

Tariqas and Benevolent Associations in Early Twentieth-Century Egypt: The Case of the Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria

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Introduction

This paper discusses reformist traits observed in the organization of tariqas (Sufi orders) in early twentieth-century Egypt, by focusing on the tariqa-based benevolent associations that emerged in Egypt, especially after the 1920s. As a case study to consider the issue, it will examine the Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria (Jam‘īya al-Ikhwān al-‘Azmīya bi-Iskandarīya), a benevolent association founded in 1921 by Muḥammad Mādī Abu-l-‘Azā’im (1869–1937), the founder-shaykh of the tariqa al-‘Azmīya al-Shādhilīya.

Early twentieth-century Egypt witnessed both the formation of a nation-state and the rise of an Islamic reformist movement. Given that the main protagonists in the nationalist and reformist movements were emerging intellectuals who had received a modern education, studies of modern Egypt have focused on their reformist thoughts and activities. Little attempt has been made to examine the movements of traditional religious intellectuals and their institutions. They were regarded as “conservative” forces that opposed reform and as not having played any significant role in this period.

However, this reformism/conservatism dichotomy has come to be reconsidered in recent studies, supported by the fact that traditional religious institutions actually went through a major transformation or “reformation.” As for tariqas, an attempt at reform also began in this period, resulting in the emergence of reformist tariqas. The founders of these tariqas were a new type of Sufi shaykh; they were familiar with modern knowledge, technology, and social and political systems, at least to some degree. Moreover, many of them shared reformist ideas with reformers such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935), who were critical of the conditions of Egyptian tariqas. Reformist tariqas were modeled exactly on these founders’ concepts of Sufism, where they attempted to “rationalize” the teachings, rituals, activities, and organizations so that their tariqas could adapt to modernity.¹

The modernizing attempts of these tariqas proved to be a great success. They achieved rapid growth, extending their influence among the emerging urban middle class. Today, they constitute a leading force in a current that might be called “the revival of tariqas,” which became visible after the end of the 1960s.

Taking account of the development of reformist tariqas in twentieth-century Egypt, it is

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¹ For a brief overview of reformist tariqas in Egypt see [Luizard 1991].

important to explore their nature in detail in order to gain an understanding of the continuation and transformation of tariqas in modern Egyptian society. While several anthropological studies have been carried out on the issue, providing a good illustration of their present conditions,² few studies have attempted to identify the factors that led to their emergence or to evaluate their significance in a historical context. As a preliminary analysis of the issue, this paper will focus on the tariqa-based benevolent associations and identify reformist traits in their organization during their formative period. It will also attempt to locate these traits in the context of the social and political situation, comparing them with the Islamic reformist movement, in which socio-political activities based on benevolent associations also played an important role.

I. Formation of the Islamic Benevolent Associations in Egypt

Before addressing the main subject, let us begin with a brief review of the formation of the Islamic benevolent associations and their relations with tariqas in modern Egypt. The benevolent associations were a new form of association that emerged in Egypt in the nineteenth century. Originally introduced by Christian missionaries, they soon permeated among Egyptian intellectuals and politicians, and often served as bases for their social activities. While many of these associations had been Christian- or secular-oriented, some Muslim reformers began to establish their own societies by the end of the nineteenth century.

The first Islamic benevolent association established in Egypt was the Islamic Benevolent Society (al-Jam'īya al-Khayrīya al-Islāmīya) founded in 1878 by 'Abd Allāh al-Nadīm (1843–96) [Ener 2003: 101–102; Hourani 2004]. Although he is generally known for being of the first generation of Egyptian nationalists, Islam was also a focus of his attention. A disciple of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838/9–97), Nadīm shared with his master the idea of anti-imperialism through Muslim solidarity and Islamic reform.³ Viewed in this light, Islamic reform was directly connected with his political purpose and his founding of a benevolent association can be regarded as part of this nationalist project; the Islamic benevolent association was not only to conduct religious benevolence but was expected to serve as a base to spread the idea of reformed Islam and to promote Muslim union. This would enable Egypt to eliminate the moral deterioration and social disruption rampant among the population, which he believed to have been major causes for the degeneration of his country, and to gain enough strength to resist the imperial powers.

2 Beginning with Gilsenan's pioneering work on al-Hāmidīya al-Shādhilīya [Gilsenan 1973], these studies discuss the issue of modernity in tariqas in contemporary Egyptian society [Chih 2000; Hoffman 1995; Johansen 1996; Kisaichi 2006; Luizard 1990; 1991].

3 For the life and thoughts of Nadīm see [Goldschmidt 2000: 146–147; Nadīm 1994: 5–33; Sadgrove 2004; Tawfiq 1954]. See also [Gershoni & Jankowski 1984: 3–20] for an overview of the development of Egyptian nationalism in the late nineteenth century.

This political awareness was shared by other Muslim reformers and inherited by Islamist movements arising in the early twentieth century. This period saw a flourishing of Islamist benevolent associations in Egypt. Their “religious benevolence” actually constituted part of their much more important task of reconstructing Egyptian society based on the ideas of reformed Islam and countering the infiltration of imperialist (i.e. British) influence.

Founders of these associations were generally critical of traditional Islamic institutions, and especially *tariqas*, which, in their view, were responsible for the backwardness of Egyptian society, thus constituting major obstacles for national (or Muslim) independence. Apart from the criticisms aimed at them in terms of doctrines and rituals, one of the major objections worth noting here was that, according to their critics, the *tariqas* did not tackle the social and political problems Egypt was facing. However, it should also be noted that many of these founders had themselves once belonged to *tariqas*, and most critics called not for the elimination of Sufi institutions but for their reform.⁴

Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949), the founder of the Muslim Brothers, was probably the best-known figure. He was affiliated with the *tariqa al-Ḥaṣāfiya al-Shādhilīya*, where he founded the Ḥaṣāfiya Benevolent Society with his colleagues. His founding of a benevolent association inside his *tariqa* indicates that his social activities were initially based within the *tariqa*. Although he established his own organization and eventually broke with his shaykh, Bannā nevertheless had reportedly long sought a way to cooperate with Sufis. It was not until the 1940s that the Muslim Brothers switched its policy and started to attack Sufism.⁵

The case of Ḥasan al-Bannā and his Ḥaṣāfiya Benevolent Society shows that the relationship between the Sufis and the Islamists was somewhat more complicated than generally imagined, and that these new associations could be of service to Sufis. In fact, Ḥaṣāfiya was not the sole case; some source materials and studies reveal that there were other *tariqa*-based associations established in this period.

‘Ashīra Muḥammadīya is a good example of such a *tariqa*-based association. It is a benevolent association of the *tariqa al-Muḥammadīya al-Shādhilīya*, founded in 1930. According to an official synopsis of benevolent associations published in 1956, its mission was to offer social services based on Islamic principles and its program included such operations as relieving poverty and job training [Istiphan 1956: 19–20]. ‘Ashīra Muḥammadīya has continued its operations until the present day. Johansen [1996] analyzed its present condition in his study on the *tariqa al-Muḥammadīya al-Shādhilīya*. According to him, the association has functioned as a base of the *tariqa*’s operations from which the *tariqa* develops its missionary and social activities. In this respect, ‘Ashīra Muḥammadīya is not

4 For *Tariqa* criticism in modern Egypt see [De Jong 1999; 2000b; Hourani 1981; Sirriyeh 1999].

5 For Bannā’s relation with *tariqa al-Ḥaṣāfiya* and later breakup see [De Jong 2000a; Luizard 1990; Mitchell 1993: 2].

just an extra-tariqa association but can be regarded as constituting the foundation of the tariqa itself.

Although their specific details are unknown, some government records reveal the fact that still more tariqa-based associations were founded in this period, such as the Benevolent Society for Construction and Preservation of Mosques and Zawiyas (al-Jam'īya al-Khayrīya li-Binā' al-Masājid wa-l-Zawāyā wa Taṣlīḥ-hā) of al-Jāzūliya al-Shādhilīya [MA539 1935], the Burhāmīya Benevolent Society of al-Burhāmīya [Istiphan 1956: 29–30], the Tariqa Society (Jam'īya al-Ṭuruq al-Ṣūfīya) of al-Rifā'īya [MA206 n.d.] and the Society of the 'Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria which we will discuss below. Considering that little attention has ever been paid to the tariqa-based associations, and thorough research on source materials has not yet been conducted, it seems quite probable that there were actually many more associations founded by Sufis in this period.

II. Muḥammad Māḍī Abu-l-'Azā'im and the Tariqa al-'Azmīya

Muḥammad Māḍī Abu-l-'Azā'im, the founder of the tariqa al-'Azmīya, was unique as a Sufi shaykh in his active commitment to politics and his critical attitude toward some established Sufi teachings and practices. Since these distinct characteristics of a founder are undoubtedly the key to understanding the nature of his tariqa and association, it is necessary first to review his career and thoughts.⁶

Abu-l-'Azā'im was born to a Sharifian family that traced its origin to the Idrīs lineage of Morocco. He himself was born in Rosetta, and then raised in a village near Dasūq. After memorizing the Qur'ān in his village, he went to Cairo, where he studied at both Azhar and Dār al-'Ulūm. Dār al-'Ulūm was a teacher-training school founded in 1871, a modern educational institution that taught subjects such as history, geography, and math, as well as Islamic sciences.

It is said that he took part in the foundation of "al-Mu'ayyad" with his brother Aḥmad (d. 1893) in this period. "al-Mu'ayyad" is reportedly one of the first Islamic periodicals published by Muslim intellectuals. Edited by 'Alī Yūsuf (1863–1913) and supported by the Khedive, the periodical assumed the role of a locus of speech for Muslim intellectuals where both the reform-minded and the conservatives voiced their opinions.

After finishing his studies in Cairo, he worked as a teacher at several government schools, until he took up a teaching post at Gordon College in Khartoum in 1905. However, in 1915, he was banished from Sudan and placed in confinement in a village in Minyā after he expressed his opposition to British administrative policies in Sudan. Opposition to British

⁶ De Jong [2004] provides a concise summary of Abu-l-'Azā'im's career and thoughts along with comprehensive bibliographical data. In this section, apart from De Jong's, the biographical information has been collected from the following materials [Abu-l-'Azā'im 1995: 64; Khafājī n.d.: 170; Luizard 1991: 37; Mujāhid 1955: vol.3, 129; Shaqraf 1986].

rule continued to be his basic political orientation and characterized his socio-political activities throughout his life. After his release in 1916, he established himself in Cairo, where he engaged in various operations. In 1919, he established his printing house, al-Madīna Press (Maṭba‘a al-Madīna al-Munawwara), which circulated his ideas. At the time of the 1919 revolution he supported anti-British organizations, which led to his temporary imprisonment. His active commitment to socio-political movements continued thereafter. He reportedly had connections with several nationalist and Islamist organizations such as the Young Muslims (Jam‘īya al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn) and Young Egypt (Miṣr al-Fatāt). The issue he addressed most eagerly in the 1920s was the caliphate question. Responding to the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, he created an organization called the Society of the Islamic Caliphate in the Nile Valley (Jam‘īya al-Khilāfa al-Islāmīya bi-Wādī al-Nīl) to work for the reinstallation of the caliph.

As for his activities as a Sufi, he was originally affiliated with the tariqa al-Ḥaṣāfiya. It was in 1893 that he first formed his own Sufi group, called the ‘Azā’im Family (Jamā‘a Āl al-‘Azā’im). He gained followers in Egypt and Sudan, and in 1934 his group was officially recognized by the government as an independent tariqa, the tariqa al-‘Azmīya.

His view on Sufism was distinguished by the emphasis he laid upon its ascetic and moral aspects. He advocated basing Sufism on the principles of Islamic Law, discarding deviations found in the teachings and practices of several tariqas. More striking was the stress he put on the social and political roles expected of Sufis. He insisted on Sufis’ active commitment to socio-political issues, in contrast with the reclusive dispositions of many other Sufis.

While these characteristics can be traced in part to the tradition of al-Shādhilīya, in which the worldly life is not neglected, we can also locate their significance in relation to Islamic reformism. One of the major criticisms of Sufism made by reformers was that its deviations and reclusiveness led to immorality and quietism among Muslims and weakened their community. Abu-l-‘Azā’im, a strong opponent of British rule, clearly shared this sense of crisis with reformers, and his stress on morality and socio-political commitment can be regarded as a Sufi’s response to these criticisms. His founding of a benevolent association should be considered in this context.

III. The Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria

The Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria is a benevolent association founded by Abu-l-‘Azā’im in 1921. A document drawn up at the time of its foundation and submitted to the government is preserved in the Egyptian National Archives in Cairo [MA206 1921]. This document, entitled “Fundamental Code (*Qānūn Asāsī*),” actually contains the Society’s basic idea, its aim, its activities, its regulations, a list of its commissioners, and a memorandum of its first meeting. Using this document, some distinct features of this association will be

examined in this chapter.

The document can be divided into three parts according to its contents. The first part is effectively the Society's manifesto, conveying its basic mission. According to the manifesto, the Society was based on the principles of the precepts of the Law (*aḥkām shar'īya*) and Islamic sciences (*'ulūm al-dīn*). Moreover, the members were required to follow several orders (*niẓām*), which were divided into six principles (*uṣūl*) and five etiquettes (*ādāb*). The six principles were, in order, avoiding a full stomach (*jū'*), solitude (*'uzla*), silence (*ṣamt*), sleeplessness (*sahar*), adherence to the shaykh (*malāzima*), and full trust in the shaykh's insight.⁷ Five etiquettes were concerned with five rights (*ḥaqq*) vested respectively in God, the shaykh, brothers, all Muslims, and individuals. These principles and etiquettes are precisely the Sufi ethics also clearly mentioned in the document as "Sufi principles (*uṣūl al-ṣūfiyya*)."⁸ Considering that membership was limited to members of the tariqa al-'Azmīya, as will be mentioned below, it is quite possible that one of the major purposes of the Society was actually to provide Sufi guidance for disciples.

In the second part of the document, the Society's organization and administration are stipulated in the form of regulations consisting of twenty articles.⁸

Firstly, concerning the Society's aim, Article 2 states that "its operations are religious benevolence (*khayrīya dīnīya*) under the supervision of our guide al-Sayyid Muḥammad Māḍī Abu-l-'Azā'im, the pious scholar. None of them are concerned with politics." Article 3 concerns membership, stipulating that only the members of the tariqa al-'Azmīya should be allowed to join the Society.

Articles 5 to 7 concern finance. The major resources were from membership fees; each member was required to pay 50 milliemes per month. Considering the prices in Egypt during this period, 50 milliemes was a fairly small amount. This pricing suggests that its targets were not restricted to some chosen elites but that it collected members from among ordinary disciples. Besides the membership fees, the Society called for contributions from both members and non-members. These revenues were first sent to the shaykh (Abu-l-'Azā'im), who checked the amount and decided how to use them. How the money should be used was specified in Article 6, which states that the revenues are to be spent on "benevolent operations" such as supporting the destitute among the members or for the promotion of the tariqa. In Article 7, the allocation of the revenues is stipulated in detail. First, one-fourth of the revenues should be saved as the Society's fund. The remainder was to be spent on activities such as operating expenses, the purchase of Abu-l-'Azā'im's books, supporting the destitute among the members, and the preservation of Abu-l-'Azā'im's mosque.

Article 8 and the remaining articles are concerned with organization and administration.

⁷ Although no specific term is mentioned in the text, it probably means "*tawakkul*."

⁸ See appendix for full translation of regulations.

Article 8 mentions the general assembly that all members were expected to attend. It was to be held once a year to conduct matters such as elections to the executive committee, an audit of the management of the Society's business, and the approval of the budget.

Article 9 discusses the executive committee that directs the Society. The committee consisted of the president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, subscription collector, and six other members. Commissioners were elected at the general assembly, except for the president, who was appointed by the shaykh. Their term of office was one year. The committee worked as an administrative body of the Society, but it is also worth noting that their operations included supervision of *dhikr* sessions (*ḥaḍra*), the core of the tariqa's activity.

The third part of the document is a memorandum of the first, or inaugural, meeting of the Society. The meeting was chaired by Abu-l-ʿAzā'im and attended by senior members of the tariqa residing in Alexandria. The meeting seems to have been an extension of a usual Sufi session, as it started with a sermon delivered by the shaykh and concluded with a reading of the *wird*. In addition, it is worth mentioning that there was a supplication to God at the end of the meeting, in which they prayed for the annihilation of Britain and France. While the Society was by no means a political organization, we can observe here a clear expression of Abu-l-ʿAzā'im's political orientation.

Analysis

We have given an overview of the contents of the "Fundamental Code" of the ʿAzmīya Brothers thus far. Now let us consider the nature of the Society. The first point to discuss is the relationship between the Society and the tariqa. While it was defined as a benevolent association distinct from the tariqa itself, it is assumed that the Society was meant to be a de facto body of the Alexandria branch of the tariqa al-ʿAzmīya. This is suggested by several stipulations. For example, the membership was limited to disciples of the tariqa. Furthermore, the Society's operations included Sufi guidance and supervision of its rituals. Finally, its "benevolence" was, in actuality, exclusively concerned with matters related to the tariqa.

The second point to consider is its organization. The regulations suggest that the Society possessed, or claimed to possess, a highly centralized and hierarchical structure, a hallmark of modern organizations. The shaykh was not only the spiritual guide for disciples, he was also the administrator of the organization and invested with substantial power. The shaykh appointed the president, and he was the final decision-maker on such matters as managing the Society's assets. Below the shaykh came senior members who formed the executive body under his command. The commissioners were allocated to various functions so that they could operate the organization systematically. It should also be noted that this structure and these functions were clearly stipulated in the form of regulations.

Conclusion

The case of the ‘Azmīya Brothers illustrates that the transformation of a tariqa into a modern organization was evident (or at least in the process of being undertaken) as early as the 1920s. As far as its “Fundamental Code” was concerned, the ‘Azmīya Brothers was a highly centralized organization in which power was concentrated in the hands of the shaykh. It was also a systematically managed organization, where a clear distinction existed between lay members and executives, and their respective roles within the organization were precisely defined. By having this Society virtually function as “a body” of the tariqa, the Alexandria branch of ‘Azmīya itself could transform into a similar modern organization.

In the conclusion, I will attempt to describe the factors that generated this phenomenon by examining the historical background.

First, we should not overlook the fact that such a modern organization was not a novel idea in Egypt at all, for it had already been adopted in governmental administration and social institutions by the end of the nineteenth century. Religious institutions such as Azhar, waqf and tariqas too were no exception, for institutional reform in these fields had also been carried out at the end of the nineteenth century, reorganizing them into highly centralized and hierarchical administrations. As for tariqas, the reform conducted from 1895 to 1905 created an administrative body called the Sufi Council (al-Majlis al-Şūfī), which consisted of commissioners elected from among Sufi shaykhs and a president appointed by the Khedive [De Jong 1978]. In this respect, this modern organization was not an unfamiliar system even for Sufis. In addition, considering Abu-l-‘Azā’im received a modern education as well as a religious education and he built his career as a teacher at government schools, it is quite likely that he himself was fully acquainted with modern administrative practices.

Another and more important factor can be detected in the criticism of Sufism leveled by Muslim reformers in this period. As mentioned above, one of the major criticisms was the reclusive nature of Sufism, which had resulted in Sufis’ non-commitment regarding socio-political issues. While many reformers originally belonged to tariqas, they finally left them and established their own associations. The new associations were more suitable as bases for their socio-political activities than the “old” associations, or the tariqas, because they were more adapted to modern society in their organization and operations.

Turning to the ideas and activities of such reformist Sufis as Abu-l-‘Azā’im, we recognize common characteristics with those “non-Sufi” (or “ex-Sufi”) reformers. He was also critical of the reclusiveness of contemporary Sufis, and he himself had actively tackled the socio-political issues at stake. As described above, he also committed himself to several benevolent associations and political groups. On the other hand, he was different from other reformers, in that he had been a Sufi shaykh and that the tariqa had served as one of the bases of his operations to the end. Therefore, it was not an option for him to discard his tariqa as

other reformers had done. Instead, the task facing him was to transform his *tariqa* into a more suitable base for his socio-political activities. Viewed in this context, his founding of the ‘Azmīya Brothers can be understood as an attempt to apply the system of modern organization to the “old” *tariqa* association. This he undertook by creating a benevolent association “inside” his *tariqa*, identifying the former as the nucleus of the latter.

Appendix

The Fundamental Code of the Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria⁹

Article 1: Name of the Society

It is called the Society of the ‘Azmīya Brothers in Alexandria.

Article 2: Operations

Its operations are religious benevolence under the supervision of our guide al-Sayyid Muḥammad Māḍī Abu-l-‘Azā’im, the pious scholar. None of them are concerned with politics.

Article 3: Its Members

Its members consist of those among the sons of the Way (*ṭarīq*) of al-‘Azā’im Family (Āl al-‘Azā’im) who have volunteered to help the Society’s operations and the spread of the Way with their property, words, and conditions.

Article 4: Affiliation

Applications for admission to the membership of the Society should be submitted to the president of the Society in order to inquire into the applicant before his incorporation into the membership. It is necessary for him to specify his name, his address, and his work in his application. He must promise in his application to be obedient and observe the moral behavior of the Way, as well as his oath (‘*ahd*’) to the guide, by accepting his service as a member of the Society and observing the Code [both] physically and morally.

Article 5: Monthly Fees

The rate of the subscription to the Society is fifty milliemes (*malīm*)¹⁰ per month. It should be paid by handing it over to the treasurer voluntarily. Those who are delayed in payment for two months will be asked for it in writing. If he is delayed [in payment] for a third month, he will be warned that he will be dismissed and his name removed from the membership. Those who wish to resign should submit the request to the president; otherwise,

9 Translation of regulations of the Fundamental Code from the Arabic text.

10 Millieme was the currency unit, equivalent in value to one thousandth of a pound.

he is requested [to pay] the subscription in the third month.

Article 6: Donations

The Society accepts every donation that is offered to the Society by its members, or by the brothers of the Way, or by the public, for the sake of supporting its benevolent operations. [It is suitable for them to make a donation] if they wish to make an interest-free loan to God or to gain His favor, glory be to Him, by offering alms (*zakā*) from their properties, their charities (*ṣadaqāt*), or their votive offerings (*nudhūr*) that are of help for the destitute of the Way of al-‘Azā’im Family and for the spread of the Way. These benefactions will be reserved at the order of our guide Abu-l-‘Azā’im, may God lengthen his life, through his knowledge of their legal aspects.

Article 7: Expenditures

[As for income] collected as monthly fees and benevolent donations——besides offering alms (*zakā*) from properties, votive offerings (*nudhūr*), and private charities (*ṣadaqāt*)——one quarter should always be preserved as savings in the treasury. The remainder will be spent for the following matters in accordance with the decision of the executive committee.

Firstly, the operations of the center of the administration; [its use] will be decided by the executive committee.

Secondly, the purchase of the publications of our guide al-Sayyid Muḥammad Māḍī Abu-l-‘Azā’im and their distribution to the brothers and disciples (*murīds*), or bearing part of their cost.

Thirdly, providing aid for the destitute among the brothers and those in trouble, as far as the state of the treasury allows it and the required conditions [are met].

Fourthly, providing aid for [construction and preservation of] the general mosque for the dispersed brothers of al-‘Azā’im Family under the patronage of the great master and our guide Abu-l-‘Azā’im.

Fifthly, as for alms from properties, votive offerings, and private charities sent to our master, Imam and guide, he will spend them in accordance with their legal principles as clarified in the Qur’ān and *Sunna*.

Article 8: The General Assembly

It is the general committee and consists of the whole membership of the Society. Its operations are holding yearly elections, inspection of all projects and carrying out an audit of the budgets. It is permissible to hold the meeting on a date other than that appointed in the Code, if necessary. The invitation in writing [to the extra meeting should be sent] by the president of the Society and include the agenda which members will gather [to discuss]. The

invitation must be delivered to the whole membership one week prior to the meeting. Its decisions will be effective if [at least] half of the members attend and unless it is postponed for two weeks; [if fewer than half attend, the meeting will be postponed for two weeks. The decisions of this second meeting] will be valid however few [members] attend.

Article 9: The Executive Committee

The executive committee consists of the president of the Society, the vice-president, the treasurer and eight other members, among them the secretary and the subscription collector. They are elected [and assume the position] for the term of one year. The operations of the committee are the administration of finances and temporary matters, establishment of orders, supervision of meetings (*majālis*) of the Way and its sessions (*ḥaḍrāt*), and the election and appointment of persons in charge of the offices.

Article 10: President of the Society

His work is to implement the decisions [of the executive committee], to forward formal legal opinions (*fatāwā*) to all within the Society and to represent the Great Master, the brothers and the Society administratively.

Article 11: Vice-President of the Society

He is responsible for [the operation of] the executive committee. He will undertake the work of the president in case of the president's absence, and will support his duties when he is present.

Article 12: Treasurer

He is elected from among the members of the executive committee and will be under the supervision of this committee. He will support the subscription collector in his work.

Article 13: Secretary

He is elected from among the members of the committee and is concerned with clerical work for the implementation [of the decisions of the committee].

Article 14: Deputies (*mumaththilūna*) of the Great Teacher

The executive committee will choose deputies from among scholars (*'ulamā'*), teachers (*mudarrisūna*), guides (*murshidūna*) and preachers (*wu'āz*). [They will receive] sanction from the master to represent him [i.e. Abu-l-'Azā'im].

Article 15: Chiefs (*nuqabā'*)

They are leaders of *dhikr* sessions (*ḥaḍrāt al-adhkār*) and their reciters (*qurrā'*) from

whom the brothers hear *qaṣīdas* of the master and guide. They are chosen by the brothers, sanctioned by the executive committee, and informed [of their appointment] by the president. The president should also direct them to be godly, sincere, and diligent.

Article 16: Assignments

The executive committee should instruct every person on assignment of their duty, orally or in writing, through the president and arrange the required orders for that.

Article 17: Meetings

The executive committee should meet every two weeks. Its decisions will be effective with the presence of half of the members. If [both] the president and the vice-president are absent, the most senior of the members in age and virtue will represent them.

Article 18: Decisions

Decisions should be put into effect if the committee agrees to them with the recognition of an absolute majority. If the voices [of approval and disapproval] are equally divided, [the judgment] given by the president will have the highest priority. The decisions of the committee should be recorded in a private register.

Article 19: Consultation

Every inquiry concerning problems of the Way that one of the brothers of al-‘Azā’im family or members of the Society make should be submitted to the president and, according to the necessity, should be transmitted either to the presence of ‘*ulamā*’ who are the deputies of the Master or to the Master directly.

Article 20: Infringements

[As for] every member who brings up any matter offensive to the Way or the Code, or any matter that the committee regards as inconsistent with general moral behavior or as harmful to the welfare of the Way and the Society, the committee shall inquire into this matter and take every measure that it regards as necessary for him, such as a spiritual remedy or moral cultivation or submitting this matter to our Imam and guide, may God be pleased with him, to cure the diseased brother.

The Fundamental Code’s confirmation, publication, and distribution was agreed by the brothers at the meeting of the general assembly held on 13th Ramaḍān 1339, which falls in April 1921.

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