

**No Sufism without Sufi Order:
Rethinking *Tarîqa* and *Adab* with Ahmad Kâsânî Dahbidî (1461-1542)[†]**

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“*al-tarîqa kulluha âdâb* (hadîth)”

quoted in the *Risâla-yi âdâb al-siddîqîn*

Introduction

One of the problems related to the concept of *tarîqa* is its essential ambivalence. While *tarîqa* actually means the Spiritual Path, the progress of the mystics on the way to Unity with Allah, the same word is used to describe the organizational form, the way of companionship, of these mystics. The scholarly literature on the *turuq*, i.e. the Sufi orders, has frequently differentiated between the two meanings, assuming that throughout the history of Sufism the original signification and content of *tarîqa* has dissipated, leaving way for the *turuq*, as if one passed from a pure spiritual dimension to a more social reality. In opposition to this view, I would argue that the *turuq* institution is inseparable from the *tarîqa* ideal, in other words that the worldly, temporal form of Sufism is intimately linked to its esoteric, spiritual substance. Moreover, this fundamental ambiguity — which may appear as a consistent feature — proves to be a main as well as indispensable element of the Sufi orders in general. It can help us to better understand their structures and changes.

For the historian, the question is therefore to know how these two faces of the *tarîqa* are joined in the different phases of the evolution of Sufism. The case of the Khwâjagân — or Central Asian Naqshbandiyya — seems particularly intriguing in so far as this Sufi lineage began to spread widely and to be organized as a Sufi order during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This phase is quite different from what happened before, in the medieval period, and different from what would happen after, in modern times. Significantly, this turning point between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries benefited from the deeds and sayings of two outstanding shaykhs, Khwâja ‘Ubayd Allâh Ahrâr (1404-1490)¹⁾ and Ahmad Kâsânî Dahbidî. Indeed, these two masters have largely contributed to the organizational and spiritual shaping of the “modern” Naqshbandiyya.

My article focuses on the latter, Ahmad Kâsânî, since he, unlike the former, authored a whole corpus of treatises (written in Persian) regarding various traditional topics of the Khwâjagân thought. I will not enter into a discussion on the authorship of this codex here. I would rather consider this written work as symptomatic of Kâsânî’s ambition to refound the Naqshbandî *tarîqa*.²⁾ What seems to me particularly interesting in Kâsânî’s writings is the discourse on *tarîqa* itself that we find mainly, though not only of course, in two treatises devoted to the rules or practices of his order, that

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1) The economical and political aspects of Khwâja Ahrâr’s centralized *tarîqa* have been analysed by [Paul 1991].

2) See [Papass 2008].

is its *âdâb* (sing. *adab*).³⁾ These texts — where Kâsânî addresses his disciples directly, often by using the second person or the imperative mood (“*bidân ây tâlib-i sâdiq ki...*”) — are entitled, respectively, *Treatise on the Rules of the Followers* (*Risâla-yi âdâb al-sâlikîn*) and *Treatise on the Rules of the Truthful* (*Risâla-yi âdâb al-siddîqîn*).⁴⁾ I will focus on the first text as it submits the most detailed explanations on Kâsânîd Khwâjagân *adab*. While analysing the manuscript extensively, “chapter by chapter”, I shall try to reconstitute, as concretely as possible, Kâsânî’s perception of his own order. Thus I hope to steer clear of any simplistic views on *tarîqa*, especially those which may separate its temporal and spiritual faces.

The two egos (*nafs*)

“What is *nafs*? Know that the *nafs* of each thing is the truth of that thing” (*nafs-i har chîzî haqîqat-i ân chîz ast*).⁵⁾ In other words, *nafs* is what characterizes an entity, what gives something or someone an identity, i.e. its ego. Such is the discussion by which Ahmad Kâsânî starts his treatise. One finds the same topic in several incipits of his writings. This is hardly surprising since, the ego being the ordinary enemy of every Sufî, the rules of the *tarîqa* aim to rule over it. Classically again, Kâsânî distinguishes two egos, the human ego (*nafs-i insânî*) and the animal ego (*nafs-i haywânî*). God created the *nafs-i haywânî* for Adam, comprising the attributes of eating and sleeping (*khûrdan û khuftan*). “He made it [*nafs-i haywânî*] the horse of Adam so that Adam could ride that horse” (*markab-i âdam sâkht wa âdam râ bi rû-yî sawâr sâkht*) and could be sent to the world to divulge the beauty of God and the divine spirit (*rûh-i ilâhî*).⁶⁾ Classical indeed in Sufi literature,⁷⁾ this image of the horse-ego is recurrent in the text; it finds some glosses here and will appear regularly later on. The world was then created by God who brought His manifestation to “heavens, earth and mountains” (*âsmân û zamîn û kûh*), but they did not accept His manifestation. Consequently, it has been carried only by Adam “riding the horse of the animal ego”.⁸⁾ From then on, this “[divine] deposit could no [more] be withdrawn” (*amânat natawânast kashîd*).⁹⁾ Again, this formula will appear several times later in the text — I shall return to this point later.

Distinct from the *nafs-i haywânî* — whose attributes (*sifat*) are not only eating and sleeping but also drinking (*âshamîdan*), desire (*khwâstan*), appetite (*shahwat*) and moving (*rândan*) — is the *nafs-i insânî*, the human ego. Free from these last attributes, it is characterized by the following: life

3) There are many copies of this codex preserved in oriental collections throughout the world. I use two of them: 1 — FY 649, İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, copy date 997-8/1589-90 (I am grateful to Necdet Tosun for having provided me a copy of this manuscript); 2 — IVAN Uz 1443, Sharqshunoslik Instituti, copy date 1134/1721. This second codex (with a third one under the reference “Kattakhanov ms.”, private collection, copy date circa 18th-century) is available, though not as a critical edition, in [Gardner 2006: 331-399] (Kattakhanov ms. pp. 1015-1094). The Tashkent copy (ms 1443) seems much less reliable than the Istanbul manuscript (ms 649) since it lacks many lines, especially in the beginning, and suffers from mistakes and misreadings.

4) For an introduction to the different types of Sufi *adab* books, see [Meier 1999: Part I 49-92]. The article presents a paraphrase of the *Âdâb al-murîdîn* of the famous Khwarezmian *shaykh* Najm al-Dîn Kubrâ (d. 1221).

5) ms 649, f. 38b; ms 1443, f. 58a.

6) ms 649, f. 39a; ms 1443, ff. 58a-b.

7) See [Schimmel 1972].

8) ms 649, f. 39b; ms 1443, f. 58b.

9) ms 649, f. 40a (does not figure in ms 1443).

(*hayât*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), power (*qudrat*), wisdom (*hikmat*), will (*irâdat*), listening (*sam’*), seeing (*basar*) and talking (*kalâm*). Kâsânî adds that the human ego, being given these attributes, is said to be at the mid-point of reason (*nîm-martaba-yi ‘aql*). As the human ego is settled in the heart (*dil*) of Adam, it is called core (*qalb*) in the sense that it stands at the middle of something, and because its vacillation (*taqallubash*) is between the divine (*haqq*) and the mundane (*dunyâ*).¹⁰⁾ This Sufi anthropological sketch describes the basic humane condition that will determinate the existence of every man. This condition is conceived as a way, from its divine origin to its mundane arrival.

Since Adam had inherited the aforementioned attributes from God, he was appointed the Caliph (*khalîfâ*) of Allah. Thus, on earth Adam “ascended the throne of creation” (*bar takht-i khilâfat nishast*). However, Iblîs (evil), who has been damned by God, became the enemy of God and Adam; he used the *nafs* to carry out his bad deeds toward Adam. This enemy could not be fought alone, and so God created Hawwâ (Eve), and ordered them both to copulate in order to extend the creation (*az jihat-i kathrat-i khilqat*). They made children, and humans increased in order to form an army to fight against evil under the command of God.¹¹⁾ While Adam left the earth and “returned to his original place”, men lost their ruler and were alone (*tanhâ*). Immediately, Iblîs started to influence men, he encouraged their inclination to desire, thus expanding the growth of the *nafs-i haywânî*, pushing men away from the right way (*râh-i râst*, *râh-i durust*) towards infidelity. God then sent to each age a prophet (*nabî*) to struggle against the evil influence and to put men back on the right track, and the prophets gathered companions (*hamrâh*) around them who helped them in this fight. As well as the prophets, men needed living spiritual masters (*pîr*) to help them to escape from evil and to find again the way to God (*râh-i rahmân*).¹²⁾ Once again, Kâsânî develops carefully the representation of the way; he even plays rhetorically with the terminology to explain his views on the ego. To be noted also is, of course, the first mention of Sufis in the treatise with the reference to *pîr* who are said to lead men toward the right direction, because men are not able to find it by themselves.

The two existences (*wujûd*)

From now on, Kâsânî will be addressing his readers, i.e. disciples, by using the second person. He warns that the above narratives (*hikâyât*) do not teach them about their own ego (*nafs-i khûd*), thus the treatise must ask again the original question “what is *nafs*?” though in a different sense. The answer is: “Know that your *nafs* is your truth” (*bidânî ki ‘ibârat az nafs-i tû haqîqat-i tu-ast*).¹³⁾ This ego is placed by the divine spirit in the heart; the true heart (*dil-i haqîqî*) has several attributes: talking (*gûyâ’î*), hearing (*shinawâ’î*), smelling (*rawâ’î*), life (*hayât*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), wisdom (*hikmat*), power (*qudrat*). These attributes characterized the *nafs* of Adam as we have seen already; now they characterize the *nafs* of all men. In other words, men are not reducible to their animal identity, they are also granted a human identity. Kâsânî — calling the novice “brother” (*ây barâdar*)

10) ms 649, f. 40a; ms 1443, ff. 58b-59a.

11) ms 649, f. 40b; ms 1443, f. 59a.

12) ms 649, f. 41a; ms 1443, ff. 59a-b.

13) ms 649, f. 41b; ms 1443, f. 60a.

— explains that “the true heart is thought” (*dil-i haqîqî andîsha ast*), therefore “the truth of men’s existence is thought” (*bidân ki ‘ibârat az wujûd û hastî-yi haqîqî-yi tû hamîn andîsha ast*).¹⁴ Yet, if thought is reduced to nothing else than eating, dressing, housekeeping (*kad-khudâ’î kardan*) or rejecting Islam, men side with the animals, and incline towards the animal nature. On the contrary, if thought is oriented toward the Truth and Allah, men draw closer to purity and divinity.

There are two existences indeed (*ma’lûm shud ki tu-râ dû wujûd bûda ast*), the true existence (*wujûd-i haqqânî*) and the animal existence (*wujûd-i haywânî*).¹⁵ A sort of competition occurs between these two existences: when the true side (*jânab-i haqîqî*) gets the upper hand, truth wins; but when the animal side takes over, animality wins. For example, the more you apply abstinence (*zuhd*) or knowledge (*‘ilm*) or piety (*taqwâ*), the more you will become a writer (*kâtib*) or a saddler (*sarrâj*) or a farmer (*dihqân*); but the more you eat or sleep, the more you will become an eater or a sleeper, depending on the attribute.¹⁶ This last case is a great sin (*gunâh*) and this is the main veil, obstacle (*hijâb*) to God and to your true existence. As long as you are ruled by your animal nature, you will not be able to know your true existence. “Know that you will not be able to break [the stone of heart (*sang-i dil*)] on your own as long as there is no stone-breaker” (*bidân ki tû bikhûdî khûd in shikastan namîtawânî tâ sang ashkanî nabâshad*).¹⁷ Fortunately, after the prophets (*anbiyâ’*), there are stone-breakers who are the Khwâjagân (*in tâ ‘îfa*).¹⁸ Here, for the first time in his treatise, Kâsânî introduces a reference to his own Sufi order. He urges his reader to follow the members of his order and to obey them.

Next follows a discussion on *jihâd*. As the Prophet taught his companions, there is a greater *jihâd* than the fight against the infidels, it is the struggle against the ego and evil.¹⁹ Although the Naqshbandî shaykh reminds us that both *jihâd* are necessary, he emphasizes the “inner” one — against the *nafs-i haywânî* — and repeats that “you will not be able to do this on your own” (*tû bikhûdî khûd in râ namîtawânî kardî*).²⁰ You need a guide (*rahbar*) who is able to lead you towards the right direction, someone perfect (*kâmil*) in the sense that he has himself taken the right way (*râh*). Hence the only solution to this problem is the Khwâjagân *ta’îfa* since his members are the doctors of God (*tabîbân-i hâdhiq-i ilâhî*), those who can cure the existential disease. From now onwards, the text details the way to join and then to follow the Khwâjagân *tarîqa*.

Feeding or starving the horse-ego

Opening this part of his treatise, Ahmad Kâsânî returns again to the primeval notion, the horse-ego (*bâz âmadîm bi bayân-i markab-i nafs-i haywânî*). The text reveals its structure progressively: while introducing successively the steps of the Sufi initiation process, through which men can be

14) ms 649, f. 41b; ms 1443, ff. 60a-b.

15) ms 649, f. 42a; ms 1443, f. 60b.

16) This comment does not figure in ms 1443.

17) ms 649, f. 42a; ms 1443, ff. 60b-61a.

18) ms 649, f. 42b; ms 1443, f. 61b.

19) ms 649, f. 42b; ms 1443, ff. 61b-62a.

20) ms 649, f. 43a; ms 1443, f. 62b.

freed from their sufferings, the *Risāla-yi ādāb al-sālikīn* goes back recurrently to the ambivalent source of these sufferings, i.e. the ego. The text is arranged in a spiral composition, recommencing while advancing. Recurrent is, consequently, the image of the horse-ego. We read here that Allah “has created this [horse-ego] to carry the spirit of man” (*ū rā barā-yi sawārī-yi rūh-i ādam khalq karda būd*). Kāsānī introduces an additional element related to his Sufi anthropology, the human spirit (*rūh-i ādam*) that belongs to every man. We read further that “as long as the spirit was strong and the ego was weak, the horse-ego was carrying the spirit but with difficulties (...) the former manifested itself to the latter (...) in eating, drinking and so on. The more the ego ate and drank, the more it gained strength; with the result that spirit was eventually weakened.”²¹⁾

God, depending on the period and the people, regularly sends one of his friends (*dūstī az dūstān-i khūd*) — i.e. a Sufi master — to remove the harmful ego from men. Each Sufi master (*akābir-i tarīqat*) sets up (*wazʿ kardan*) a path and a practice (*tarīqat ū riyāzat*), corresponding to the period and to the people they should apply to. Both the path and the practices aim at weakening “this dog of an ego” (*sag-i nafs*).²²⁾ For those (the Sufi masters) who have defeated the *nafs*, i.e. succeeded in controlling it, it is necessary to feed it, giving it plenty of barley and forage (*juw ū ʿulf*) in order to be able to carry the divine deposit (*amānat*).²³⁾ Kāsānī clearly distinguishes between masters and disciples: masters no longer have to perform ascetic practices, not so much because they do not need them as rather because they use this force to carry the divine deposit. On the contrary, disciples have to undergo a rigorous spiritual training to make their horse-egos obedient. They must train their *nafs* by thirst (*tashnagī*), hunger (*gurusnagī*), and sleeplessness (*bikhwābī*) on the one hand, and on the other concentrate on their master.²⁴⁾ This distinction between masters and disciples appears as a general principle of organization within the Sufi order; it will receive much more attention in final chapters.

What interests Kāsānī here is still the metaphor of the horse-ego: the relief of *nafs* is not a short effort — he warns — it is like a horse (*asp*) that fled to the desert and became wild; it is difficult to catch it. To render the horse docile, one has to ride it a while, to refresh it at night, to take care of it and to train it.²⁵⁾ The same goes for men. “Former masters who did not practice the *riyāzat* during forty even fifty years, did not reach felicity” (*akābir-i mā taqaddīm tā muddat-i chihil sāl ū panjāh sāl riyāzat namīkashīda and bi ʾin saʿādat namīrasīda and*). Besides the practices, the most important activity of all (*a ʿmāl*) is to persevere on the path (*bi tarīq dawām bāshad*).

Joining the Sufi group (*tāʾifa*)

According to Ahmad Kāsānī, “each Sufi group pursues a particular activity, and by persevering in it over a certain time they will reach their goal” (*har tāʾifa bi ʿamal-i makhsūs wa dawām-i ān*

21) ms 649, f. 43a; ms 1443, ff. 62b-63a.

22) ms 649, f. 43b; ms 1443, f. 63a.

23) ms 649, ff. 43b-44a; ms 1443, f. 63a.

24) ms 649, f. 44a; ms, ff. 63a-b.

25) ms 649, ff. 44a-b; ms 1443, f. 64a.

'amal bimuddatî ki gufta shud bimaqsûd rasîdand).²⁶⁾ Here the shaykh introduces a short discussion on the various Sufi groups. He differentiates between them according to one specific activity or range of activities — which means that, from the point of view of a pre-modern Sufi master, the practices represent an element in the definition of a *tarîqa*. After having briefly mentioned several groups which perform either silent remembrance (*dhikr-i khufiyya*) or oral remembrance (*dhikr-i jahr*), contemplation (*murâqaba*) or concentration (*tawajjuh*), the bond between master and disciple (*râbita*) or servitude (*khidmat*), the attraction to God (*jadhba*) or companionship (*suhbat*),²⁷⁾ Kâsânî refers to the various milieus, the different socio-religious groups the novice may associate with.²⁸⁾ If the suspicion toward 'ulamâ' and even *qârî* is conventional in the Sufi literature, it is noteworthy that they are clearly distinguished from the Sufi milieus, that is from the *turuq*. This is actually a second element in the definition of a *tarîqa*: the Sufi order is not only a group of people with specific activities, it is a particular milieu.

To be more precise, Kâsânî describes *tâ'îfa* or *tarîqa* in terms of relationship and companionship. He warns novices of the dangers of dealing with exoterically oriented people (do not talk too much with 'ulamâ', chat but do not sit with people who seek the *tasfiyyat*,²⁹⁾ etc.). In contrast, it is highly appreciated to have close relations with Sufi orders in general and the Khwâjagân in particular.³⁰⁾ Indeed the activity proper to the Khwâjagân is companionship, the spiritual discussion between a master and his disciples (*suhbat*), according to Kâsânî. It is even the best of any activities (*bihtarîn az a'mâl ast*) as it follows the model of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (*sahâba*).³¹⁾ The shaping of a spiritual milieu, distinct from but not hostile to "exoteric circles", is therefore the main activity of the Khwâjagân. Such a mystical sociability ordered around the *pîr* appears as the basic organizational form of Kâsânî's *tarîqa*.

Live and breathe as a Sufi!

Frequenting the Khwâjagân *tâ'îfa* means changing one's life and overall behaviour. "Since life is only few breaths" (*chira ki 'ibârat az 'amr nafasî chand ast*), since the past is dead and the future is not born yet, since this *tâ'îfa* considers each breath as the last one, the person who wishes to enter the *tarîqa* needs to practice constant concentration.³²⁾ This concentration is composed of three well-known Naqshbandî spiritual techniques (last part of the eleven *kalimât-i qudsiyya*): counting

26) ms 649, f. 45a; ms 1443, f. 64b.

27) ms 649, f. 45a; ms 1443, ff. 64b-65a.

28) ms 649, ff. 45a-b; ms 1443, f. 65b.

29) *Tasfiyyat-i wajh-i isti'dād*: To whom Kâsânî alludes to remains unclear to me. He seems to aim at religious authorities who want to purify Islam from esoteric dimensions.

30) ms 649, f. 45b; ms 1443, ff. 65b-66a.

31) ms 649, ff. 45b-46a; ms 1443, f. 66a. *Suhbat* is, of course, not ignored by precedent Khwâjagân (see for instance the various occurrences in [Meier 1994], but in Kâsânî's branch it finds a much greater importance than usual (probably in continuity with Khwâja Ahrâr's teachings). *Suhbat* is also highly developed in the classical Sufi *adab* literature, such as, for instance, the '*Awârif al-Ma'ârif*' of Shihâb al-Dîn 'Umar al-Suhrawardî (1145-1234) where three chapters are devoted to companionship, and the '*Âdâb al-muridîn*' of his uncle Abû al-Najîb al-Suhrawardî (1097-1168) on sections 76-102 (themselves related to Abû 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Sulamî's *Kitâb âdâb al-suhba*).

32) ms 649, f. 46a; ms 1443, ff. 66b-67a. The Tashkent manuscript seems not fully reliable here.

the repetitions of *dhikr* (*wuqûf-i 'adadî*), awareness of time (*wuqûf-i zamânî*) and keeping the heart constantly attentive to God (*wuqûf-i qalbî*).³³⁾ Kâsânî provides some concrete explanations related to these techniques. What is more interesting for us is his thorough emphasis on the *dhikr* of the heart: we learn that the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) has to be executed until it becomes a natural attribute of the heart (*sifat-i dhâtî-yi dil*), without feeling any pain (*takalluf*). “Whatever [the Sufi] does to dismiss the awareness of God, he will not be able to dismiss it” (*har chand ki in âgâhî râ az khûd rawad kunad natawânad*). Once more, we find this formula meaning that the Sufi cannot withdraw from the spiritual result he has attained; and so the Sufi path is marked by irreversible stages.

In the meantime, many mystical experiences will occur: states (*hâlât*), qualities (*kayfiyât*), impressions (*adhawâq*), revelations (*mukâshafât*), intoxications (*sukrâ*), and ecstasies (*bîkhûdîhâ*). Angels, spirits of prophets and saints will appear to the Sufi; each one will present his *tarîqa* and invite him to try various spiritual states.³⁴⁾ Through these trials (*imtihân*), they “will see if he is resolute on his path or not” (*bîbînand ki û dar tarîqat-i khûd thâbit qadam hast yâna*).³⁵⁾ If he indulges in the experiences they propose, they will leave him alone, considering that he is not firm. If he rejects these experiences, no matter what they are, and if they consider that he is firm enough on the path, they will help him all the way along his spiritual path. The novice has to remain indifferent to these visions, and must concentrate on the essence (*tawajjuh-i dhât*), i.e. God. If something from the divine truths is revealed to him (*haqâ'iq û ma'ârif-i ilâhî*), he must not only grasp it but ask for more.

Aside from this inner discipline, the follower of the Khwâjagân has to acquire an equal outer discipline. The *sâlik* must avoid strangers (*bîgâna*) and low-minded people (*dûn himmat*) in order not to be influenced by them and not to become like them; he should keep good company during his life.³⁶⁾ Kâsânî repeats that the novice would better break with the *qârî* and join the Sufis. Whereas the former are interested in the call (*dhikr*), the latter are only interested in the called (*musammâ*), i.e. God. Moreover, the seeker (*tâlib*) must remain indifferent to worldly affairs and even to heavenly ones. He should be content with the basic necessities of life (*zarûrî*).

To sum up, it is a matter of defining the Sufi milieu on the esoteric as well as the exoteric level. The general idea consists in avoiding temptations from inside and from outside. In Kâsânî's representation of the *tarîqa*, inner and outer organizations are thus inseparably intertwined. Lastly, at this stage of the *Risâla*, the Sufi reader theoretically takes a further step into the Sufi path and finds himself more and more involved in the *tarîqa* milieu.

Ruling your life: *muhâsiba*, *mushâhida* and *tawajjuh*

Continuing his didactic account, the Naqshbandî shaykh now explains how the day should be planned.³⁷⁾ He begins by keeping account (*muhâsiba*) of his spiritual schedule: after the *namâz-i*

33) ms 649, ff. 46a-b; ms 1443, f. 67a.

34) ms 649, f. 47a; ms 1443, f. 68a.

35) ms 649, f. 47a; ms 1443, ff. 68a-b.

36) ms 649, f. 47b; ms 1443, ff. 68b-69a.

37) ms 649, ff. 47b-48a; ms 1443, f. 69b.

dîgar (i.e. *salat al-‘asr*, the afternoon prayer), the Sufi comes back home and remains attentive (*mulâhiza*) until the evening. After sleep, a few hours are devoted to occupations (*mashghulî*) and few others to rest (*bikârî*). During resting time, the devotee prepares to do repentance (*tawba*) and penitence (*istighfâr*). Each day, he completes the *istighfâr* 70 times by crying and imploring.³⁸⁾ In general, he has to remain in *mulâhiza*, that is attentive to God’s presence, during each of his activities — devotions, eating, sleeping, drinking, moving, standing, sitting, and wishing.³⁹⁾ Thanks to this discipline, he will begin to see God everywhere and will become one of His men (*rijâl allâh*). By taking account of his devotions everyday, the disciple reaches another step toward spiritual realisation. Kâsânî conceives this step in terms of vision:⁴⁰⁾ it is the beginning of contemplation (*bidâyat-i mushâhida*) which consists in “seeing the divine truth in the world” (*dîdan-i haqq subhâna wa ta‘âlâ dar dunyâ*), like a thirsty man seeing water all around (*hamchû ân tashna ki az kamâl tashnagî hama ‘âlam dar nazar-i û âb minamâyad*). Once again, such vision should arise without any pain (*takalluf*) and should turn into an inherent attribute of the ego (*în sifat malikat-i nafs-i û shawad*), like seeing for the eye or hearing for the ear. And “whatever [the Sufi] will do to remove this attribute, he will not be able to” (*har chand khûhad ki ân sifat râ az khûd dâr kunad natawânad*).

This degree (*martaba*) on the spiritual way corresponds to concentration (*tawajjuh*).⁴¹⁾ Kâsânî details this degree in quite concrete terms, referring to the five attributes of the *nafs* which go against its five former faults:⁴²⁾ 1— do not say meaningless words or anything contrary to the divine truth, thus remaining silent (*bâyad ki samt ikhtiyâr kunad*); 2— do not eat excessively, thus staying hungry (*gurusnagî*);⁴³⁾ 3— do not sleep for a long time, thus staying awake (*bîdârî*); 4— do not deal with strangers, i.e. non-Sufis (*âmîzish bi mardum-i bigâna*); 5— perform *dhikr* continuously. These five attributes are basically the rules of life for members of the *tariqa*; they provide a harsh and abstemious discipline to the Sufi beginner who then concentrates his effort and his overall thoughts as well as all his activities on Allah. However, this does not mean that he will make his efforts by himself, outside of the environment of the *tariqa* and the guidance of its leader.

The *suhbat* and its rules

The effects of such activities depend upon the authorisation and companionship or discussion with a perfect master (*bi ijâzat û suhbat-i pîr-i kâmil-i mukammil*). And Kâsânî repeats that the best of every activity is the *suhbat-i pîr*, provided that you know the rules (*âdâb û sharâ‘it*) of the discussion with your master.⁴⁴⁾ Among the various conditions of *suhbat*, one is to be passionate in it (*mûla‘ bûdan*) to such an extent that the listener has to sit “in a way that a bird would stay on his head without being frightened by any movement” — you should be in the hands of your master

38) ms 649, f. 48a; ms 1443, f. 69b.

39) ms 649, ff. 48a-48b; ms 1443, ff. 70a-b.

40) ms 649, ff. 48b-49a; ms 1443, ff. 70b-71a.

41) ms 649, f. 49a; ms 1443, f. 71a.

42) ms 649, ff. 49a-b; ms 1443, ff. 71a-72a. The Tashkent manuscript is slightly incomplete here.

43) On food within Sufi *adab*, see [Reynolds 2000].

44) ms 649, f. 49b; ms 1443, f. 72a.

like a deceased in the hands of the corpse washer (*ghassâl*).⁴⁵⁾ You have to stay immobile and silent: “do not talk, do not hear, do not eat, do not drink, do not move, do not stay”, except by order of the master (*magar bi amr-i pîr*). Other âdâb are as follows: do not ask for anything to eat or to wear (*hich chîz az khûrdanî û pûshîdanî*) since it is your master who knows better than you what you need. Also, if you reach the degree of altruism (*martaba-yi îthâr*), that is giving preference to others over yourself — one of the moral values of Sufis — do not give up *suhbat*, otherwise you would not benefit from it. Even if your *shaykh* is excessive (*mubâlagha kunad*) in testing you (*imtihân-i tû*), do not give up because “this kind of test is very frequent in this Sufi group” (*imtihânât-i in tâ'îfa bisyâr ast*).⁴⁶⁾

“Indeed, what occurs to you thanks to the discussion with this master, we, in this Sufi group, call it attraction to God” (*chirâ ki âncha bi tû rasîda bûd az suhbat-i 'azîz dar istilâh-i in tâ'îfa ân râ jadhba mîgûyand*).⁴⁷⁾ Intimately linked to the *suhbat*, the *jadhba* means a further step on the spiritual path. The more the disciple is involved in listening and accompanying the master, or in other words in participating in the life of the Sufi order, the more he is progressing in his mystical quest. By adding to *suhbat* the exercise of remembrance (*dhikr*) and reflection (*fikr*) — that is other individual and collective practices (*riyâzat*) — the Sufi will certainly progress.⁴⁸⁾

Kâsânî mentions a series of additional rules (*âdâb-i suhbat*) which give further organizational principles to the *tariqa* at the inter-personal level:⁴⁹⁾

— Do not seek for miracles or any mystical station of this order (*karâmat û maqâmî az maqâmât-i in tâ'îfa*), nor enquire into exoteric or esoteric matters (*zâhir û bâtin*). The master will teach you these, be patient.

— Do not sit or rise or move without being concentrated (*mutawajjuh*) on the master. Do not ask him questions for any reason at all. If you experience difficulty, it is your responsibility, so asking questions is unruly (*bî adabî*).

— Do not bow your head or look down during the *suhbat*, this is unruly because the aim is to contemplate (*mushâhida*) the divine truth. Yet the disciple is not able to perceive this at the beginning. Consequently he has to contemplate the beauty of his master. Kâsânî adds that to be unruly (*bî adabî*) has bad results not only on you but also on the others present. In this respect, the communal element of initiation is essential.

— Do not raise your voice when the master asks a question.

— Do not quit the assembly (*majlis*) of *suhbat* even if you need to relieve yourself. It is actually a diabolical trick to distract you.

— Be attentive to your master by focussing on the point between the two eyebrows of the

45) ms 649, f. 49b; ms 1443, f. 72b. This is a traditional expression to qualify the relation between master and disciples.

46) ms 649, f. 50a; ms 1443, f. 73a.

47) ms 649, f. 50a; ms 1443, f. 73a.

48) ms 649, f. 50b; ms 1443, f. 73b.

49) ms 649, ff. 50b-52b; ms 1443, ff. 74a-77b.

master [since] it is the place of divine power (*mibâyad ki hâzir û âgâh-i pîr-i khûd bâshî chinânchi gufta and nazar dar bayân-i dû abrû-yi pîr dârad ki mahal-i fayz ast*).

— Do not fall asleep during *suhbat*. It is unruly in this *tâ'îfa* for *suhbat* is the place of attention (*mahal-i huzûr û âgâh*).

— “This master wishes that this community attains felicity” (*în ‘azîz mîkhwâhad ki în jamâ‘at bi sa‘âdatî musharraf shawand*). If someone is careless, everyone will be deprived of this felicity. Once again, Kâsânî underlines the necessity of the collective dimension.

— Whoever shows up at community meetings, he will be given a seat. Moreover, every fellow has to seat one beside the other, “shoulder to shoulder and knee to knee” (*katf bi katf û zânû bi zânû*), as in prayer.⁵⁰⁾

Throughout this short description of correct *âdâb*, in accordance with the spiral composition of this treatise and his teaching, the Naqshbandî *shaykh* once more goes over the concepts of perseverance and attributes.⁵¹⁾ He urges disciples to be continuously on *suhbat* (“*ihtimâm kun ki suhbat dâ‘îmî shawad*”). Nevertheless, Kâsânî acknowledges that this is impossible. Sufis have therefore to remain conscious of every moment of *suhbat*, and to always keep present the effects of *suhbat*. These effects can be summarized in the perception of the beauty of the *pîr* which is the beauty of God (*mushâhada-yi jamâl û jalâl-i ilâhî*), inside as well as outside *suhbat* until this *suhbat* becomes “a natural attribute of your heart” (*sifat-i dhâtî-yi dil-i tû*). But beyond this stage — Kâsânî says — you will see in your heart only the beauty of the *pîr*, then if you can, you should endeavour to remove this image (*sûrat*) from your heart. After that, you will only see the beauty of God. “At this time, give up your master” (*ân zamân dast az pîr bâz dâr*) because the master is only a ladder (*nardabân*) for your spiritual ascension.⁵²⁾

At this stage, the *Risâla*, while reaching a further step on the path, returns to a fundamental teaching of Sufi orders in general, and of Khwâjagân in particular: the aim of the Sufi is obviously not the love of masters or saints but the love of Allah. This is the reason why the disciple must keep a careful eye on his master. More exactly, if he experiences spiritual states and impressions (*hâl û dhâwq*) he should not divulge them to his master since this one could be an envious (*ghayûr*) master. Such is a last general rule related to *suhbat* according to Ahmad Kâsânî.⁵³⁾ As a result, the *âdâb-i suhbat* account ends on a paradoxical note regarding the status of the *tarîqa* through the ambivalence of the relationship between the master and his disciples: enter the Sufi order completely, apply all of

50) Here is an allusion to a well-known *hadîth* transmitted by Anas bin Malîk: “When you stand for Salah, stand shoulder to shoulder, so that the devil does not come in between you.” More broadly, this range of rules shows a great attention at the bodily aspects of *suhbat*. On the question of body in Sufi *adab*, see [Feuillebois-Pierunek 2007].

51) ms 649, f. 51b; ms 1443, f. 75b.

52) On ms 649, f. 55b; ms 1443, f. 81b, Kâsânî will return on this *adab-i suhbat* (“*bâz âmadîm bi bayân-i âdâb-i suhbat...*”). To underline this point, quoting Bahâ’ al-Dîn Naqshband, he repeats that, ultimately, the Sufi has to quit his spiritual master, who is said to be only an intermediary (*wasita*). It is possible that this opinion comes from the conflict opposing Bahâ’ al-Dîn to his master Amîr Kulâl. On this point, see [Paul 1998: 56-57].

53) ms 649, f. 52a; ms 1443, f. 76a. This rule is illustrated by two anecdotes about Khwâja ‘Ahrâr and Muhammad Qâzî.

its rules, fully respect the authority of the master, but do not consider it, them or him as your aim; use the Sufi order, its rules and his master to follow nothing but the Sufi path.

The *tarîqa* and its general rules

Although the *Risâla-yi âdâb al-sâlikîn* is not marked by any interruption at this point, it no longer deals with *suhbat* but expounds more widely, on *tarîqa*. The chapters that follow show less regard for the inter-personal level than for the collective and institutional scale. Likewise, it refers to a more advanced stage of spiritual progress. Not surprisingly then, we find the following *adab*: “do make *tarîq* — i.e. servitude, need, modesty, reserve, humility and humbleness — your craft” (*mîbâyad ki târiq khidmat û niyâz û shikastigî û ‘ajz û khuzû‘ û khushû‘ râ pîsha sâzi*).⁵⁴⁾ In contrast with the preceding section, the Sufi path (*tarîq*) is here conceived as a craft, a means, based on the lifestyle of the Sufi community. The mystic, henceforth deeply involved in the life and organization of his milieu, must behave in consequence and shape his life on the austere model of Sufi life — servitude. *Khidmat* must be practised without discrimination toward anyone, any creature (“*khidmat bî tamîz kunî ya ‘nî farq nakunî miyân-i âdamiyân az banda û âzâd û haywânât*”). Kâsânî insists on the need to practice it at length (*muddat-i madîd*) in order to turn it into an inherent attribute of the ego (*în sîfat malikat-i nafs-i û shawad*), like seeing for the eye or hearing for the ear. Whatever the Sufi will do to remove this attribute, he will not be able to remove it.⁵⁵⁾

Servitude (*khidmat* or *bandagî*) appears as a major step. Kâsânî details this craft in terms of station (*maqâm*) and gives no less than three equivalent technical expressions:⁵⁶⁾ the station of unity (*maqâm-i wahdat*), the station of annihilation (*maqâm-i fanâ‘*) and the station of love (*maqâm-i ‘ishq*). Becoming a slave (*banda*), a servant of Allah, you reach a mystical degree by which each breath (*nafas*) makes you achieve a spiritual accomplishment (*kamâl*) “which former Sufi masters used to take forty or fifty years to obtain” (*ya ‘nî ancha [akâbir-i] mutaqqadim dar muddat-i chihil sâl û panjâ sâl kasb karda and*). In fact — says Kâsânî — only four ancient masters attained this accomplishment: Sayyid al-Tâ’îfa Junayd, Shaykh Abû al-Hasan Nûrî, Shaykh Bahlûl, and Shaykh Shiblî. As a servant of God, whatever the Sufi does is not done by him but by God; such is the journey toward God and in God (*sayr ilâ allâh ast wa sayr fî allâh*), a journey without end. In addition to this rather esoteric explanation, the *Risâla* submits a more exoteric content: while some other Sufi groups consider that, at this stage, “practising piety is no longer necessary” (*tâ‘at kardan hâjat nîst*), the Khwâjagân believe that not only piety but devotion in general (*ibâdat*) figure among the obligations (*takâlîf*) the Sufi ought to follow for his entire life. In other words, spiritual travel is subordinated to ritual practices. This is actually typical of the Naqshbandî juristic way of Sufism.⁵⁷⁾ Yet, from our perspective, it means also that the mystical traveller should not neglect the religious principles and conducts within his worldly community. Follow the Sufi path but do not forget the

54) ms 649, f. 53a; ms 1443, f. 78a.

55) ms 649, f. 53a; ms 1443, f. 78a.

56) ms 649, ff. 53b-54b; ms 1443, ff. 78b-80a. It remains unclear to me whether or not Kâsânî sets up a hierarchy between these three notions. It seems not although further research may reveal the contrary.

57) See for instance [Buehler 1998: 17-18].

Sufi order.

A second rule related to the institution of the *tarîqa* is as follows:⁵⁸⁾ if, for a certain purpose (*maslahat*), the master rejects or humiliates the disciple, the latter should not have doubts about the former's intentions. The disciple should not be opposed to the master's decision since it is in *his* interest. Significantly, this *adab* coincides with a further spiritual station, the station of willingness (*maqâm-i himmat*):⁵⁹⁾ the Sufi must obey the *shaykh*, stay fully confident, and remain attached to his master. Do not leave your master, otherwise you will be psychologically demolished (*kharâb sâzî*). Also, "as long as the master is alive, do not lose the way of servitude, and do not take the way of mastership — this is the *sunna* of our order" (*tâ zamânî ki pîr dar qayd-i hayât ast tarîq-i niyâz û bandagî râ az dast nadahî wa tarîq-i shaykhûkhat pîsh nagîrî ki sunnat-i îh tâ 'îfâ-yi 'uliyya ân ast*). This rule represents clearly a sort of parapet, even an anti-rule, against misunderstanding the advice to quit the master eventually. Furthermore, it aims at preserving the cohesion of the Sufi order in so far as the hierarchy between the master and the disciple, the access to *shaykh*-hood, and last but not least the *shaykh* succession — all three are implicitly included in this *adab* — constitute the very institution of *tarîqa*.

On the same issue, Ahmad Kâsânî recalls that, after the death of Khwâja 'Abd al-Khâlîq Ghijduwânî, there remained only three legitimate successors (*khalîfa*): Khwâja Ahmad Siddîq, Khwâja 'Ârif Riwgârî, and Khwâja Awliyâ'-yi Kalân.⁶⁰⁾ He also exemplifies his point by an anecdote reported by and concerning Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband himself:⁶¹⁾ I wished to become a disciple of Shaykh Amîr Kulâl. So I rode from Kûshak-i 'Ârifân (near Bukhara) to the house of Amîr Kulâl to attend his spiritual discussion (*suhbat*). But when he saw me, he got angry and pulled me out from his assembly (*majlis*). I disobeyed and I tried to find another door. Then Amîr Kulâl told me: you dog, the door is right here. And he closed it. I then put my head on the door's threshold and spent the night in this position, in spite of the fact that snow was falling. When, in the morning, Amîr Kulâl came out of his house, he collided with my head, so he finally took me into his house and took care of me, and he said: "At present, there is no inquirer, there is only one required; I have never seen a head at my door" (*dar îh zamân tâlib nîst hama matlûb and har kazî sarî bar âstân nadîdîm*). Beyond the emphasis on the difficulty of the Sufi path and, symmetrically, the exceptional abilities of Bahâ' al-Dîn, the meaning of this anecdote is that discipleship is a different thing than mastership; in other words, mastership, according to the Khwâjagân order, is not the aim of discipleship. Bahâ' al-Dîn was not a disciple, not an inquirer (*tâlib*) but someone already on the way to mastership, required (*matlûb*) by Allah to lead the *tarîqa*.

Contrary to the Khwâjagân — Kâsânî explains — "in [another] Sufi order, there is no master and disciple, as among the Turkic masters who, after a few days, grant permission to someone and make him a master; such is the agreement they conclude between themselves" (*dar tarîqa-yi îh*

58) ms 649, f. 56b; ms 1443, f. 82b.

59) ms 649, f. 56b; ms 1443, f. 83a.

60) ms 649, ff. 56b-57a; ms 1443, ff. 83a-b.

61) ms 649, f. 57a; ms 1443, f. 83b.

mardum shaykhî û murîdî nîst mithl-i mashâyikh-i turk ki dar har chand rûz yakî râ ijâzat dahand wa shaykhî sâzand injâ hamîn 'aqd-i ukhûwwat ast ki mîbandand).⁶²⁾ In Kâsânî's view, there is a clear difference between his own order and the *mashâyikh-i turk*, that is the Yasawîs.⁶³⁾ While the Naqshbandiyya defends a strong hierarchy, even an ontological difference, between masters and disciples, the Yasawiyya overlaps the two statuses. Whatever the reliability of this distinction is (it probably originated in the growing competition between the two groups), we learn about a major organizational principle that — at least ideally — characterizes the Khwâjagân as a Sufi order: the separation between *shaykh*-hood and discipleship. Here again, the organizational principle is intimately linked to an esoteric belief — ratified by Qur'ân XVIII: 65, “*So they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence*” — namely the divine election of the *shaykh*.

Kâsânî seems to attribute the introduction of this principle to ‘Abd al-Khâliq Ghijduwânî who is said to “have closed and opened two doors (*dar*); he closed the door of mastership (*shaykhî*) and opened the door of servitude (*khidmat*); he closed the door of isolation (*khalwat*) and opened the door of companionship (*suhbat*).”⁶⁴⁾ The separation between mastership and discipleship corresponds to the firm distinction between solitude and community. If the *shaykh* is not able to follow the Sufi path by himself but only with the constant and direct support of God, the *tâlib* cannot follow the Sufi path except within a Sufi order able to guide him toward God. This does not mean that the disciple is not allowed to become a master. Indeed, when his exoteric interest (‘*alâqat-i zâhiri*’) and his esoteric interest (‘*alâqat-i bâtinî*’) do not contradict each other, the *tâlib* can reach to the stage of having the capacity to guide (*martaba-yi irshâd*). He has been authorized by Allah and does not need an authorization by someone else. However — Kâsânî recalls — the Khwâjagân do not allow access to the spiritual direction as long as the master is alive. To pretend to *shaykh*-hood is *bî adabî*, as is shown in the following story: On the eve of Bahâ’ al-Dîn Naqshband’s death, his companions were waiting to know who would be his successor (*khalîfa*); Bahâ’ al-Dîn opened his eyes and said: “why do you disturb me now? This person will be revealed (*zâhir khwâhad shud*).”

A last general rule mentioned in the *Risâla-yi âdâb al-sâlikîn* is related to the detachment of the disciple: “The one who enters this Sufi group must have no wish, neither for this world nor for the world beyond, neither manifest nor hidden” (*kasî ki pîsh-i in tâ’îfa mî âyad mî bâyard ki hîchgûna tam’î az dunyâ û âkhirat nadâshda bâshad bizâhir û bâtin*).⁶⁵⁾ Kâsânî quotes his mentor Muhammad Qâzî (named *makhdûm-i mâ* in the text):⁶⁶⁾ When I was a *tâlib* at the Jawhariyya *madrassa*, there was

62) ms 649, f. 57b; ms 1443, f. 84a.

63) The *mashâyikh-i turk* (with the Qalandars) were the usual peevs of Central Asian Naqshbandî authors at this time. See [Babajanov 1996: 171; DeWeese 1996].

64) ms 649, f. 57b; ms 1443, f. 84a. This formula is quoted again in ms 649, f. 62a; ms 1443, f. 91b. The same saying is quoted in [Kâshifî 1977: 252]. [Pârsâ 1975: matn 54] features another version of the formula (whose authorship is not attributed): “close the door of isolation (*khalwat*) and open to door of servitude (*khidmat*), close the door of mastership (*shaykhî*) and open the door of assistance (*yâri*), close the door of solitude (‘*uzlat*) and open the door of companionship (*suhbat*)”.

65) ms 649, ff. 57b-58a; ms 1443, f. 84b.

66) ms 649, f. 58a; ms 1443, f. 85a.

a member of the Khwājagān order named Mullâ Ziyâ' who was dressing as a *mullâ* to become my confidant. He was teaching me Rûmî's *Mathnawî* at night. He told me: I see in you the desire for *tarîqa*, you must see Khwāja Ahrâr. He taught me the rules of discipleship and told me about Ahrâr's *suhbat*: "there must be nothing worldly or other-worldly in your mind in his *suhbat*, this is unruly. Neither ask for miracles (*karâmât*) nor even stations (*maqâmât*) nor more than what is permitted (*halâl*) and necessary (*zarûrî*)."

The *tarîqa* and its specific rules

The other *âdâb* featured in the next sections of the *Risâla* are quite different. As is classically the case in essays on Sufi *adab*, the *Treatise on the Rules of Followers* ends with several rules regarding religious rituals. This textual arrangement is not simply a rhetorical convention; it signifies a return to the exoteric sphere and, more fundamentally, to the law — *sharî'a*.⁶⁷⁾ As we shall see, it also signifies an emphasis on the *tarîqa* as an institution.

— "One must never avoid the ritual ablutions (*wuzû'*) and at each ablution [one must] give thanks. After giving thanks, one has to ask for what God wants, since the prayer (*du'â*) after giving thanks always receives an answer" (*mîbâyad ki dar hîch zamânî bî wuzû' nabâshad wa har bâr ki wuzû' sâzad shukr-i wuzû' bigudhârad wa ba'ad az gudhârdan-i shukr-i wuzû' az khudâ-yi ta'âlâ bikhwâhad har chi mîkhwâhad ki du'â ba'ad shukr-i wuzû' mustajâb ast*).⁶⁸⁾

— "In the early hours, when one gets up for the night prayer (*tahajjud*), after giving thanks one must ask for forgiveness one hundred times" (*sahar ki az barâ-yi tahajjud bar mîkhîzad wa ba'ad az shukr-i wuzû' sad bâr istighfâr kunad*).⁶⁹⁾

— "Then, one must complete the night prayer with twelve *rak'at* and six *salâm* then two other *rak'at* while sitting for the last supererogatory prayer" (*ba'ad az tahajjud mahghûl shud namâz-i tahajjud dawâzdah rak'at bishash salâm bigudhârad wa dû rak'at-i dîgar-i nishasta gudhârad tâ witr*).⁷⁰⁾

— "If he is able, he should read the *Sura Tâ Hâ* [XX] and the *Sura Yâ Sîn* [XXXVI]" (*agar tawânad sûra-yi ta wa sûra-yi sîn bukhûnad*).⁷¹⁾

These *âdâb* refer to others detailed in a previous section of the *Risâla* regarding the rules of Sufi life, but here they accompany a better understanding as well as a further progress on the Sufi path. As a last ellipse within the spiral composition, the text returns to the concepts of concentration and spiritual station. According to Abû Muhammad Murta'ish (d. 328/940) quoted by our author, "the Sufi is the one whose attention follows his steps; he [continuously] exerts his attention to the spiritual

67) The last pages (ms 649, ff. 61a, 63b, 64a; ms 1443, ff. 92a, 94b, 95b) of the treatise contain several references to *sharî'a* and *sunna*, testifying to the legality of Khwājagān *âdâb* and preventing accusations of *bid'a*.

68) ms 649, f. 58b; ms 1443, f. 85b.

69) ms 649, f. 58b; ms 1443, ff. 85b-86a.

70) ms 649, f. 59a; ms 1443, f. 86a.

71) ms 649, f. 59a; ms 1443, f. 86b.

station” (*sūfī ān bâshad kī nazar-i way bâ qadam-i way barâbar bâshad ya ‘nī tawajjuh-i ū bi maqâmī bâshad*).⁷²⁾ This is actually an allusion to the second of the eleven principles of the Naqshbandiyya: *nazar bar qadam* (attention to the step).⁷³⁾ For Kâsânî, *qadam* means a step in spiritual progress while *nazar* is the actually reaching this step and standing at this step. Moreover, this corresponds to a degree called “the degree of attention and presence” (*martaba-yi huzûr ū âgâhî*), that is the inner — physical as well as spiritual — experience of the divine presence. There, echoing the *hadīth qudsī* describing the condition of the pious Muslims, the body (*tan*), heart (*dil*) and speech (*qaul*) of the Sufi express Allah’s presence. Now — says the Naqshbandî master — begins the Sufi path (*dar bidâyat-i tariq mibâshad*). It consists in “the annihilation of the human existence” (*fanâ’-yi wujûd-i bashariyat*) and “the beginning of the journey toward God” (*bidâyat-i sayr ilâ allâh*).

This ellipse also acknowledges a better understanding and a further achievement of the Sufi institution: describing this step in mystical advancement, Ahmad Kâsânî identifies it with the station of the capacity to guide (*maqâm-i irshād*). For those authorized by Allah, it consists in “witnessing unity in multiplicity” (*shuhûd-i wahdat dar kathrat*) and experiencing “eternity after annihilation” (*baqâ’ ba’d al-fanâ*). In other words, the Sufi comes back from the spiritual accomplishment to the temporal sphere in order to help and guide the lost souls. “The one who reaches this station is called perfect; and he is authorized by Allah to perfect and to educate the imperfects” (*har ki bi in maqâm rasîd kâmil-i mukammil ‘ibârat az way ast wa ū min allâh majâz ast az barâ-yi takmîl ū tarbiyat-i nâqisân*).⁷⁴⁾ As a supplementary condition for promotion to mastership, the mystical experience of perfection provides legitimacy to the Sufi to lead other Sufis. This highly-demanding requirement to be a master finds an equivalent in discipleship. There are two categories of disciples:⁷⁵⁾ The first one is the group of “novices, to whom God manifested himself secretly and made them experience the theophanies” (*tâlibân and ki haqq subhâna wa ta’âlâ az râh-i nihânî dar bâtin-i ishân tajallî karda ast wa ishân dhawq-i tajallî yâfta and*). The second group is the group of the “confused, which means that they heard about this group’s mystical successes and imagined that they would easily be successful” (*muhawwas and ya ‘nī shinawida and ki in tâ’ifa bisyâr-i ‘azîz ū sharîf and wa karâmât ū hâlât bisyâr dârand khayâl karda and ki râ bi âsânî bidast mîshawad*).

Kâsânî sums up these last clauses within a last *adab* stated in two words:⁷⁶⁾ indifference (*tanazzuh*) and purity (*taqaddus*), that is, more precisely, the act of being purified from any other purpose, whether worldly or other-worldly, than God. The “natural existence” (*wujûd-i tabî’î*) being over, the “divine existence” now begins (*wujûd-i mawhûb-i haqqânî*) where one enjoys the “efficiency of actions in the realm of Heaven” (*tanfîdh-i tasarrufât dar mulk-i malakût*), where one’s words, acts and visions are entirely devoted to God. Remarkable is the exoteric ability this esoteric experience involves: according to Kâsânî, at this time the Sufi reaches the “degree of

72) ms 649, f. 59a; ms 1443, ff. 86b-87a.

73) On this point, see [Tosun 2002: 335-336]. See also Kâsânî’s short treatise entitled *Chahâr kalima* (ms 640, ff. 158a-160; ms 1443, ff. 244b-247a) which comments *nazar bar qadam*.

74) ms 649, f. 59b; ms 1443, f. 87a.

75) ms 649, f. 60a; ms 1443, ff. 88a-b.

76) ms 649, f. 60b; ms 1443, ff. 88b-89a. The Tashkent manuscript seems not entirely reliable here.

vicariate and succession” (*martaba-yi khilâfat û niyâbat*).⁷⁷⁾ Approaching the end of his treatise and the denouement of the initiation narrative as well, the Naqshbandî master introduces a last organizational principle related to *shaykh* succession — one of the most sensible issues in Sufi orders in general, and in the Naqshbandiyya in particular.

To illustrate this institutional aspect, a final chapter deals with “the transmission of the invocation of the heart” (*bayân-i talqîn-i dhikr-i qalbî*), starting with the teaching of this technique to Abû Bakr by the Prophet, and finishing with Muhammad Qâzî, the *shaykh* of Ahmad Kâsânî himself.⁷⁸⁾ This is the occasion for Kâsânî to put forward his vision of the Khwâjagân as an organized and coherent Sufi order. While listing the names of the successive Khwâjagân *shaykhs*, he stresses the role of rules in the masters’ succession and appointment. As an exemplary case, he mentions the succession of Khwâja Yûsuf Hamadânî by Khwâja ‘Abd Allâh Barqî then Khwâja Hasan Andâqî then Khwâja Ahmad Yasawî then Khwâja ‘Abd al-Khâliq Ghijduwânî. Throughout his listing, Kâsânî defends the consistency of *ijâzat* (permission to guide) and *khalîfa* organizational form, showing as a result the careful transmission of the silent *dhikr*, despite, for instance, the temporary introduction of public invocation (*dhikr-i ‘alâniyya*) by Khwâja Mahmûd Anjîr Faghnavî, although Kâsânî explains how this technique, and oral invocation (*dhikr-i jahr*) as well, have been abandoned by Bahâ’ al-Dîn.

From a formal point of view, this last section shows clearly the text’s practical quality within the *tarîqa*’s form of organization. In addition to its various informative contents, the *Risâla* appears itself as an instrument for the transmission of *tarîqa* knowledge: by placing the *bayân-i talqîn* at the end of his text, Kâsânî not only establishes his own legitimacy as a Khwâjagân *shaykh* but also inscribes his written work within the long didactic tradition of the Khwâjagân. The very fact of writing, perhaps copying and definitely reading, such a treatise is actually a regular practice of the members of Ahmad Kâsânî’s *tarîqa*. But, more widely, the *Treatise on the Practices of the Followers* proves to be an intellectual element of the order’s organization and assumes all the appearances of a performative text. It performs what it claims, it does what it says, hence providing a further occasion to rethink *tarîqa*.

Conclusion: rethinking *tarîqa* with Ahmad Kâsânî

The *Risâla-yi âdâb al-sâlikîn*, like other writings of Ahmad Kâsânî, is not an innovative treatise. It deliberately remains within the Khwâjagân conceptual frame and does not deviate from the general line of *adab* texts produced by Sufi orders.⁷⁹⁾ Nevertheless, the foremost interest of this tract is to give us an inside, almost intimate, view of the *tarîqa* in various respects. Firstly, while presenting, without barely enumerating, the various rules of the Sufi order, it describes the

77) ms 649, f. 60b; ms 1443, f. 89a.

78) ms 649, ff. 61b-64a; ms 1443, ff. 90b-95b.

79) [Farah 1974]. Interestingly, the author notes that “it is only with the orders that we notice in the tracts some specific allusion to *adab al-ṣayḥ*.” The question of the conduct of masters, and not of disciples, arises with the institutionalization of Sufi groups, representing therefore an element of the definition of *turuq*.

progression on the Sufi path from the struggle against the horse-ego — the first act of all those who enter a spiritual brotherhood — to the promotion to mastership and even *shaykh* succession — the penultimate activity of certain elite Sufis. Secondly, we have seen that, parallel to the spiritual advancement characterized by ineradicable, indelible results on the novice, the text itself follows a spiral scheme that ensures a constant progression, as if the treatise were itself an initiatic discourse, perhaps a sort of ideal *suhbat* (in the sense of spiritual discussion), where form and content would identify. Third, if not a perfect *suhbat*, we can at least admit that this *Risāla* is a theoretical treatise as much as a practical writing charged with transmitting knowledge, authority and regulation. It is not a hazard if Ahmad Kāsānī insists so much on *suhbat*, that is to say, on didactic moments of Sufi life. No doubt, the resort to writing by a Sufi *shaykh* shows a supplementary effort to systematize a mainly oral technique, and this not only toward the *suhbat* but toward the other teaching methods. In all these respects, the *Treatise on the Rules of the Followers* represents an intellectual tool of *tarīqa* organization.

Reading its contents, we noticed on several occasions a deep suspicion toward any whim of individual initiation. You cannot make it alone, you will not be able to do this on your own, you will not achieve that by yourself — Kāsānī raps out. The necessity for a disciple to have a master is, of course, a common view among Sufis.⁸⁰⁾ Nevertheless the argument does not only regard the need for a master but also the importance of a community. This second point, the sense of *suhbat* (companionship), proves to be a fundamental aspect of the Sufi initiation, during which the disciple must integrate into the Sufi milieu, respect its way of life and organization, and remains distant from non-Sufis. In the perspective of the *Risāla-yi ādāb al-sālikīn*, ‘Abd al-Khāliq Ghijduwānī’s saying about the closing of the door of *khalwat* and the opening of the door of *suhbat* can be interpreted as a defense of the *tarīqa* institution. *Khalwat* means isolation but certainly not solitude, since the disciple in spiritual retreat is constantly watched over by his master. However, it is perceived as a less valuable practice than *suhbat*, for the reason that the initiation process, according to Kāsānī, has to be somehow more collective and maybe less individualized than former Naqshbandī trends.⁸¹⁾ The quasi-absence of the notion of *rābita* is significant from this point of view. While individual progress on the path seems to be unknown, it is not only necessary to have a spiritual mentor;⁸²⁾ it is also highly recommended to belong to a *tarīqa*. Otherwise, Sufism would turn into a chaotic training, an unruly mysticism. *Tarīqa*, conceived as the place of *suhbat* and regulation (*adab*), provides a community suitable for the candidate’s initiation. The Sufi order as *suhbat* is not only a manifestation of the Prophetic model (i.e. Muhammad and his *sahāba*); it implies that there is no salvation but in the annihilation of every kind of individuality or identity, whether psychic, social or ontological.

It is interesting then that Ahmad Kāsānī — following a *via negationis* rather than a *via negativa*

80) Although one finds some opinion in favour of spiritual advancement without a *shaykh*, see [Paul 1998: 58].

81) In the beginnings of the Naqshbandiyya, *khalwat* was a major method: see [Paul 1998: 31]. Beyond the Naqshbandī case, the debate around isolation (*khalwat*, ‘*uzlat*) and companionship (*suhbat*, *ikhwat*) is a classical controversy among Sufis. They are not necessarily contradictory and can be understood as two successive steps on the Sufi path.

82) On the dangers of being without a guide, see [Buehler 1998: 38-39].

— recalls that the master himself has eventually to be abandoned. Subsequently his community is doomed to be annihilated. Only God remains. As we have seen above, the Khwājagān Sufi order requires disciples to be entirely involved in the brotherhood but, at the same time, required them to quit it once they have completed the Sufi path. *Tarīqa* is only a passage... though an obligatory one. Such is the last but primary lesson we can draw from the *Risāla*: if there is no Sufi order without a Sufi path, there is no Sufi path without a Sufi order. The former appears as a necessary frame for the latter. According to this opinion there cannot be *tasawwuf* without *tarīqa*; *tarīqa* is the necessary condition of *tasawwuf*. So when a Sufi *shaykh* like Ahmad Kāsānī Dahbidī thinks out his own *tarīqa*, he does not make any difference between the spiritual and the worldly definitions of *tarīqa*, he logically regards devotion, initiation, hierarchy and institution as one and the same thing. In the early modern period, in the case of the Naqshbandiyya, which was increasing in size, in power and in influence, there was no distinction between mystical accomplishment, leadership legitimacy and the institutionalization of spirituality.

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