʿarīqa 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 ʿarīqa 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 ʿarīqa mean? What were the things which were innovated in the period? The questions are inevitably complicated by the multiplicity of elements composing ʿarīqa. ʿArīqa 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 ʿarīqa, in general or individual ʿarīqa, the above mentioned aspects should be treated separately and analytically. In this paper I attempt to reconsider the formation of ʿarīqa in the history of Sufism by examining the origins of above mentioned three elements of ʿarīqa in the pre-ʿarīqa period and comparing them with their conditions after the ‘emergence’ of ʿarīqa.

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. ʿIsḥāq said: I read in the handwriting of Abū Muḥammad Gaʿfar al-Ḥuldī, who was one of the leaders of the Sufis and a pious man and an ascetic, and I heard him tell of what I read in his handwriting as follows: I received from Abū al-Qāsim al-Ǧunayd b. Muḥammad. He told me, “I received from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sarī b. al-Muḡallis al-Saqṭī. al-Sarī received from Maʿrūf al-Karḥī. Maʿrūf al-Karḥī received from Faqrād al-Saqqī. Faqrād received from al-Ḥasan

3) For example, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ǧīlānī’s role in the emergence of the Qādiriyya ʿarīqa is either approved or rejected by scholars [Baldick 1989: 71-72; Knysy 2000: 183]. As for the Suhrwardiyya, it is generally accepted that not the alleged founder Abī al-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī but his nephew Shāh ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234) was its actual founder [Trimingham 1971: 34; Baldick 1989: 72; Sobieroj 1997: 784; Knysy 2000: 203].

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

The expression ‘I received from (‘ahdту ʾan),’ with the supposed object ‘instruction’ or āhirqa (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 Sufī 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 Sufī 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 Aṣrār al-tawḥīd and dedicated it to the Ghurid sulṭān Abū al-Fatḥ 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-Ḥaṭḥīb (d. 1109), whose original Arabic version has been lost and only the Persian translation from the 14th century exists today, also contains Kāzarūnī’s silsila [Maḥmūd b. ‘Uṭmān (in Meier 1948): 25-26]. These silsilas also suggest the antiquity of the concept of genealogy in Sufism although their composition dates may leave room for consideration.

In the meantime, the oldest existing silsila composed within a ʿarīqa is the Kubrawī one. Maḡd al-dīn Baḡdādī (d. 1219), an immediate disciple of the eponymous founder of the Kubrawiyya Naḡm al-dīn Kubrā (d. 1221), describes the Kubrawī silsila in one of his treatises:

5) Dodge [1970: 455-456] erroneously interprets this passage ‘I took [the following list of ascetics].’
6) Qušayrī’s al-Risāla was translated into Persian by his immediate disciple [Targhuma-yi Risāla-yi Qušayrīya 1370š./1991-2: 1].
He (i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad) clothed (i.e. gave the ḥiṣaṣ to) ‘Ali, and ‘Alī clothed al-Ḥasan al-Dīghrī and Kumayl b. Ziyād, and Kumayl clothed ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sūsī, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Nahrāǧūrī, and he clothed Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṯmān, and he clothed Abū Ya‘qūb al-Ṭabarānī, and he clothed Abū al-Qāsim b. Ramaḏān, and he clothed Abū al-‘Abbās b. Idrīs, and he clothed Dāwūd b. Muḥammad known as Ḥādim al-fuqara’, and he clothed Muḥammad b. Mānkīl, and he clothed Šayh al-warī Ḫaṣā’il al-Qaṣrī, and he clothed our master Abū al-Qaṣīm al-Ḡannāb Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Ṣūfī (i.e. Naḡm al-dīn Kubrā), and he clothed me.

The genealogy (ṭarīqa) of al-Ḥasan al-Dīghrī is more famous because most of the ḥiṣaṣ are related to al-Ǧūnayd, and he is related to his uncle al-Ṣarī, and he is related to al-Maʿrūf al-Karḥī, and he to Dāwūd al-Ṭāʿī, and he to Ḥabīb al-ʿAḡamī, and he to al-Ḥasan al-Dīghrī.

However, I read the writing of al-Šayh al-Imām Ṣīḥāb al-dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ‘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 ḥiṣaṣ describing the succession of the ḥiṣaṣ up to al-Ǧūnayd and after that described only the companionship.⁷ Masters other than he fix the ḥiṣaṣ and describe the succession of the ḥiṣaṣ 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 Ṣīḥāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī also had their own silsila 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 ṭarīqaṣ 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 ṭarīqaṣ. 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 ḥiṣaṣ.
⁸ Most of the earliest known silsilas of ṭarīqaṣ are of the 14th century. The Suhrawardī silsila is found in the Rīḥla 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 ḥiṣaṣ from 124 masters [Ḡāmī 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” [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 (maṣḥīḥa)? Among authors of early Sufi literatures Huğwirî (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 *usul* and *fard* of *ṣār* 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-Ḥārīt b. al-Asad al-Muḥāṣibī ... [Huğwirî 1384/2006: 267]

The schools enumerated by Huğwirî are the following: the Muḥāṣibiyya, the Qaṣṣāriyya, the Ṭayfūriyya, the Ġunaydiyya, the Nūriyya, the Sahliyya, the Ḥākimiyya, the Ḥarrāziyya, the Ḥafīfīyya, the Sayyāriyya and the Ḫulūliyya. 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-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

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

In addition, Sufi teachings weren’t passed on only through silsilas. Literary works by Sufis were read broadly regardless the authors’ tarīqas. Works of Abū al-Naḡīb al-Suhrawardī and Sīḥāb al-dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī were manuals of not only the Suhrawardī tarīqa but also any Sufis.\(^{17}\) One of the treatises of Naḡm al-dīn Kubrá had its commentators later in the Naqšbandiyya and the Ḥalwatiyya.\(^{18}\) 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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\(^{11}\) For example, see [Baldick 1989: 72; Paul 1998: 18-30].

\(^{12}\) Ǧabahī (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 tarīqas such as the Tāḥāniyya [Raidke 2005].


\(^{16}\) For example, the Qādīriyya has relatively kept its name while the Ḥalwatiyya has many branch tarīqas with original names.

\(^{17}\) For example, see the treatment of them in a Kubrawī treatise [Yaḥyā Bāḥarzī 1345/1966-7: 357].

\(^{18}\) Kubrā’s al-‘Usūl al-‘asara, his most popular treatise, was not only translated into Persian by a Kubrawī ‘Alī Hamadaḏī (d. 1385) but also commented on by a Naqšbandī ‘Abd al-Ḡafūr Lārī (d. 1506) in Persian and a Ḥalwarī (Ḡalwarī) Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursawī (d. 1724) in Ottoman Turkish.
YAJIMA: The Origins of Ṭariqas

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 pre-ṭariqa period perhaps even in its narrowest definition.

For example, the followers of the famous 10-11th centuries Ḥurāšānian Sufi Abū Saʿīd 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 Shayh (i.e. Abū Saʿīd) came back from Nishāpur to Mayhana, he gave his green woolen garment to this Shayh Bū Naṣr and said, “You should go back to your homeland and put up our flag there.” Shayh Bū Naṣr stood up and came to Sirwān following Shayh’s instruction. He built there a ḥānjāh, which still exists and is known by his name. [Muḥammad b. Munawwar 1376š./1997: 134]

Šayh Bū ʿAmr spent three days and nights with our Šayh. Then he asked permission to return and visit to the Holy Place and the presence of Šayh. Our Šayh said, “You should go to Buṣḥiwān.

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 Bušjwān, there was—and now there is his ḥānqāh—a chamber which had already been converted into a ḥānqāh. Šayḥ Bū Ḥamr settled in the ḥānqāh. People of Bušjwān 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 ṭaruqas as Sufi orders. The order even had stipulated regulations:

Our Šayḥ 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 ḥānqāh.” When the ink bottle and paper were brought, our Šayḥ said, “Write as follows: ‘Know that in the practice and rules of the members of the ḥānqāh there are ten duties which they should impose upon themselves following the custom of the People of the Bench (Aṣḥāb-i suffa). ... 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 wīrd 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 ṭaruqas [Baldick 1989: 74-75; Knysh 2000: 175-176], it is noteworthy that stipulated regulations did exist in the Sufi organization in the pre-ṭaruqā period.

Thus a Sufi organization which can fairly be regarded as an ‘order’ had been already formed in the pre-ṭaruqā 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 ṭaruqas to the organization of continuous orders is doubtful. It is not beyond dispute whether ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡilanī 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 Ḥwārazm and his disciples retained the Kubrawī

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 Ḥwārāzm survived his death.²³ Therefore the ‘founders’ of tariqas 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 tariqas the principal elements of tariqas was already in existence and there was no essential change in them before and after that period. Therefore the emergence of tariqas 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 tariqas suggests that their substantial foundation was done by later Sufis gradually. These processes were at the same time the formation of the identity of tariqas.

Sufis formed the identity of their tariqa by distinguishing themselves from others. In the Sufi literature composed in the early formative period of tariqas 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 tariqas.

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

al-Šayḥ Muhāyī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir was asked, “If someone regards himself as yours but does not take your hand ²⁴ nor wear the ḥirqa for you, is he regarded as one of your followers?” He answered, “Although it is an unpleasant way, God accepts and forgives the man who joins to me and regards himself as mine. He is regarded as one of my followers. My Lord promised me that my followers, the people of my teaching (madhābi) and everybody who loves me will enter Paradise.” [Ṣaṭṭanawfī 1330/1912: 100-101]

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

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-Šādīlī’s) way (ṭarīq) is that of supreme richness and great attainment. He used to say, “The master doesn’t seek your obedience (taba’). The master seeks your relief.”

Under his hands grew Maģribians such as Abū al-Hasan al-Šādīlī who was a great faithful person as well as Abūd Allāh al-Ḥabībī who was a great saint. ... His ṭarīqa is connected to al-Šayh ‘Abd al-Salām b. Mašīš. And al-Šayh ‘Abd al-Salām is connected to al-Šayh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī, then one-by-one to al-Ḥasan b. Abī Ṭālib. [Ibn ‘Aṭī Allāh 1413/1992-3: 90-91]

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

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

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

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

In addition, the veneration of the spiritual ancestors, especially the alleged founders, also
seems to have contributed to forming the identity of țariqa. No ‘founder’ of a țariqa 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 țariqas 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 țariqas. 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-țariqa period had also given identity to Sufis in some degree but neither strictly, nor continuously. As the concept of țariqa emerged, the identity converged around țariqas integrating the existing elements, and it became popular for Sufis to regard themselves as belonging to certain țariqas. The significance of the emergence of țariqas in the history of Sufism was in the role of identifying units of Sufis.

Conclusion

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

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