

The Social Role of Spiritual Communication:
Authority as a Relationship between *Shaykh* and Follower
in the Contemporary *Tarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, Acre and Jaffa

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Abstract

This study analyses the authority of *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti in Amman, Acre, and Jaffa. He is the master of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, a Sufi *ṭarīqa* (brotherhood) which originated in Acre but is now based in Amman. It examines how the changing religious climate and the challenges faced by the Palestinian people affect the role of the *Shaykh* and the cohesion of the community. This study approaches both the concept of authority and the practice of fieldwork from a relational perspective, and discusses the challenges faced when doing multi-sited fieldwork using Graham Harvey's concept of 'methodological guesthood'.

The study analyses how the founding *Shaykh*'s charisma is maintained in a *ṭarīqa* which is institutionalised on traditional (kinship) lines, and focuses on the doctrinal, functional and locational aspects of *Shaykh* Ahmad's authority by examining the underlying paradigm of authority, as well as the different roles his followers attribute to him, how these are connected to the functions of the *zawāya* (lodges) in Amman and Acre, and how this affects the *ṭarīqa*'s place in society and in the arena of 'Muslim Politics' (as understood by Eickelman and Piscatori).

This is mainly done by focusing on the emic concept of *tarbiya* (education), which corresponds to Berger and Luckmann's concept of 'socialisation' and Asad's approach to the transmission of a discursive tradition that is in a continuous process of transmission and reinterpretation through the institutionalised relationship between Sufi *shaykhs* and followers. The study argues that the process of *tarbiya* and the mode of communication between *Shaykh* and follower – which mainly consists of indirect communications and signs to be identified and interpreted by the follower – allows the *ṭarīqa* to value both individuality and submission to the *Shaykh*; it also allows it to be centralised, while at the same time adaptable to local circumstances. This thus explains the development of a discursive tradition, the functioning of a translocal *ṭarīqa*, and the changing position of a Sufi *shaykh*, enabling us to see that a Sufi movement can be both traditional and innovative.

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Transcription of Arabic Words

ء	In the middle of the word: ' At the beginning of a word: only if it is the first root letter	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	'
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
		ة	a / at (in an <i>iqāfa</i> construction)
ش	sh	و	w / ū
ص	ṣ	ي	y / ī

I have not used diacritics and italics when transcribing personal and geographical names (including names of mosques), and when using words that are common in English, such as sharia, fatwa, and the two main Muslim festivals, Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr.

In the case of names of Islamic prophets that are also known in the Judeo-Christian tradition, I have used the Arabic names rather than the English ones.

In some cases I have used the anglicized plural of an Arabic word, most notably in the case of *shaykhs*.

Whenever referring to a specific *shaykh*, I have capitalized the word.

When quoting from an English source, I have maintained the spelling of the original text.

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Introduction

Akkā al-munā, yā Sīdī, kull al-hanā' fihā
Tasharrafat bi-'Alī, Allāh yahanīhā

Acre is the thing one yearns for, o *Sīdī*, all the longing is for her
She welcomed Ali [Nur al-Din al-Yashruti], may God give her the good life¹

Soon after the Tunesian Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti arrived in Acre in 1850 and started teaching in the Zaytuna Mosque, he began to acquire followers from the Galilee, the Levant and the wider Muslim world. Nowadays the *ṭarīqa*² Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya³ is particularly strong in East Africa, but it continues to have a presence in the Levant and among Arab communities in the Gulf and the Americas. While the number of followers is slowly declining, the devotion of the remaining followers to the current *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, and to the community remains strong.

Like most Sufi *ṭuruq*, the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya revolves around the *Shaykh*. Historically, the theology supporting the *Shaykh*'s position, strengthened by miracle stories and given a material dimension through the wealth of the *ṭarīqa* in money and land, made the *Shaykh* the axis of the *ṭarīqa* and a charismatic figure beyond the close circle of followers, playing a notable role in society at large. His *zawāya*⁴ in Acre and Tarshiha functioned as pilgrimage centres for his

¹ *Nashīd*, recited by ZA2 in Interview with twelve followers in Zarqa on 01-11-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview ZA1.

² *Ṭarīqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*) literally means 'path'. In Sufism, it refers to the path towards God, to the practices one has to undertake to travel on this path towards God as taught by one's *murshid* (guide) – devotional, ethical, intellectual, social etc. – and to the institution which gathers those who follow the same path. It is often translated as 'brotherhood' or 'order'.

³ I have chosen to vocalize the name of the *ṭarīqa* as 'Shadhuliyya' rather than the more common 'Shadhiliyya', because this is the vocalization used on the booklet in which the most important *wird* (litany) of the *ṭarīqa* – the *wazīfa* (see chapter 6) – is printed. This vocalization corresponds with the pronunciation used in the Palestinian dialect.

⁴ Plural of *zāwiya*, literally means 'corner', and in the Sufi context is usually translated as 'lodge' or 'hospice', where followers of the *ṭarīqa* and visitors live, visit, meet, practice their rituals, study, etc. It is a religious institution that is connected to a Sufi *shaykh* and / or *ṭarīqa* and can take many different forms. It can be one building or a big complex. It can be a centre of (mystical) religious

many followers in the Levant and beyond, and the first two *Shaykhs*, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti and *Shaykh* Ibrahim al-Yashruti, were buried in the *zāwiya* in Acre. There was a very strong link between the *Shaykh*, the *zāwiya* and the community (see chapters 1 and 3).

When in 1948 Israel was established and Palestinian society was destroyed as most Palestinians were killed or driven into exile – the event Palestinians know as the *nakba* ('catastrophe') – the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya was also severely affected. *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi became a refugee residing in Beirut, most of the *awqāf*⁵ were taken by Israel, and the *zawāya* in Acre and Tarshiha became inaccessible to all but a few followers. This radically altered the physical infrastructure of the *ṭarīqa* as the community was dispersed and the borders were closed, and the physical link between the *Shaykh*, the *zāwiya* and the community was disrupted (see chapters 3, 8 and 11).

The religious climate has changed and has affected and continues to affect Palestinians and their host societies in several ways. During the Mandate period, Palestinian nationalism was increasingly articulated in Islamic terms. After the rise of secularist nationalist movements and a brief decline of religion in the public space after World War II, in the late 1970s an Islamic revival came underway both in individual lives and the nationalist groups (see chapters 1, 3, 4 and 8). The relation between the local and the global changed in religion as it did in other aspects of life, and the place of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in these complex and dynamic trends needs to be taken into account in order to understand the contemporary situation of the *ṭarīqa*.

After the demise of his father in 1980, *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti moved the centre of the *ṭarīqa* to Amman, again adapting its infrastructure to new circumstances and shifting the *ṭarīqa*'s second geographical spiritual centre to a new country. The *Shaykh* and his followers insist that nothing changed on the

instruction and practice, a hospice for guests, the home of a community. It sometimes includes a tomb-shrine. It often has an important role in society.

⁵ Plural of *waqf*, 'religious endowment', a charitable trust founded according to the sharia (Islamic law). Generally speaking, a *waqf* is unalienable and its proceeds serve towards the upkeep of an institution for public benefit. See Michael R.T. Dumper, *Islam and Israel: Muslim Religious Endowments and the Jewish State* (Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1994).

spiritual level as the spiritual relationships are stronger and independent of physical connections, and that only the material manifestations of these relationships were affected. The *Shaykh* continued to develop the *ṭarīqa* and embarked on a revival of the *ṭarīqa* by investing in the human infrastructure of the community: he strengthened the links with his followers in Israel, republished the *ṭarīqa*'s main books, built a new *zāwiya* in Amman and two in Lebanon, and began to renovate the *zāwiya* in Acre (see chapters 3, 4, 8 and 11).

This is one of many examples that contemporary Sufism is still very much present, even though it has been thought for a long time that Sufism – understood as a backward traditional survival – will decline in a continuously modernising world.⁶ This approach to Sufism has its roots in the Western post-Enlightenment belief in ‘progress’ and Orientalist ideas of Islam and Sufism, leading Westerners to believe that they were furthest on this path of ‘progress’ and therefore had the moral duty to ‘help’ others – while oppressing and exploiting them, legitimizing their economic expansion and later colonial enterprise. In this process of ‘modernization,’ traditional elements such as religion were considered to be declining (an idea known as the secularisation thesis).⁷ This is still a common view in the West that underlies many academic works and policies towards the non-Western world, and many non-Westerners have adopted this framework to understand their own history.⁸ One can also find this attitude in Israeli policies and in much Israeli academic work on Arabs and specifically Palestinians.⁹

Another way of understanding Sufism that derives from the same Orientalist post-Enlightenment thinking but does appreciate the continued social

⁶ Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam,’ in *Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam*, ed. Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 8; Ilan Pappé, *The Modern Middle East* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 10; Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 2nd ed. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 22–24.

⁷ Malcolm Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion. Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 185–186.

⁸ Pappé, *The Modern Middle East*, 1–13.

⁹ Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011), 277, 279; Dan Rabinowitz, ‘Oriental Othering and National Identity: A Review of Early Israeli Anthropological Studies of Palestinians’, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 9, no. 3 (2002): 305–25.

and political relevance of Sufism embraces it as the 'tolerant, peaceful, moderate, other Islam' in the struggle against 'radical jihadi Islam'.¹⁰

Since the 1970s scholars have questioned the understanding of modernization as a linear process and the imperialist ideology behind it. The secularisation thesis has been challenged and reformulated as it is acknowledged that it is not a unilinear and uniform process, in an extensive discussion which is complicated by the many different conceptions of 'religion' and 'secularisation'. Either way, it is acknowledged that religion continues to play a role in contemporary societies, but that it has developed significantly under influence of and in reaction to both modernity and Modernism.¹¹ The increasing interaction between cultural anthropology and historiography led to an attitude which stressed that 'change was a complex event, at times accentuating traditional patterns of behaviour, at times totally transforming them.'¹² By focussing on the history of subaltern groups, historians have shown that contemporary societies are the result of a complex dynamic of interactions and reactions to the imperialists and their culture.¹³

The modernization theory and secularisation thesis are also challenged by scholars of Sufism, who understand Sufism as a religious tradition which has always developed dialectically within its context, and is a diverse phenomenon with many different ideas and practices and socio-political roles. Many scholars have pointed to the relationship between *shaykh* and follower as both the spiritual and the material axis around which Sufi communities have always revolved (and in most cases continue to revolve). In the words of Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg:

¹⁰ Linda Sijbrand, 'Orientalism and Sufism: An Overview', in *Orientalism Revisited*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 98–114.

¹¹ For 'modernity' and 'Modernism', see Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 5; Valerie J. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 358–359, 422. Based on Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 17–18, 23–42, esp. 27. For an overview of the debate on 'secularisation', see Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 185–214. See paragraph 1.5.

¹² Pappé, *The Modern Middle East*, 9; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 24–28.

¹³ Pappé, *The Modern Middle East*, xii, 1, 10.

Contemporary Sufism dwells and develops between traditionalism in local Muslim communities, in the midst of national and political projects, in transnational movements emphasizing the links between diaspora and homelands, in the argumentation in favour or against the notion of a global digital Muslim community.¹⁴

This study is placed within the broader research problem of Sufism in contemporary society and the task of redefining the concepts of 'tradition' and 'modernity' after the discrediting of modernization theory. An important aspect of this research problem is the issue of the changing authority of Sufi *shaykhs* in the globalising world.

Aiming to add another case study to the literature on contemporary Sufism, my first intention is to examine how the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya operates in the contemporary world as a 'lived religion'.¹⁵ This will be done by focussing on the understandings, practices and experiences of the community of followers, and by contextualising the *ṭarīqa*, to see how the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as a translocal *ṭarīqa* currently led from Amman but with strong roots in its country of origin – Palestine – operates within the boundaries set by the challenges faced by the Palestinian people and by the changing religious climate.

Literature Review

Research on the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is very limited and strongly focussed on the late nineteenth century, with later periods treated as sidetracks in studies dealing with *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's period or Sufism in the contemporary Levant. The present study aims to start filling this gap in order to achieve a

¹⁴ Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority. Sufi Practices and Discourses as Facets of Everyday Muslim Life', in *Sufism Today. Heritage and Tradition in the Global Community*, ed. Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 2.

¹⁵ See for example Raudvere and Stenberg on 'Sufism in everyday life'. *Ibid.*, 6.

deeper understanding of this fascinating *ṭarīqa* and of contemporary Levantine Sufism and Palestinian religions in general.

There are several Arabic biographies of the founder, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti. The most important ones – accepted by the *ṭarīqa* itself – are the books by his daughter Fatima al-Yashrutiyya: *Rihla ilā al-Ḥaqq* (1954),¹⁶ *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq* (1963),¹⁷ *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq* (1966),¹⁸ and *Masīrati fi Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (1981).¹⁹ The first three were critically evaluated by Josef van Ess in 1975, who aimed to give a reconstruction of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's milieu.²⁰ He makes some remarks regarding the Yashrutiyya as he found it in Lebanon in the 1970s. He values Fatima al-Yashrutiyya and her work as a survival of 'a lost world' but is quite cynical when describing the contemporary leadership and religiosity of the *ṭarīqa*:

The Yashrutiyya surprises by its tight central leadership and the ecumenical spread of its followers. It has not achieved this by itself; its old core is even more decayed than older brotherhoods that are more rooted in history. Two things give it strength today: the Palestinian refugees' feeling towards their homeland, which serves as a crystallization point, and the identification with the leading circle in a remote African region, especially on the Comoros Islands and Madagascar.²¹

¹⁶ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Rihla ilā al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, 1954), 2nd revised edition published in 1979, 3rd edition published in 1990, 4th edition published in 1997. This book mainly deals with the life of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, and from the second edition onwards includes an extensive theoretical discussion of Sufi thought (in the first edition this discussion was incorporated in the main narrative).

¹⁷ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, 1963), 2nd edition published in 1978, 3rd edition published in 1982, 4th revised edition published in 1997. This book collects sayings by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din.

¹⁸ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, 1966), 2nd edition published in 1979, 3rd revised edition published in 1997. This book collects accounts of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's *karāmāt*.

¹⁹ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Masīrati fi Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, 1981), 3rd revised edition published in 1997. This is Fatima al-Yashrutiyya's autobiography.

²⁰ Josef van Ess, 'Libanesische Miszellen 6: Die Yašrutiya', *Die Welt des Islams* 16 (1975): 1–103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 91. The same cynicism is present in his description of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, discussed here in chapter 5.

Without a methodological discussion of his fieldwork, and no examples or references to back up these statements, we should be hesitant to place too much value on such remarks without additional research.

Frederick de Jong included the Yashrutiyya in his survey articles on Middle Eastern and Palestinian Sufism based on his research in the early 1980s, using a socio-historical approach, focusing on the institutional aspect of Sufism.²² In this context he also pays attention to the relations between centre-periphery relations and schismatic movements in the Yashrutiyya's history. Regarding the Yashrutiyya in the early 1980s, he notes a modest revival and asks himself if it is typical of the Palestinian situation or part of a more universal trend.²³

Itzchak Weismann discusses the Damascene Yashrutiyya as part of his discussion of the development of Islamic thought in late nineteenth-century Damascus.²⁴ While an interesting work to understand the dynamics in late nineteenth-century Syria, it does not deal with the *ṭarīqa* in Palestine then or now. He briefly discusses the contemporary Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya (early 2000s) in his overview article on contemporary Sufism in Syria and Israel, in which he discusses new forms of discourse and organisation of Sufi *ṭuruq*, and their level of adaptation to 'Syrian and Israeli realities'. Treating the Yashrutiyya in one paragraph, he classifies them as more successful than the Qadiriyya and less successful than the Khalwatiyya, without explicit discussion.²⁵

Recently there has been more interest in Sufism in Israel and the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya has been mentioned sporadically.²⁶ A non-academic

²² Frederick de Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', *Studia Islamica* 58 (1983): 149–81; Frederick de Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques musulmanes au Machreq Arabe. Centres de gravité, signes de déclin et de renaissance', in *Les Ordres Mystiques dans l'Islam. Cheminements et Situation Actuelle*, ed. Alexandre Popović and Gilles Veinstein (Paris, 1986), 204–43.

²³ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 180.

²⁴ Itzchak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 219–224, 252–255.

²⁵ Itzchak Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel: A Contemporary Overview', *History of Religions* 43 (2004): 308–309, 316. For a more extensive discussion of this article, see paragraph 8.2.4.1.

²⁶ Ron Geaves, "'That Which We Have Forgotten': The Emergence of "Traditional Islam" as a New Movement in Global Muslim Religious Contestation', *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 26, no. 1 (2013): 40–41; Chen Bram, 'Spirituality under the Shadow of the Conflict. Sufi

book has been written by Zeev ben Arieh, an Israeli tourguide from the Jewish 'new spirituality' network. It is written with the support of 'the representative' of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel and is therefore treated as primary material in paragraphs 9.3 and 10.3 when discussing this particular follower's view.²⁷

The Yashrutiyya in East Africa has been discussed by B.G. Martin.²⁸ Chanfi Ahmed and Achim von Oppen have included the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in their research on holy places in the southern Swahili world in the early 2000s, leading to several articles on the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya's history and translocal links in the Comoros and Tanzania.²⁹ While these articles are very interesting in their own right and in this thesis have been used as comparative material (see chapter 1 and the final conclusion), we should be careful to draw conclusions on them regarding the wider Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya until more research has been done to examine the translocal connections between the *ṭarīqa* in the Levant and in East Africa.

Hassan Abu Hanieh wrote a survey on Sufism in Jordan for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in 2011, in which he also discusses the Yashrutiyya.³⁰ Due to the nature of the work he does not treat the *ṭarīqa* extensively and his information is solely based on a few websites, interviews with outsiders and an interview with *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil al-Ansari (1944), who claims to be a *shaykh* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya and speak for the *ṭarīqa* at large but is not accepted as

Circles in Israel', *Israel Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (2014): 131. For a more extensive discussion, see paragraph 8.2.4.2.

²⁷ Ze'ev Ben Arieh, *Zawiya. Siporo shel Misdar Sufi Shazilia Yashrutiya bi-Isra'el* (Jerusalem: Hutsa'at Sfarim Ari'el, 2011). Ben Arieh's website is Mysteries of Israel, <http://israelmystery.co.il>, accessed 07-05-2014.

²⁸ B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 152–158.

²⁹ Chanfi Ahmed and Achim von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini: A Commemoration Ceremony as the Performance of Translocality around the South Swahili Coast', in *On Archaeology of Sainthood and Local Spirituality in Islam. Past and Present. Crossroads of Events and Ideas*, ed. Georg Stauth (Bielefeld & Piscataway NJ: Transcript, 2004), 89–103; Chanfi Ahmed, 'Un Pèlerinage Maritime des Disciples de La Shâdhiliyya en Tanzanie', in *Une Voie Soufie Dans Le Monde: La Shâdhiliyya*, ed. E. Geoffroy (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005), 398–413; Chanfi Ahmed, 'Networks of the Shâdhiliyya Yashrutiyya Sufi Order in East Africa', in *The Global Worlds of the Swahili. Interfaces of Islam, Identity and Space in 19th and 20th-Century East Africa*, ed. Roman Loimeier and Rüdiger Seesemann (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 317–42.

³⁰ Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders: God's Spiritual Paths. Adaptation and Renewal in the Context of Modernization*, trans. Mona Abu Rayyam (Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2011), 138–141, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/amman/08884.pdf>.

such by *Shaykh Ahmad* and his branch of the *Yashrutiyya*.³¹ It does not go deeply into the *ṭarīqa*'s ideas, practices, and organisation, nor does it discuss its followers and their relationship with *Shaykh Ahmad*. Abu Hanieh's account therefore does not give a clear picture of the situation of the *ṭarīqa* in contemporary Jordan.

There are also a few academic studies by followers of *Shaykh Ahmad* on aspects of the philosophy of the *ṭarīqa*.³² Due to time constraints I decided not to include these in my analysis as the aim of this study is to analyse the community's 'lived religion', the followers' understandings and how this relates to the functioning of the *ṭarīqa* and its pattern of authority – not so much the 'high philosophy' but the 'everyday philosophy' as understood and acted upon by the community. I have spoken to the authors in interview and informal settings, and have therefore included their views as members of the community, but their deeper understanding of the philosophy of the *ṭarīqa* and how it relates to Sufi philosophy in general is beyond the scope of this study. I fully appreciate that in order to arrive at a complete understanding of the *ṭarīqa* one has to use a combination of several methodologies and take the *ṭarīqa*'s conceptual and philosophical development into account, and I by no means claim to have written the final word on this *ṭarīqa*. This study is meant as a modest first step towards understanding what the *Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya* means for its followers today, in the hope that this will lead to further research using additional methodologies in the future.

³¹ Informal discussions with followers in Amman and Acre.

³² Wafa Ahmad Sawafta, *'Unmūdhaj min al-Wujūd al-Ṣūfī fī al-Mashriq al-'Arabī: al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya wa Shaykhuha al-Shaykh 'Alī Nūr al-Dīn al-Yashruṭī* (Lebanese University, 2003); Wafa Ahmad Sawafta, *Nazariyyat al-Ḥubb al-Ilāhī 'anda Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb wa-l-Shaykh 'Alī Nūr al-Dīn al-Yashruṭī*, 2012; Umar Muhammad Sa'id Laloh, *al-Maḍāmin al-Tarbawiyya li-l-Fikr al-Ṣūfī fī al-Islām*, 2012.

Focus of the Study

My first intention was to make a comparison between the contemporary Yashrutiyya in Israel and Lebanon, analysing the *ṭarīqa*'s development as part of a translocal movement in different contexts. Because of the dearth of academic knowledge on the contemporary Yashrutiyya, my research problem was initially phrased very broadly. While conducting initial observations and interviews in Acre, I realized the importance of the *Shaykh* for the followers and decided to focus on *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti's role and authority, substituting Lebanon for Jordan as a second focus of fieldwork because he is based there.

Authority is based on the recognition of legitimacy, as opposed to power which is based on coercion and force.³³ The literature on authority and charisma stresses that charisma is attributed by people and that authority is a relationship. Bruce Lincoln sees authority essentially as the capacity for 'authoritative speech', a speech act which is accepted by its audience by virtue of the speaker and his or her office (see paragraph 1.3).³⁴ This relationship is culturally defined and the elements of authority need to be identified within the context of the tradition in which this authoritative relation takes place. The first task of this study is therefore to identify the relevant elements and patterns of authority for this particular *Shaykh* – *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Hadi al-Yashruti – in this particular *ṭarīqa* – the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya – and to see whether there is a difference among the different local communities. We shall see how the mode of communication that belongs to this relationship is essential to understand the *Shaykh*'s authority.

When gaining more understanding of the *ṭarīqa* and talking to more people, three interrelated issues related to the question of authority seemed paradoxical to me and drove the rest of the research. The first is that the translocal *ṭarīqa* is organised and experienced as extremely centralised,³⁵ while one of its main values is to adapt to local circumstances. The second potential

³³ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58.

³⁴ Bruce Lincoln, *Authority. Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1–2, 168.

³⁵ Also noted by De Jong and Weismann. De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179–180; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 316.

paradox is between two of the four *arkān al-ṭarīqa* ('pillars of the *ṭarīqa*'): ³⁶ *fikr* (thought, contemplation) and *taslīm* (submission). These potentially conflicting elements are not experienced as contradicting on the spiritual level by Sufis in general and by the followers, and we will see that they are allowed to practically co-exist through the nature of the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower and the mode of communication with the *Shaykh*.

The third paradox is that of the significant differences in the messages communicated to outsiders by the *Shaykh* (and most of his followers in Amman, Acre and Jaffa), and by AKR, the *mutawallī*³⁷ of the *waqf* in Acre, who in addition to the responsibilities bestowed upon him by the *shaykh* regarding the administration of the *ṭarīqa*'s real estate in Acre, presents himself as 'responsible for external affairs of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel and the West'. Despite the fact that he acts as the *ṭarīqa*'s representative when dealing with outsiders, the Review Panel (see paragraph 2.4) stress that '[a]fter consulting with the Sheikh and with AKR himself, it became clear to us that AKR has responsibilities that are limited to managing the endowment (Waqf), and does not represent the Sheikh nor the Path in other matters' and that his views should be seen as personal opinions, except 'on a case by case basis'.³⁸ Even so, in practice he functions as the representative in Israel as for many outsiders he is the main, if not the only, member of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya they speak to. The social consequences of these different images further complicate the issue. When confronted with these differences, AKR refers to the same mode of communication that solves the first two paradoxes, but the result is significantly less convincing and the co-existence of these two messages remains problematic.

³⁶ In addition to adherence to the sharia, the four pillars of the *ṭarīqa* are *maḥabba* (love), *dhikr* (all those acts that serve to remember God), *fikr* (thought, reflection), and *taslīm* (submission). See chapter 6.

³⁷ A *mutawallī* is the custodian of a *waqf* (religious endowment), appointed by the *qāḍī* (Islamic judge) (in the text, I have used the anglicized plural *mutawallīs* rather than the Arabic *mutawalliyūn*).

³⁸ Review Panel, 'General Comments and Remarks', 20-08-2014, 3-4; Review Panel, 'Specific Comments on Conclusions of Individual Chapters', 4; Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 56.

Due to constraints of time and access this study focuses on Amman and Acre as the two spiritual centres of the *ṭarīqa*. These were the places I was able to build sufficient networks of personal and professional relations, understand the local politics, and transcend the language barrier to a sufficient degree to enable me to gather meaningful information. I also spent an intensive week in Jaffa. Because of the brevity of my stay and the informal character of the data obtained there, and because of the strong ties between the communities in Acre and Jaffa, I do not use the data to discuss the situation in Jaffa on its own account, but to provide information against which to clarify the conclusions reached in Acre, and to give a preliminary understanding of the situation in Jaffa.

Access to the communities in Umm al-Fahm, Nablus and Tubas was restricted as I was only able to meet and interview one person per community (the *muqaddam* in the case of Umm al-Fahm and Tubas, and a notable follower in Nablus – all in group settings). Because my aim is to achieve an understanding of the ‘lived religion’ and of the dynamics within communities this was not enough material on which to base a proper analysis, and I have chosen not to include these communities in this study. I have occasionally mentioned these interviews in the footnotes when they provide an interesting comparative point to what was discussed in the main text. I conducted one interview in Zarqa – which I treat as part of the community in Amman as the followers there participate in life in the *zāwiya* in Amman to such a degree that I deem this justified.

This study focuses on the inner core of the followers of *Shaykh* Ahmad, who refer to themselves as *abnā al-ṭarīqa*, *ikhwānā*, *fuqarā*, and *murīdīn*,³⁹ who have made the conscious decision to live and worship in accordance with the rules of the *ṭarīqa*, and have done *mubāya*‘a.⁴⁰ The *muḥibbīn*⁴¹ and other

³⁹ *Abnā al-ṭarīqa* (‘the children of the *ṭarīqa*’) and *ikhwānā* (‘our brothers’ – sometimes also *khawātnā*, ‘our sisters’) are terms used by the followers of *Shaykh* Ahmad to refer to themselves. They also call themselves *fuqarā*’ (sg. *faqīr*), ‘poor people’ who do not care for material wealth and are fully dependent on God, and *murīdīn* (sg. *murīd*), seekers.

⁴⁰ The pledge of allegiance to the doctrines and practices of the *Shadhuliyya*-*Yashrutiyya* and the authority of the *Shaykh* in the Sufi tradition (and in Islamic culture in general), the oath of allegiance is called *bay‘a*. It is the acceptance that the person to whom allegiance is promised derives his authority from God (either due to his spiritual power or due to a political doctrine that

members of society who are in touch with the *ṭarīqa* have not been included in this study. Some experts' opinions and initial observations on the role of the Yashrutiyya in society at large will be discussed, but a definite conclusion regarding the larger impact of the *ṭarīqa* in society awaits further research.

Research Questions

In this study I aim to answer the following question: What is the relation between *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Hadi al-Yashruti and his followers in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, Acre and Jaffa, in a context shaped by the disruption of the link between *Shaykh*, shrine and community and the challenges of a changing religious climate?

I will address the following sub-questions: On which elements is his authority based? Is his authority charismatic or institutionalised? What does he mean to the followers in different contexts, which roles does he take on and are attributed to him? How does he exercise these roles? What role does this give the community and the individual followers in their specific contexts? Where does this exercise of authority take place (what is the 'stage' of his authority)? How does this affect the larger societies in which these communities and individuals are present? How does this affect the doctrinal, practical and communal cohesion of the *ṭarīqa*?

teaches this), and it is therefore an oath of adherence to this person's teachings and/or a promise of obedience. The pledge of new Muslims to the Prophet is the prototype on which both *bay'a* to the ruler and to a Sufi *shaykh* build. The *mubāya'a* is considered to go back to the Prophet's time and is mentioned in the Qur'an in the *Āyat al-Mubāya'a* (*Sūrat al-Fath* 48:10, more commonly known as *Āyat al-Bay'a*) (see chapter 6)

⁴¹ A *muḥibb* (pl. *muḥibbīn*) is someone who loves and respects the *Shaykh* but has not dedicated him/herself fully to the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa* through the *mubāya'a*.

Research Methods

Because of the focus on contemporary lived religion and the understanding of authority as a relationship, this study has an inductive character and is based on anthropological fieldwork.⁴² Following Graham Harvey, I approach fieldwork as a relational activity and as ‘methodological guesthood’ and consider myself a ‘guest-researcher’.⁴³ Due to the multi-site character of this project, the socially defined codes of guesthood in different localities influenced my access to the communities and the collection of data as I was obliged to use different research methods (see chapters 1 and 2).

My fieldwork consisted of participant observation (attending meetings in the *zawāya* and visiting people) and of interviews. After a first official invitation for which permission had to be sought, in Acre I was free to meet and talk to people and I conducted several individual semi-structured interviews. In Jaffa, where I only spent a week altogether, most of my meetings were highly informal and most of my data therefore stem from informal (unrecorded) discussions. In Amman two ladies were responsible for accompanying me whenever I visited the *zāwiya* and for arranging meetings and interviews, which were always done in groups of 10-15 people. While posing difficulties for data comparison, these different codes of guesthood are reflections of the position of the *ṭarīqa* in society in the different localities and of the different levels of influence the *Shaykh* has over the dissemination of knowledge, and are therefore interesting sets of data in their own right.

When analysing my data, I used a combination of testing hypothetical patterns of authority as derived from the secondary literature, and deriving

⁴² Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk, ‘Introduction: Vernacular Religion, Generic Expressions and the Dynamics of Belief’, in *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*, ed. Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 7; Leonard Norman Primiano, ‘Afterword. Manifestations of the Religious Vernacular: Ambiguity, Power, and Creativity’, in *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life*, ed. Bowman and Valk, 384.

⁴³ Graham Harvey, ‘Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method’, *Numen* 50, no. 2 (2003): 125–46; Graham Harvey, ‘Field Research. Participant Observation’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London etc: Routledge, 2011), 217–44.

elements and patterns of authority from the data. Keeping in mind the different research settings and the resulting different methods of data collection, I have undertaken a comparison of the followers' attitudes to the *Shaykh* and the *zawāya*, and the process of *tarbiya* (upbringing, training, education, pedagogy) in Amman, Acre and Jaffa, and addressed the question how the followers continue to identify as one community even though the situations in which they enact their tradition are so different – how the *ṭarīqa* can be centralised while at the same time being adaptable – through their relationship and mode of communication with the *Shaykh*.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 will discuss Sufism as a discursive tradition and what this means for our understanding of Sufi authority and our identification of hypothetical elements of authority. Here we shall also discuss theories of authority focusing on institutionalisation and socialisation, the maintenance of charisma in Sufi movements, and the development of authority in contemporary Sufism. In the second chapter, we shall discuss the anthropological research methodology as sketched above in more depth. Chapter 3 sketches the historical framework in which the Yashrutiyya developed and the role of the *Shaykh* and his relation with the shrine and the community in pre-1948 Palestinian society, finishing with the developments of the *ṭarīqa* since 1980 to give a basic understanding of the *ṭarīqa*'s history against which the discussion of authority will become intelligible.

Part II (chapters 4-7) discusses *Shaykh* Ahmad's authority in Amman. After a historical overview of Palestinians, Islam and the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Jordan (chapter 4), we examine the elements on which *Shaykh* Ahmad's authority is based for the followers in Amman, and which roles they attribute to him, arguing that based on the conviction that the *Shaykh* is the

embodiment of the *nūr muḥammadī*⁴⁴ and the *'aqīda*,⁴⁵ the *Shaykh* is mainly presented as a teacher and guide. Chapter 5 examines how these roles are enacted in the process of *tarbiya* in which the relationship and the possibility of communication between *Shaykh* and follower is developed. Chapter 6 deals with the role the *zāwiya* in Amman plays in this process as the 'stage of authority', and what this means for the community's position in Jordanian society.

Part III (chapters 8-11) deals with Acre and Jaffa. Chapter 8 examines the situation of the Palestinians, Islam and Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel (and especially in Acre) after 1948, after which we examine which roles are attributed to the *Shaykh* in Acre and Jaffa (chapter 9). While ideas of the *Shaykh* as teacher and guide are important, the *Shaykh* as a father is the predominant image in Acre and Jaffa. Chapter 10 discusses the process of *tarbiya*, the development of the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower, and the mode of communication between them among the followers in Acre and Jaffa. The views of AKR will be discussed separately in both chapters to examine in what way they are related to the views of the followers and of *Shaykh* Ahmad. In chapter 11 we discuss the role of the *zāwiya* in Acre as an element of the *Shaykh's* authority as followers continue to look towards it as *al-zāwiya al-umm* ('the mother *zāwiya*'). In addition to its spiritual importance, the current renovations draw attention to its social role, as the diverging narratives of followers and AKR explored in chapters 9 and 10 materialize and gain in social relevance.

⁴⁴ The *nūr muḥammadī* is the 'Muhammadan light', the primordial light from which everything was created, the first stage of God's self-disclosure. It is the unifying principle of all archetypes. The *nūr muḥammadī* was manifested in all the prophets and lives on in the *awliyā*. It is one of the reasons the Sufis venerate the Prophet Muhammad to such a high degree, which is reflected in prayers and songs, and the celebration of the *mawlid al-nabī*, which is the major festival for many Sufi *ṭuruq*. Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1984), 236–238; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 59–60, 89; Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 214–216.

⁴⁵ *'Aqīda*, often translated as 'belief', 'creed', 'dogma' or 'doctrine'. For the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is an umbrella term that encompasses both faith (*īmān*) and divine law (*sharī'a*), which consists of devotional and social rules. It is not just an abstract theoretical concept, but is present in the hearts and minds of the followers – a good follower 'has the *'aqīda* inside'. See paragraph 5.1.

Finally, in the conclusion we shall discuss how charisma is maintained through adherence to the past and through innovation, and how our understanding of authority as a relationship, and especially our understanding of the modes of communication within this relationship, helps us achieve a deeper understanding of a contemporary traditional movement – explicitly contextualised and adaptive, yet believing in the transmission of essential unchanging values as embodied by the *Shaykh*, and how these beliefs and practices help the *Shaykh* to maintain a high level of authority and the community to maintain a high level of cohesion, allowing the *tariqa* to be highly translocal and local at the same time, managing the restrictions faced by the situation of the Palestinian people.

Part I

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1

Authority in Sufism

The Arabic word translated as Sufism is *taṣawwuf*, literally meaning ‘the process of becoming a Sufi’. It is the verbal noun of the fifth form of the root ṣ-w-f – this fifth form has the basic connotation of ‘assimilating or taking on a religious or ethnic identity’. Carl Ernst argues that ‘[d]efinitions of Sufism are, in effect, teaching tools.’ The term is used to cover ‘a broad spectrum of spiritual qualities’, both mystical and ethical, and their external social and historical manifestations. The European equivalents of the term came into being during the eighteenth century.¹

From then onwards, ‘Sufism’ has been seen as ‘Islamic mysticism’ when focussing on its written sources, or ‘popular Islam’ when adopting an anthropological approach. Nowadays scholars are calling for the contextualisation of ‘Sufism’ as a discursive tradition which revolves around the relationship between *shaykh* and follower. This chapter will first track this development and then continue to discuss how to approach Sufi authority, first by redefining the concepts ‘tradition’ and ‘charisma’ and arguing that authority should be seen as a relationship, then by looking closer at authority in Islam and Sufism. Finally, we shall discuss how ‘modernity’ has led to rationalisation and to the ‘fragmentation of authority’ and how this has impacted Sufi movements.

1.1 Orientalism and Sufism as Islamic Mysticism

Some notions of Islam had existed in Europe since the Arab and Berber armies challenged European-based powers almost immediately after the death of the

¹ Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston MA: Shambhala, 1997), 21–31. Keeping in mind the broad meaning of the Arabic term, we shall use the English term here.

Prophet.² European ideas on Islam and Sufism were formed more clearly during the eighteenth century when travellers, colonial officials and scholars visited and studied the Orient. In his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said argued that Orientalists – both artists and academics – constructed their own idea of the ‘Orient’, giving rise to gross distortions in Western understanding of Islam and Muslims. They aimed to uncover the essence of ‘the East’ and did so mainly by fabricating stereotypes with little base in reality. According to Said, this has not only influenced the attitudes towards the ‘Other’ but also (re)defined the European ‘Self’, and supports the continuing imbalance of power in the world between the ‘West’ and the ‘Other’.³ Ernst argues that these imperial ideas on Islam and Sufism still underpin contemporary ideas on Sufism, both among Muslims and non-Muslims, Sufis and non-Sufis.⁴

The Western concept of religion and mysticism in general, and of Islam and Sufism in particular, is rooted in the eighteenth century during which religions were increasingly seen as hierarchically ordered expressions of a universal truth.⁵ J.G. Herder (1744-1803) saw a people’s language, myths, folk-tales, beliefs, customs, etc. as expressions of the people’s essential spirit, or *Volksgeist*. To make sense of this diversity within a universalist framework, G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) posited the idea of ‘history as a singular civilizing process’ of ‘progress’ in which all peoples develop at a different pace towards the same goal, and can be hierarchically ordered based on the criterion how close

² In the earliest centuries of contact, Muslims were mainly seen as the enemy to be feared, although there were also trade connections. Islam was seen as a Christian heresy, or as a false religion coming from a false prophet. Gradually however, Bible scholars began to realise that knowledge of Arabic might be useful to better understand the Hebrew and Aramaic scriptures. The importance of Arabic scientific texts for disciplines such as mathematics, physics, philosophy and geography led to many translations, and interest for Islamic literature and religious texts increased. Albert Hourani, ‘Islam in European Thought’, in *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7–10; J. Brugman and F. Schröder, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 1979); K. Humayun Ansari, ‘The Muslim World in British Historical Imaginations. “Re-Thinking Orientalism”?’ in *Orientalism Revisited*, ed. Netton, 3–32.

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

⁴ Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 16; Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 2. See for example the works of Sayyid Hossein Nasr, Frithjof Schuon, and Mircea Eliade.

⁵ Hourani, ‘Islam in European Thought’, 14.; Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–2.

they are to this goal. As both language and religion were seen as expressions of the *Volksgeist*, these ideas were linked to the theory of 'language families' according to which Indo-European or Aryan languages were superior to Semitic languages due to the level of which they were capable of 'inflection', a syntactical structure which according to the philologists attested to creativity and a spirit of freedom. Because Semitic languages only had partial inflection, scholars concluded that Semitic peoples and religions were seen as rigid, legalistic and stagnant. While originally a Semitic religion, Christianity's Aryan roots were stressed, especially Greek 'rationality' and susceptibility to 'progress'. The Aryan *Geist* was considered closest to the universal truth, which in their eyes gave the Europeans the right and duty to rule the world.⁶

On this path of 'progress', some believed that reason and science would take over from religion.⁷ Mainstream religion came to be seen as rational, social, liberal, institutional, and masculine, whereas 'mysticism' was considered irrational, antisocial, fanatical, sensual and female. Others espoused 'mysticism' as the universal religion that was manifested in different degrees in specific peoples and religions, most notably in Christianity. They saw the universal goal of 'mysticism' as the searching for and the intangible and ineffable 'experience' of God, the Infinite, the Universal Truth.⁸

There are several problems with this universalist essentialist approach to mysticism and Sufism. First of all, it is a term that developed in a Western context and does not always fit other traditions. In Western scholarship the term has become ill-defined and conflated with other terms.⁹ Second, there is the focus on 'experience', which is subjective and therefore epistemologically impossible to understand as an outsider – and even for an insider when we take 'mystical experience' to happen during an altered state of consciousness. The term fails

⁶ Hourani, 'Islam in European Thought', 25–30; Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, xiii–xiv, 24–25, 177–178, 199.

⁷ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, xiii–xiv, 177–178. See for example the thinking of Ernest Renan (1823-1892) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

⁸ Leigh Eric Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 2 (2003): 277–279, 287.

⁹ William B. Parsons, 'Introduction. Teaching Mysticism: Frame and Content', in *Teaching Mysticism*, ed. William B. Parsons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–4.

to distinguish between episodic experience and mysticism as a *process* that, though surely punctuated by moments of visionary, unitive, and transformative encounters, is ultimately inseparable from its embodied relation to a total religious matrix: liturgy, scripture, worship, virtues, theology, rituals, practice, and the arts.¹⁰

To this we should add that ‘mysticism’ came to be seen as detached from the material world and from the devotional, ethical and socio-political practices related to it, even though the term originated in the context of spiritual, religious, social and political struggles, and helped explorers, colonizers and missionaries relate to other cultures and religions, and became ‘part of an Orientalist strategy of appropriation’.¹¹ ‘Material practices’ were ‘spiritualized’ and depoliticized, turning them ‘into expressions of something timeless and suprahistorical’. Tomoko Masuzawa calls this ‘the sacralizing character of Orientalism’.¹² According to Grace Jantzen this approach

had become a way of keeping politics, materiality, embodiment, power relations, and social ethics off the scholarly table. The very depoliticization of ‘religious experience’ was, in other words, highly political and required dismantling.¹³

In this period Orientalists defined Sufism as ‘Islamic mysticism’. The first Europeans to come into contact with Sufis were travellers in the seventeenth century who stressed the Sufis’ perceived social marginality and ‘the exotic, peculiar, and behaviour that diverges from modern European norms’.¹⁴ From the

¹⁰ Ibid., 4–5.

¹¹ Schmidt, ‘The Making of Modern Mysticism.’ Schmidt discusses the roots of modern mysticism in New England Unitarianism that sought an antipositivist, antimaterialist religion that enabled political and religious union in the context of the American Civil War. It provided the possibility of dialogue in the global encounter of religions – but Schmidt points out that at the same time it served as a strategy for appropriation, providing a vision of union on Protestant terms.

¹² Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 20.

¹³ Schmidt, ‘The Making of Modern Mysticism’, 274.

¹⁴ Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 3. Ernst stresses the Protestant roots of these travellers. The influence of different religious backgrounds on the image of Sufism awaits further research.

eighteenth century onwards, colonial officials studied Persian and Arabic and became especially interested in Sufi poetry and philosophy. Because of their literal understanding of the language of love, passion, longing, drunkenness, etc., they saw Sufism as a foreign, Aryan, element in Islam, 'a flower in the desert', and they searched for Sufism's roots in the Indo-Aryan cultures of India, Persia, Greece, and Christianity.¹⁵

Because of their focus on what they perceived as the alien and antinomian aspects of Sufism, Orientalists believed that Sufis did not adhere to the sharia¹⁶ and that there was a deep division between Sufis and 'orthodox' scholars, the '*ulamā*' (religious scholars) and *fuqahā*' (Islamic jurists). The Orientalists admired what they called 'High Sufism', the civilized, Aryan, intellectual, urban, philosophical, poetical, esoteric mysticism, but they argued that after its 'golden age' from the ninth to the twelfth century, when Sufism became institutionalized, it declined into 'Low Sufism' or 'folk religion'.¹⁷ They studied Sufi poetry and philosophy from the 'golden age' and in line with the understanding of 'mysticism' as purely transcendental and therefore apolitical, they focussed only on the spiritual aspects of the texts, with no interest for their historical and social context or their contemporary manifestations.¹⁸

¹⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 8, 12–14; Alexander Knysh, 'Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West', in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 126–127; Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 202–203; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 15; Everarde Berendsen, "'Als een Bloem in de Woestijn.'" Zes Theorieën over de Herkomst van het Vroege Soefisme' (Bachelor, University of Leiden, 2008); Sijbrand, 'Orientalism and Sufism.'

¹⁶ Islamic law as contained in God's revelation. It is discussed, described, and explained in *fiqh*, which is based on Qur'an, Hadith, analogous reasoning (*qiyās*), the consensus of the scholars (*ijmā*), and sometimes the opinions of individual scholars (*ijtihad*). Because this is the only access Muslims have to the divine law, the result of *fiqh* is often also referred to as sharia. There are four legal schools (*madhāhib*) in Sunni Islam that 'follow the same legal principles and recognize each other as valid interpretations of the law'. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 423–424.

¹⁷ Examples of this approach are A. J. Arberry, *Sufism. The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950); Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

¹⁸ Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 16; Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain: An Exploration of Muslim Identity* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2000), 2–3.

The organizational aspects of Sufism, the contemporary *ṭuruq* or brotherhoods, were studied by social scientists affiliated with the colonial rulers who saw the *ṭuruq* as potentially effective instruments to mobilize the population. They largely ignored the historical development and the ideas of the brotherhoods they studied, and colonial rulers devised policy based on these views in order to neutralize potential rival sources of authority.¹⁹

Even though among the earliest Orientalists there were scholars who disagreed with these theories on the basis of a thorough analysis of Sufi texts or extensive fieldwork, such as Frid. Aug. Deofidus Tholuck (1799-1877),²⁰ Louis Massignon (1883-1962),²¹ Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936),²² these Orientalist approaches continued to influence research on Sufism.²³ As was common in the academia of this period, the historical and philological approach and the social sciences hardly mixed.²⁴ Even when scholars were aware that these are not separate religious phenomena but

¹⁹ Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 1–18, 205–211; Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 2–3. A good example is French colonialist anthropology of the Maghreb. Colonial officials and scholars (such as Évariste Lévi-Provençal, Jacques Berque and Alfred Bel) distinguished between what they saw as the Arab hierarchically organized towns and the Berber egalitarian tribes, which led to an immense array of related dichotomies: High Islam - Low Islam, orthodox - non-orthodox, 'ulamā' - marabouts/saints, sharia - tribal law, puritanical scripturalism - ritualistic saint-worship, text-based authority - person-based authority. This understanding led to the 'Berber Decree' of 1930 in which two sets of laws were imposed for Arabs and Berbers, in a classic move of divide-and-rule. Scott A. Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 52–55; Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xxvi.

²⁰ Frid. Aug. Deofidus Tholuck, *Ssufismus sive Theosophia Persarum Pantheistica*, 1821.

²¹ Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane*, 1922.

²² Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1888); *Ibid.*, *Verspreide Geschriften* (Leiden: Brill, 1923-1927).

²³ Hourani, 'Islam in European Thought', 41–50; Christopher Melchert, 'The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.', *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 51; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 15–16; Berendsen, "'Als een Bloem in de Woestijn'", 14–15; Sijbrand, 'Orientalism and Sufism', 102–105; Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 2.

²⁴ R.S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, 'Neo-Sufism Reconsidered', *Der Islam* 70 (1993): 54.; Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 8–9.

different aspects of the same phenomenon, they tended to focus on one of them.²⁵

In response to Western cultural, social, and political hegemony, including these early Christian critical approaches to Islam and Sufism, several scholars chose to work from within the Islamic tradition and provide an inside understanding (often associated with the Traditionalist school), such as Henry Corbin (1903-1978), Martin Lings (1909-2005), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933). Some authors worked from a perennialist perspective, most notably René Guénon (1886-1951) and Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998).²⁶ Daphne Habibis sees this as part of a larger counter-culture approach challenging mainstream Western modernist ideology, valuing intuition and emotion over reason, creativity over intellect, 'psychological unification instead of compartmentalisation', antagonism towards materialism and rules, spirituality over institutionalised religion, and community over individuality, anonymity and separation.²⁷ The phenomenological approach was also adopted by some scholars of Islam, especially by Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003).

By the 1960s relativist approaches such as constructivism and poststructuralism became more common; 'Pattern and interpretive theories, as opposed to causal, linear theories, were now more common' as '[t]he search for grand narratives was being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations.'²⁸ In anthropology greater attention was given to historical issues such as the contingent development of ideas and social structures, to issues of economic and political inequality and oppression, and to the role of religion in these issues on local and global levels. Issues related to

²⁵ An excellent example of historical philological studies of Sufism is Annemarie Schimmel's book *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1987), which acknowledges the importance of the social aspect of Sufism but does not cover it in detail.

²⁶ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 7, no. 2 (1995): 110. For the Traditionalists, see Mark J. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁷ Daphne Habibis, 'The Problem of Values in Muslim Research: The Case of Sufism', *Asian Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (1991): 20.

²⁸ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 'Introduction. The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, 2005), x, 18–20.

imperialism, colonialism, globalisation and worldwide political and economic networks formed the background of these new projects.²⁹

There was an increasing interest in socio-economic approaches to Islamic history and in contextualising Sufism rather than searching for its origins and its essence, and for the historical analysis of Sufism's role in society.³⁰ At first the distinction between High and Low Islam, 'scholars, saints and Sufis', and the focus on Sufism's antinomian aspects were perpetuated by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and Ernst Gellner, and historian Nikki Keddie.³¹ On a doctrinal level, this opposition was challenged by J.S. Trimingham who showed the link between Sufi philosophy and *ṭuruq* by describing the connection between the theory of *wilāya*³² and the social organisation of the *ṭarīqa* as disciples turn to and

²⁹ Michael Lambek, *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 471. In Islamic Studies, names associated with this shift are Clifford Geertz, Talal Asad and Dale F. Eickelman. See for example Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington DC: Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001); Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*.

³⁰ A noteworthy example is social historian Nikki R. Keddie's edited book *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis* (1972), in which she aims to contextualise Islamic people and movements. For example, Vincent Crapanzano analyzes the Moroccan Hamadsha in two different settings to show the brotherhoods degree of adaptability to different social contexts. Vincent Crapanzano, "The Hamadsha," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 328.

³¹ Even though Nikki Keddie noted that the institutions of the '*ulamā*' and Sufis were intertwined, she defined Sufism as 'the more popular and generally less learned religious groups'. Nikki Keddie, "Introduction," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, ed. Keddie, 1. In the same volume, Gellner argued that 'urban Sufi mysticism is an *alternative* to the legalistic, restrained, arid (as it seems to its critics) Islam of the '*ulamā*. Rural and tribal 'Sufism' is a *substitute* for it.' Ernest Gellner, "Doctor and Saint," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, ed. Keddie, 308–309. Geertz and Gellner described society as 'a drama of religiosity' in terms of social typical actors who they saw as representing social structure. These abstract figures reduced social actors to stereotypes who 'represented' rather than 'made' culture, and gave an overly simplified image of society. Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 6–8; Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law*, 36, 250 note 42.

³² *Walī* (pl. *awliyā*) literally means 'friend, someone who is close, someone who is under protection'. The general Arabic and Islamic tradition, a *walī* is a 'next of kin, ally, friend, helper, guardian, patron, saint', and it has a broad range of meaning in political and legal contexts. In Sufism, a *walī* or *walī Allāh* is 'someone who is close to God, someone who is under God's protection', often translated problematically as 'saint'. The friend of God has acquired God's good qualities, is blessed with spiritual powers (such as the ability to perform *karāmāt* (miracles), and possesses spiritual and sometimes socio-political authority. In Sufi theosophy ideas on the *awliyā*

organize around the *walī*.³³ Vincent Cornell argued that one has to look at the doctrinal context of sainthood to understand the Moroccan cult of saints.³⁴ The anthropologist Michael Gilsenan argued that the *ṭuruq* are present in all levels of society enacting many functions, and that the ideological disagreements between some Sufis and ‘*ulamā*’ reflect historical problems and struggles over authority as Sufis claimed to be ‘a new order of religious specialists claiming a new order of knowledge and the capacity to mediate the relation between God and man.’³⁵ This was taken up by De Jong and Bernd Radtke in their edited volume *Islamic Mysticism Contested* (1999), in which they argued that there is no clear cut essential dichotomy between exoteric ‘*ulamā*’ and esoteric Sufis, and that the many cases in which aspects of Sufism and particular individuals and groups of Sufis have been criticized throughout history – sometimes even leading to

have been discussed since the ninth century, including ideas on a hierarchy of *awliyā*, the highest *walī* being the *quṭb* (axis), and the *khatam al-wilāya* (seal of the *awliyā*). *Wilāya* is the spiritual and/or worldly authority exercised by a *walī* based on his closeness to God, often translated problematically as ‘sainthood’. Broadly speaking, *wilāya* conveys the meaning of ‘power, authority, domain of authority’, while the closely related concept of *walāya* conveys the meaning of ‘friendship, closeness’. Due to the general absence of vocalization, the two are often indistinguishable in written texts, and they rely on each other for their meaning. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 199–213; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xviii–xx; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 58–80; A. Christmann, ‘Reclaiming Mysticism: Anti-Orientalism and the Construction of “Islamic Sufism” in Postcolonial Egypt’, in *Religion, Language and Power*, ed. N.S. Green and M. Searle-Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2008), 92–103; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 13. For more on the concept in the broader Islamic tradition, including its use in the Qur’ān and its political and legal uses in Sunni and Shi’i Islam, see Hermann Landolt, ‘Walāyah’, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol 15 316–323.

³³ Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, chapter 5, ‘The mysticism and theosophy of the orders’. Trimingham’s work has been criticized for numerous reasons, not least because of his theory of decline, as he believed that that ‘Sufism’ declined since its ‘golden age’ of classical intellectual Sufism in the twelfth century into the rural variant of the contemporary brotherhoods. De Jong considered the chapter on Sufi philosophy the best part of the book, even though in his view Trimingham did not give enough attention to Ibn Arabi, did not link the Sufi philosophy to his theory of development, and failed to link it to the religious practices of the brotherhood. O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” 54; Frederick de Jong, “Periodization, Categorization, and Simplification in a Comprehensive Survey,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17 (1972): 279–285, republished in *Sufi Orders in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Egypt and the Middle East. Collected Studies* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 249–55.

³⁴ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxi, xxiv, 272.

³⁵ Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt. An Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Manchester: Oxford University Press, 1973), 10–11.

outright persecution – should always be examined in their socio-political context.³⁶

The clearest call to combine philological and social science methods – and as a result to go beyond the distinction between Sufis, saints and scholars – has been put forward by Bernd Radtke and Frederick de Jong in their discussion of ‘Neo-Sufism’. The term ‘Neo-Sufism’ was first coined by Fazlur Rahman to denote the – in his view – radical break within Sufi thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as several Sufi leaders reformed the content and organizational form of Sufism with the aim of making it more involved in society and more compatible with orthodox Islam.³⁷ The term was taken over by several scholars until it was questioned by Radtke and R.S. O’Fahey, who combined the analysis of colonial sources with an analysis of the writings of the Sufi leaders associated with the legacy of Ahmad ibn Idris (1749/50-1837), and reached the conclusion that there is more continuity with previous developments and more overlap in the relationship between Sufism and ‘orthodoxy’ than is commonly believed, that the eighteenth-century revival movements should be seen as a continuation of the dynamic Islamic tradition, and that the criticism to which Sufism has been subject since its earliest centuries is based as much on power struggles between different religious factions as on ideological issues.³⁸

1.2 Contextualising Sufism - Sufism as a Discursive Tradition

In order to go beyond the distinction between tradition and modernity, to bring methods from the social sciences and humanities together, and to contextualise

³⁶ Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see paragraph 1.3.

³⁷ O’Fahey and Radtke, ‘Neo-Sufism Reconsidered’, 55–57; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

³⁸ O’Fahey and Radtke, ‘Neo-Sufism Reconsidered’, 52–53. In addition to Ahmad ibn Idris, they discussed Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi (1787-1859), Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793-1852), Ibrahim al-Rashid (1817-1874), Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815). For more on the eighteenth-century reform movements, see paragraph 1.5.1.

Sufi movements, scholars approach Sufism as a discursive tradition and focus on the centrality of the relation between *shaykh* and disciple, and the physical aspects of Sufism in the form of embodiment and theories of space.

Nile Green understands Sufism as ‘a *tradition* of powerful knowledge, practices and persons’ (italics in original),³⁹ and follows Edward Shils’s understanding of a ‘tradition’ as ‘anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present’, whether they be objects or (normative) ideas; Shils sees tradition as a ‘guiding pattern’, a pattern of behaviour, words and practices, or a pattern of submission to authority. Shils envisages traditions as consisting of a ‘multiplicity of judgments about a multiplicity of objects’ which are component elements that in certain clusters or combinations receive a name and are portrayed as a separate tradition either by insiders or outsiders. These separate traditions are grouped in families and branches, and separate spheres of tradition (e.g. political, religious, literate) overlap and exchange elements. This is how one minor tradition belongs to and interacts with other traditions in its past and present in dynamics of imposition, addition, amalgamation, absorption and fusion, or outright conflict.⁴⁰ As Marshall Hodgson pointed out: ‘No tradition is isolable from others present in the same social context. (A culture, indeed, may be defined as a complex of interdependent traditions.)’⁴¹

Tradition is ‘the past in the present but it is as much part of the present as any very recent innovation.’⁴² More important than the past as it actually happened is the perception of this past in the present, which depends on ‘the construction, dissemination and acceptance of authoritative historical narratives’, providing ‘a pool of resources which can be drawn upon in traditional and modern settings to sanction present practice.’⁴³ It consists of what are considered to be essential, central elements which exist in combination with other variable elements – although even those elements considered to be essential and

³⁹ Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester, West Sussex & Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3.

⁴⁰ Edward Albert Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago etc: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 262–286.

⁴¹ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 83.

⁴² Shils, *Tradition*, 13.

⁴³ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 29; Shils, *Tradition*, 195.

unchanging at a certain time and place might become variable as the tradition develops. The connection to this temporal chain and to what are perceived to be essential elements can provide an individual and/or a community with a sense of identity and belonging in time and space.⁴⁴

Therefore, while 'traditions' are often seen by insiders and outsiders as eternal and unchanging institutions which exist outside of the individual, Shils stresses that traditions are not self-perpetuating but are enacted and modified by individuals through continuous selection and interpretation, which makes tradition interpretive, dynamic, creative, and accumulative, leaving room for development and diversification as people feel the need to improve their tradition, make it more 'authentic', or adapt to new circumstances.⁴⁵ Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori see these elements of tradition as symbols which are subject to continuous interpretation due to their ambiguous nature, simultaneously providing a connection to the past and an opportunity for change.⁴⁶

This brings us to the question who has the authority to make and enforce these selections and interpretations and to decide what are the accepted limits within which this can be done – the 'custodian' or 'exemplar' of tradition. These limits are mainly maintained through institutions where future custodians of the tradition are trained to uphold the 'correct' pattern of ideas and practices.⁴⁷ The process whereby these interpretations are transmitted to the community leads to the blurring of these limits of tradition⁴⁸ and to the existence of parallel traditions which are intrinsically linked through adherence to what are considered the essential elements, challenging the perceived dichotomy between what is commonly seen as 'official religion' and 'popular or folk religion'.⁴⁹ In order to go

⁴⁴ Shils, *Tradition*, 269–273.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12–33.

⁴⁶ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 28.

⁴⁷ Shils, *Tradition*, 96–97.

⁴⁸ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:86–87.

⁴⁹ Shils, *Tradition*, 264–269. This understanding also enables us to go beyond the 'world religions paradigm' which posits the idea of clearly delimited exclusive world religions. This paradigm originated in the colonial period as scholars trained in a Christian framework – characterized by methodological compartmentalisation and a focus on theology – ignored everyday belief and practice. Ron Geaves, 'The Borders between Religions: A Challenge to the World Religions Approach to Religious Education', *British Journal of Religious Education* 21, no. 1 (1998): 20–23;

beyond this dichotomy, folklorists and scholars of religion discuss 'vernacular religion'. As understood by Leonard Primiano,

[v]ernacular religion is, by definition, religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it. (...) The process of religious belief refers to the complex linkage of acquisition and formation of beliefs which is always accomplished by the conscious and unconscious negotiations of and between believers.⁵⁰

Primiano points out that there is no abstract, 'pure' form of religion as even the religious elite express their own form of their tradition in their own specific time and place: 'Since religion inherently involves interpretation, it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular,' even if this individual is a member of the religious elite.⁵¹

We should keep in mind however that while the term 'official religion' does not make sense from the etic perspective of religious studies, it does appear in emic perceptions; usually, the belief in a leader's superior knowledge or in the authenticity of a regulating institution is part of the individual's or community's belief system and should therefore be reintroduced as part of this 'vernacular religion'. In such situations, Marion Bowman's understanding of religion consisting of three interacting components is useful, as she distinguishes

- 'official religion (meaning what is accepted orthodoxy at any given time, although this is subject to change);
- folk religion (meaning that which is generally accepted and transmitted belief and practice, regardless of the official view);
- individual religion (the product of the received tradition, plus personal beliefs and interpretations).'⁵²

George D. Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*, 2nd ed. (London & New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2014), 189–195.

⁵⁰ Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', *Western Folklore* 54, no. 1. Reflexivity and the Study of Belief (1995): 44.

⁵¹ Ibid., 44–45; Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 222.

⁵² Bowman and Valk, 'Vernacular Religion', 4. Bowman first developed this idea in British Association for the Study of Religions Occasional Paper no.6, 1992, republished as Marion

When seeking to understand 'lived religion', we are concerned with the *interaction* of these levels, as individuals transmit and interpret the belief systems they have inherited from their communities and from the institutions of 'official religion'. Many different factors interact with the individual in a continuous process of 'creative self-understanding, self-interpretation, and negotiation' to form 'a unified organic system of belief', which in turn becomes part of the social environment.⁵³ This continuous interpretation is 'a living process exhibiting both conservative/passive and dynamic changing qualities'.⁵⁴

In his seminal article 'The idea of an anthropology of Islam,' Talal Asad proposes to understand Islam as a discursive tradition based on the central elements of Qur'an and Hadith – both a product of power and cooperating with power in producing authority and discipline.⁵⁵ In Sunni Islam, the '*ulamā*' – especially the legal scholars – acquired the authority to interpret scripture and prescribe the behaviour based on this interpretation, defining what is called 'orthodoxy': the combination of 'right' creed and 'right' practice. They thus became the custodians of the Islamic Sunni tradition. Norman Calder also characterizes this as 'a discursive process, an ongoing process of interpreting their own past', in which scholars always acknowledged their intellectual ancestors. The importance of certain issues fluctuated, and there was room for dispute within flexible boundaries; it is a discursive tradition, influenced by the historical situation and outside elements, but always revolving around itself.⁵⁶ Devin DeWeese states that 'we may find the Qur'an to be much more of an

Bowman, 'Phenomenology, Fieldwork and Folk Religion', in *Religion: Empirical Studies: A Collection to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the British Association for the Study of Religions*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe (Aldershot etc: Ashgate, 2004), 3–18.

⁵³ Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion', 44; Bowman, 'Phenomenology, Fieldwork and Folk Religion.' Primiano takes the term 'unified organic system' from Don Yoder, "Toward a Definition of Folk Religion," *Western Folklore* 33, no. 1 (1974): 13.

⁵⁴ Primiano, 'Afterword', 384–386.

⁵⁵ Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14. See also Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 28; Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 3.

⁵⁶ Norman Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', in *Defining Islam: A Reader*, ed. Andrew Rippin (London: Equinox, 2007), 224–225.

“interactive” text than commonly thought, with its authority resting in part on the affirmative engagement of believers.⁵⁷

Asad points to the central role of teaching in maintaining this tradition, creating space for reason and argument within tradition.⁵⁸ For Shils, a sacred text (gone through a process of selection and canonization) is just as much a tradition as its (accumulative) interpretations, both in their physical and their textual forms. In the Muslim religious sciences these interpretations derive their legitimacy from the texts on which they are based, the Qur’an and the Sunna,⁵⁹ but also on the soundness of the interpreter’s reasoning.⁶⁰ Shils argues that ‘[t]he process of rationalization – clarifying, refining, and making logically consistent – itself modifies the tradition and therewith the meaning of the sacred text itself.’⁶¹ In addition to the rational transmission of teachings, Asad points to the role of disciplinary practices to form people’s identities and instill values and behaviour as ‘embodied practical, emotional, and conceptual dispositions’. They are thus ‘the multiple ways in which religious discourses regulate, inform and construct religious selves.’ In addition to Weber’s focus on the repressive and manipulative aspects of power, Asad focuses on ‘the conditions within which obedient wills are created’ by transforming dispositions. Obedience thus becomes a virtue, rather than a loss of will.⁶²

In this process of teaching power is enacted and resistance can take place:

⁵⁷ Devin DeWeese, ‘Authority’, in *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, ed. Jamal J. Elias (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010), 35.

⁵⁸ Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16.

⁵⁹ The Sunna is the model behaviour, primarily of the Prophet, but also of his companions and successors. It is known through the body of *Hadith*. After the Qur’an, it is the second source of sharia (Islamic law). Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:63–64.

⁶⁰ Shils, *Tradition*, 17, 94–97. While occasionally referring to non-Christian religions, his essay is predominantly written from a Western Christian perspective. This can be seen most clearly in his use of the normative Christian distinction between church and sect, which he extends to other religions. *Ibid.*, 175–178.

⁶¹ Shils, *Tradition*, 95.

⁶² Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 77–79, 125–126; Paulo Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, in *Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality*, ed. Paul L. Heck (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 125–126.

It should be the anthropologist's first task to describe and analyze the kinds of reasoning, and the reasons for arguing, that underlie Islamic traditional practices. It is here that the analyst may discover a central modality of power, and of the resistance it encounters – for the process of arguing, of using the force of reason, at once presupposes and responds to the fact of resistance. Power, and resistance, are thus intrinsic to the development and exercise of any traditional practice.⁶³

Therefore, 'orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power',⁶⁴ and one should look at the conditions under which this power is exercised and the extent to which this power is accepted or resisted.

Steven T. Katz argues that not only are the reports of mystical experiences bound by historical cultural factors and religious tradition, but that also the experiences themselves are structured and limited by these and other factors. He points to the importance of teachers and models, of the education process and of mystical literature in the cultivation of mystical consciousness and of mystical experiences. He argues that mystical experience, the accounts of these experiences and the interpretations of canonical sources based on them therefore tend to maintain the authority of these canonical sources rather than reject and transcend them. Furthermore, he stresses that when a mystic does challenge (aspects of) religious authority, s/he does so by framing his/her experience in terms of sacred scripture. The charismatic moment is thus securely grounded in tradition.⁶⁵

As did Katz, Green stresses the conservative nature of Sufism, as its adherents continuously look backwards for their legitimacy and strive to return to the primordial state before creation. Also, he points out that it is part of the

⁶³ Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵ S.T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. S.T. Katz (London & New York: Sheldon Press, 1978), 22–74; S.T. Katz, 'Models, Modelling, and Mystical Training', *Religion* 12 (1982): 247–75; S.T. Katz, 'The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience', in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. S.T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Islamic tradition, 'rooted in a wider Muslim model of reliable knowledge in which the sanction and security of past authority (whether of the Prophet or of the saintly "friends" of God) was of overwhelming importance.'⁶⁶ Specific Sufi communities are composed of elements of tradition that come forth from the Sufi tradition and the wider Islamic tradition. Which elements are stressed and which are neglected, which elements are developed and in what direction, depends on the specific context of this community, and who has the authority to perform, guide and control these selections and interpretations.⁶⁷

Definitions of Sufism are part of 'a continuous debate on the meanings of Islam' not only in academic circles, but also in contemporary Islamic discourse as people are vying for the authority to speak for Islam and define what Sufism is, what its relationship to Islam is, and who has the final word on these issues.⁶⁸ Most Sufi movements are part of the Islamic discursive tradition, focused on the Qur'an and Sunna, and Asad's approach is therefore a good starting point when examining the Sufi discursive tradition. This raises the question which are the elements of their tradition that make them particularly Sufi. We can therefore apply the discussion on Islam as a discursive tradition to the Sufi tradition by asking ourselves 'whether, besides these founding texts, devotional and charismatic practices cannot also function as reference points for what is counted as Islamic.'⁶⁹

Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen argue that there are elements of tradition or 'paradigmatic concepts that shape both social relations and ritual practice across place and time wherever people draw on the Sufi heritage': the bond between *shaykh* and disciple, the bond between the disciples, the concrete 'meeting place that provides a physical locus for the enactment of those relations' – even though these bonds are constructed in different ways in different

⁶⁶ Green, *Sufism*, 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3–4; Katz, 'The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience'.

⁶⁸ Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer, 'Introduction', in *Sufis in Western Society. Global Networking and Locality*, ed. Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁶⁹ Markus Dressler, 'Between Legalist Exclusivism and Mystic Universalism: Contested Sufi Muslim Identities in New York', *The Muslim World* 100 (2010): 435.

contexts.⁷⁰ Lincoln identifies four overlapping ‘forms of expression’ or ‘domains’ of religion: discourses, practices (both everyday and ceremonial), communities (and fellowships and networks), and institutions.⁷¹ When we apply these to Sufi movements, we see that the religious leader and spiritual guide (*shaykh*, *murshid*, *pīr*) is the central figure, the central element, the axis around which all these domains turn, linking them all together. Therefore, many researchers stress that the relationship between *shaykh* and disciple is central to Sufism, and many debates in Sufi Studies centre on the authority of Sufi leaders.⁷²

While for most Sufi movements the fact that they are a part of the larger Muslim tradition is essential, we should keep in mind that in the contemporary world, there are groups which identify as Sufi but not as Muslim, taking elements from the Sufi tradition but reinterpreting them, and altogether leaving some elements that are more specifically Muslim. Some people identify themselves as Sufis without following a *shaykh*. In some cases, several paradigms even coexist in the same movement.⁷³

While Sufism is generally seen as the mystical dimension of Islam, and certainly does include elements that have come to be associated with the concept of ‘mysticism’ (such as the spiritual development of the believer and his/her quest for a direct experience of the divine), the Sufi tradition encompasses much more than that. Valerie Hoffman, for example, shows that while some of her respondents did mention esoteric aspects, the common understandings of Sufism among contemporary Egyptian Sufis focus on ethics and purification of the soul in the framework of the sharia, and on love – love for

⁷⁰ Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 16–17.

⁷¹ Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 8; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006): 1–18.

⁷² Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 15; Ron Geaves, ‘Charismatic Authority in Islam: An Analysis of the Cause of Schisms in the Ummah’, in *Sacred Schisms. How Religions Divide*, ed. James R. Lewis and Sarah M. Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53; Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (London: Hurst, 2003), 7; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 78–80; Green, *Sufism*, 2.

⁷³ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 161–184. See for example the differences between Iranian and Western initiates in the Munawwar Ali Shah branch of the Ni‘matu’llahi *ṭarīqa* in the West. Leonard Lewisohn, ‘Persian Sufism in the Contemporary West: Reflections on the Ni‘matullahi Diaspora’, in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (London: Routledge, 2006), 49–70.

God, for the Prophet and his family, and for the *shaykh* and the brethren.⁷⁴ Ron Geaves suggests that by combining the emic definition of Ali al-Hujwiri (990-1077) that the Sufi is he who adopts *ṣafā* (purity), and Hoffman's etic definition of Sufism as 'purification of the heart, sincerity of worship, and renunciation of the fleshly passions', we reach an understanding of Sufism as 'practical Islam.'⁷⁵

In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr: 'No understanding of Islamic spirituality is possible without comprehension of the element of love for God.'⁷⁶ Hoffman points out that *maḥabba*, love, is intimately connected with all aspects of Sufi life:

The redemptive qualities of love for the Prophet and his family, the deep love that exists in the shaykh-disciple relationship, and dhikr [remembrance] as a function of love for God (...) It is almost impossible to discuss any aspect of Sufi experience without reference to love.⁷⁷

The love between God and His creation is celebrated in *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* 5:54: 'He loves them and they love Him.'⁷⁸ While all Muslims love God out of obedience or fear, Sufis stress that they love God for His own sake rather than out of self-interest. While early Sufis focused on their fear for God and practised extreme asceticism and withdrawal from society,⁷⁹ soon Sufis started to focus on love for God and all his creation and the yearning (*shawq*) that accompanied this. The first Sufi who showed this pure selfless love for God was Rabia al-Adawiyya (d.ca.788-92): 'I have not worshipped Him from fear of His fire, nor for love of His

⁷⁴ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 21–22.

⁷⁵ Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel, 'Introduction', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 40.

⁷⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'God', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 321.

⁷⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 188.

⁷⁸ Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābi'a to Ibn 'Arabī', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 151.

⁷⁹ While asceticism (*zuhd*) and the greater *jihād* as a struggle to purify the soul still play a role in contemporary Sufism in the form of supererogatory fasting and seclusion (*khalwa*), the strict asceticism of this early ascetic movement (including renunciation of material things, extreme poverty and specific dress) is hardly found nowadays and is usually frowned upon. Most Sufis engage in society, work for their living and dress well, as renunciation has become a spiritual virtue rather than a material one. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 193, 196–200.

garden, so that I should be like a lowly hireling; rather, I have worshipped Him for love of Him and longing for Him'.⁸⁰ Writers such as Ja'far al-Sadiq (d.765), Harith al-Muhasibi (d.857), Dhu al-Nun al-Masri (d.859), Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz (d.890 or 899) and Samnun al-Muhibb (d.910-11) further explored the themes that love and yearning are the path towards God, until one sees God in every beautiful thing and reaches true understanding. Samnun saw love as the supreme spiritual abode which does not diminish as other spiritual states do, and as unavoidably connected with adversity (*balā*) and suffering.⁸¹

During the tenth and eleventh centuries these ideas became central to Sufi mysticism and terminology. The most important love mystic in this period was Mansur al-Hallaj (d.922), who was the first to see love not as the path to God but as the Divine Essence itself, and love for God as leading to the unity (*ittihād*) of lover and beloved.⁸² Other important love mystics were Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri (d.907), Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd (d.910), and Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d.945).⁸³ By the eleventh and twelfth century, an antinomian love mysticism was flowering in Khurasan – in this respect Abdullah Ansari of Herat (1006-1089) should be mentioned, and Abu Sa'id ibn Abi-l-Khayr of Nishapur (967-1048), who was the first to use secular love poetry to illustrate his mystical experiences.⁸⁴ Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (d.1111) argued that no matter what seems to be the object of love, God is always love's ultimate source.⁸⁵ His brother Ahmad al-Ghazali (d.1126) worked in the tradition of both Baghdadi and Khurasani love mysticism and like al-Hallaj identified Love (*'ishq* – passionate love) with God. He

⁸⁰ Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 152–153; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 193.

⁸¹ The word *balā* not only means 'adversity', but it also refers to the moment of the pre-eternal covenant (*mithāq*) found in *Sūrat al-A'rāf* 7:172, in which God asked the uncreated souls 'Am I not your Lord (*alastu rabbakum*), to which they replied *balā* – yes – thus accepting in advance all the suffering they would suffer because of their love. This became a distinct topos in later Persian poetry. Martin Lings, 'The Koranic Origins of Sufism', *Sufi* 18 (1993): 5–9; Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 150–151, 158.

⁸² Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 161–163; Louis Massignon and Herbert Mason, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Martyr and Mystic of Islām* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 62–77.

⁸³ Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 153–161.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 164–166; Terry Graham, 'Abu Sa'id Abi-l-Khayr and the School of Khurasan', in *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 1. Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi (700-1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 83–135.

⁸⁵ Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 170.

also saw all love as ultimately originating from God. According to him, Love can only be grasped through contemplation and intuition (*dhawq*)⁸⁶, not rational knowledge.⁸⁷ Leonard Lewisohn writes that Ahmad al-Ghazali is considered to be the ‘foremost metaphysician of love in the Sufi tradition’, and ‘the founder of the literary topos and mystical persuasion known as the “Religion of Love” (*madhhab-i ‘ishq*) in Islam.’⁸⁸ Other influential Sufis who wrote about *maḥabba* and *‘ishq* were Ruzbihan Baqli (1128-1209)⁸⁹ and Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi (1165-1240), who wrote both theoretical works and poetry on the topic of love.⁹⁰ In the famous Persian poetry of Sa’di (1210-1291) and Hafez (1325-1390), Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) and Mahmud Shabistari (1288-1340), romantic and divine love are inextricably intertwined and cannot be distinguished.⁹¹

In contemporary Sufism, love is still considered the central characteristic. Love for God is the foundation of all love, from which flows love for the Prophet and his family, for the *awliyā* (particularly one’s *shaykh*), and from there to all creation: ‘The Sufi whose heart is filled with love for God is able to see God’s love for all his creation. Such a person is able to love other creatures ‘in God,’ through his love for God.’⁹² Hoffman’s description of Egyptian Sufism can be extended to other regions: it ‘is not an abstract mysticism. It is, typically, a deeply personal relationship of love and veneration, and the most frequent immediate object of this love and veneration is the Prophet Muhammad.’⁹³ This love inspires prayers and songs on the Prophet and leads Sufis to imitate him as thoroughly

⁸⁶ *Dhawq* literally means ‘taste’. In Sufism: discernments and experiences achieved through the inner (non-physical) senses. It provides knowledge that cannot be reached by the physical senses and reason, but requires the experiencing of the spiritual states, and as such can be used in the sense of ‘inspired knowledge’, ‘experience of the divine presence’. It is often seen as the first stage on the Path to knowledge, the first experience which does not yet provide contentment. A common Sufi metaphor that goes back to the Prophet and is also used by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is that one cannot describe the taste of honey, one has to taste it oneself.

⁸⁷ Lewisohn, ‘Sufism’s Religion of Love’, 166–168.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 172–173; Carl W. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996).

⁹⁰ Lewisohn, ‘Sufism’s Religion of Love’, 173–176.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 176–177; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 287–328; J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poems* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

⁹² Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 193.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

as possible, aiming to lead the same devotional and ethical life. This love has ‘a soteriological quality’ as it is often seen as the ultimate form of worship and the best way to reach God and enter His paradise.⁹⁴

This focus on love of God has often been seen as that aspect of religion which transcends the boundaries of religion. Some contemporary Sufi movements indeed reach out to other religious groups to form an interfaith dialogue based on this shared love. Translations of Persian poetry (especially Rumi’s work) are widely popular in Western spirituality as odes to love as the divine force transcending religions.⁹⁵ It should be noted, however, that most Sufi groups see *maḥabba* as the force that draws them closer to God and inspires them to obey the Islamic rules and rituals and infuse those with a deeper meaning.⁹⁶

To develop this loving relationship with God and draw closer to Him, believers should engage in devotional practices, first of which are the obligatory *ṣalāa* (ritual prayer) and the general Islamic practice of *du‘ā’* (supplication).⁹⁷ Sufis are known for their supererogatory contemplative practices, the most important of which is *dhikr* (remembrance, invocation), ‘the quintessence of worship and the central means of spiritual actualization’. It is a religious obligation mentioned in the Qur’an (*Sūras* 2:152, 3:190-91, 33:41, 72:8), and has been developed in Sufism as a concept involving many methods and practices and interpretations. Muhammad Isa Waley describes *dhikr* as ‘the methodical and repeated invocation of a formula, either aloud or in silence, individually or collectively. This formula can be a Divine Name, *wird* (litany, pl. *awrād*), or

⁹⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁵ Lewisohn, ‘Sufism’s Religion of Love’, 178–179. For more on this ‘new spirituality’ approach to Sufism, see paragraph 1.5.2. For a discussion of this trend in the Jordanian and Israeli contexts, see paragraphs 4.3 and 8.2.2.3 respectively.

⁹⁶ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 192.

⁹⁷ *Ṣalāa* is the obligatory ritual Islamic prayer which is prayed five times a day, one of the five pillars of Islam. It is derived from the verbal root ṣ-l-y, which means to join as the believer joins himself to God through the prayer. For the Sufi, remembrance of God and attentiveness are essential aspects. *Du‘ā’* (pl. *ad‘īya*) is personal prayer, supplication, invocation (as distinct from the obligatory ritual *ṣalāa*). There are no fixed rituals and words, but one’s attitude and *ādāb* (etiquette) are important. One can use Qur’anic verses, traditional prayers or one’s own words; one can pray silently or aloud. Muhammad Isa Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, in *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 1*, ed. Lewisohn, 514–518.

poetry, and is instructed by the spiritual teacher.⁹⁸ The *wird* is a 'set, supererogatory personal devotion observed at specific times, usually at least once during the day and once again at night.'⁹⁹ The practice of reciting *awrād* goes back to the Prophet, and consists of reciting pious formulas, Qur'anic verses and prayers composed by spiritual leaders. They differ per *ṭarīqa*, and in many cases the *shaykh* gives the disciple a personal *wird* according to his personal needs and spiritual advancement. In the case of collective *dhikr*, it is regulated by the *shaykh* or his representative.¹⁰⁰ *Dhikr* can be accompanied by music (*samā'*)¹⁰¹ and/or bodily movement and dancing (*raqs*),¹⁰² which are quite controversial issues in the Sufi tradition. Another related contemplative practice is *khalwa* (spiritual retreat).¹⁰³

Dhikr is performed by 'gathering together the dispersed powers of the soul and focusing them on the Real himself',¹⁰⁴ at first performed by the tongue, then by the heart, until it pervades the entire being of the believer and continues unconsciously. Waley calls this 'ethical' or 'moral' *dhikr*. 'the act or state of striving to be constantly mindful of God in every waking moment of one's life'. There is a measure of reciprocity involved, as Sufis believe that God will remember the person who remembers Him by bestowing blessings upon him: 'So remember Me, and I will remember you.'¹⁰⁵ The practice of *dhikr* leads to knowledge of the Divine as the purification of the heart and the drawing closer of

⁹⁸ Ibid., 502–503, 509–519; L. Gardet, 'Dhikr', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1960-2002) II 223-227.

⁹⁹ F.M. Denny, 'Wird', *EI2* XI 209-210.

¹⁰⁰ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 511–513; Gardet, 'Dhikr'; Denny, 'Wird.' The practice of reciting pious formulas at many moments throughout the day (such as *inshallah*, *alhamdulillah*, *ma'sha'allah*) is common among all Muslims and serves to remind them at every moment of God's presence and power. *Wird* however is closely associated with a particular spiritual guide to whom it is attributed, and is observed at set times. Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 511–512; Denny, 'Wird.'

¹⁰¹ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 523–526; J. During, 'Samā' - 1. In Music and Mysticism', *EI2* VIII 1018-1019; Leonard Lewisohn, 'The Sacred Music of Islam: Samā' in the Persian Sufi Tradition', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997): 1–33.

¹⁰² Annemarie Schimmel, 'Rakṣ', *EI2* VIII 415-416.

¹⁰³ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 519–522; J. Landolt, 'Khalwa', *EI2* IV 990-991.

¹⁰⁴ William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Sūrat al-Baqara* 2:152, quoted in Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 505–506.

dhikr, *dhākir* (person who does the *dhikr*) and *madhkūr* (that which is remembered) is considered an inward journey of unforgetting the truths planted in the soul before birth that have since been forgotten.¹⁰⁶

Complementary to *dhikr* is *fikr* or *tafakkur*,¹⁰⁷ discursive or contemplative reflection, ‘the power of thought or cogitation, the ability of the soul to put together the data gathered by sense perception or acquired from imagination in order to reach rational conclusions’.¹⁰⁸ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali incorporated both meditative reflections (*tafakkur* and *ta’ammul*) and more intellectual types of thought in the category of *fikr*.¹⁰⁹ Subjects of these reflections can be human qualities and their corresponding actions, the Divine Names and Attributes, God’s creation and the manifestations of His Wisdom and Creative Power – never His Essence. When performed in the right way *fikr* is connected to *dhikr*, as such a reflection ‘brings to the heart a knowledge which transforms it and heightens the consciousness and spiritualizes the action of the seeker.’¹¹⁰ If used improperly, ‘it is one of man’s greatest obstacles to this knowledge.’¹¹¹ According to Ibn Arabi, it can only be used properly when it is part of a wider programme of spiritual practice aimed at purifying the soul and clearing the inner vision. He distinguished between *fikr*, rational thought disengaged from the senses, and ‘imagination’, the inner perception that perceives with the inner (non-physical) senses, which leads to unveiling (*kashf*). Perfect knowledge of God needs both – one *knows* God’s transcendence (*tanzīh*) through reason, and one *sees* His immanence (*tashbīh*) through imagination.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ For a thorough discussion of contemplative practices in Sufism, including a more thorough discussion of the spiritual transformations that happen on this inward journey, see Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism.’

¹⁰⁷ The two terms are used interchangeably. In this thesis I have chosen to use the word *fikr*, as this is the word that is used by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya.

¹⁰⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 159.

¹⁰⁹ In his chapter on *tafakkur* in *Ihyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazali mentions *tafakkur*, *ta’ammul*, and *tadabbur* as meditative reflection, and *tadhakkur*, *i’tibār* and *nazar* as intellectual reflection. He sees all these forms as part of a ‘process of extending one’s cognition and understanding through disciplined and regular meditation.’ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 541–547.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 541–544.

¹¹¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 162.

¹¹² Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 16; Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 69–72.

Essential in all these practices, including the general Islamic practices of *ṣalāa* and *duā*, is the cultivation of *ādāb*, including sincerity of intention (*ikhhlāṣ*) and proper awareness and concentration (*ḥuḍūr*).¹¹³ *Ādāb* in general means correct behaviour, manners, courtesy, social and ethical etiquette as appropriate for certain functions and contexts,¹¹⁴ and in the Sufi sense it encompasses the embodiment of Sufi values and the outer manifestation of one's inner spiritual states: 'perfect refinement of words and deeds by weighing himself in the scale of the Law as embodied in the person of the Prophet.'¹¹⁵ It is closely related to the concept of *akhlāq* (ethics).¹¹⁶ Another related concept is *sulūk*, the verbal root of which means 'to travel or follow a road', and in the Sufi context refers both to progression on the Path to the Divine, and to the required 'traveling-manners' which the traveler (*sālik*) needs in order to undertake the journey: 'appropriate spiritual attitude and proper ethical comportment', in other words 'spiritual correctness' – it thus combines the associations with the concepts of the Sufi *ṭarīqa* and Sufi *ādāb*.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 503, 532–534.

¹¹⁴ In the pre-Islamic period, *ādāb* was a synonym of *sunna* and referred to praiseworthy habits and customs that were inherited from the ancestors. In the urban culture of the Abbasid period it came to refer to high quality of the soul, good upbringing, etiquette, courtesy, courtliness, and urbanity (as opposed to Bedouin ethics and customs). In the ethical and social sense of etiquette, it came to refer to the appropriate behaviour in a certain function and context. In its intellectual meaning, it also referred to humanistic knowledge which made a person accomplished, 'courteous and urbane': literature, poetry, and profane science, centred on man and his qualities, passions and material and spiritual culture. At first this focused on the Arab culture, but it soon extended to Iranian, Indian, and Hellenistic culture. In the post-Abbasid period the meaning narrowed to refer to knowledge necessary for specific functions on the one hand, and *belles-lettres* on the other. F. Gabrieli, 'Adab', *EI2* I 175–176.

¹¹⁵ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 174–179.

¹¹⁶ *Akhlāq* or Islamic ethics gradually developed from several sources, namely pre-Islamic Arab codes of behavior, the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet and his Companions, and Persian and Greek ethical systems. As the Sunna became the basis of the sharia, it also strongly influenced the development of *ādāb* and *akhlāq*. By the eleventh century these had formed an amalgamation which described good character (*ḥusn al-khulūk*) which was valued by scholars of *ḥadīth*, Sufis, philosophers, and those who wrote practical advice to rulers. R. Walzer and H.A.R. Gibb, 'Akhlāk', *EI2* I 325-329; Louise Marlow, 'Advice and Advice Literature', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition* (Brill Online, 2007); Peter Adamson, 'Ethics in Philosophy', *EI3* (Brill Online, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sulūk', *EI2* IX 861-863. Lewisohn points out that the term came in use in the twelfth century as a synonym of the Qur'anic concept *ṭarīq* (path), was first mentioned by al-Qushayri and then used extensively by al-Ghazali in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, after which it was fully incorporated in Sufi terminology.

It is essential to travel this path under guidance of a spiritual guide. Dhikr is considered to be so powerful that it has to be performed with permission (*idhn*) of and under guidance of a *shaykh* lest the disciple be overwhelmed.¹¹⁸ This necessity is illustrated by the Sufi saying that ‘when someone has no *shaykh*, Satan becomes his *shaykh*.’ The disciple should be in the hands of his *shaykh* as in the hands of a corpse washer.¹¹⁹ Sufis often refer to the Qur’anic story of Moses and ‘one of God’s servants’ (identified with al-Khidr) in *Sūrat al-Kahf* 18:65-82 to illustrate that the gnostic should be obeyed due to his superior knowledge of the hidden consequences of acts.¹²⁰ A spiritual master has reached high levels on the Path and as such can see into the heart of hidden things (*firāsa*),¹²¹ including the hearts of his followers, which enables him to teach them exactly according to their needs and abilities. Lewisohn stresses that there is a wide diversity in ‘programmes of mystical behaviourism and spiritual pedagogy’ encompassing a wide range of spiritual exercises and the appropriate *ādāb*, all prescribed by and to be followed under the guidance of the spiritual teacher.¹²² Sufi *shaykhs* thus transform the general principles of the Islamic and Sufi tradition – especially the sharia but also concepts of *ādāb* and *akhlāq* – ‘into individualized mechanisms of moral discipline.’¹²³

As the disciple develops spiritually, s/he progresses on the Path through different ‘resting places’ (*manāzil*, sg. *manzil*¹²⁴) – spiritual stages (*maqāmāt*, sg. *maqām*) and states (*aḥwāl*, sg. *ḥāl*). They are ‘the psychological, moral, and spiritual attributes and perspectives that mark degrees of spiritual growth which travelers on the path to God must experience, assimilate, and in most cases

¹¹⁸ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 526–529; Gardet, ‘Dhikr’; Denny, ‘Wird’; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 132–133.

¹¹⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 103–104; Éric Geoffroy, ‘Shaykh’, *EI2* IX 397-398.

¹²⁰ Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 39–42.

¹²¹ *Firāsa* means discernment, perspicacity, ability to read the hearts of other people, as is stated in the following *ḥadīth*: ‘Beware of the *firāsa* of the believer, for he sees by the light of God’. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 205; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 304; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 221–222.

¹²² Lewisohn, ‘Sulūk.’

¹²³ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 116.

¹²⁴ N. Elisséef, ‘Manzil’, *EI2* VI 454-456.

pass beyond.¹²⁵ The *maqāmāt* are acquired after effort and form stable stages that the seeker can always return to, whereas the *aḥwāl* are considered received through divine grace and succeed or alternate each other. They are usually grouped in complementary pairs that must be actualized together in an ‘ascending hierarchy’.¹²⁶ Every Sufi author has his own progressive classification of *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* with different concepts occupying different places in such classifications – *maḥabba* for example is seen by Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi (d.ca.990) as the highest *maqām*, and for al-Ansari as the first of the *aḥwāl*.¹²⁷

The seeker’s experiences and the related behaviour are conceptually organized through the *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* as they frame the devotional practices and the development of *ādāb*, ‘the main disciplinary practices through which the Sufi notions of morality are grounded as embodied practical, emotional, and conceptual dispositions.’¹²⁸ The spiritual states need to be expressed in deeds (*‘amal*) in order to be recognized and to form the base of Sufi identity and authority. These deeds can range from the miraculous to the social in the form of the correct performance of *ādāb*, thus creating a framework of social morality (which, as we shall see, can also be interpreted as a miracle of the *shaykh* who inspires this correct behaviour). This process ‘aims to produce social actors whose discourses and practices are framed and disciplined by an internalized normative framework.’¹²⁹ Thus, obedience to the leader and adaptation to the social framework are seen as a virtue.¹³⁰

The goal of the Path is *fanā’* and *baqā* (annihilation and survival in God), the experience of the Divine, annihilation of the temporal selfhood in God’ (*fanā’ fi-llāh*)¹³¹ and the affirmation of *tawḥīd* (existential Oneness),¹³² as the seeker has

¹²⁵ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 10.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Chittick gives the examples of hope and fear, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety, annihilation and subsistence.

¹²⁷ L. Gardet, ‘Hāl’, *EI2* (Brill Online, 2012); Elisséef, ‘Manzil.’

¹²⁸ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 126.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 125–126.

¹³⁰ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 125–126.

¹³¹ The concept of *fanā’* was probably first developed by Abu I-Qasim al-Junayd (d.892) in *Kitāb al-fanā’* (‘Book of the annihilation of the self’) that is attributed to him. After the execution of al-Hallaj, Sufis felt the need to give a ‘sober’ description of his state. Jawid A. Mojaddedi,

returned to the moment of the primordial covenant (*mithāq*) (see above).¹³³ Self-affirmation is erased until only God's self-disclosure remains. *Fanā'* is not a simple negation, but it has to be accompanied and replaced – and thus validated – by a new subsistence (*baqā*); it is the annihilation from a specific mode of lower consciousness and the simultaneous subsistence through a specific mode of higher consciousness, a new mode of witnessing (*shuhūd*) which is understood as unveiling (*kashf*) – it is the human vision of the Real disclosing itself in all things.¹³⁴ It is the annihilation of self-consciousness and of the imperfect human attributes, which are replaced by a pure consciousness of God and the perfect attributes bestowed by God. The individual 'returns to his senses', 'surviving' or 'abiding' with God as he keeps the perfect attributes and as his will is replaced with that of God¹³⁵ – after the experience of ultimate selflessness, the individual is 'reconstituted as a renewed self'. In the words of Abu I-Qasim al-Junayd (d.892):

He is himself, after he has not been truly himself. He is present in himself and in God after having been present in God and absent in himself. This is because he has left the intoxication of God's overwhelming *ghalaba* (victory), and comes to the clarity of sobriety, and contemplation is once more restored to him so that he can put everything in its right place and assess it correctly.¹³⁶

'Annihilation and Abiding in God', *EI3* (Brill Online, 2008); Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 16–17.

¹³² *Tawhīd* is the act of believing and affirming that God is one and unique (*wāḥid*), as is stated in the first article of the Muslim profession of faith: 'there is no other god but God' (*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*), and is at the centre of the Islamic faith. Theologians have aimed to prove this rationally, and in Sufism it has transformed from an intellectual statement into a spiritual experience. Lewisohn, 'Sulūk'; D. Gimaret, 'Tawhīd', *EI2* (Brill Online, 2012).

¹³³ The state of *fanā'* was first connected to the primordial state of mankind in the moment of the primordial covenant in the *Kitāb al-fanā'* ('Book of the *annihilation* of the self') attributed to Abū I-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 892). Mojaddedi, 'Annihilation and Abiding in God'; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 16–17.

¹³⁴ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 59–62; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 321–324.

¹³⁵ Fazlur Rahman, 'Baḳā' Wa- Fanā'', *EI2* | 951; Mojaddedi, 'Annihilation and Abiding in God.'

¹³⁶ Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 17. Quote from al-Junayd, translated by Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac, 1962), 172. This 'complementary opposite' pair is more or less an equivalent of *sukr* (intoxication) and *ṣaḥw* (sobriety). Rahman, 'Baḳā' Wa- Fanā'.'

At this point he has become God's instrument on earth, a guide to others. As is stated in an oft-quoted *ḥadīth qudsī*.¹³⁷

My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works until I love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Where he to ask of Me, I would surely give to him, and where he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.¹³⁸

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali saw *maḥabba* as based on *ma'rifa* and noted that the two increase in proportion to each other.¹³⁹ *Ma'rifa* is 'knowledge that is not reached by discursive reason but is a higher understanding of the divine mystery' as 'the faithful sees through God's light, the gnostic sees through God'.¹⁴⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes that in Sufism, *maḥabba* and *ma'rifa* always go together,¹⁴¹ and Schimmel also discusses their relation as the last stations of the Path. Sometimes they are considered complementary, and sometimes one is thought to lead to the other, as in the words of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali: 'Love without gnosis is impossible – one can only love what one knows.'¹⁴² The lover's worst fear is to be separated from the Beloved, and he does everything to draw near to Him. For all orthodox Muslims love for God means obedience, but a Sufi goes further: driven by love, he walks the Sufi Path until he constantly remembers and completely surrenders to the Beloved, and reaches 'qualification

¹³⁷ A *ḥadīth qudsī* is an account of speech by God (as opposed to an account of speech by the Prophet or one of his Companions). Like the Qur'an it might come through Gabriel, but can also come through another medium, such as *ilhām* (inspiration) or in a dream. J. Robson, 'Ḥadīth Quḍsī', *EI2* (Brill Online, 2012).

¹³⁸ *Ḥadīth qudsī* related by Bukhari, quoted in Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 503.

¹³⁹ Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 170.

¹⁴⁰ Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fi't-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden & London, 1914), quoted in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130.

¹⁴¹ Hossein Nasr, 'God', 321.

¹⁴² Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* vol.4 (Cairo: Bulaq, 1872-3), 254, quoted in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130.

with God's attributes': 'Love is the annihilation of the lover in His attributes and the confirmation of the Beloved in His essence.'¹⁴³

As Sufi scholars developed the descriptions of the Path and the concepts of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, the concepts of *fanā' fi-l-rasūl* (annihilation in the Prophet) and *fanā' fi-l-shaykh* (annihilation in the *shaykh*) were also developed as more accessible 'preliminary goals' for those on the earlier stages of the Path. By focusing on the *shaykh*, the follower submits his will and identifies completely with him.¹⁴⁴ Hoffman points out that this is rarely discussed among contemporary Sufis, as this shift from *fanā'* in God to *fanā'* in the *shaykh* is commonly seen by Muslims and academics as a sign of decline of classical Sufism. She continues that the actual experience of believers who are part of this system is of course very different as it may be seen 'as allowing those of lesser rank to participate in an experience that would otherwise be unattainable', thus making God's graces more widely available, and making it a genuine aspect of contemporary Sufi spirituality.¹⁴⁵

Hoffman argues that *fanā'* can be seen in terms of spiritual connection, as 'an intense spiritual and emotional identification that leads to a merging of the boundaries of two personalities.' It can also be experienced among Sufis with their spiritual brethren, as '[s]ome Sufis say that in love they are able to transcend the boundaries of their own individuality, to touch each other's spirits in such a manner that they deny their own separate identities'. In the Egyptian cases Hoffman describes, this is referred to using the concept '*tawhīd*', as 'this annihilation of the ego leads not only to a great aloneness with God (...) but also to an appreciation of the common existence that these annihilated souls in God have with each other.' This understanding of love and spiritual connection points to the communal nature of Sufism, which is mainly experienced during communal

¹⁴³ Ali ibn Uthman al-Hujwiri, *The "Kashf al-Mahjūb," the Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism by al-Hujwiri*, transl. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1959), quoted in *Ibid.*, 134–135.

¹⁴⁴ Mojaddedi, 'Annihilation and Abiding in God'; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 216, 237; Johan G. ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', in *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 2. The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 320.

¹⁴⁵ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 63–64, 141, 203.

dhikr and during festivals dedicated to the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*¹⁴⁶ and the *awliyā*, on both the spiritual and the social level.¹⁴⁷

There is a continuum between the figure of the Sufi *shaykh* as spiritual master, the *awliyā*, and the saints that are venerated throughout the Muslim world.¹⁴⁸ Theosophical understandings of *wilāya* are often connected to local ideas on sainthood in a ‘multi-layered process of sanctification’ in which theosophical ideas are connected to hagiographies, shrines, pilgrimages, and the belief in miracles,¹⁴⁹ (although they are not always completely understood).¹⁵⁰ The *walī* is close to God and thus His friend, His protégé, and an intermediary and patron for those who follow him. While ideas on the *awliyā*’ go back to the ninth century, it is mainly al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 907-912), al-Hujwiri and Ibn Arabi who developed theories on the hierarchy of *awliyā*’, the *khatm al-awliyā*’ (Seal of the *Awliyā*’), the *quṭb* and *al-insān al-kāmil* (the Perfect Man).¹⁵¹ The *awliyā*’ are considered to hold the universe together by providing a connection between the world of the Creator and the creation, channelling divine energy into

¹⁴⁶ *Ahl al-bayt* means ‘the people of the house’, used by all Muslims to refer to the family of the Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁴⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 63–64, 140, 188–195, 203–205.

¹⁴⁸ Paulo Pinto, ‘Performing Baraka: Sainthood and Power in Syrian Sufism’, in *On Archeology of Sainthood*, ed. Stauth, 195–211.

¹⁴⁹ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 18; Green, *Sufism*, 72, 92–103.

¹⁵⁰ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 93–95.

¹⁵¹ B. Radtke et al., ‘Walī’, *EI2* XI 109-125; Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 18; Green, *Sufism*, 94. The *quṭb al-zamān* is the ‘axis of the age’, the highest rank of *awliyā*’, the spiritual centre around whom the universe revolves. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 200; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxxv–xxxvi.

Al-insān al-kāmil is ‘the Perfect Man’, the archetypal human being, often equated with the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*, a manifestation of the totality of the divine names and attributes, which are also manifested in the created world, taken as a whole. Man is created as an intermediary (*barzakh*) between the divine oneness and the created world of manifestations, a microcosmos in which God contemplates Himself, which is the goal of creation. In the Perfect Man mankind’s potential is fully realized; he sees the flow of the Divine through all the planes, both in His transcendence and immanence and manifests His attributes. According to some only the Prophet Muhammad is the Perfect Man – others see it as a station that can be reached by the prophets and *awliyā*’ (Friends of God), especially by the *quṭb*. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 224, 272–273, 280–282; William C. Chittick, ‘Ibn Arabi and His School’, in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 65–66; Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 15; William C. Chittick, ‘Ibn Arabi’, in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London: Routledge, 2007), 125, 131–132; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 19.

the cosmos, and providing a continuing access to divine mercy.¹⁵² Or, to use anthropological vocabulary: 'A sufi pir, like the Prophet, maintains a state of permanent liminality between heaven and earth, which gives him, like other permanently liminal individuals, supernatural powers.'¹⁵³ This combined with pre-Islamic beliefs regarding saints and the power and grace that can be found at their tombs due to their continuing spiritual presence. When a Sufi *shaykh* died, therefore, the devotion of his followers often turned to his tomb, around which a shrine cult often developed. People also often believed that his power could be transferred through his bloodline, and his descendants often played an important role in the development of this shrine.¹⁵⁴

Pnina Werbner writes that 'Sufism as a discursive formation encapsulates an integrated set of assumptions about saintly world renunciation, spiritual authority and closeness to God, which travel globally and are widely shared across the Islamic world'. This 'deep structural logic' holds that the renunciation of the world (asceticism) leads to divine love and intimacy with God, which bestows 'divine hidden knowledge' and the ability to transform the world on the saint, showing 'the hegemony of spiritual authority over temporal power and authority.' These general Sufi ideas on *wilāya* are a 'determinative symbolic force' that interacts with local environments, through 'its concrete localisation and embodiment in myths and effective demonstrations of power, morality, and social-cum-material investments.' Because one of the most common assumptions about a saint's character is his uniqueness, this overarching discursive formation creates a large degree of heterogeneity within the Sufi tradition.¹⁵⁵

We have discussed some of the elements on which the Sufi discursive tradition is based, in addition to the Qur'an and Hadith, the central elements of

¹⁵² Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 11; Paul L. Heck, 'Introduction', in *Sufism and Politics*, ed. Heck, 8–9; Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13.

¹⁵³ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 18.

¹⁵⁵ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 25, 81–83, 286–290; Pnina Werbner, 'Playing with Numbers. Sufi Calculations of a Perfect Divine Universe in Manchester', in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 114, 126–127.

the Islamic tradition. Different clusters of elements combine to form different Sufi groups and movements, which can be seen as parallel traditions. The selection and interpretation of these elements is done by the custodians of the tradition, usually the Sufi masters, who transmit these elements to their followers through discursive and disciplinary means, encouraging devotional, social, and political behaviour based on them, as the followers embody Sufi values and correct behaviour through *ādāb*, framing ‘the production of Sufi identities and their public expression as forms of moral performance,’¹⁵⁶ rendering the Sufi tradition into a ‘normative discourse through a most complex procedure of dissemination.’¹⁵⁷

The main element around which the Sufi tradition has historically revolved is thus the relationship between *shaykh* and disciple. Ernst defines the Sufi tradition as ‘a teaching of ethical and spiritual ideals, which has been historically embodied in lineages of teachers who held prominent positions in Muslim societies.’¹⁵⁸ Green sees Sufism as having a ‘quintessentially relational profile’, the central relation being that between master and disciple as the master teaches and guides the disciple and holds the *ṭarīqa* together, while the followers enable the master to enact these functions and pass on the elements of tradition.¹⁵⁹ Rather than focusing on Sufism as Islamic Mysticism that is unconnected to the social world, or as a purely social phenomenon that is exclusively organised in *ṭuruq*, we should therefore focus on this relationship between *shaykh* and follower and the transmission of religious knowledge, modes of behaviour, and spiritual experiences that happens through these relationships and within the communities that are based on them.

The authority of a Sufi *shaykh* often extends beyond the immediate circle of disciples as his spiritual power often ensures his social, economic and political power in wider society (see paragraph 1.4). Guidance can be given to any person in society who asks for it, but is done most effectively through the process

¹⁵⁶ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 77–79, 123; Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 125–126.

¹⁵⁷ Jamal Malik, ‘Introduction’, in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Carl W. Ernst, ‘Sufism, Islam, and Globalization in the Contemporary World: Methodological Reflections on a Changing Field of Study’ (Fourth Victor Danner Memorial Lecture, Indiana University, 2006).

¹⁵⁹ Green, *Sufism*, 9.

of initiation into the *ṭarīqa* whereby a person dedicates him/herself to the *shaykh* fully. In the Sufi tradition (and in Islamic culture in general), the oath of allegiance is called *bay'a*. It is the acceptance that the person to whom allegiance is promised derives his authority from God (either due to his spiritual power or based on a political doctrine), and it is therefore an oath of adherence to this person's teachings and/or a promise of obedience. The pledge of new Muslims to the Prophet (mentioned in *Sūrat al-Faḥ* 48:10, also known as the *Āyat al-Bay'a*) is the prototype on which both *bay'a* to the ruler and to a Sufi *shaykh* are modelled.¹⁶⁰ Paulo Pinto notes that it is after initiation that a disciple commits him/herself completely to the disciplinary mechanisms 'inscribed in the teachings, ritual performances, mystical exercises and bodily ordeals' in order to 'embody the symbolic, practical and normative framework of Sufism as a set of bodily capacities and moral dispositions' that give them a framework in which to understand and enact their mystical experiences and steer the disciple's social behaviour.¹⁶¹

Pinto shows that different ways of transmission lead to different relationships between *shaykh* and follower, and to different relationships among the followers themselves. Pinto sees a difference between a *ṭarīqa*'s collective rituals such as collective *dhikr*, which can be practiced by both initiates and by non-initiated followers and which allows them 'various degrees of socialization into the symbolic and experiential universe' of the *ṭarīqa*, and the more individualized process of initiation which allows them to develop an individualized religious self through a personalized *wird* and subjective mystical experiences.¹⁶² Based on his fieldwork in Aleppo, he argues that while collective rituals on the one hand foster an egalitarian atmosphere based on collective experiences, they can also promote a subtle hierarchization as the mystical experiences expressed during collective rituals can be used to evaluate the spiritual level of the disciples and to create a hierarchy based on these levels. In such cases, 'the body is both

¹⁶⁰ E. Tyan, 'Bay'a', *EI2* I 1113-1114.

¹⁶¹ Paulo Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated: Reflections on the Ethnography of Mystical Experience among the Sufis of Aleppo, Syria', *Social Compass* 57 (2010): 464–465.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 465.

the main focus of the disciplinary dimension of the Sufi ritual and a performative arena for the communication of mystical experiences and the affirmation and classification of Sufi subjectivities.¹⁶³ Collective rituals are not the only setting in which mystical states are evaluated, however – as we have seen, spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) should be expressed in deeds (*ʿamal*), and their evaluation can therefore also happen in different settings, such as study groups and social interactions, where knowledge and *ādāb* are factors to rank the disciples.¹⁶⁴ He further notes that study groups in which knowledge is discursively transmitted, lead to ‘the homogeneous distribution of doctrinal categories and religious knowledge’, creating shared doctrinal understandings and a moral community that has egalitarian properties. Pinto argues that this tends to encourage reflexivity, which leads to objectification and a clearer definition of the tradition.¹⁶⁵ Personal instruction, e.g. in the form of personalized disciplinary practices such as a personalized *wird*, on the other hand, provides the disciple with ‘a reflexive arena in which he/she can gradually fashion an individualised religious subjectivity’ and in which the master/disciple relationship is inscribed ‘in the process of subjectification fostered by mystical initiation’, reinforcing the hierarchical links that connect the *shaykh* with each of his disciples.¹⁶⁶

While Pinto pays a lot of attention to hierarchies within Syrian Sufi communities, Hoffman points to the communal character of the Sufi experience she witnessed in the Egyptian context, where Sufis refer to their relationship as *tawḥīd*. The question whether a particular community is characterized by an egalitarian mode of interaction, or whether it operates as an explicit or implicit hierarchy, and how this relates to the process of *tarbiya*, the process of transmission of the tradition through doctrinal lessons and spiritual exercises, is a

¹⁶³ Ibid. The example used by Pinto is quite extreme, as he discusses the evaluation of the performance of the *darb al-shīsh*, the piercing of disciples’ bodies in a collective ritual setting performed by the Rifa’iya in Afrin, Syria. This *ṭarīqa* has a clear hierarchy and a disciple is placed within it partly based on his success in passing the *darb al-shīsh*

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 468; Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 125–126.

¹⁶⁵ Paulo Pinto, ‘Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition’, in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 126–127.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 125; Paulo Pinto, ‘Knowledge and Miracles: Modes of Charisma in Syrian Sufism’, in *The Anthropology of Religious Charisma: Ecstasies and Institutions*, ed. Charles Lindholm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 65–67.

relevant one. This approach shows how we can begin to understand the functioning of a Sufi community by analysing the relationship between a *shaykh* and his disciples, and how this impacts on the formation of social attitudes within the community and outside it. It further raises the question how this dynamic would work in a translocal *ṭarīqa*, where the members of the community do not have a regular interaction with their *shaykh*.

Pinto refers to the process of spiritual education that follows the initiation as *tarbiya*.¹⁶⁷ It is important to note that the word *tarbiya* generally refers to the broader concept of upbringing, training, education and raising of children in general,¹⁶⁸ not just to the more narrow meaning of spiritual education following a voluntary initiation. Indeed in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya the term is used in its broader meaning. As we shall see, in their case this reflects a different approach to spiritual education and to initiation than Pinto noted in his fieldwork in Aleppo. As the *ṭarīqa* is institutionalized on kinship lines and the followers' children are born into the community and exposed to the teachings and practices of the *ṭarīqa* from a young age, and as there is no individualized instruction, the *mubāya'a* has a less pronounced role. This shall be further discussed in chapters 6 and 10.

1.3 Authority as a Relationship

The classic sociological understanding of authority is based on Max Weber's (1864-1920) Idealtypen categorization of rational bureaucratic authority, irrational conservative traditional authority and irrational transformative charismatic authority.¹⁶⁹ Weber saw tradition as 'conservative, predictable, and oriented towards mechanical reproduction of itself'.¹⁷⁰ The definition of 'tradition' sketched

¹⁶⁷ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 464–465.

¹⁶⁸ The basic meaning of the verbal root r-b-y is 'to increase; to grow; to grow up', and *tarbiya* means 'education, upbringing; teaching, instruction; pedagogy; breeding, raising (of animals)'. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed.; 'Tarbiya', *EI2* X 223. Ter Haar notes that it has the connotation of the father-son relationship. Ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', 319.

¹⁶⁹ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–2.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Lindholm, *Charisma* (Oxford etc.: Blackwell, 1990), 24.

above however understands 'tradition' as both dynamic and rational. In this understanding, all 'patterns of authority' are embedded in a particular tradition and are rational when perceived from within their own framework. The focus on the transmission of tradition as a process in which authority is sustained or contested points us to the relational character of authority.

As opposed to conservative 'tradition', Weber posited disruptive 'charisma':

a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a "leader."¹⁷¹

Weber saw charisma as a personal magnetism based on a person's capacity 'to have a direct connection with supernatural or sacred power'.¹⁷² Peter Berger sees the charismatic as a 'breaking through' of the transcendent into the everyday historical reality, in a specific person or place.¹⁷³ Charles Lindholm understands this as an extraordinary quality to experience and display intense emotions as the charismatic has an 'enhanced expressiveness' and appears 'to exist in an altered and intensified state of consciousness that is outside of mundane patterning, and that is more potent than ordinary emotional life.'¹⁷⁴

Weber saw charisma as 'revolutionary and creative, occurring in times of social crisis' that could overthrow the status quo, 'a negating, emotionally

¹⁷¹ Charles Lindholm, 'Introduction: Charisma in Theory and Practice', in *The Anthropology of Religious Charisma*, ed. Lindholm, 8. Quoted from Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, transl. I. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 242

¹⁷² Charles F. Keyes, 'Weber and Anthropology', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 248.

¹⁷³ Berger bases his ideas mainly on Durkheim and Eliade's dichotomy of 'sacred' and 'profane' and Otto's 'numinous' or 'holy' and 'everyday', but mostly on Alfred Schultz's distinction between 'paramount reality' and other fields of experience. Eliade calls such an event a 'hierophany'. Peter L. Berger, 'Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no. 2 (1974): 125–33; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, transl. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 11.

¹⁷⁴ Lindholm, *Charisma*, 26.

intense, undercutting force which “is opposed to all institutional routines, those of tradition and those subject to rational management” with no ‘fixed lines of authority’.¹⁷⁵ Weber saw pure charismatic authority as creative, disruptive and transitory, challenging established traditional or rational authority, disappearing as soon as the charismatic movement is institutionalized and the pure charisma of the charismatic moment becomes ‘secondary charisma’.

Inherent in Weber’s conceptualisation of charisma, however, is the idea that charisma ultimately derives from the people who ascribe it and not from the individual who is perceived to be charismatic – which logically means that it is part of society, part of culture, part of tradition. While in common parlance it has come to refer to an attribute of personality, Weber already pointed out that an individual’s charisma has to be ‘recognized by those to whom he feels he has been sent’.¹⁷⁶ It ‘needs to be *perceived, invested with meaning, and acted upon* by significant others: those who respond to this charismatic appeal’.¹⁷⁷ As Thomas O’Dea (1915-1974) notes:

The new doctrines proclaimed by a charismatic leader or by his missionizing followers are in fact a complex mixture of the new and old. Unless they found people’s minds in some measure prepared, they would not gather converts. But at the same time they proclaim something new, or something old in a new way. In this way they are able to appeal to those who are seeing for new values.¹⁷⁸

Therefore the strict distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘secondary’ charisma is problematic, as is the idea that charisma is anti-traditional or revolutionary, as ‘many types of *charisma* actually seem to be integral parts of institutionalized and traditional social orders.’¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 24–25. He quotes from Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 52.

¹⁷⁶ Weber, *From Max Weber*, 246, quoted in Keyes, ‘Weber and Anthropology’, 248.

¹⁷⁷ P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken 1968) xi (emphasis in original), quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 60–61.

¹⁷⁹ Martin Riesebrodt, ‘Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion’, *Religion* 29 (1999): 1–14.

Martin Riesebrodt (1948-2014) points out that Weber did not adequately define and systematise his concept of charisma, which led to this confusion. Weber's sources – Rudolf Sohm's (1841-1917) work on ecclesiastical law and the British anthropological debate on magic and religion focussing on *mana* and similar terms – treated charisma as part of the status quo, and in most of Weber's work this same attitude can be perceived implicitly, despite his explicit statement that charisma is anti-traditional and revolutionary.¹⁸⁰ This is why many researchers interpret charisma as a tool of the status quo, connected to the 'centre' or 'sacred' in the Durkheimian sense, or the 'holy' as understood by Rudolf Otto (1869-1937).¹⁸¹ For example, while Shils discusses charisma in Weberian terms, in his framework charisma operates as another tool of selection and interpretation which transforms tradition.¹⁸² Similarly, Riesebrodt points out that in *The Construction of Society* (1972), Shils sees charisma as 'the main ordering tool of the centre'. Following Durkheim and Otto, he sees it as 'the mystifying quality of all kinds of power, authority, and social order'.¹⁸³

In line with this thought, many writers have pointed to the similarities between Weber's distinction between charisma and tradition on the one hand, and Victor Turner's (1920-1983) *communitas* and *structure* on the other.¹⁸⁴ Applying Arnold van Gennep's (1873-1957) three-stage theory of rites of passage to pilgrimages, Turner distinguishes between *communitas* as an egalitarian liminal state, and 'structure' as the hierarchical structure of society. Like charisma, *communitas* also at first sight seems to challenge the status quo, but more often than not after inverting tradition temporarily in the liminal phase, confirms it after reintegration into society. *Communitas* 'represents a *charismatic*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3–5. Lindholm for example argues that people seek to transcend themselves and lose themselves in 'the sacred', which Durkheim understands as a symbol of society, a mirror in which society can contemplate and worship itself. Rituals and sacred symbols are 'a lens through which the power of the community can be focused and amplified'. A person can also become this symbol of the community/sacred when the community sees him/her as a perfect embodiment of the social configuration, and people seek to transcend themselves in the leader as a symbol of society in what Lindholm calls the 'charismatic moment'. Lindholm, *Charisma*, 28–32, 192.

¹⁸² Shils, *Tradition*, 152–156, 228–231.

¹⁸³ Riesebrodt, 'Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion', 3–5.

¹⁸⁴ Keyes, 'Weber and Anthropology', 248.

but nevertheless highly institutionalized transitional stage through which a traditionalist society reproduces itself.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, many 'charismatic movements' have been 'rituals of rebellion' rather than revolutions changing the status quo.¹⁸⁶

Therefore, Lindholm argues that charisma has to be attributed according to the expectancies of a certain culture regarding the manifestation of extraordinary power, such as personality traits, the fulfilment of a journey (in the physical or spiritual sense), or the articulation of a vision. He notes that charisma is not an innate quality but that the leader needs to prove and perform his charisma: 'the leader's sacredness exists if followers believe in and experience its existence.' It is thus 'a relationship in which leader, follower, and circumstances fatefully intertwine.'¹⁸⁷

According to Weber, charismatic authority has to be routinized and institutionalised in order for the movement to continue after the charismatic leader's death. Weber described this 'routinization' (*Veralltäglicung*) as follows:

a result of the process whereby either the prophet himself or his disciples secure the permanence of his preaching and the congregation's distribution of grace, hence insuring the economic existence of the enterprise and those who man it, and thereby monopolizing as well the privileges reserved for those charged with religious functions. (...) Once a religious community has become established it feels a need to set itself apart from alien competing doctrines and to maintain its superiority in propaganda, all of which tends to the emphasis upon differential doctrines.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Riesebrodt, 'Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion', 10; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 23. Charles Keyes points out that Turner never made this connection himself. Keyes, 'Weber and Anthropology', 248.

¹⁸⁶ Keyes, 'Weber and Anthropology', 249. Reference to M. Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in Southeast Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954).

¹⁸⁷ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1112–1113, quoted in Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9.

¹⁸⁸ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, ed. Talcott Parsons (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) 66–61, 70. Quoted in Mark J. Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons: The Making and Remaking of the Rashidi Ahmadi Sufi Order, 1799–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1.

Thus, the movement transforms into a traditional or bureaucratic movement as the successors of the charismatic leader become traditional authority figures or the leaders of a bureaucratic organisation.¹⁸⁹ According to Weber, this includes a move from primary charisma to secondary, institutionalised charisma which has lost its unpredictability and revolutionary character, but has taken a role in social control, 'the reinforcement of society's norms and its structures of authority.' It thus remains an essential legitimating element in an institutionalised movement: it 'is this charismatic element, carried over into established social structures, which becomes the basis for the legitimation of established authority'.¹⁹⁰

Berger – who sees charisma as the 'breaking through' of the sacred into everyday reality – analysed the legitimating function of religion extensively in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), which complements Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Berger and Luckmann argue that man and society shape each other in a dialectic between ideas (both every-day and theoretical) and social structure, constructing a 'world' or 'universe' which is experienced as objective reality, and ultimately legitimated by an all-encompassing 'symbolic universe' that integrates all aspects of society – all its sectors, roles, and experiences, in past, present, and future. According to this approach, this 'reality' can be challenged by 'marginal situations', such as death or disaster, and intrusions from 'alternative realities', such as dreams and imagination, which might break through the precarious order of the 'universe' by suggesting alternatives, and create chaos. Such experiences can be integrated in 'everyday reality' as 'finite provinces of meaning' or 'enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience'. These experiences are made meaningful in everyday terms by referring to aesthetic or religious frames of reference, and act to reinforce the primacy of the 'everyday reality'. Through references to the 'sacred' these experiences are incorporated in the 'symbolic universe' and serve to strengthen it. By providing meaning to people, religion is thus a major legitimacy tool for social structure –

¹⁸⁹ Lindholm, *Charisma*, 192–193; Shils, *Tradition*, 186.

¹⁹⁰ O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 22–25.

similarly, social structure carries religion. The institutionalisations of such moments in which 'the sacred breaks through' are therefore essential in the legitimation of a society's structure and worldview.¹⁹¹

Berger and Luckmann distinguish three dialectical moments in the process of institutionalisation of social reality: the first is externalisation, in which the human being pours meaning into reality, thus shaping society. This is followed by objectification, 'the process by which the externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity'¹⁹² as society comes to be seen as the natural order of things, rather than a human product or projection. Finally, this objectified reality is internalized through the process of socialisation:

The individual not only learns the objectivated meanings but identifies with and is shaped by them. He draws them into himself and makes them *his* meanings. He becomes not only one who possesses these meanings, but one who represents and expresses them.¹⁹³

Berger and Luckmann point out that that the objective character of 'reality' and society alone is not enough for people to identify with it – it needs to speak to them and provide them with meaning, in other words, integrate those challenges they face so it becomes part of their subjective experience.¹⁹⁴ Socialisation, reality-maintenance and reality-confirmation happen through social interaction within specific institutions and in dialogue with significant others with whom the individual develops strong affective relationships and who occupy specific institutionalised roles – usually, primary socialisation happens in the family and is done by the parents.¹⁹⁵ The importance of other people in the family and community for this process is stressed, as they are the ones who define the roles the individual is socialized into:

¹⁹¹ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 28–55.

¹⁹² Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Penguin Books, 1966), 77.

¹⁹³ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 17.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁹⁵ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 171–173.

Subjective identity and subjective reality are produced in the same dialectic (here, in the etymologically literal sense) between the individual and those significant others who are in charge of his socialization. (...) the individual becomes that which he is addresses as by others. (...) the individual appropriates the world in conversation with others and, furthermore, (...) both identity and world remain real to him only as long as he can continue the conversation.¹⁹⁶

This point is especially relevant in the case of conversion. Conversion can come in different forms and is classified by Marta Dominguez Diaz as conversion proper ('changing from one religious tradition to another'), reversion (those who were born in a religious tradition and after a period of inactivity return to practice), and reaffiliation ('changing from one group to another within a tradition'). To this Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian add 'the intensifying of religious beliefs and practices'.¹⁹⁷ Julianne Hazen notes that conversion is mainly an 'ongoing process that takes place in the socio-cultural context of life', sometimes including an 'extraordinary transformational element'.¹⁹⁸ Berger and Luckmann treat conversion as resocialisation, which aims to mirror the primary socialisation in encouraging an affective relationship and emotional dependence on the significant other who has the role of guide or mediator into the new 'reality', in addition to the cognitive focus on this new 'reality'.¹⁹⁹ Also in certain situations of secondary socialisation which require a high degree of immersion such an emotional bond is important. Religious reaffiliation falls in this category; it is the immersion in a 'sub-world', a 'partial reality in contrast to the "base-world" acquired in primary socialization', during which new content is superimposed

¹⁹⁶ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 18.

¹⁹⁷ Marta Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many? Transnational Sufism and Locality in the British Būdhīshīyya', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 120–121. Definition of conversion by Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian quoted in Julianne Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'i Tariqa in Britain', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 151.

¹⁹⁸ Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'i Tariqa in Britain', 151.

¹⁹⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42.

upon an already present reality.²⁰⁰ As Berger and Luckmann point out: 'A religious experience in itself is nothing, 'it is only within the religious community (...) that the conversion can be effectively maintained as plausible.'²⁰¹

The cultivation of roles, and the behaviour and values related to them, is one of the most essential aspects of the socialisation process. The institution 'is embodied in individual experience by means of roles' as people participate in the social world and experience it through the roles they perform, making it subjectively real. The roles people are socialized to take up place them in the social structure, 'the entire institutional nexus of conduct', and in doing so they shape this structure at the same time as it shapes them.²⁰² Some roles represent the entire social and symbolic system, such as the divine monarch who is seen to embody the ultimate values of society and provide a direct link to the sacred, rooting the social structure in the sacred cosmos and time and lifting it 'above human, historical contingencies'. Berger gives the example of the institution of divine kingship - through socialisation, both 'the man in the street' and the king himself cannot conceive of an alternative reality in which he might not be the king.²⁰³

Berger points to the role of ritual in 'reminding' people of their tradition and the ideas and institutions that are part of it through actions and formulae.²⁰⁴ O'Dea also sees ritual as an act in which the relationship to the sacred and to the community is re-affirmed as 'relationships of fellowship, and of leader and followers, are acted out, reasserted, and strengthened' and as the individual is provided with strength and comfort.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 157–166.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42.

²⁰² Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 91–92.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

²⁰⁴ He refers to ancient Greek ritual, which he notes combine actions and sacred formulas that 'make present' the names and deeds of the gods – or more broadly speaking, the 'traditional meanings embodied in the culture and its major institutions', restoring 'the continuity between the present moment and the societal tradition, placing the experiences of the individual and the various groups of society in the context of a history (fictitious or not) that transcends them all.' Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 36–37.

²⁰⁵ O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 39–41.

Adherence to this system is ensured through the socialisation process, but it is never complete and the social structure and symbolic universe are always open to tension and challenge. Through legitimation the social order is justified and explained in a cognitive and normative way,²⁰⁶ providing order and integration of experiences, including these in other realities, establishing the paramount reality as the first, establishing 'the primacy in the hierarchy of human experience'.²⁰⁷ Social control seeks to contain individual or group resistance within tolerable limits, and strategies such as therapy, negation or integration can be used to deal with deviances. If all else fails, the use of sanctions and force might be employed.²⁰⁸ For most people, the social structure and its legitimation will be so convincing that this is not necessary, especially when religion is involved: 'the fundamental coerciveness of society lies not in its machineries of social control, but in its power to constitute and to impose itself as reality.'²⁰⁹

Weber saw this institutionalisation and routinization of charisma as a move from 'sect' – a religious group characterized by voluntary association and a charismatic leader – to 'church', a religious group one is generally born into, a normative order that executes hierocratic authority (exercised through the granting or withholding of grace) in which charisma is attached to 'office'.²¹⁰ The distinction between 'sect' and 'church' was developed by later sociologists into a sociological classification of religious groups, with the main distinction between 'sect' and 'church' being their affirming or rejecting attitude to society as sects came to be seen as world-rejecting secessionist protest movements and churches as world-affirming institutions, often connected with political power.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 111; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 14–15.

²⁰⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 116.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁰⁹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 14–15.

²¹⁰ Peter L. Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', *Social Research* 21, no. 4 (1954): 468–469; William H. Swatos, 'Church-Sect Theory', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 1998), <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/cstheory.htm>.

²¹¹ Ernst Troeltsch further identified the category of 'mysticism', which he saw as individual spirituality that was not susceptible to social organisation. Howard Becker (in 1932) delineated two types within each of the original two types, resulting in a cult-sect-denomination-ecclesia model. J. Milton Yinger (in 1946) increased extended Becker's four types to six: cult, sect,

Berger, however, proposes to define 'sect' and 'church' not in terms of their organisational mode or their relationship to society, but their relationship to the sacred: he sees a 'sect' as 'a religious grouping based on the belief that the spirit is immediately present', and the 'church' as 'a religious grouping based on the belief that the spirit is remote' and which therefore requires mediation to access the spirit and achieve a 'religious experience'.²¹² He therefore also sees institutionalisation as a move from sect to church in the sense that access to the sacred becomes mediated. In order to control the potentially disruptive charismatic experience, the charismatic is routinized and limited to specified times and places:

Religious institutions assign the potentially disruptive manifestations of the other reality (as opposed to the reality of the ordinary, everyday world) to carefully circumscribed times and places in society. They domesticate the ecstasies, channel them into socially acceptable and useful activity (such as moral conduct), and even manage to convert the religious definition of reality into legitimations of the sociopolitical order.²¹³

The taming of the charismatic is never absolute, however. New 'manifestations of the sacred', 'charismatic moments', and 'religious experiences' can happen either within or outside the institution of the 'church', creating a new system of relations built on such experiences. This might be incorporated in the larger 'church', or might lead to secession – and in due time again to institutionalisation. This is the eternal dynamic of sect formation and institutionalisation.²¹⁴

O'Dea has discussed the process of institutionalisation extensively. He notes that it is not only the containment of charisma and the transformation of the

established sect, class church/ denomination, ecclesia, and universal church. Later, Benton Johnson and Bryan Wilson returned to the use of this variable of 'response to the world' in an idealtypical way, closer to Weber's original usage. Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', 471–472; O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 70–71; Swatos, 'Church-Sect Theory.'

²¹² Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', 474.

²¹³ Berger, 'Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion', 132; Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 41.

²¹⁴ Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism.'

mode of authority and organisation – it also encompasses the elaboration and stabilization of religious ideas, beliefs, and practices.²¹⁵ The unpredictability of the ‘charismatic moment’ in which the transcendent breaks through into everyday life (which he calls the ‘religious experience’) and the reactions to this moment are institutionalised in stable and established forms. This is never truly stable, however: ‘There is a constant or recurring tension between the forces which work for stability, even at the risk of distortion, and the forces which work for a truer realization of the initial charismatic moment.’²¹⁶ Because it is the ‘symbolic and organizational embodiment of the experience of the ultimate in less-than-ultimate forms and the concomitant embodiment of the sacred in profane structures’, or in Berger’s words, the translation of the transcendent into the immanent,²¹⁷ it poses several dilemmas:²¹⁸

1. The dilemma of mixed motivation: during the charismatic moment, the overwhelming motivation of the followers is to follow the charismatic leader. As the movement becomes institutionalised, however, and acquires material assets and social prestige from which those invested in the system can partake, it also elicits other kinds of motivation such as the attainment of status, prestige, security, etc., which might strengthen motivation over-all by mobilizing both self-interested and object-interested elements of motivation, but might also lead to tensions as those types of motivation are espoused by different factions. Self-interested motivation might become more predominant among those with an emotional, social and/or material stake in the institution, leading to goal displacement, which might trigger a protest movement of those who still adhere to the original ideals. As O’Dea points out, this tension might already be present during the original charismatic moment, but will more easily be overshadowed by the

²¹⁵ O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 35.

²¹⁶ Geaves, ‘Charismatic Authority in Islam’, 41–42.

²¹⁷ Berger, ‘Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion’, 125–126.

²¹⁸ Thomas O’Dea, ‘Sociological Dilemmas: Five Paradoxes of Institutionalization’, in *Sociological Theory, Values and Socio-Cultural Change*, ed. E.A. Tiryakian (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 71–89; O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 90–98.

attraction of the charismatic – it therefore seems to be a shift in degree, rather than a clear difference, between the original charismatic moment and later institutionalisation.²¹⁹

2. The symbolic dilemma: as the reactions to and expressions of the original religious experience become routinized into symbols (words, gestures, acts, images, sounds, etc.), these cease to be merely reactions, but they also become re-presentations of the ‘charismatic moment’ in which emotions and attitudes are elicited and group solidarity is reinforced – they become ‘an objective reality imposing its own patterns upon the participants’ and the medium for sharing and communicating and form ‘the basis for socializing the religious response’, but if they cease to speak to the participants, the symbols become empty and alienate the participants.²²⁰
3. The dilemma of administrative order: while an effective organisation obviously strengthens the movement, over- bureaucratization leads to inefficiency. This is connected to the first point – as people become invested in the status quo by depending on the organisational structure with its social and economic aspects, they will be hesitant to change it as this would threaten their status, security and self-validation. In extreme cases, maintenance of the organisational structure becomes the primary goal, which often implies a high degree of conservatism.²²¹
4. The dilemma of delimitation: to affect people’s lives and influence their behaviour, the message and practices of the religious movement need to be concretized and translated into everyday terms. In addition to this, its doctrines and moral rules must be defined to be protected. This might lead to the loss of the original extraordinary element and to a doctrinal and legal structure which only the elite can understand, all of which might lead to alienation.²²²

²¹⁹ O’Dea, ‘Sociological Dilemmas’, 74–78; Geaves, ‘Charismatic Authority in Islam’, 41–42.

²²⁰ O’Dea, ‘Sociological Dilemmas’, 78–80.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 80–82.

²²² *Ibid.*, 82–84.

5. The dilemma of power: while the first generation of a movement exists completely of converts, the next generations will increasingly consist of those born in the group. Socialisation and education might substitute for the dramatic conversion (or prepare for such a dramatic moment of 'turning'), but it might also lead to a lessening of the primary zeal. If the group acquires social power, the conformity of the believers becomes socially relevant, and social or even political power might be used to keep people within the fold.²²³

In line with our understanding of charisma as part of a dynamic tradition, it is important to note that some of these developments might already occur during the lifetime of the charismatic leader. As the message is spread to a wide base of followers in order that it influences their social behaviour, it is inevitably translated to their concrete contexts. The organisational development of the movement is often already started by the charismatic founder, and mixed motivation can be present among the first leaders and followers.²²⁴ The relation between the original 'charismatic moment' and its subsequent institutionalisation therefore should be seen as a continuum rather than a stark distinction.

The linearity of early theories of charisma and routinization have therefore been challenged and it has been argued they should be replaced by a cyclical pattern.²²⁵ We have already seen that theories of 'sect formation' point to the circular nature of sectarianism and routinization. For example, Pnina Werbner builds on Richard Werbner's work on the waxing and waning of regional cults,²²⁶ analysing Sufi movements as regional cults which spread from a sacred centre in predictable patterns wherever emissaries settle, and establish branches that

²²³ Ibid., 84–86.

²²⁴ Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 42, 58. Geaves refers to Roy Wallis and Ruth Bradby who both argue that institutionalization processes could start during the life of the founder and ensure smooth transmission of authority at the founder's death. See Roy Wallis, *Salvation and Protest: Studies of Social and Religious Movements* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 188, and Ruth Bradby, *A Better Way, A Course in Miracles: The Development and Legitimation of a New Religious Discourse and its Diffusion through Spiritual Self-Help Literature* (Chester: University of Chester, 2007).

²²⁵ Ibid., 57.

²²⁶ Richard P. Werbner, 'Introduction', in *Regional Cults*, ed. R.P. Werbner (London: Academic Press, 1977), ix – xxxvii.

remain connected to the sacred centre through participation in the annual festival.²²⁷ She argues that such cults 'wax' and expand under charismatic leadership and 'wane' when this charisma becomes routinized and the movement becomes institutionalised, until a new charismatic leader rises.²²⁸

Geaves has challenged Pnina Werbner's model in the contemporary context, noting that migration to Britain transforms this pattern (see paragraph 1.5.3).²²⁹ On a more general level, scholars have argued that institutionalisation does not necessarily lead to the decline of a movement or the lessening of charisma. As we have seen above, Berger and Luckmann argue that institutionalisation maintains 'reality' and social structure without diluting its meaningful character. Rather than the start of a process of decay and stagnation, they see transmission to a new generation as the completion of the initial process of world construction: 'only with the appearance of a new generation can one properly speak of a social world.'²³⁰ O'Dea noted that goal displacement might go together with protest from those who persist in their adherence to the original message,²³¹ rituals might re-create the original experience by eliciting emotions

²²⁷ Pnina Werbner, 'Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims', *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 309–38. Quoted in el-Sayed el-Aswad, 'Sacred Networks: Sainthood in Regional Sanctified Cults in the Egyptian Delta', in *On Archaeology of Sainthood*, ed. Stauth, , 129–130.

²²⁸ Pnina Werbner, 'The Place Which Is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 123–124; Pnina Werbner, 'Seekers on the Path. Different Ways of Being a Sufi in Britain', in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 127–41. The same argument is made in the Lower Egyptian context by Catherine Mayeur-Jouean: 'The family in charge of the tomb or the *zāwiya* is not necessarily composed of holy men. Its relative renown and wealth – obtained explicitly by exploiting the holy founder's charisma – enabled it to set up a local power. (...) For the renown of the tomb to last, however, a new holy men must appear to revive the fervour and charisma around the shrine.' Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, 'Holy Ancestors, Sufi Shaykhs and Founding Myths: Networks of Religious Geography in the Central Nile Delta', in *On Archaeology of Sainthood*, ed. Stauth, 26.

²²⁹ Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 46.

²³⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 77–79.

²³¹ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 74–78. Mayer N. Zald and Roberta Ash argue with regards to social movements that institutionalisation does not necessarily lead to goal displacement and accommodation to the social environment as is posited by the classical approach to the transformation of Social Movements – the institutionalization and goal displacement model of organizational transformation based on the work of Max Weber and Roberto Michels. They argue that alternative developments are possible due to the persistence of alternative motivations and approaches. This might be connected to the level of heterogeneity of the social base and the basis of authority, and the influence of external factors: response to ebb and flow of sentiment in larger society which affects recruitment and institutional transformation, relations with other

and attitudes, re-affirming ties to the leader and the community,²³² and bureaucratisation does not necessarily lead to an organisation without spirit as ‘order’ can also be seen as a manifestation of the divine.²³³

Scholars of Sufism have pointed out that the assumption that institutionalisation brings a lessening of charismatic authority does not hold true for many Sufi movements due to the ‘existing template for sainthood’ in Sufi tradition²³⁴ (see paragraph 1.2) which is thoroughly pervaded by the notion that one can see the divine in everything and by the embodiment of the sacred in the spiritual master, which can be manifested in many ways, such as knowledge, piety, *karāmāt*,²³⁵ social success, and the manifestation of *baraka*.²³⁶ As O’Dea pointed out, institutionalised rituals not only serve to express a reaction to the ‘charismatic moment’ but also serve to re-present it and elicit emotions and attitudes that allow to recreate the ‘charismatic moment’, in addition to enhancing group solidarity based on this experience of the charismatic.²³⁷ As we have seen in paragraph 1.2, all of this happens in collective *dhikr* as part of the path that is walked under guidance of the *shaykh*. ‘Charisma here, while thoroughly personal and primary, is also thoroughly structured and systematic.’²³⁸

institutions, and to success or failure (all of this depending on whether the movement is inclusive or exclusive). Mayer N. Zald and Roberta Ash, ‘Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change’, *Social Forces* 44, no. 3 (1966): 327–41; Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 39.

²³² O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 39–41.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 25., referring to G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol.1 (New York: Harper Torchbooks 1963), 71.

²³⁴ Lindholm, ‘Introduction’, 24.

²³⁵ *Karāma* (pl. *karāmāt*) means ‘dignity’, often translated as ‘miracle’. Muslims distinguish between *mu’jizāt*, miracles performed by prophets, and *karāmāt*, performed by other people with God’s grace, although this distinction is not always very clear. It is related to the relationship between *wilāya* and prophethood. *Karāmāt* are considered attributes of the *walī*, given to him, not performed by him. It is the trace of closeness to God that can be witnessed and experienced by the believer. Miracles can happen both before and after the *walī*’s death as he remains forever present spiritually, especially in his tomb, but also elsewhere. Denise Aigle, ‘Introduction. Miracle et Karāma. Une Approche Comparatiste’, in *Miracle et Karāma*, ed. Denise Aigle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 13–35. For a classification of miracles as found in the Sufi literature, see Richard Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes. Theologien und Erscheinungsformen der Islam-Heiligenwunders* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden, 1987).

²³⁶ *Baraka* is divine grace, blessing; ‘a spiritual power associated with holy people, time, places, or things. It is communicable and can bring disaster on evildoers or unbelievers, just as it brings blessing on believers Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 419.

²³⁷ O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 39–41.

²³⁸ Lindholm, ‘Introduction’, 24–25.

Pinto argues that the use of Weber's theories on charisma and 'routinization of charisma' in the study of Sufi sainthood tends to lead to a focus on the concept of *baraka* as a synonym of 'charisma', without paying sufficient attention to additional bases of authority deriving from the Islamic tradition such as *ṣalāḥ* (piety/virtue, discussed extensively by Cornell),²³⁹ and the notion of *wilāya*. The authority of a Sufi *shaykh* can be simultaneously charismatic and legitimized through his connection to the doctrinal and ritual traditions of Sufism. Even when he has inherited his authority, he still has to prove his *baraka* in order for the community to accept him by performing 'powers and qualities that are culturally linked to the notion of *baraka*'. Hoffman also points out that

[a]lthough the Sufi definition of sainthood may depend mainly on inner, and deeply personal, spiritual attributes and an attitude of separation from the world, the average person knows a saint by his or her capability to work miracles, dispense blessing, and function in an intercessory capacity for those in need.²⁴⁰

She further quotes Gilson in saying that sainthood is 'bound up, not with vague ideas of other-worldly holiness, but with the capacity for significant action in the world'.²⁴¹ As Lindholm noted, charisma needs to be proved and performed.²⁴² The form which this performance takes, depends on the cultural context and the audience's expectancies. It could for example take the form of the performance of piety and justice, or of miracles.²⁴³ Therefore, Pinto argues, '[t]he performative character of the *shaykh's* authority calls for a better conceptualisation and contextualisation of *baraka* as a constitutive element of disciplines of power in contemporary Sufism.'²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxv–xxviii. This approach has led scholars to see a dichotomy of '*ulamā*' and marabouts in Morocco, which has had a large influence on the understanding of Middle Eastern Islam in general. Pinto, 'Performing Baraka.' For more on this perceived dichotomy, see paragraph 1.4.2.

²⁴⁰ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 90.

²⁴¹ Gilson, *Saint and Sufi*, 45. Quoted in Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 90.

²⁴² Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9.

²⁴³ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 98.

²⁴⁴ Pinto, 'Performing Baraka', 196–198; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles', 70.

Pinto uses Asad's model of the transmission of tradition and disciplinary mechanisms (which he refers to as the process of initiation, or *tarbiya*) to analyse the character of the relationships within the Sufi group (as discussed in paragraph 1.2), noting that charisma has to be enacted in the group, and that different enactment leads to 'divergent configurations of religiosity, community, and religious subjectivities within the normative framework of a shared Sufi tradition'.²⁴⁵ This means that 'charismatic forms of authority coexist, transform, and subvert bureaucratic or traditional power structures and forms of organization within the Sufi communities.'²⁴⁶ This comes close to the focus Berger and Luckmann place on the role of socialisation in world-maintenance and the possibility to maintain the original meanings within the institution.²⁴⁷

A particularly interesting example of the maintenance of charisma in a traditional Sufi *ṭarīqa* is provided by Ahmed and Von Oppen, who analyse the Saba Ishrin pilgrimage on Ngazidja/Grande Comore and in Tanzania, the main annual ceremony of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in East Africa.²⁴⁸ The ceremony commemorates the death of *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ma'ruf (1852-1904) on the 27th day of the Islamic month Jumada al-Thani (hence the name 'Saba Ishrin', which means 27 in Arabic), who spread the *ṭarīqa* in the region and is buried in Moroni.²⁴⁹ Before the 1990s all followers on Ngazidja/Grande Comore gathered at the *zāwiya* in Moroni where *Shaykh* Ma'ruf is buried, until the leaders decided it became too crowded and they should celebrate at their own *zawāya*. Ahmed and Von Oppen point out that is not an indication of decentralisation, but rather of the vitality and the flexibility of the *ṭarīqa* and the strength of its cohesion, re-affirmed by the shared temporality of the celebrations.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles', 73; Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 77–79, 125–126.

²⁴⁶ Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles', 60.

²⁴⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 171–173.

²⁴⁸ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini', 89. For an extensive discussion of the pilgrimage in Tanzania, see Ahmed, 'Un Pèlerinage Maritime.'

²⁴⁹ The Shadhuliyya Yashrutiyya is spread in East Africa in the Comoros Islands, Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, and Uganda. For a discussion of the spread of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in East Africa, see van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 84–89; Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, 152–158; Ahmed, 'Networks of the Shādhiliyya Yashrutiyya Sufi Order in East Africa.'

²⁵⁰ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini', 92–93.

In Tanzania, this celebration is combined with the commemoration of the death of *Shaykh* Hussein (d.1971), who spread the *ṭarīqa* in Tanzania and who is buried in Kilwa-Pande. It has been transformed into the month-long Saba Ishrin ‘caravan’, performed since 2002. *Shaykh* Hussein had travelled along Tanzania’s coast to spread the *ṭarīqa* but was based in a cluster of *zawāya* in the southeast region of Tanzania (Kilwa-Kisiwani, Kilwa-Pande and Songomnara). Most members of the community, including *Shaykh* Hussein’s son and successor *Shaykh* Nuruddin, migrated to Dar al-Salam, and *Shaykh* Hussein’s *zāwiya* is now empty. The annual Saba Ishrin caravan, a month-long communal pilgrimage from Dar al-Salam to Mohoro, Kilwa-Panda, the Mafia Islands, and back to Dar al-Salam, visits many places connected to the *ṭarīqa* and holds commemoration celebrations there, providing the opportunity to simultaneously reconnect to the roots of the *ṭarīqa* and of the community and re-enact the travels of *Shaykh* Hussein, thus connecting the *zawāya* and followers across space and time.

Based on Turner’s concepts of ‘structure’ and ‘*communitas*’, Ahmed and Von Oppen see this innovative pilgrimage caravan as a successful attempt to ‘inject the structure (here the stable or stabilised *tariqa*) with Utopian ideas from the origins of the *tariqa* (i.e., the *communitas* period) which, at the same time, are adapted to a modern context’, combining various layers of remembrance and translocality. Such an innovation can break the cycle of ‘waxing and waning’ as the *Shaykh* – son of the previous charismatic *Shaykh* and thus an example of routanization – maintains the original charisma as it is recreated every time the community meets, and in particular during the Saba Ishrin pilgrimage. The spiritual and social cohesion of the community and their devotion to the previous and current leaders of the *ṭarīqa* is thus maintained as the *ṭarīqa* ‘continuously re-articulates itself in both local and global contexts.’²⁵¹

This draws our attention to the relationship between charisma and innovation. The attempt to concretize the charismatic message and its rules by clearly defining them and translating them into everyday terms does not

²⁵¹ Ahmed and Von Oppen, ‘Saba Ishirini’

necessarily lead to the loss of the extra-ordinary charismatic element (O’Dea’s fifth dilemma), but might enhance its charisma by allowing it to continue to speak to the believers and prevent alienation (O’Dea’s second dilemma).²⁵² For example, R. Werbner notes that ‘innovation itself becomes a proof of spiritual grace’ as innovation and adaptation to the situation and experiences of the followers lead to their identification with the spiritual leader and the attribution of charisma. Even Pnina Werbner herself notes that actual travel and the sacralizing of space is an important aspect of a *shaykh*’s authority.²⁵³ We might thus turn her argument on its head and say that it is not charisma that allows for expansion, but expansion that provides charisma. Seen from this angle, charisma is that aspect of tradition which allows it to renew itself in every generation, to speak to new issues – not necessarily the irrational revolutionary force that Weber saw (although it can also be that), but the force that allows for the innovation that is necessary for followers to stay connected.

Based on his research of the historical development of the Ahmadiyya *ṭarīqa*, Mark Sedgwick suggests a cyclical model that is based less on the notion of charisma, but rather on the notion of re-invention of the tradition, noting the different bases of authority that can lie at the base of such re-inventing figures. The Ahmadiyya’s doctrinal and practical teachings and organisational forms are very diverse and its routine is periodically disrupted by an innovator – who bases his innovative authority on charisma, or scholarship, or both – making its centres and periphery continuously shift. Sedgwick notes that the one constant factor in this process of re-invention of tradition and innovation, is the ‘limiting expectations of the shaykh’s followers’, as their ideas on sanctity, piety, and the Sufi path are very influential and remain remarkably constant.²⁵⁴

Simon Stjernholm also points to the influence the followers can have on their *shaykh*, which he sees as ‘a complex interaction where ongoing negotiations concerning the content and form of the *ṭarīqa*’s activities

²⁵² O’Dea, ‘Sociological Dilemmas’, 78–80, 84–86.

²⁵³ Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu, ‘The Embodiment of Charisma’, in *Embodying Charisma. Modernity, Locality and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu (London: Routledge, 1998), 13; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 50.

²⁵⁴ Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 1–4.

continuously take place.²⁵⁵ Referring to Alberto Melucci he argues that collective identity is ‘an interactive process consisting of shared cognitive definitions, active relationships and emotional investments’ in which each participant has a role to play. In his research on the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya, he points out that its publications – while transmitting the teachings of *Shaykh* Nazim – are edited, distributed, and discussed by the followers, who thus are also responsible for meaning and significance in community. By recounting their visits to the *Shaykh* they participate in the manufacture of tradition. Most tellingly, Stjernholm relates an incident in which Hisham Kabbani, who acts as the leading *Shaykh* Nazim’s representative but whose authority is not unanimously accepted, was silenced by his audience during an event of the *ṭarīqa* in London. Stjernholm points out that as Kabbani’s responsibility has grown, ‘so has the negotiating aspect of the relation between shaykh and murids in London’.²⁵⁶ As such, it is not only leaders, but also the followers who participate in the definition of the movement, and an analysis of a religious movement should focus on the relationships in which meaning is negotiated.²⁵⁷

The mechanism through which charisma is attributed is thus a dynamic interaction between leader and follower, which Lindholm explains on a psychological level:²⁵⁸

Charisma is, above all, a *relationship*, a mutual mingling of inner selves of leader and follower. Therefore, it follows that if the charismatic is able to compel, the follower has a matching capacity for being compelled, and we need to consider what makes up the personality configuration of the follower, as well as that of the leader, if we are to understand charisma.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Simon Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement. Developments among Naqshbandi-Haqqani in London’, in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 83.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 91–93; Simon Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa? Notes on Developments and a Critique of Typologies’, in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 210.

²⁵⁷ Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement’, 83–84.

²⁵⁸ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58.

²⁵⁹ Lindholm, *Charisma*, 7. The anthropologist Charles Lindholm has combined sociological and psychological theories (including psychoanalysis) to approach the concept of charisma. He distinguishes four factors that together lead to a charismatic interaction: the character of the charismatic person, the attributes that make an individual susceptible to the charismatic appeal, the dynamic of the charismatic group in which the leader and the follower interact, and the

In addition to this, we have to take into account that this relationship takes place within a particular time and space and is therefore anchored in a particular society and all the ideas, values and institutions it has inherited from the past. Therefore, the elements which lead to the attribution of charisma are bound by culture: the transcendent values embodied by the charismatic, and the signs by which people recognize this embodiment, depend on the tradition in which the charismatic appears.²⁶⁰

Lincoln argues that 'authority' should be seen as a relationship, the capacity for 'authoritative speech', a speech act that is accepted by its audience by virtue of the speaker and his or her office, which operates within a certain discourse. He distinguishes between epistemic and executive authority – in other words between those who are 'an authority' and those who are in a position of authority – but also notes that these categories can complement each other and that by focussing on both categories' 'capacity to produce consequential speech' this distinction can be transcended. Lincoln stresses that in order for speech to be authoritative it has to be 'the right speech and delivery', delivered by the right person (either due to personal characteristics or by virtue of his/her office), at the right time and place, with the right 'staging and props', and the message has to be judged 'right' by the audience – that is, it has to appeal to the audience's historically and culturally conditioned ideas of right and wrong.²⁶¹ Essential here is the role of the audience, as we have just seen in the examples given by

process that takes place over time and in a specific context. His analysis is mainly centred on a psychoanalytical approach to all these factors, which is not the approach I intend to follow as it is practically not feasible but mainly as I find it morally problematic. Another problem with this work is his choice of case studies. He illustrates the negative consequences of charisma in thorough psycho-analytic discussions of Hitler and the Nazis, Charles Manson and the Family, and Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. To show that 'charisma' can also work as an integrating force he concludes with an anthropological chapter on 'shamanism', heaping together comments on shamanistic systems from many times and places as expressions of 'paradigmatic archaic religion' in 'pre-modern, primitive, less complex' societies, followed by a succinct deeper discussion of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari. The difference in approach between Western and non-Western societies is scholarly unsound and denigrating to these religious systems. In addition to this, the choice of case studies gives the impression that there is no space for positive, integrative charisma in the contemporary Western world.

²⁶⁰ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 25, 82.

²⁶¹ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–4, 11, 168.

Sedgwick and Stjernholm. Especially Kabbani's silencing by his audience is a very explicit example of how the enactment of authority as a speech act on a stage can be denied by the audience, and hence of the influence the audience can have on the authoritative leader's message.²⁶²

We shall discuss all these conditions with regards to Sufi leaders in the next paragraph, but here it is important to delve deeper into the concept of 'speech acts' in a religious milieu where relationships and communications are not only located in 'everyday reality' but also in spiritual, experiential, meta-empirical reality – as the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya say, in the *zāwiya* of the heart. These communications are very real for the followers and imbued with meaning, and for the interpretive social scientist therefore have to be taken into account. They cannot be empirically observed, but can be analysed in so far as they are given meaning and acted upon in the empirically observable everyday reality.²⁶³

Islamic tradition as a whole is full of instances of spiritual communication, most notably visions, such as dreams, appearances of light, or apparitions. In fact, the Qur'an, the word of God, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in a series of visions.²⁶⁴ The Prophet's *mi'rāj*²⁶⁵ 'was seen to epitomise the notion of the vision as a genuine revelation from God, as a true epistemic rupture (or *fath*, literally an 'opening') of everyday reality.'²⁶⁶ Dreams 'are believed to be windows

²⁶² Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 91–93; Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 210.

²⁶³ This is not to say these experiences themselves are not valuable and worthy of study, only that it is impossible for a social scientist to study them as they are not empirically observable. Following Berger and Smart, I here take a 'methodologically agnostic' approach which brackets such unempirical occurrences. For a more thorough discussion of my attitude towards the role of the transcendent in social research, see chapter 2.1.

²⁶⁴ Nile Green, 'The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 3 (2003): 289; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 124–131, 134–145, 213–218.

²⁶⁵ The *mi'rāj* is the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven, based on *Sūrat al-Takwīr* 81:19–25 and *Sūrat al-Najm* 53:1–21, often celebrated in Islamic communities. Sufis see it as a metaphor for each person's spiritual journey. In Islamic tradition it is connected to the Prophet's night journey (*isrā'*) from Mecca to 'the furthest mosque', which came to be defined as al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, from which the *mi'rāj* is believed to have taken place.

²⁶⁶ Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam', 293; Michael Anthony Sells, ed., *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 47–56, 242.

into the spiritual realm and to provide insights that would otherwise be unavailable.²⁶⁷ This is supported by the Qur'an as visions and dreams of the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets are mentioned (especially the story of Joseph), and it is written that 'in the sleeping state, the spirits of the living and the dead are together in the divine presence' (*Sūrat al-Zumar* 39:42)). The Prophet legitimized dream-visions believers have of him: 'Whoever has seen me has seen me truly, and Satan cannot take my form.'²⁶⁸ In the Islamic tradition, this attitude to dreams was further developed in literature on dream interpretation and in oral tradition. In Sufi tradition, accounts of visions and dreams abound (e.g. the visions of Bayezid Bistami (804-874), Rabia al-Adawiyya (713-801), Sahl al-Tustari (818-896), al-Tirmidhi, Ruzbihan Baqli, and Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762)); Umar Suhrawardi (d.1234), Ibn Arabi, and Abd al-Aziz al-Dabbagh (1679-1719) wrote theories about the nature of dreams.²⁶⁹

Dreams have always been taken seriously and have played an important role in Muslim societies. Dreams form important parts of the narratives establishing the Islamization of places²⁷⁰ and the legitimacy of kings²⁷¹ and saints. Saints often claimed to have been initiated not by an earthly master but through dreams and visions of the Prophet, al-Khidr, or an important *walī*. This is called an *uwaysī* initiation.²⁷² In addition to this, Sufi *shaykhs* derive functional authority

²⁶⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 213–214.

²⁶⁸ *Hadīth* from Bukhari's *Saḥīḥ*, quoted by Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam', 291.

²⁶⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 214; Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam.'

²⁷⁰ Patrick Franke discusses the role of appearances and dream visions of al-Khidr in the Islamization of places, for example in the Ottoman legend that the Prophet Khidr guided the Byzantine Emperor Justinian to build the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople as part of the debate whether the Ottomans had the right to take over the heritage of the Byzantine Empire. Patrick Franke, 'Khidr in Istanbul: Observations on the Symbolic Construction of Sacred Spaces in Traditional Islam', in *On Archaeology of Sainthood*, ed. Stauth, 40–45.

²⁷¹ Green for example mentions the dreams of Shaykh Safi-al-Din of Ardabil (d.1334), which became an important feature of Safavid historiography as his dreams encoded 'political claims to legitimate rule into signs of divine blessing and approval'. Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam', 303.

²⁷² An *uwaysī* initiation is an initiation by the spirit of a physically absent or deceased person, often the Prophet or al-Khidr. The term derives from Uways al-Qarani (d.657) who was instructed by the Prophet Muhammad without ever having physically met him. It enables a Sufi to claim initiation without submitting himself to a master, but places him within institutional Sufism as well. J. Baldick, 'Uwaysiyya', *EI2* X 958; Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam', 299–301. See paragraph 1.4.

from the interpretation of the dreams of others, and their own visions and dreams are considered to be a kind of revelation in its own right.²⁷³ Particularly relevant is the practice of *istikhāra*, ‘Islamic dream incubation practice’, ‘an approved form of seeking guidance through dreams’. One prays the *istikhāra* prayer, after which one goes to sleep and expects the answer will be provided in a dream (although daytime guidance also happens in some cases).²⁷⁴ It is said in several hadiths that the Prophet Mohammed taught his companions *istikhāra* and the detail of the *istikhāra* prayer and recommended it to them.²⁷⁵ While dreaming and *istikhāra* are thus part of the general Islamic tradition and Muslim imagination, the actual dreaming practice is culturally informed as dreams and visions are simultaneously culturally embedded in a shared Islamic symbolic universe and in those of the cultures with which the dreamer is familiar.²⁷⁶ Additionally, the practice of guidance following the *istikhāra* prayer varies, and the decisive authority of interpreting dreams differs, as do the issues for which *istikhāra* is sought (such as health, marriage, sorcery).²⁷⁷ In this milieu, visionary experiences are promoted and through the recounting of visionary narratives ‘a blueprint’ is created ‘that might recur in the novice’s own visionary life’, linking vision and narrative, imagination and tradition, connecting ‘Muslims’ inner and outer worlds as an interrelated process of embodied well-being’.²⁷⁸

While we cannot access the subjective dreaming experience empirically, the analysis of such acts of spiritual communication can and should be taken into consideration when discussing the relation of a spiritual master and his disciple. The way in which the experience is induced (e.g. prayer or meditation), with whom it is discussed, how it is narrated and interpreted, and who are the actors involved in the process and what are their roles, are very relevant questions.

²⁷³ Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 305, 309–311.

²⁷⁴ Iain Edgar and David Henig, ‘Istikhara: The Guidance and Practice of Islamic Dream Incubation Through Ethnographic Comparison’, *History & Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (2010): 251–62; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 214–215; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 307–308.

²⁷⁵ Edgar and Henig, ‘Istikhara’, 252.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 251–252; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 288.

²⁷⁷ Edgar and Henig, ‘Istikhara’, 252–253.

²⁷⁸ Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 305; Edgar and Henig, ‘Istikhara’, 251–252.

While ‘the stage of the speech act’ is to be found on the spiritual level and therefore not empirically accessible to the researcher, the other factors involved in the analysis of authoritative speech acts are still relevant: it has to be delivered by the right person at the right moment, and the message has to be judged ‘right’ by the audience, appealing to the audience’s historically and culturally conditioned ideas of right and wrong.

As we have seen in paragraph 1.2, the practising of the Sufi Path involves the development of a spiritual connection between master and disciple and among disciples, leading to a strong social and affective communal bond, ‘an intense spiritual and emotional identification that leads to a merging of the boundaries of two personalities.’²⁷⁹ Because of this spiritual connection the disciples believe that the *shaykh*’s instruction can happen even when there is a geographical distance, through autosuggestion and visions.²⁸⁰ It is accepted that when a follower engages in the *awrād* the *shaykh* has set for him/her, s/he will develop this spiritual connection and open him/herself for visions of the *shaykh* through which guidance can take place.²⁸¹ While the exact nature of this bond and communication is beyond our reach, we can say that due to the strong process of *tarbiya*, which we can understand as socialisation, a strong intellectual and affective attachment is created to the *ṭarīqa*’s symbolic universe and its plausibility structure.

Eickelman and Piscatori identify three interconnected levels of analysis of authority as a relationship: the ideological – which they understand as the apparent embodiment of the moral order and representation of ‘symbolic reference points of society’; the locational – as authority is partly defined by one’s relation to competing figures of authority; and the functional, which derives from the performance of particular functions. Here Eickelman and Piscatori point to the circular logic of authority, as figures of authority are allowed to fulfil certain

²⁷⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 63–64, 140, 188–195, 203–205.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 215–216.

²⁸¹ An example is given in *Ibid.*, 142.

functions, such as offering guidance and delimiting proper ideas and practice, from which they in turn derive more authority.²⁸²

1.4 Authority in Sufi Movements

1.4.1 Bases of Authority in Islam

The classic sociological concepts ‘tradition’ and ‘charisma’ have been redefined to focus on the relationships inherent in authority as people submit to someone’s authority when he or she provides a link to the transcendent or sacred, to the source of ultimate authority in their particular society. The ultimate value and authority in Islam is obviously God, who has made Himself known through various Prophets throughout history, but most notably through the Prophet Muhammad in seventh-century Arabia. As such, Muhammad serves as the ‘symbolic personal centre’ of Islam. Muslim authority – in whatever field and form – therefore derives from God, through the Prophet Muhammad. In order for a person to claim authority in an Islamic society, s/he has to prove a link to the symbolic centre, i.e. the Prophet.²⁸³ The main question when discussing authority in Islam therefore is, what is a valid connection to the Prophet, and who can claim this? The answers to this question differ according to time and place throughout Islamic history.

Eickelman and Piscatori consider ‘Muslim politics’ to be

the competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them. Politics is thus a struggle over people’s imaginations – habits of the mind, the heart, and of public space that help shape people’s ideas of the common good – just as much as it is a struggle for control over groups, institutions, states, and resources. (...)

²⁸² Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58–59.

²⁸³ Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 13–26.

The interpretation of symbols is played out against the background of an underlying framework that, while subject to contextualized nuances, is common to Muslims throughout the world.²⁸⁴

In other words, 'sacred authority' is the right to interpret the sacred sources and the social, economic and political power that comes with it.²⁸⁵

Similarly, according to Paul Heck, 'Sufi authority' takes place in two realms – or as Lincoln would say, on two stages: the spiritual/religious and temporal/political. The *shaykh*'s authority derives from saintly charisma and organisational resources; it is institutionalised in the relationship of the Sufi master and his initiated disciples and the wider community of followers, 'an extension of the authority of the prophet Muhammad and, through him, of God (...) based on the claim of direct transmission, even embodiment, of prophetic knowledge' which is conceived as part of the hierarchy of saints holding the cosmos together.²⁸⁶

Calder distinguishes five epistemological categories or ways to gain knowledge of God. According to him, Sunni 'orthodoxy' is formed by a balance between scripture and community, with the balance tilting towards 'community' – meaning the community of '*ulamā*'. In Calder's view, the boundaries of what is 'right' are constantly being redefined by referring to other ways of thinking: gnosis (found amongst the Sufis), reason (found among the '*falsafā*' (philosophers)), and charisma (found among the Shi'a).²⁸⁷ Calder sees Sunni Islam as 'primarily a religion of community, scripture and gnosis, marginally of reason, and hardly at all of charisma.' As Calder focusses on the analysis of written texts, it is unavoidable that he stresses their importance. When taking a broader view at Islamic sources of authority, we notice the importance of charismatic figures such as the *mujaddidūn* (renewers), the *mahdī*,²⁸⁸ and the *awliyā*.²⁸⁹ Also, we should

²⁸⁴ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, xv, 5.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., chapter 3: 'Sacred authority in contemporary Muslim societies' 46–79.

²⁸⁶ Heck, 'Introduction', 8–10.

²⁸⁷ Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', 226–227, 231.

²⁸⁸ 'The rightly guided one', an eschatological figure who will come at the end of time and rule for a number of years before the Day of Judgment. Throughout Islamic history, the belief in the

keep in mind that one *shaykh* can combine several epistemological categories in his background – in fact this was the case during most of Islamic history. Most ‘*ulamā*’ – exegetes, theologians, jurists – were also students of Sufi *shaykhs* and/or members of Sufi *ṭuruq*. Charismatic saints were often educated in one of the religious sciences – in fact they usually derived part of their charisma from this education. Different groups within society stressed different aspects of one and the same person.²⁹⁰

Historically, there has been a lot of criticism of and opposition to certain Sufi ideas, practices, and forms of organisation, both within and outside Sufi movements. These dynamics involve many different groups and approaches to Islam, and have reached different levels of conflict, from discussions to outright persecution and executions. These are ‘crucial forces shaping and coinciding with socio-political configurations in the world of Islam while constituting an integral part of an ongoing debate inside the Islamic tradition’.²⁹¹

Green points out that in early Islam there were many interacting trends shaping the young tradition, and Sufism developed in close relation to the other religious sciences.²⁹² Discussions among ascetics and lovers of God, and accusations from those opposed to them, dealt with ascetic practices and the nature of love of and for God. Later, criticism turned on specific practices (such as ecstatic *dhikr* with or without music), Sufi esoteric Qur’anic commentary (*ta’wīl*), the nature of inspiration and visionary experiences, *karāmāt*, spiritual elitism, and theological concepts such as the *nūr muḥammadī* and the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).²⁹³ Criticism and debate between different trends and

Mahdi has inspired a number of religious and political movements. W. Madelung, ‘Al-Mahdī’, *EI2* V 1230-1238.

²⁸⁹ DeWeese, ‘Authority’, 37.

²⁹⁰ See for example Rachida Chih, “Entre Tradition Soufie et Réformisme Musulman: La Littérature Hagiographique dans le Soufisme Égyptien Contemporain,” *Égypte/Monde Arabe* 29 (1997): 23–36.

²⁹¹ Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, ‘Introduction’, in *Islamic Mysticism Contested. Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1.

²⁹² Green, *Sufism*, 55.

²⁹³ De Jong and Radtke, ‘Introduction’; Josef van Ess, ‘Sufism and its Opponents. Reflections on Topoi, Tribulations, and Transformations’, in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and

approaches, and personal disagreements, were part of the larger Muslim world, and this in itself should not be seen as an indication that Sufis were singled out as a group.²⁹⁴ There were cases, however, where these dynamics led to outright persecutions. Often, these charges were personal matters rather than institutionalised persecution of Sufis as a collective,²⁹⁵ as in the case of Mansur al-Hallaj (d.922).²⁹⁶ Ibn Arabi has also been subject to endless and fierce opposition, most notably regarding his ideas of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.²⁹⁷

A major issue of contention is the different epistemological bases of knowledge and their relation to religious authority, as this raises the question who gets to interpret the sacred sources and the law, and speak for Islam. Due to their direct access to divine wisdom, *ma'rifa*, Sufi masters can claim to interpret Qur'an and Hadith, and base rules of behaviour on these interpretations that might compete with the rules and practices prescribed by the *'ulamā*. Ibn Arabi took this so far as to say that only *kashf* (mystical illumination) can truly verify the

Radtke, 22–44; Gerhard Böwering, 'Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 45–67.

²⁹⁴ Laury Silvers-Alario, 'The Teaching Relationship in Early Sufism: A Reassessment of Fritz Meier's Definition of the Shaykh al-Tarbiya and the Shaykh al-Ta'lim', *Muslim World* 93, no. 1 (2003): 69–98.

²⁹⁵ Böwering, 'Early Sufism between Persecution and Heresy', 54–59. Böwering notes that when Sufi teachings were confined to Sufi circles they were usually left alone, but when they made them public, the public and authorities interfered, which often led to persecutions. He gives the examples of Abu Sulayman al-Darani (d.830), Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi (d.882-3), Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d.874-5), Abu Abdallah al-Husayn b. Bakr al-Subayhi, Abu Bakr al-Wasiti (d.after 932), Abu Husayn al-Nuri (d.865), Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d.859-862), and Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz (d.899) who were exiled, Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d.946) who was locked up in an asylum, and Ibn Ata (d.922) who was beaten to death.

²⁹⁶ He is known as a 'martyr of love' who was executed for his blasphemous sayings, uttered in a state of loving ecstasy – most notably, *Anā al-Ḥaqq* (I am the Ultimate Truth, i.e. God). In the words of Schimmel, he is 'a symbol for both suffering love and unitive experience, but also for a lover's greatest sin: to divulge the secret of his love.' Ahmet Karamustafa notes his unique mode of piety. He was opposed in religious circles for claiming to have reached real union with God, but he gained much popular support as he travelled, preached, and performed miracles. In addition to this, he engaged in social and political activism against the caliph and viziers, who feared that the spiritual revival he preached to the masses, including the 'secret of personal sanctification' rather than blind acceptance, would undermine the social and political order. His behaviour made him enemies in both religious and political circles, and he was imprisoned for ten years until he was executed. Massignon and Mason, *The Passion of Al-Hallāj*; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 62–77; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 25–26.

²⁹⁷ De Jong and Radtke, 'Introduction', 7–8. His main opponent was Ibn Taymiyya, whose criticism is re-used until this day, most notably by the followers of Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab.

validity of a *ḥadīth*,²⁹⁸ not scholarship.²⁹⁹ The Sufis' inspiration is sometimes seen as a continuation of the Prophet's revelation, and therefore considered superior to scriptural knowledge.³⁰⁰ These two approaches could be the centre of an intense power struggle, but in other situations were considered complementary rather than diametrically opposed.

The perceived dichotomy between '*ulamā*' and 'marabouts' (Sufi saints) was first discussed by anthropologists in the Moroccan context, and from there has had an enormous influence on academic work in the rest of the Islamic world. Cornell has argued that the focus on this dichotomy was partly the result of the use of Weber's theories on charisma as this led to an exclusive focus on the concept of *baraka* 'without its adaptation to the specific dynamics of sainthood in Islamic contexts,' and without taking alternative bases of authority into account.³⁰¹ This dichotomy has been challenged by Asad, Cornell, Maribel Fierro and others, who have argued that while there has indeed been a lot of opposition to Sufism in the history of Morocco, there is no clear essential dichotomy between Sufis and scholars. In their contributions to *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, Fierro and Cornell show that opposition to Sufism in Morocco tended to focus on Sufi doctrines that posit inspiration and revelation as alternative epistemological bases, and on Sufi practices, which their opponents feared might replace the established devotional practices and law of the sharia – in other

²⁹⁸ *Ḥadīth* (pl. *aḥādīth*) literally means 'narrative, talk, speech', used by all Muslims to refer to the traditions about the words and deeds of the Prophet, and of his Companions and Successors. It can refer both to a single account, and to the entire body of literature containing these accounts. Based on these accounts, one can learn about the *sunna* (model behaviour) of the Prophet. Hence the body of *ḥadīth* is an important source for sharia (divine law), and has been important in the development of *ādāb* (etiquette) and *akhlāq* (ethics).

It has often been translated as 'tradition' in the sense of something handed down from one to another, but this has led to confusion as the English term carries the connotation of something oral, anonymous and imprecise. The *ḥadīth* accounts, on the other hand, are textual reports that explicitly name the transmitters and their sources to ensure maximum precision. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:63–64.

²⁹⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 57.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 218–225.

³⁰¹ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxv–xxviii; Pinto, 'Performing Baraka', 196. Examples of such analyses are those of Gellner and Geertz, who posit the miracle-maker saint opposite the scripturalist doctor as one of a whole string of dichotomies in which the tribal egalitarian saint-worshipping rural population was contrasted with the centralized, hierarchical scripturalist sharia-minded urban people. Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 6.

words, it focused on their position as rivals of authority. Especially during the Marinid period, when the *'ulamā*'s epistemological claims and their social position were consolidated by the state, institutionalised Sufism was opposed (particularly its rural *ribāṭ*-based manifestation). Opposition to Sufis therefore tended to focus on their socio-political rivalry with the *'ulamā* and the state.³⁰²

In Safavid and Qajar Iran, persecutions were very severe. After the Safavids established Shi'ism as Iran's official religion in 1501, the legal scholars consolidated their authority and got to define official Shi'ism. With the backing of the state, they severely opposed Sunnism, philosophy, and Sufism in its institutionalised and theosophical forms (*'irfān* (philosophical Gnosticism) and *hikma* (theosophical wisdom)).³⁰³ Lewisohn's work on the Nimatullahis in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iran gives a good impression of the severe repression the Sufis of Iran suffered.³⁰⁴

In India, shrine cults and saint veneration were targeted by modernists and neo-fundamentalists in the second half of the nineteenth century,³⁰⁵ as Barelwis, Deobandis, and Ahl-i Hadith disagreed on the legitimacy and role of

³⁰² De Jong and Radtke, 'Introduction', 4–5; Maribel Fierro, 'Opposition to Sufism in Al-Andalus', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 174–206; Vincent J. Cornell, 'Faṭḥ versus Faṭīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological Dimensions of a Polemic', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 207–24.

³⁰³ Nasrollah Pourjavady, 'Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shiism', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 621–623; Mangol Bayat, 'Anti-Sufism in Qajar Iran', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 624–38; Pierre-Jean Luizard, 'Les Confréries Soufies en Iraq aux Dix-Neuvième et Vingtième Siècles Face au Chiisme Duodécimain et au Wahhabisme', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 285–287.

³⁰⁴ Leonard Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I: The Ni'matullāhī Order: Persecution, Revival and Schism', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 61, no. 3 (1998): 437–64; Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and the School of Isfahan: Tasawwuf and 'Irfan in Late Safavid Iran ('Abd Al-Razzaq Lahiji and Fayd-I Kashani on the Relation of Tasawwuf, Hikmat and 'Irfan)', in *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 3. Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 63–134.

³⁰⁵ Previously, specific Sufi ideas and practices had been subject of debate, most notably *samā'* and associated ecstatic experiences. In addition to this, there had been contests of authority involving the court and Sufi masters. Akbar (1542-1605), for example, identified with the Chishtis to consolidate his legitimacy, and subtly opposed other Sufi orders. Bruce B. Lawrence, 'Veiled Opposition to Sufis in Muslim South Asia: Dynastic Manipulation of Mystical Brotherhoods by the Great Mughal', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 436–51.

mediation, spiritual hierarchy, and personal charismatic authority.³⁰⁶ Werbner discusses the ‘ambivalences of authority in the Barelvi movement’, as she shows there is a complex relationship between Barelvi *‘ulamā* and Sufi masters. She argues that while Sufi masters base their authority on charisma and immediate experience, the Barelvi *‘ulamā* base theirs on knowledge of the scriptures. Even so, they reinforce each other ‘as saint and mosque continue to exist within the same movement’ in a ‘symbiotic relationship’: ‘While the maulvi preaches, the pir blesses.’³⁰⁷ Geaves points out that this is only valid in the particular case of the South Asian Barelvi movement, as the relationship between Sufi and *‘ālim* in the Deobandi movement is very different as both roles are often combined in one person.³⁰⁸ As De Jong and Radtke point out following Bruce Lawrence, there is no ‘binary relationship of intrinsic hostility or irreconcilable enmity between Sufis and non-Sufis’ in South Asia.³⁰⁹

We shall discuss the particulars of our case study in chapters 4 and 8, but here it can be noted that in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, the religious establishment in general seems to be quite positive towards Sufism. In Jordan, the King seeks to be the champion of a general traditional Islam that includes and combines scripturalist, legalist and Sufi interpretations of Islam. In Jerusalem, Geaves has noted that many *‘ulamā* at the Azhar Mosque complex are practising Sufis or sympathetic to Sufism. In Jordan and Palestine, opposition to Sufism can be found amongst the successful Islamist and Salafi movements and their supporters.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ De Jong and Radtke, ‘Introduction’, 11–13; Marc Gaborieau, ‘Criticizing the Sufis: The Debate in Early-Nineteenth-Century India’, in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 452–67; Arthur F. Buehler, ‘Charismatic versus Scriptural Authority: Naqshbandi Response to Deniers of Mediational Sufism in British India’, in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 468–91.

³⁰⁷ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 256–258; Pnina Werbner, ‘Du’a: Popular Culture and Powerful Blessing at the ‘Urs’, in *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, ed. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 83–94.

³⁰⁸ Ron Geaves, ‘The Contested Milieu of Deoband: “Salafis” or “Sufis”?’ in *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 191–216.

³⁰⁹ De Jong and Radtke, ‘Introduction’, 11; Lawrence, ‘Veiled Opposition.’

³¹⁰ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten.’ Considering the fact that Jordan still administers Jerusalem’s *awqāf*, including the al-Aqsa Mosque complex, it would be interesting to further examine the connections between Islam and Sufism as practised in al-Aqsa, and King Abdullah’s project of defining Islam.

These are but a few examples of many that show that opposition to Sufism cannot be explained by an essential dichotomy between mystical and scripturalist / legalist approaches to Islam. As Radtke and De Jong point out, there is 'a considerable fluidity in the divide between Sufism and its opponents' as Sufis were sometimes their own harshest critics, and even incompatible interpretations of Islam did not necessarily exclude co-operation, which 'points to the impracticality of a paradigmatic approach based on a presumed existence of ulama-Sufi opposition.'³¹¹ These debates can often be seen in the light of the Islamic discursive tradition which encompasses many conflicting ideas and approaches, such as traditionalist, rationalist, emotional 'sober' and 'intoxicated', and elitist and popular, etc. Exterior and interior knowledge might be considered complementary approaches that are both subject of extensive debate, or they might be seen as absolute opposites in moments of intense conflict and persecution. Such moments of conflict should not be seen as manifestations of an essential dichotomy, but should be understood in their social, economic and political circumstances.³¹² Generally speaking, Berger points out that 'there will always be a social-structural base for competition between rival definitions of reality and (...) the outcome of the rivalry will be affected, if not always determined outright, by the development of this base.'³¹³ We should therefore see these conflicts in the light of the 'orthodox discursive tradition' and Islamic contestation: as part of the continuing renewal of Islamic tradition, at the same time shaping and adapting to its context.

This constant reformulation of Islamic orthodoxy points to a paradox at the heart of Sunni Islam: on the one hand there is a constant looking back to scripture and the earliest believers, but on the other hand it is constantly renewing itself.³¹⁴ Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence point out that we find the same paradox in Sufism: the textbooks speak of a lost 'golden age' which needs to be

³¹¹ Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, 'Postscript', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 757.

³¹² De Jong and Radtke, 'Introduction', 21; De Jong and Radtke, 'Postscript', 757.

³¹³ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 137–138.

³¹⁴ Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', 231.

found, and a tradition which needs to be revived (*iḥyā*) in every generation.³¹⁵ Like every other aspect of Islam, Sufi ideas and practices were constantly disputed, and the integrity of individuals was discussed, but the system as a whole was seen as an essential part of religion: the *dīn*³¹⁶ combined *īmān* (faith), *islām* (submission, practice),³¹⁷ and *iḥsān* (interiorization, worshiping God as if you see him), with the latter corresponding to the sphere of the Sufis.³¹⁸ Notions such as ‘renewal’, ‘revival, and ‘reform’ have been an essential part of Muslim tradition, and are not new phenomena in the nineteenth century.³¹⁹

Discussions and criticism of specific Sufi ideas and practices centred on the theory of *fanā’* and *baqā*, the theory of the *nūr muḥammadī*, and the idea of a ‘spiritual elite’, which were seen as contrary to Islamic egalitarian values, and critics objected to the belief in miracles and the practices that sprung out of the visits to the saints’ tombs. Another important aspect of this criticism was that Sufis claimed an alternative way of interpreting the Qur’an and the Sunna based on their claim to be linked more directly to God than others, which gave them the power to shape society and advise the rulers. Radtke and De Jong point out that opposition to Sufism should often be seen within its social and political context; it was not only an issue of ideology, but also an issue of authority.³²⁰

Arthur Buehler treats all forms of Islamic authority in one framework as he identifies four main sources of authority in Islam and shows their overlapping nature:

³¹⁵ For example, such thoughts can be found in the work of al-Hujwiri and Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri (986-1074). Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 7; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 3.

³¹⁶ *Dīn* is commonly translated as ‘religion’. Originally it did not refer to a separate system. Rather, it is the obligation mankind has towards God.

³¹⁷ *Islām* literally means ‘submission’, ‘the act of submitting to God (...) accepting personal responsibility for standards of action held to have transcendent authority (...) a personal acceptance of godly ideals’. It has become the name for ‘the whole social pattern of cult and creed’ which grows out of ‘the act of *islām* of the individual believer’ and the messages of the prophets. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:72–73.

³¹⁸ Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 7.

³¹⁹ William A. Graham, ‘Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History – Religion and History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 500.

³²⁰ De Jong and Radtke, ‘Introduction’; Bernd Radtke, ‘Kritik am Neo-Sufism’, in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. De Jong and Radtke, 162–73.

- lineage (genealogical and/or spiritual), which is a ‘conduit of spiritual energy’
- embodiment of the Prophetic Sunna, in other words ‘being a Prophetic exemplar’
- transmission of religious knowledge
- spiritual travel, or the ‘transformative spiritual experience’

The concept of the lineage is used in many fields of Islamic knowledge. William A. Graham discusses the importance of genealogy, of the *isnād*-paradigm, and of the Sufi *silsila* in Muslim societies.³²¹ A Sufi is linked through his masters to the Prophet, and the Prophet sends his *baraka* down to the Sufi *shaykhs* and those with whom he is in contact. Sufis go beyond the simple transmission of knowledge: for them it is ‘a heart-to-heart transmission of divine grace’ that made disciples feel as if they were in the presence of the Prophet.³²² Therefore the lineage – the tool of tradition par excellence – has the charismatic embedded in it.

One could see an an *uwaysī* initiation, the initiation by the spirit of a physically absent or deceased person (often the Prophet or al-Khidr),³²³ as subversive in that it enables a charismatic Sufi to claim spiritual power without having a *shaykh* or belonging to a *ṭarīqa*, in other words, without being part of an institution. But in practice, such an initiation is still located in the framework of the *silsila*. Uwaysi initiations are especially common in the Naqshbandiyya,³²⁴ and Johan ter Haar has argued in the context of this *ṭarīqa* that an Uwaysi initiation and attachment to a *shaykh* are two sides of the same coin, since what matters is the focus (*tawajjuh*) on the spiritual presence of the *shaykh*. In fact, he points out that an *uwaysī* initiation is usually complemented by guidance to a living *shaykh*,

³²¹ The *isnād* is the chain of transmission guaranteeing the authenticity of a *ḥadīth*. The *silsila* is the chain of spiritual descent, the chain of initiation, connecting the *shaykh* of a *ṭarīqa* to the Prophet. Graham, “Traditionalism in Islam.”

³²² Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 82.

³²³ The term is derived from Uways al-Qarani (d.657) who was instructed by the Prophet Muhammad without ever having physically met him. Baldick, ‘Uwaysiyya’; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 299–301.

³²⁴ Baldick, ‘Uwaysiyya.’

but it also sometimes leads to disloyalty.³²⁵ *Shaykh* Muhammad Uthman of the Burhaniyya, for example, claimed an *uwaysī* initiation through visions, emphasizing his independence and uniqueness. In addition to this, however, he also situated himself in a *silsila* claiming genealogical and spiritual descent from the Prophet and the founders of his *ṭarīqa*, who he claimed had hidden secret texts for him on which he could base his renewal.³²⁶ Such a Sufi does place himself in the framework of the *silsila* and institutionalised Sufism by referring to his initiation – by the Prophet, Khidr, or another Sufi master – but he also has a base of authority that is distinctly personal as he does not simply rely on the transmission from history, but he also relies on something in his present, which could be characterized as charismatic as it directly connects him to the ultimate source of authority.

Regarding the transmission of knowledge and the embodiment of the Prophetic Sunna, anthropologists have come to see the Sufi *adāb* as central to the relationship between a Sufi *shaykh* and his followers,³²⁷ as they are ‘the expression of inner qualities of the self’³²⁸ and make those that adhere to them the ‘living embodiment of the exemplary model of Muhammad’.³²⁹ The *aḥwāl* ‘must be expressed in deeds and actions (*ʿamal*) in order to be recognized as legitimate grounds for the Sufi identity.’³³⁰ On the micro-level these practices change the immediate social relationships of the practitioner, but on the macro-level this has the potential to shape the ethics of a whole society. Because of this, Sufism is ‘both an underlying conceptual framework and a set of agreed-upon techniques to verify and confirm it’³³¹ and the ‘embodied quality of objects/persons explains the power of signifying practices to reproduce the social

³²⁵ Ter Haar, ‘The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order’, 318–319.

³²⁶ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 324.

³²⁷ See for example Heck, ‘Introduction’, 1; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 145–146; Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’; Paul L. Heck, ‘The Politics of Sufism. Is There One?’, in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 13–29. See paragraph 1.2 and 1.3.

³²⁸ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 126.

³²⁹ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 19.

³³⁰ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 127.

³³¹ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, xvi.

order.³³² It 'creates a framework for public morality through which are built social evaluations and expectations.'³³³ In Heck's words, Sufism's 'twofold conception of truth, spiritual and ethical, gives Sufism room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis the world.'³³⁴

Buehler argues that the main source of authority for Sufis is spiritual travel – in other words, it is what makes them Sufis and sets them aside from others. This spiritual journey is a duplication of the Prophet's *mi'rāj*, an 'inner transformation and resulting access to spiritual power'. But it is inextricably connected to the other sources of authority. For example, by travelling spiritually a *shaykh* follows the spiritual example of the Prophet; it is 'the inner Sunna' whereas following the Prophet's behaviour is the 'outer Sunna.'³³⁵ As such the *shaykh* is able to guide the spiritual seeker on his/her own spiritual journey.³³⁶

While Buehler touches on the issue of space when discussing the enactment of Sufi authority and the stage upon which this happens (see paragraph 1.4.2), he does not include it as a separate source of authority. Kees Terlouw discusses the role of space in the creation of charisma, following Webers Idealtypes to argue that traditional regimes tend to use places with a link to the charismatic past to increase their legitimacy through monuments, heritage sites, and places of pilgrimage, whereas bureaucratic regimes tend to focus on the future. Of course, in practice these two approaches are often combined.³³⁷ The institutionalisation of Sufism and the establishment of Sufi sacred spaces, e.g. in the form of *zawāya*, led to a marked routinization of charisma. Unlike mosques, Sufi *zawāya* often have a clear connection to the space they

³³² Werbner and Basu, 'The Embodiment of Charisma', 7. The focus on embodiment is an important part of recent anthropological understanding of religion. In the words of Schmidt, 'the body has utterly eclipsed mysticism as an axial term for the discipline.' In earlier anthropological studies of religion the Cartesian duality of body and mind was found to such a degree that 'belief' was detached from 'ritual action', 'reconstructed (...) as disembodied and abstract'. As anthropologists increasingly pay attention to the link between the body and the mind, we also gain more understanding of the role religion plays in society. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', 273–274; Werbner and Basu, 'The Embodiment of Charisma', 7.

³³³ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 126.

³³⁴ Heck, 'Introduction', 1.

³³⁵ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, xv–xvi, 23.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10–13.

³³⁷ Kees Terlouw, 'Charisma and Space', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10, no. 3 (2010): 335–48.

occupy.³³⁸ Their location is not arbitrary as it is connected to a Sufi master and/or saint – either because he spent part of his life there, because he is buried there, because he appeared in a dream or vision, etc. His spirit is considered to linger and to be present and accessible in this particular place. Whereas the mosque points people towards the ultimate Islamic sacred centre, Mecca, the presence of the saint in whatever form draws the believer's attention to the centre of this space, providing a complementary geographical symbolic centre, constituting a direct link to the sacred, 'a nexus of the earthly and the divine.'³³⁹

Like mosques, they are places of prayer and devotion, of study and learning, with a strong communal character.³⁴⁰ The communal character of the *zāwiya* is often more pronounced as it is the main place where disciples gather around their *shaykh* and where visitors attend from far away. Sometimes this happens to such a degree that villages and neighbourhoods spring up around them, and their local and regional role can become very large indeed. Hoffman argues that this social aspect is seen as connected to the spiritual aspect of the *zāwiya* by

promoting love for the brethren, mutual service for the sake of God, and mutual informal exhortation and instruction in the spiritual life. (...) the mystical experience itself as best achieved in the communal setting and indeed as partly communal in its goal.³⁴¹

Through collective *dhikr* '[t]heir spirits influence each other and pull each other up toward greater heights than they can reach on their own.' In such occasions, there is a confluence of sacred space and sacred time thus flow together.³⁴²

³³⁸ Joel P. Brereton characterizes mosques as 'meaningful negation of sacred space' because they deny the localization of divinity. He argues that mosques still classify as 'sacred space', because as places of ritual and meaning they point the believer to the sacred – quite literally in the case of the prayer which is communally performed and during which all believers face the direction of Mecca, the ultimate geographical sacred centre in Islam. Joel P. Brereton, 'Sacred Space', *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, vol 12 526-535: 528.

³³⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 103–104.

³⁴⁰ Brereton, 'Sacred Space', 528.

³⁴¹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 116.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 114–116.

Control over such sacred space therefore provides he who controls it with a connection to the sacred and/or the past of the community, in addition to control over the present community and the sacred space's material assets and position in society. The sacralisation and maintenance of this sacred space – either in its affective or material aspects – can therefore have a profound effect on a person's authority. Pnina Werbner argues that 'the relation between person, body and space is a key to the charisma of a living saint' and that actual travel and the sacralizing of space is just as important to understand a *shaykh's* authority as the idea of spiritual travel and experience:³⁴³

Beyond the transformation of the person, Sufism is a movement in space which Islamicizes the universe and transforms it into the space of Allah. This journey, or *hijra*, which evokes the migration of the Prophet to Medina, empowers a saint as it empowers the space through which he travels and the place where he establishes his lodge. (...) It is the divine transformation in space which is the ultimate proof of the divine transformation of the person.³⁴⁴

Through this sacralising of space communal identities are rooted in specific localities. As his social function increases, more people tend to attach themselves to a *shaykh* to participate in his connection to the divine without actually travelling the spiritual path. The *shaykh* often becomes the mediator between God and the people, through the *baraka* that flows through him from his connection with God and from his connection with earlier *shaykhs* through his initiation.

As we saw in paragraph 1.2, theosophical understandings of *wilāya* that are known throughout the Muslim world are often connected to local ideas on sainthood including hagiographies, shrines, pilgrimages, and the belief in

³⁴³ Werbner and Basu, 'The Embodiment of Charisma', 13; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 50.

³⁴⁴ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 43. In her study of the Naqshbandi *Shaykh* Zindapir of Ghamkol Sharif in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (former North-West Frontier Province) in Pakistan, she discusses that Zindapir's main miracles and claims to spiritual authority were his inner journey to tame the *nafs* and the taming of the wilderness as he founded his lodge. Zindapir's *khalīfa* Sufi Sahib's migration to the 'land of unbelievers' and his work to establish a Sufi centre in Birmingham should be seen in the same light. *Ibid.*, 45–47, 73–81.

miracles.³⁴⁵ A Sufi *shaykh* is often seen as a *walī* and is thus considered to play a part in holding the universe together by providing a connection between the world of the Creator and the creation and channeling *baraka* into the everyday reality.³⁴⁶ Or, to use anthropological vocabulary: ‘A sufi pir, like the Prophet, maintains a state of permanent liminality between heaven and earth, which gives him, like other permanently liminal individuals, supernatural powers.’³⁴⁷

Vincent Cornell and Scott Kugle seek a way to understand sainthood in the Moroccan context that goes beyond the binary opposition between *‘ālim* (religious scholar) and marabout. Following William James and Reginald Ray, Kugle identifies the saint’s separateness – interpreted as self-transcendence – as his primary distinguishing characteristic. The sources, or ‘markers’, of this distinction are manifold and culturally and historically dependent. By tracing these sources or markers, one can construct the relevant paradigm.³⁴⁸ Based on the work of sociologists and historians Pierre Delboz, Donald Weinstein and Ronald Bell, Cornell advocates the sociological analysis of hagiographies and other sources to identify criteria of sainthood and ‘typicality profiles’ or paradigms of sainthood.³⁴⁹ These paradigms are socially generated and specific individuals are made to fit them as the conduct of the person is selectively perceived and remembered.³⁵⁰ ‘Sufis are actual people, whereas sainthood is a remote ideal. Saints are those people from among the Sufis who are believed to have embodied this ideal.’³⁵¹ Cornell points out that several ‘spheres of sainthood’ co-existed in pre-modern Morocco as there were varied yet interdependent perceptions of the *walī Allāh* among different types of followers. These different spheres came together in the figure of the ultimate saint, the *quṭb al-zamān*.³⁵²

³⁴⁵ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 18; Green, *Sufism*, 72, 92–103.

³⁴⁶ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 11; Heck, ‘Introduction’, 8–9; Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 13.

³⁴⁷ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 50.

³⁴⁸ Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 240 note 17.

³⁴⁹ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxxviii.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

³⁵¹ Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 29.

³⁵² The *quṭb al-zamān* is the ‘axis of the age’, the highest rank of *awliyā*, the spiritual centre around whom the universe revolves. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxxv–xxxvi.

Hoffman makes the same argument in the Egyptian context, as she analyses several types of saint in Egypt and compares them with the Coptic Pope Kyrillos VI (1902-1971, pope 1959-1971), and argues that his model of sainthood is much the same as that of the Sufi *shaykhs*, showing the cultural character of these models.³⁵³ She concludes: 'Both the illiterate and the intellectual shaykhs command great respects among Sufis today, and each represents an acceptable model among the models of sainthood.'³⁵⁴

A *shaykh's* authority is stronger when several sources of authority are combined in his person. Because of this, DeWeese points out: Sufi communities have

a distinctively expansive approach to religious authority. It is, indeed, in the context of the personal and public experience of Sufism that we find the most remarkable range of significations of authority [in Islam], and the most dramatic extensions of the reach of religious authority into different social venues.³⁵⁵

Buehler discusses the development of Sufism in terms of the development of different 'patterns of Sufi religious authority' – different types of relationship between *shaykh* and follower – based on different compilations of sources of authority: the teaching *shaykh* (*shaykh al-ta'lim*), the directing *shaykh* (*shaykh al-tarbiya*) and the mediating *shaykh*.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ She discusses Shaykh Ahmad Radwan of al-Baghdadi, a village near Luxor (1895-1967), a charismatic, humble ascetic and gnostic with occasional ecstatic utterances, a holy man who teaches and provides hospitality at his *sāḥa*, and a miracle worker (especially miracles of knowledge); the modern Sufi reformist Shaykh Abu l-Wafa al-Sharqawi (1879-1961); Shaykh Mahmud Abu al-Azm (1910-1983), a recluse with extraordinary spiritual power; Hagga Zakiyya Abd al-Mutallib Badawi (1899-1982), the charitable, hospitable hostess of a *sāḥa*; and the Sudanese *Shaykh* Muhammad Uthman al-Burhani (d.1983), the founder of the Burhaniyya. Regarding Pope Kyrillos, she writes: 'Deep love and devotion to God, expressed in a formative period of solitary prayer and ascetic detachment from material things, purified his spirit and sharpened its receptivity to visions of the spiritual realm. Holiness is expressed through virtue and demonstrated through miracles of healing, knowledge, control over wild beasts, and God's avenging of insults. His sanctity is seen by his followers as infusing the church with new life and is believed to be largely responsible for the revival of the Church in the 1960s.' Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 340–343.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁵⁵ DeWeese, 'Authority', 47.

³⁵⁶ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, xv. He bases his typology partly on the two types of *shaykh* that were discussed in Islamic theology, the *shaykh al-ta'lim* and the *shaykh al-tarbiya*. Ibid., 31.

Historically, the teaching *shaykh* based his authority mainly on the transmission of religious knowledge and the instruction in *akhlāq*, and this teaching took place through a loose relationship between pupil and teacher: an ‘informal guide (...) to an ad-hoc group of students’ who travelled throughout the Muslim world to study with several *shaykhs*. He was the ‘exemplary custodian of sacred knowledge’ who instructed both through books and by example. An important aspect of this instruction was the many rituals and behavioural rules associated with the transmission of knowledge.³⁵⁷

According to Buehler, the rise of the directing *shaykh* developed in the context of the institutionalization of Sufism. Together with the development of the Sufi lodge and the writing of Sufi handbooks, the relationship between the pupil and the master became more regulated and the *shaykh*’s authority became more encompassing as he did not just supervise the disciple’s spiritual exercises but molded every aspect of the disciple’s character in the struggle to transform the *nafs*.³⁵⁸ The disciple had to obey the *shaykh* in everything in order to progress on the spiritual path, and the *shaykh* helped him on this path by providing him with spiritual energy, both through the lineage in which he was initiated and through his own spiritual activities. Initiation became an important element in that relationship.³⁵⁹

In addition to this classical distinction between *shaykh al-ta’līm* and *shaykh al-tarbiya*, Buehler posits the type of the mediating *shaykh* as unconditional love for the *shaykh* became the sole requirement to achieve a connection with God: the sheikh mediates and transmits his follower’s needs to the Prophet, who in turn mediates between the *shaykh* and God – other spiritual practices are no

Buehler discusses the views of Ibn Abbad al-Rundi (d.1390) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) based on the work by Muhsin Mahdi. Muhsin Mahdi, ‘The Book and the Master as Poles of Cultural Change in Islam’, in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, ed. Speros Vryonis Jr. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 3–15. See also Fritz Meier, ‘Khurasan and the End of Classical Sufism’, in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, ed. Bernd Radtke, transl. John O’Kane (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 189–219; Silvers-Alario, ‘The Teaching Relationship in Early Sufism.’

³⁵⁷ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 26–29; L. Massignon et al., ‘Taṣawwuf’, *EI2* X 313-340.

³⁵⁸ The *nafs* is the ‘self’, the lower soul, the base instincts. When untrained, the *nafs* is driven by desires and causes blameworthy actions and sins. The seeker trains and purifies the *nafs* until it serves him/her on the path to God. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 112–113.

³⁵⁹ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 29–54.

longer necessary.³⁶⁰ Because of the belief in their continuing spiritual presence, deceased *shaykhs* could also fulfil this function. Tomb-shrines became part of the religious landscape and hereditary shrine *shaykhs* became more common. The inclusion of other local practices, such as healing practices and the use of amulets, further enlarged the basis and scope of authority of the shrine-*shaykhs*.

The *ṭuruq* made Sufism into a mass movement and Sufi leaders into social leaders. Trade guilds, urban neighbourhoods, villages and tribes were attached to a *ṭarīqa* and a patron saint, and many political movements had their roots in a *ṭarīqa* (e.g. the Libyan Sanusiyya and the Sudanese Mahdi movement). Sufi *shaykhs* offered their guidance and mediation to wider society, and their *zawāya* and shrines often became wealthy economic hubs. As landowners and community leaders they therefore had a large social and often political role.³⁶¹

Green distinguishes three interdependent forms of power in the Sufi tradition. Discursive power refers to the power to shape behaviour as it provides a vocabulary, models of society, and paradigms of behaviour based primarily on the Prophetic Sunna. Miraculous power was seen as the ability to perform miracles – often in the form of rewards or punishments – due to the *walī*'s closeness to God, and led to social power as people of all ranks tied themselves to the saint because of this, which in turn led to economic power in the form of *zakāa*,³⁶² endowments (*awqāf*), and donations. This social and economic power was usually transferred through the same family lineages as the spiritual power, strengthening the traditional character of a Sufi community, and making these three forms of power ultimately interdependent.³⁶³

As the *ṭuruq* developed, the practice of passing the position of *shaykh* from father to son became more common, and was often tied to the notion of genealogical descent from the Prophet. This practice is based on the belief that the *nūr muḥammadī* is passed along the line of physical descent, and piety and

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶¹ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 242; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 37; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 4.

³⁶² *Zakāa* is charity, obligatory donation of a set portion of one's property, one of the five pillars of Islam

³⁶³ Green, *Sufism*, 6–7.

baraka are transferred with it.³⁶⁴ Hoffman notes that this is a common practice in Egypt and is seen as natural, not as a corruption of 'golden age' Sufi practices:

It is generally expected that the spiritual secrets of a master will be inherited by his son, unless his son exhibits attitudes and behaviour that contradict the Sufi way. The inheritance by a son of the office of shaykh is therefore not seen by the Sufis as a corruption of a system that ought to be based on spiritual stature, unless it leads to wrongful veneration of an unworthy individual or the assignment of spiritual leadership to a minor. In most cases, it is seen as an entirely natural process that follows the typical flow of the grace of God and is a natural extension of the belief that the prophetic light was distributed among his physical descendants first, and then among the saints.³⁶⁵

It is important to keep in mind that older modes of authority and organisation continued to exist as new ones developed – the emergence of new modes of authority and organisation did not lead to the shift of all Sufi groups and movements from one mode to another, it merely meant that more options were available. Buehler himself notes these are idealtypes that often overlap, with different roles often coexisting in the same *shaykh*.³⁶⁶ In the context of medieval Palestine, Daphna Ephrat points out that *tarbiya* cannot be clearly distinguished from *ta'lim*.³⁶⁷ Werbner criticizes 'linear theories of Sufi historical evolution' such as Buehler's as they 'mistake a phase in the cycle of a particular regional cult with a general historical trend.'³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ Ron Geaves, 'Transformation and Trends among British Sufis', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 52.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 87–88, 128–129, 390 note 129. Hoffman's remark refers to the accusation that such an institutionalization on kinship lines is a corruption of classical Sufism. Regarding such arguments, it is useful to recall Hodgson's remark: 'When we look at Islam historically, then, the integral unity of life it seemed to display when we looked at it as a working out of the act of Islam almost vanishes. In such ever-renewed dialogues, among settings formed apart from Islam at all, is not anything possible provided only it possess a certain general human validity? We can no longer say that Islam eternally teaches a given thing, or that another thing is necessarily a corruption of Islam. Such judgments a believer may feel himself able to make, but not a historian as such.' Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:85–86.

³⁶⁶ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 21 note 43, 37.

³⁶⁷ Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 48–50.

³⁶⁸ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 20–21.

Other studies show that in the contemporary world we see old and new forms of *shaykhdom* combine into new forms of Sufi authority. For example, Suha Taji-Farouki's study of the Beshara movement in the United Kingdom shows a new form of the teaching *shaykh*.³⁶⁹ Similarly, different perceptions of a *shaykh* can exist within one movement. Rachida Chih analysed the hagiographies of several recent Khalwati *shaykhs* in Egypt, and noticed a very strong focus on their educational credentials and their connections to al-Azhar. When she did fieldwork among the adherents of the *ṭarīqa* however she found they were mainly concerned with the *shaykh's* piety and *baraka*.³⁷⁰ Ron Geaves discusses different levels of discipleship which influence how people see the *shaykh*, what they expect from him/her, and how much influence the *shaykh* can exercise over their ideas and behaviour.³⁷¹ As Werbner points out: 'In this sense it is the disciples who define and determine the nature of the connection between saint and follower, as much as the saint him or herself does.'³⁷²

1.4.2 The Zāwiya as the Stage of Authority

When analysing the relationship between *shaykh* and follower we have to take into account in which context this relationship is enacted and on which 'stage of authority' the authoritative speech act is performed. We have to take into account

³⁶⁹ Beshara's leader Bulent Rauf was a teacher and a guide, who saw himself as a messenger, not a *shaykh*. In his words 'the era of teachers is now over' and people should be taught by the Reality directly. This approach to his role, which came mainly from his understanding of Ibn Arabi, influenced the way the movement was organised (in the form of a school) and the way the teaching was done there. Suha Taji-Farouki, *Beshara and Ibn 'Arabi: A Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World* (Oxford: Anqa, 2007), 69–96.

³⁷⁰ Chih, 'Entre Tradition Soufie et Réformisme Musulman.'

³⁷¹ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 17–18, 76–77. Geaves distinguishes five concentric circles which demonstrate levels of allegiance or degrees of belonging, the first three of which consists of those followers who have pledged themselves to the *shaykh* through the oath of allegiance (*bai'at*). The outer circles formed 'a large amorphous allegiance based on status, emotional loyalty, or pragmatic need.'

³⁷² Pnina Werbner, 'Intimate Disciples in the Modern World: The Creation of Translocal Amity among South Asian Sufis in Britain', in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 197–198.

the locational aspect of authority and see how the Sufi *shaykh*'s authority relates to other figures of authority in society (see paragraph 1.3)

Buehler understands the place of Sufi communities in society in terms of Victor Turner's 'structure and anti-structure' which together form society.³⁷³ In his analysis, structure, stability and routine are provided by the jurists (*fuqahā'*, sg. *faqīh*) – concerned with *islām*, the submission of the body and outer practices (*amal*). This legitimizes the status quo and supports political power. The idealtype *faqīh*'s authority to interpret scripture and prescribe religious rules comes from his education and his performance of these rules, thus making him a Prophetic exemplar. Buehler sees this authority as 'scripture-centred'. On the other hand, Buehler sees 'anti-structure' or the transformational process in both people and society as the domain of the Sufis, whose ultimate concern is *iḥsān*. Buehler sees them as providing the liminal experience of *communitas* in the charismatic community centred around the Sufi *shaykh*. The idealtypical Sufi *shaykh* bases his authority on his lineage, his teaching and interpretation of scripture, his exemplary behaviour, but most of all on his spiritual travel, his 'transformative spiritual experience', which defines him as a Sufi – as such, his authority is 'person-centred'. In his view, Sufis operate through experience and inspiration, thus providing new impulses, but ultimately providing the 'hidden foundation of society'.³⁷⁴

Lincoln argues that every society incorporates multiple religious forms that have different functions in society.³⁷⁵ As the elements of traditions are ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, they could serve both to confirm or

³⁷³ Victor Turner sees social structure as 'the dynamic configuration of patterned arrangements that are consciously recognized and operate regularly according to legal and political norms of a given society. Structure highlights and justifies economic, hierarchical, age, and sex differences.' The charismatic (often religious) community by contrast, is the *communitas*, the anti-structure in which people seek to live out an ideal world in which the social stratification is non-existent, representing social reality as a homogeneous, egalitarian, unified whole associated with a mythical or historical 'golden age'. Turner mainly sees this *communitas* in rites of passage. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 49, 53.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–28.

³⁷⁵ Bruce Lincoln, 'Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution', in *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution. An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Collection of Essays* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 168.

challenge the status quo.³⁷⁶ A ‘religion of the status quo’ supports and legitimates the hegemonic power’s authority through its organisations and through its discourse.³⁷⁷ ‘Religions of resistance’ on the other hand do not accept the hegemonic power and resist by altering public discourse rather than attacking the hegemonic power openly.³⁷⁸ The protest works on both the levels of doctrine and practice: there is a competition over the interpretation of symbols and over the control of the institutions that produce and sustain these symbols.³⁷⁹ According to Paolo Pinto, Sufism is very well adapted to provide this resistance because of its transformation of the public sphere through the ‘continuous production of shared normative understandings and practical standards’ and the transformation of the individual,³⁸⁰ and ‘by defining how power is to be legitimately claimed and exercised.’³⁸¹ Finally, ‘religions of rebellion’ attack the *whole system* of the status quo. Essential in this regard is the articulation of an alternative ‘theory of political legitimation’.³⁸² We should also bear in mind that a religious movement can move along this spectrum, and several attitudes can co-exist in the same movement.

All of this is most visible in the *zāwiya*, the ultimate Sufi ‘stage of authority’. It is the place where the disciples and the *shaykh* practice together and live together, and it is also the place where the individual transformation of the Sufi path connects to society and provides the space for either social transformation or for the implementation and internalisation of traditional social values, supporting the status quo. This often happens concretely through patronage links connecting the Sufi institutions to actors holding political power. As such, the *shaykh* is able to perform his mediating function on both a spiritual level and a worldly level – all within the Sufi *zāwiya*.³⁸³

³⁷⁶ Primiano, ‘Afterword.’

³⁷⁷ Jennifer Milliken, ‘The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods’, *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 229–230, 236.; David R. Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 67.

³⁷⁸ Lincoln, ‘Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution’, 268–272.

³⁷⁹ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 131–135.

³⁸⁰ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 130.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

³⁸² Lincoln, ‘Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution’, 272–280.

³⁸³ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 44–54.

Throughout Islamic history, *shaykhs* were often well-respected members of society and because of their knowledgeable and ethical image often mediated in case of social conflict, either between the people and the rulers or between the people themselves. Sufi *shaykhs* could also act as moral guides to the rulers, thus legitimizing the rulers' position as Islamic rulers. In Sufi ideology the Sufis guide individuals – including the ruler – and society in their ethical development. In return for this guidance and legitimacy the *shaykh* received material benefits and a political aura, which was the basis for more sociopolitical influence. *Shaykhs* could have extensive wealth, deriving from *awqāf* (religious endowments) or from patronage. Also, they could be 'assimilated to other networks', e.g tribal, ethnic, or commercial networks, and derive more legitimacy and material benefits from these associations. Heck calls this the advisory model.³⁸⁴

The *shaykhs*' authority thus usually bolstered the status quo, but there have also been cases where a *shaykh* functioned as an opposition figure. Lincoln points out that 'direct revelation' (in his example in the form of prophecy, in the case of Sufi *shaykhs* in the form of divine inspiration and mystical experience) can be a form of corrosive discourse in the face of institutionalized power. The control of channels of revelation and religious experience is therefore a central aspect to the struggle over authority.³⁸⁵

Some Sufi *shaykhs* adhered to the idea that Sufis should shun the affairs of the world altogether and not associate themselves with rulers in order not to defile their spiritual purity. Heck points out that this attitude might enhance their charisma as it removes them from the corruption of the world, but could also create 'a spiritual ghetto'.³⁸⁶ We should keep in mind that such an 'apolitical' stance in fact still positions the *shaykh* and his followers in a particular political position – if not actively supporting the status quo, the absence of opposition

³⁸⁴ Heck, 'Introduction', 2, 11; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism', 14–15.

³⁸⁵ Lincoln, *Authority*, 46. Lincoln understands corrosive discourse as 'all those sorts of speech which are not only nonauthoritative, but downright antithetical to the construction of authority, given their capacity to eat away at the claims and pretensions of discourses and speakers who try to arrogate authority for themselves.' *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁸⁶ Heck, 'Introduction', 11.

means that the status quo is not challenged and thus passively supported. In fact, rulers have often been content to discourage active participation in politics, or to encourage a form of resistance that does not impact wider society. As Werbner points out, ‘the attitudes of Sufis to temporal power and authority are highly ambivalent, a mixture of moral superiority and pragmatic accommodation, but they are never outside of politics.’³⁸⁷

We have seen that the rivalry among *shaykhs* often centred on their competing claims for divine knowledge and for the social and political power based on this – ‘Muslim politics’ over the right to interpret ideas and symbols. The Sufis’ claim to a higher and more certain form of knowledge makes them the real ‘heirs to the prophets’, the real spiritual and worldly authority and possibly a rival to the worldly leaders on both an organizational and a spiritual/ideological level. It gave the Sufis a degree of authority that was distrusted by the non-Sufi ‘*ulamā* and by the state, and sometimes led to heavy power struggles with a strong ideological component.

1.5 Sufism in the Contemporary World

The concept of ‘modernity’ refers to the social and material effects based on greater reliance on rationalization, technology, industrialisation, and bureaucratization, all of which which developed in the West and spread throughout the world in the wake of Western colonialism. The accompanying ideology ‘Modernism’ values empirical knowledge, individual freedom and autonomy, and ‘progress’ as society moves from tradition, magic and religion to a new rationalist worldview and rational-bureaucratic institutions.³⁸⁸ Even though the latter assumption has been falsified, we can still say that ‘religion’ has developed significantly under influence of and in reaction to both ‘modernity’ and

³⁸⁷ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 5.

³⁸⁸ For ‘modernity’ and ‘Modernism’, see Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 5; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 358–359, 422. Based on Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 17–18, 23–42, esp. 27.

'modernism'.³⁸⁹ While some individuals and movements have subscribed to 'modernism', others are intensely critical as they see it lacking in spirituality and morality and reform their traditions to challenge this, or establish new religious movements. The categories 'religion' and 'spirituality' have undergone a discursive shift as 'institutionalised religion' has lost ground to a more individualised 'new spirituality' (generally associated with the New Age movement).³⁹⁰ Fierce discussions have rocked the Islamic tradition whether to reject or (selectively) adapt modern technology, institutions, and/or ideas, leading to discussions about the definition of Islam itself. The category 'Sufism' and Sufi ideas, practices, movements, and individuals have not been immune to these trends.³⁹¹

Despite earlier ideas – influenced by modernization theories and the secularisation thesis – that the Sufi *ṭuruq* were set to decline in the modern world, we are witnessing a significant Sufi contribution to the general Islamic resurgence since the 1970s. Not only are 'traditional' Sufi *ṭuruq* surviving and often even thriving, many other forms of Sufism are attracting members and participating in the global struggle to 'speak for Islam'. In line with the rationalizing trend in Modernism, many Sufi *ṭuruq* redefine their heritage on rational terms and reorganise their institutions along rational-bureaucratic lines. This can take the form of increased autonomy for their members in terms of affiliation, behaviour and interpretation (with space for rational-critical thought), or they might re-invent themselves as voluntary associations, business enterprises and networks, or political parties.³⁹² A strong trend is the redefinition of Sufism as part of Traditional Islam, as the ethical and devotional aspect of Islam that connects one to the deeper, inner meaning of the faith, that can be cultivated outside of the *ṭuruq*, without guidance by a master – in some cases going so far as rejecting traditional Sufi terms and the word *taṣawwuf* itself.³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 185–214.

³⁹⁰ Boaz Huss, 'Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and Its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014): 47–60.

³⁹¹ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 3.

³⁹² Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 10–11.

³⁹³ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 312.

Our main concern in this study is how these trends affect Sufi authority? Does the rationalisation found in many movements affect the charismatic and traditional modes of authority? And how does globalisation affect Sufi movements and their modes of organisation and authority, and hence the experiences of the followers?

1.5.1. Fragmentation of Authority

Lincoln argues that as religious institutions and discourses lost their hegemonic position in society due to the proliferation of Enlightenment values, 'the ideological warrants used in support of authority changed – as they have at other times in history.' Because he sees authority as context-specific in any time and place, he suggests 'that authority not only survives such changes, but operates in a similar fashion whether it is legitimated through a religious ideology or through mystificatory claims of other sorts.'³⁹⁴

He refers again to his idea of the 'stage' on which acts of authoritative speech are performed, arguing that in the modern world there is an increasing number of specialized stages that compete amongst each other.³⁹⁵ With the inclusion of the Muslim world into the global market, its exposure to European technologies and forms of organisation, and its subjection to imperialism and colonialism, European ideas also spread through the Muslim world and a number of competing 'stages' was erected renegotiating boundaries and challenging indigenous modes of authority and discourses. On these 'stages', different 'spokesmen of Islam' took place who reinterpreted the Islamic symbols, who were subject to diverse intellectual and structural influences and spoke within diverse frames of reference, the totality of which has been characterized by an absence of consensus. Both in the religious and the political field, actors have to decide which authority (or authorities) to follow, which to oppose, and why.

³⁹⁴ Lincoln, *Authority*, 103–104, 117.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143–144.

Eickelman and Piscatori call this the 'fragmentation of authority'. Thus we see a growing diversity of Islamic trends and movements, which are all based on their own attitude to knowledge and criteria for investing authority. Even non-religious actors and bodies are pressured to participate in these 'Muslim politics'. As Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi point out, the continued importance of Islam for the people forced even the most secular nation-state to participate in this competition over the right to interpret Islamic sources and speak for Islam.³⁹⁶

One new discourse was that of nationalism and the nation-state as a source of identity, an idea to consolidate a state, legitimize colonialism, or motivate opposition to an outside power. This has left its mark on Muslim thinking in many colonial and postcolonial situations, in which religion and nationalism became strongly linked because they both refer to aspects of identity: genealogy, kinship, ethnicity, history, values, language, etc.³⁹⁷ Sufism – especially in its more localized aspects – provided a good meeting point for religion and nationalism.³⁹⁸

Other discourses are those associated with Islamic reform movements. As we have seen in paragraph 1.4, Islamic self-criticism and reform had always happened in localized contexts. From the eighteenth century onwards, however, it took on a more global character as travel and communication between different parts of the Muslim world increased. The level of self-criticism and reform rose as the crises facing the Muslim communities intensified in the face of economic expansion and colonialism, which were seen as signs of God's disfavour with the corruption of the *umma*.³⁹⁹ Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) saw the Sufi reform movements that sprang up in this environment as a radical break with the past tradition and called it 'neo-Sufism', but O'Fahey and Radtke have convincingly argued that elements identified with the new movements should be seen as a

³⁹⁶ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 12–13, 69–71, 131–135; Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi, 'Introduction', in *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 5–11.

³⁹⁷ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 82, 85.

³⁹⁸ Paulo G. Pinto, "Religions et Religiosité en Syrie," in *La Syrie au Present. Reflets d'une Société*, ed. B. Dupret et al. (Paris: Sindbad 2007), 351.

³⁹⁹ Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 50–52.

continuation of the dynamic Islamic tradition.⁴⁰⁰ Sedgwick showed that the concept of the *ṭarīqa Muhammadiyya*, which is at the centre of this eighteenth-century wave of reform movements, consisted of several elements that had existed separately in the Islamic tradition for several centuries, but were now combined for the first time in a loosely connected movement.⁴⁰¹ Michael Frishkopf sees this development as a re-orientation of Sufi leaders and *ṭuruq* from the local to the global sphere and to the pan-Islamic reformist and revival movement that stresses this sphere.⁴⁰²

As Muslim governments and societies were increasingly influenced and controlled by Europe and as an increasing number of Muslim countries were subjugated by non-Muslim governments, Muslim intellectuals wrote that the Muslim world had become weak and corrupt because Islam had stagnated, and that Islam had to be revived in order to restore its 'golden age'. As reform had always been an intrinsic part of Islam, many Muslims sought for renewal within the Islamic tradition.⁴⁰³ Others however wanted to break with tradition in the form of traditional scholarship and jurisprudence, and 'purify' Islam by returning to the sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna, the practices of the Prophet and the earliest generations of Muslims (the *salaf*, hence *salafiyya*, Salafism). Mark Sedgwick uses Reinhard Schulze's dual understanding of the word 'original' to illustrate that they wanted to go back to the origins of Islam but they also gave a new interpretation of these origins and opposed 'traditional' authorities.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ O'Fahey and Radtke, 'Neo-Sufism Reconsidered'; Bernd Radtke, 'A Reconsideration Reconsidered', in *Neue Kritische Gänge zu Stand und Aufgaben der Sufikforschung* (Utrecht: M.Th. Houtsma Stichting, 2005), 293–302; Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 28.

⁴⁰¹ Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 11–21. He notes the primary characteristics of a focus on waking visions of the Prophet and a recourse to the Prophet and those who are considered in touch with him, an opposition to the *madhāhib* and the '*ulamā*', and the reform of certain Sufi practices that had been criticized for centuries. A secondary characteristic deriving from these, is the predominance of initiation through a vision of the Prophet – together with a connection to a traditional *silsila* – and the focus on ethical behaviour and social activities such as labour and commerce.

⁴⁰² Michael Frishkopf, 'Changing Modalities in the Globalization of Islamic Saint Veneration and Mysticism: Sidi Ibrahim Al-Dasuqi, Shaykh Muhammad Uthman Al-Burhani, and Their Sufi Orders', *Religious Studies and Theology* 20, no. 1 & 2 (2001): 21–22.

⁴⁰³ Abdulkader Tayob, *Reading Religion and the Religious in Modern Islam. Inaugural Lecture* (Nijmegen, 2004), 6–8; Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 1–2.

⁴⁰⁴ The most important scholars associated with this trend in the nineteenth century are Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Rashid Rida (1865-1935).

Scholars debated which elements of the Islamic tradition should be maintained and reformed, and how much should be taken from Europe in the fields of technology, institutions, and ideas. The main discussion was what should be the relation between revelation and reason, and whether society should be built on reason or religion.⁴⁰⁵ The Islamic Modernists were in favour of selectively adapting aspects of modernity, but they believed that Islam needed to provide the spiritual basis on which these changes should be built. They saw Islam as essentially a rational, progressive religion, and reinterpreted the Sharia in light of the needs of society and the moral principles and progressive spirit of the Qur'an.⁴⁰⁶ An aspect of this reform was a pan-Islamic drive to strengthen the *umma* through social and doctrinal unity,⁴⁰⁷ championed by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897).⁴⁰⁸ His disciple Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) aimed to bring traditional and modern modes of thought together, to root necessary modern changes in Islam, 'to weigh [Islam's sources] in the scales of human reason, and sought to bring different trends within Islam and within Egyptian society closer together.'⁴⁰⁹ His disciples took his thought in different directions, most notably Rashid Rida, who brought it closer to Hanbali fundamentalism and Wahhabism,⁴¹⁰ while other disciples of Abduh moved in the direction of secularism.⁴¹¹ Others opposed Modernism and its embrace of rationality, individual autonomy and progress, and re-affirmed the primacy of revelation over reason. Sufis affirmed the possibility of a metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'an through ongoing revelations in the form of religious experiences.⁴¹² Others affirmed the absolute authority of the literal interpretation of Qur'an and

Albert H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mark J. Sedgwick, *Sufism: The Essentials* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 89–92; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 34; Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 1–2.

⁴⁰⁵ Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 37.

⁴⁰⁶ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 6, 422.

⁴⁰⁷ Frishkopf, 'Changing Modalities.'

⁴⁰⁸ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 103–129.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 136–141; Mark J. Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010).

⁴¹⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 222–244.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 162–188, 245–259.

⁴¹² Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 37.

Hadith and the desire to build society on the base of these literal interpretations.⁴¹³

The term 'Salafism' has come to denote a 'frame of mind', a variety of movements that all aim to 'purify' Islam from 'innovations' but have little else in common. The most influential movement of this kind today is Wahhabism, based on the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791) and connected to the ruling family of Saudi Arabia. Oil wealth served to spread the Wahhabi message through modern institutions and modes of communication, with the effect that the Wahhabis have become quite successful claiming the right to define Islamic orthodoxy. Through their control of mosques, schools and other organisations all over the world and their use of the internet many people have easy access to Salafi Islam.⁴¹⁴

The terminology used to describe these trends and movements is confusing and problematic. The most common label is 'fundamentalism', an intensely problematic term as it is originally used to denote a specifically Christian phenomenon, but also because there is no agreement on its definition and it is used to denote a variety of phenomena, e.g. 'scripturalism', 'literalism', 'puritanism'. This trend has been called 'totalist' by William E. Shepard and 'maximalist' by Lincoln.⁴¹⁵ Most of these phenomena can be found throughout Islamic history, even though they have become more predominant during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴¹⁶ The difference is that in modern times there are so many competing values that the commitment to Islam as a 'totalist' religion is an option among many and therefore has become more explicit. Many 'fundamentalist' movements are in fact very modern as their explicit aim is to break with tradition.⁴¹⁷ All these ideologies engage with modernity as they show

⁴¹³ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 420.

⁴¹⁴ Guilain Denoeux, 'The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam', *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (2002): 59–61.

⁴¹⁵ William E. Shepard, 'Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 307–35; Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 5.

⁴¹⁶ For example, Calder argues that Islamic heritage is narrowed down as 'orthodox' Islam became more scripturalist and literalist and charisma, gnosis, and community/tradition became less important. Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', 235–236; DeWeese, 'Authority', 41.

⁴¹⁷ Graham, 'Traditionalism in Islam', 500.

'a dialectical relationship to modernity, one that entails not the negation of modernity but an attempt to simultaneously abolish, transcend, preserve and transform it.'⁴¹⁸ In the words of Eickelman and Piscatori, the modern world is characterised by conscious reflection on the own culture and religion, and through 'objectification' Islam has become 'more *self-consciously* Islamic'.⁴¹⁹

These Islamic reform movements have also inspired political movements, organisations and parties that aim to practise politics based on Islamic values, or establish an Islamic state. The Islamist movements first developed in the colonial period, and experienced a revival after the Six Day War of 1967 and the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Islamism has been defined as 'movements and ideologies drawing on Islamic referents – terms, symbols and events taken from the Islamic tradition – in order to articulate a distinctly political agenda'. The methods used by Islamist parties differ hugely. Some use grassroots activism to Islamize society from below while others resort to violence to achieve their goals. These movements do not necessarily break with tradition as they encompass Muslims from many different backgrounds with many different orientations.⁴²⁰

Despite the intensified criticism it has to endure, Sufism has also participated in this revivalist atmosphere, both in the form of the traditional *ṭuruq* and in other organisational forms.⁴²¹ Islamists have often been seen as Sufism's arch-enemies, but some members of *ṭuruq* participate in Islamist movements, some movements are modelled on Sufi organisational modes of leadership and mobilization, or refer to Sufi morality as a basis for social and political action, and scholars have noted similarities in terms of religious practices that establish strong communal bonds.⁴²² On a completely different line of development, some

⁴¹⁸ Taji-Farouki and Nafi, 'Introduction', 3. Quote from Roxanne L. Euben, 'Premodern, Antimodern or Posmodern? Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity', *Review of politics* 59, no. 3 (1997): 429-460.

⁴¹⁹ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 37-45; Taji-Farouki and Nafi, 'Introduction', 4.

⁴²⁰ Denoeux, 'Navigating Political Islam', 61. See for example on the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Itzchak Weismann, 'The Politics of Popular Religion: Sufis, Salafis, and Muslim Brothers in 20th-Century Hamah', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 39-58.

⁴²¹ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam'; Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten.'

⁴²² Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 2; Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam'.

Sufi individuals and movements connect to Western ‘new spirituality’ movements based on their shared interest for inner spirituality and embodied spiritual experiences.

1.5.2 Sufism in Contemporary Societies

As we have discussed in paragraph 1.4.2, throughout Islamic history Sufi ideas, practices, and institutional forms have been subject to (self-)criticism, which sometimes led to outright opposition and persecution. Involved in such conflicts was often a rivalry over epistemological bases of authority in which exoteric scholars opposed the esoteric knowledge of Sufis, based on claims of inspiration and direct access to the divine, and their resultant authority to interpret the sources and the law. Despite these criticisms and conflicts, most agreed that religion consists of *islām*, *īmān* and *ihsān*, that the inner and outer spheres are inseparable and validate each other, and that Sufism is an integral part of Islam.⁴²³

In this increasingly fragmented ideological arena of contemporary societies, however, the nature of this criticism has changed as the connection between Sufism and Islam is questioned. Sufism is criticized because it is considered a foreign innovation (*bid’a*), because it is considered to keep the Muslim world backward and divided, and/or because it is seen to collaborate with colonial and post-colonial powers.⁴²⁴ But most importantly, rather than specific Sufi practices such as *dhikr* and *samā’*, it is now the essence of Sufism that is under attack as essentially un-Islamic.⁴²⁵ Especially the relation between master and disciple and the value of complete obedience to the *shaykh* in every aspect of life is considered to compromise monotheism and undermine the disciple’s individual reason and will, and concrete socio-political roles of Sufi *shaykhs* are

⁴²³ See De Jong and Radtke, *Islamic Mysticism Contested*.

⁴²⁴ Chanfi Ahmed, “Introduction: Le Renouveau de l’Islam Soufi,” *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 135 - Reveils du Soufisme en Afrique et en Asie (2006): 9–15.

⁴²⁵ Sedgwick, *Sufism*, 92; Werbner and Basu, ‘The Embodiment of Charisma’, 3.

criticized. The possibility of a spiritual connection with people who have passed away is considered heretical. On a deeper ontological and epistemological level the idea of the experiential basis of knowledge and the possibility of inspiration and mediation is challenged.⁴²⁶

In addition to these Islamic critics, some Sufi movements in the West also stress the non-Islamic aspects of Sufism by embracing its universal tendencies, and stressing the universal, esoteric and ethical aspects of the Sufi tradition over the Islamic devotional and ethical ones.⁴²⁷ This goes back to the early twentieth century when Eastern spirituality was embraced as the counterweight to Western materialism, and continued in the 1960s and 70s in the context of the counter-culture's search for an 'alternative spirituality'.⁴²⁸ Intensely disillusioned with scripture-based traditional religion and its hierarchies, 'spiritual seekers' preferred 'experience-based, practical and body-related forms of teachings that produce immediate results', seeking for the validation of a spiritual teaching in themselves in line with the individualistic character of this religious approach. According to Gritt Klinkhammer, this led them to search for charismatic leaders who could provide them with these experiences, and who possessed 'authenticity' as representatives of 'Eastern spirituality'.⁴²⁹ These universalist Sufi *shaykhs* and movements came to participate in the 'spiritual, therapeutic and aesthetic market' as the boundaries between spirituality, healing and art started to shift and spirituality became commodified in both a metaphoric and a very real sense – the best example being the popularity of all things Rumi among spiritual seekers and the general public.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam,' 7; Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law*, 12.

⁴²⁷ Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization.'

⁴²⁸ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*; Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 'Introduction'; Geaves, 'Transformation and Trends among British Sufis'; Gisela Webb, 'Third-Wave Sufism in America and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship', in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 86–102; Marcia Hermansen, 'Global Sufism. "Theirs and Ours"', in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 26–45.

⁴²⁹ Gritt Klinkhammer, 'Sufism Contextualised. The Mevlevi Tradition in Germany', in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 209–28.

⁴³⁰ Amira el-Zein, 'Spiritual Consumption in the United States: The Rumi Phenomenon', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 11, no. 1 (2000): 71–85.

Many contemporary Sufis however firmly stress their adherence to the Islamic principles of the Qur'an, Sunna and sharia. In addition to their own initial responses, the challenge of their critics has led them to interact with the ideas circulating in the Islamic and nationalist ideological arena and to further redefine their position. The 'objectification' mentioned above also happened within traditional Islam and Sufism, which became more self-consciously Sufi while at the same time stressing that it is the authentic traditional Islam, 'a brand of Islam that acknowledges 1,400 years of tradition as authoritative alongside the teachings of Qur'an and Sunna and recognizes the contribution of Sufi spirituality, the legal interpretations of the *'ulamā'* and the four schools of law',⁴³¹ promoting a non-localized, deterritorialised adherence to traditional and Sufi values by appealing to tradition and continuity.⁴³²

Under influence of Modernist preferences for institutional and intellectual rationality, scripturalism, individualism, and political activism, some Muslim intellectuals stress the intellectual, devotional and/or ethical aspects of Sufism as opposed to the esoteric aspects. During the Islamic revival of the 1970s and 80s this was accompanied by a return to inner spiritual expression, experience and embodiment, which created a space for Sufism's inner search for a heightened awareness of the divine.⁴³³

Related to these shifts, new organisational frameworks are developing in addition to the traditional *ṭuruq*. These movements are often developed in local communities by new agents, and show new modes of authority and new – often flatter – hierarchies, and new ritual forms.⁴³⁴ Berger points out that in contemporary pluralist society, the religious arena is dominated by the logics of market economics, competition and need for rationalization of socio-religious structures, leading to bureaucratization. Bureaucratic religious leaders need different skills: Berger says they should be 'activist, pragmatically oriented, not

⁴³¹ Ron Geaves, 'Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and Wahhabi Movements: The Counterattack of the New Sufi Movements in the UK', in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 157 note 1.

⁴³² Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 44.

⁴³³ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam'.

⁴³⁴ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 5, 10.

given to administratively irrelevant reflection, skilled in interpersonal relations, “dynamic” and conservative at the same time, and so forth’). In addition to this, religious movements need to take their followers’ needs into account, e.g. by shifting attention from the public to the private sphere, and focusing on values and moral and therapeutic needs rather than supernatural beings and events (as people have been influenced by their secularized environment). Berger further points out that the symbolic universes and plausibility structures of these movements only cover sub-societies, and are therefore more vulnerable and need a stronger legitimation (see paragraph 1.3).⁴³⁵ The analysis of the socialisation process is therefore essential to understand how such groups maintain their ‘reality’ and plausibility structure in this pluralist situation.

Many Sufi movements have rationalised their institutions – an example of which is the Hamidiyya-Shadhiliyya studied by Michael Gilsenan, which formalized its structure and wrote explicit rules for its followers.⁴³⁶ Other Sufi movements went further and transformed themselves into political parties, voluntary associations, or business networks.⁴³⁷ The Iskanderpasha Naqshbandiyya movement in Turkey provides us with an example of both intellectual and institutional rationalization, combined with traditional and charismatic authority. They aim to raise a Muslim *avant-garde* through their educational and business networks (with political ties) and with a strong stress on Sufi ethics. The *Shaykh* and the *silsila* are their centring principle, but due to the circumstances in secularist Turkey have developed a more egalitarian structure, as one of their recent leaders was not an Islamic scholar, depended on senior

⁴³⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 42–44, 112–119, 133.

⁴³⁶ Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*; Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000). Gilsenan explained the *ḥarīqa*’s success by referring to their rationalisation. De Jong argues that their success was rather due to state sponsorship. Frederick de Jong, ‘The “Uniqueness” of Al-Hamidiyya Al-Shadhiliyya, Its Qanun, and Related Matters [Review of M. Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt. An Essay in the Sociology of Religion*]’, in *Sufi orders in Ottoman and post-Ottoman Egypt and the Middle East. Collected Studies* (Istanbul: the Isis Press, 2000) 256–263. The two explanations, of course, do not necessarily exclude each other.

⁴³⁷ Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 10–11.

members, and encouraged critical thinking.⁴³⁸ Catharina Raudvere and Ašk Gaši show that Bosnian *shaykhs* in the Swedish Bosniak diaspora communities have moved from being local community leaders to facilitators of *dhikr* as informal groups take over their community functions.⁴³⁹ Geaves suggests that the activities of Sufi ‘online *shaykhs*’ (mainly in the Shadhili-Alawi tradition) and Muslim intellectuals who are not affiliated to Sufi groups might lead to ‘the emergence of a transglobal Sufism that (...) will find tariqa and shaikh/murid relations sublimated to serve the cause of ‘traditional Islam.’⁴⁴⁰ Heck argues that increasingly Sufism is being packaged not so much as a ‘network of disciples’ but rather as a set of beliefs and practices that constitute normative Islam.⁴⁴¹

Howell and Van Bruinessen both studied the Indonesian situation, where in the 1930s the Indonesian Muslim Modernist Hamka (1908-1981) disengaged *taṣawwuf* (understood as ethical cultivation and philosophical reflection), from the *ṭuruq* and redefined Sufism as ‘a body of Muslim knowledge’ with a deeper emotional richness and ethical subtlety that can be reached through personal study and introspection, without the necessity of a guide and a long spiritual path.⁴⁴² A later generation – which Howell classifies as ‘Neo-Modernism’ or ‘Neo-Traditionalism’, but which can also be called ‘Traditional Islam’ – stressed this approach to Sufism even more, valuing autonomy, eclecticism and experience. This led to the rise of Sufi leaders, teachers and institutions ‘designed to engage cosmopolitan Muslims’, which interacted as nodes within a ‘new urban Sufi network’ in which people move around with more autonomy: commercial Islamic study institutions where Islamic devotional and mystical practices are taught in

⁴³⁸ Brian Silverstein, ‘Sufism and Modernity in Turkey: From the Authenticity of Experience to the Practice of Discipline’, in *Sufism and the ‘Modern’ in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 39–60; Heiko Henkel, ‘One Foot Rooted in Islam, the Other Foot Circling the World. Tradition and Engagement in a Turkish Sufi Cemaat’, in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 103–16.

⁴³⁹ Catharina Raudvere and Ašk Gaši, ‘Home, Nation and Global Islam. Sufi Oriented Activities and Community Building among Bosnian Muslims in Southern Sweden’, in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 162–79.

⁴⁴⁰ Ron Geaves, ‘A Case of Cultural Binary Fission or Transglobal Sufism? The Transmigration of Sufism to Britain’, in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 110.

⁴⁴¹ Heck, ‘The Politics of Sufism’, 15.

⁴⁴² Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 11; Julia Day Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks’, in *Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 218–219; Julia Day Howell, ‘Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 710–711.

addition to other Islamic sciences, ‘traditional’ *ṭuruq* where students are guided by their spiritual masters (often reorganised along more formal lines⁴⁴³), and ‘personal growth’ and New Age movements, reworked as ‘spirituality’ and via Sufism incorporated into Islam.⁴⁴⁴

Geaves discussed similar trends regarding the development of Sufism in Britain, tracing this development to the arrival of *ṭuruq* from immigrants’ home countries that continue to be organised on ethnic lines and often maintain strong ties to the place of origin and its shrine. A good example is that of the Chishtis who continue to focus on their shrine in Ajmer through remittances and visits.⁴⁴⁵ In the face of challenges by the better organised Deobandis in Britain, by the 1970s and 80s some Sufi leaders tried to unite under the umbrella of the South Asian Barelvi movement, referring to themselves as Ahl as-Sunnat wa-Jama’at, claiming to be the true orthodox Islam and focusing on their veneration of the Prophet. These endeavours often failed to transcend the ethnic basis of affiliation and the strong loyalty to the *shaykhs*, and were hardly successful in defending traditional Islam as a whole,⁴⁴⁶ but more recently Traditional Islam seems to be ‘transforming into a coherent movement able to bring together various strands of Sufi allegiance.’ Scholars – often converts – challenge criticism of Sufism head-on by referring to the same primary textual sources as their opponents and

⁴⁴³ Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks’; Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Saints, Politicians and Sufi Bureaucrats: Mysticism and Politics in Indonesia’s New Order’, in *Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 92–112. The Sufis also were an essential part of the traditionalist political parties established by the ‘*ulamā* of the *pesantren* (religious schools): Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in East Java (1926) and Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Perti) in West Sumatra (1930). Especially the Perti was dominated by the Naqshbandi *shaykhs* of West Sumatra. After independence in 1945 their role became stronger, as they managed to gain more political power due to their ability to mobilize voters. Some Traditionalist leaders supported Suharto and argued that the material development of the New Order should go together with spiritual development provided by the Sufi leaders. *Ibid.*, 99–102.

⁴⁴⁴ Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks.’

⁴⁴⁵ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 87–90; Geaves, ‘Learning the Lessons’, 143–144; Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 26, 48, 55–57; Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 8; Geaves, “‘That Which We Have Forgotten’”.

⁴⁴⁶ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 26, 48, 55–57; Geaves, ‘Learning the Lessons’; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 8; Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten.’ Geaves distinguishes between those who actively follow a Sufi *ṭarīqa* and those who are not practising Sufis but believe in the tenets of the Ahl al-Sunnat wa Jamaat movement: the omnipresence of God, the superior knowledge, continued spiritual presence and intercession of the Prophet and saints, and the practice of saying prayers for the dead and of celebrating of the *mawlid al-nabī*. Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 76.

spread their work through new networks including educational centres, publishing houses, websites, etc. The role of traditional *ṭuruq* in this movement is subject of discussion, as some think allegiance to a *ṭarīqa* is necessary, while others think it is a personal choice, and yet others oppose it altogether.⁴⁴⁷

Geaves sought for similar developments in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's old city, occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967,⁴⁴⁸ and found two trends that operated independently but both re-defined Sufism as *'ilm al-tawḥīd*:

1. Traditional Sufism re-branded as street ethics (*adab*) with an emphasis on shaykh/*murid* instruction, *dhikr* attendance and other traditional practices
2. Traditional Islam with an implicit Sufi allegiance (*tassawuf*) (*sic*) embedded into the al-Aqsa mosque complex but with little or no explicit reference to Sufism⁴⁴⁹

Howell notes that 'spiritual seekers' who are more focussed on spiritual experiences of the holistic person are challenging rationalist approaches to religion all over the world, in all religious traditions.⁴⁵⁰ Voll sees this renewed interest in Sufism as 'part of a postmaterialist reaction to modernity' that prefers 'spirituality' and experience over organised religion and its monopoly over revelation.⁴⁵¹ The incorporation of Sufism as the Islamic manifestation of a universal Mysticism in 'new spirituality' movements is an extreme example of this

⁴⁴⁷ Geaves, 'Transformation and Trends among British Sufis', 51–53; Sadek Hamid, 'The Rise of the "Traditional Islam" Network(s): Neo-Sufism and British Muslim Youth', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 183-204.

⁴⁴⁸ While an extremely interesting and valuable preliminary study of Sufism in Jerusalem, the idea that it can serve as 'an extreme case study' to test the rise of Sufism in a global Traditional Islam 'without cross-fertilisation of ideas caused by physical contact' because it is 'relatively isolated (...) and therefore less able to draw upon transglobal or Levantine-led revivals of Sufism', overstates the degree of isolation experienced by the general Palestinian population of East Jerusalem. While acknowledging that their situation is extremely difficult, communications with people outside Jerusalem are hardly inhibited as most are able to travel (if with restrictions), in addition to the possibilities offered by modern communication tools. To name just one example, also mentioned by Geaves himself, Sidi *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Jamal leads a strongly internationally oriented *ṭarīqa* on the Mount of Olives and travels abroad several months every year. Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 42. In addition to this, the *awqāf* in Jerusalem are administered by the Jordanian government, and their explicit support of Traditional Islam should therefore be taken into account when analysing Sufism in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁵⁰ Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks', 240.

⁴⁵¹ John O. Voll, 'Contemporary Sufism and Current Social Theory', in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 296–298.

trend. This is not the whole story, however, as traditional Sufi *ṭuruq* and Sufi leaders stress the intricate link between Islam and Sufism, and present Sufism as part of Traditional Islam. This speaks to the search for a more unified, universalized Islam which originated in the anti-imperialist struggle and is still relevant in the face of the ongoing marginalization of Muslims in the global sphere and in national contexts, and is either seen as the ethical aspect of activist movements, and/or as an alternative to the more radical activist radical Islamic movements.⁴⁵² At the same time, it speaks to the search for tradition and authenticity, as they provide ‘an understanding of *ummaḥ* that was more than a collectivity across geographical Muslim space but also back through the generations, linked by *isnad* (chains of transmission) to the Prophet himself.’⁴⁵³

While there are definitely shifts in the orientation of Sufi movements, we should note that these are not radical departures from the Sufi tradition, and should not be seen as mere apologetic defensive measures, but as part of the dynamic Sufi tradition. Such revival movements are characterised by institutional and intellectual rationality, an important aspect of which is the members’ autonomy, expressed through the development of their rational-critical skills and their enactment of personal choice of sources, religious expression, and affiliation. It is important to note, however, that this does not necessarily distract from the emotional and spiritual experiences that might be reached through these affiliations.⁴⁵⁴

Most importantly, alternatives continue to exist as less ‘reformist’ Sufis battle for the stage. Charismatic leaders continue to extend their influence. In the Indonesian context, Van Bruinessen discusses the ‘heterodox living saints’ who persuade the public of their spiritual status through antinomian behaviour. They became popular in the 1990s, at the height of the rise of ‘orthodox Islam’ supported by Suharto’s ‘Islamic turn’. These charismatics did not come from Indonesia’s wide range of ‘syncretist’ religious movements as might be suspected, but rather from ‘the centre of traditionalist orthodoxy’. Van Bruinessen

⁴⁵² Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 46–47.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁵⁴ Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks’, 239–240.

notes that the most successful religious leaders in the Indonesian context were those who had a combination of bureaucratic and charismatic authority – where these roles did not coincide, conflicts often followed.⁴⁵⁵

Similarly, sacred spaces are not abandoned, as can be seen from the example of Pir Wahhab Siddiqi, a Pakistani *shaykh* from a wealthy family in Lahore who migrated to Britain in 1972. He established both a mosque in Coventry and a college in Nuneaton which provides both traditional Islamic and secular education. When he passed away, his sons initially obtained municipal permission to bury him in the mosque, but he was later moved to the grounds of the college in a big procession. Geaves sees this as the shift of the *ṭarīqa*'s centre in Britain from the mosque to the school. While the role of the *shaykh* as educator and moral leader is thus stressed in a reformist fashion, the shrine does still strengthen this role.⁴⁵⁶

This development of the Sufi tradition happens in interaction with the global sphere (in which scripturalist revivalism is predominant with its stress on the unity of the *umma*, but the universalist 'new Sufi spirituality' is also gaining ground), but also with local contexts. In Indonesia, this revival was also stimulated by social changes due to Suharto's New Order that had created a religiously committed new Muslim middle class and generated new demands in Indonesia's religious market.⁴⁵⁷ Geaves seeks an explanation for the revival of Sufism in Jerusalem, presented as *'ilm al-tawḥīd*, in the political context of the Palestinians, who have suffered from the Israeli occupation for decades and are disillusioned with both Fatah's secularism and Hamas's political Islam. In this context, Sufism can be seen as the less political and more traditional 'third option'.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Van Bruinessen, 'Saints, Politicians and Sufi Bureaucrats.'

⁴⁵⁶ Ron Geaves, 'Continuity and Transformation in a Naqshbandi Tariqa in Britain: The Changing Relationship between Mazar (shrine) and Dar-al-Ulum (seminary) Revisited', in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 65–81.

⁴⁵⁷ Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks', 228. Most notably, the rise of secular education, cosmopolitan experiences of those who lived abroad, and social mobility which led to a more heterogeneous society and led to cultural 'deterritorialization'.

⁴⁵⁸ Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 43–44. Hoffman noticed a similar attitude in the Egyptian Sufi revival of the 1980s and 90s. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 14.

Heck points out that Sufi ‘reformism’ means ‘a reorientation to the nation-state’ as ‘[t]raditional patterns continue, only now in a competitive dialogue with both secularists and fundamentalists over the nature of the state and the role of Sufism in it.’⁴⁵⁹ Often the pre-modern advisory model remained in effect; as it did in British India where the colonial rulers recognized the indigenous leaders, among whom were Sufi *shaykhs*, to mediate between themselves and the people.⁴⁶⁰ In many post-colonial states, there are Sufi movements who support the government and bolster the status quo – e.g. Egypt’s Supreme Sufi Council. On the other hand, there are many examples of Sufi movements acting as religions of resistance or rebellion, to use Lincoln’s terms (see paragraph 1.4.2). Some Islamists feel the need for their religious ideology to be rooted in Sufi ethics and organisational forms that are adapted to the times.⁴⁶¹ For example, Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1920s, was initiated in the Shadhiliyya-Husafiyya, and he based the organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood on the model of Sufi *ṭuruq*.⁴⁶²

Because of their perceived ‘mystical’ approach, with its connotations of universality and detachment from the social and political, Sufism is often seen as a counterweight to Islamism and Salafism, on both a national and an international level. Ernst calls this ‘Sufism and the politics of peace’. Hisham Kabbani’s efforts to sponsor ‘Sufi ideology’ through the UK’s Sufi Muslim Council (est.2006) move to the international level.⁴⁶³ The Jordanian King Abdullah uses similar rhetoric both on a national and international level (see chapter 4). While this approach is very popular amongst non-Muslims seeking an ‘alternative Islam’ to deal with, these initiatives are less popular in Islamic societies and among Muslims in the West, which gives weight to the argument that Sufi *ṭuruq*

⁴⁵⁹ Heck, ‘Introduction’, 11–14.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ See Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999).

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 142; De Jong, ‘Periodization, Categorisation, and Simplification’, 254–255.

⁴⁶³ Ernst, ‘Sufism, Islam and Globalization.’ The UK’s Sufi Muslim Council does not seem to include many British Muslims and has been criticized for its close links to the New Labour government, the neo-conservatives in the US and the Uzbek president Islam Karimov. Kabbani’s strong inter-faith approach is not appreciated by all members of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya. Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement’, 87–91.

cooperate with colonial powers or oppressive regimes. The type of universalized 'new spirituality' of the Sufi movements that tend to participate in these initiatives is not very popular among immigrant Muslims, and the notion that this type of Sufism can play a role in redefining immigrant Islam therefore seems misguided.⁴⁶⁴

The distinction between a religion of resistance and a religion of the status quo should be more nuanced, however, and go beyond what normally counts as 'politics'. Heck characterizes the Sufi socio-political position as 'engaged distance' – engaged with society but in principle distant from worldly power, enacted through the Sufis' focus on character formation and providing guidance to both individuals and communities. Heck argues that Sufis consider 'silent opposition' performed in the spiritual realm just as valid and more powerful than opposition in the exterior realm, understanding quietism as a method of protest. Heck gives the example of Emir Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (d.1883) who was exiled to Damascus after fighting the French in Algeria for almost twenty years and spent the rest of his life teaching Ibn Arabi's thought 'as a way to prepare Muslims intellectually to meet the challenges of European civilization.'⁴⁶⁵ A recent example is that of the Moroccan *Shaykh* Abd al-Salam Yasin, who stresses the need for a *shaykh's* guidance to ensure the legitimate use of power and the proper spiritual preparation for jihad, and the need to build an alternative society through reform of the *nafs*. Due to his religious charisma he has the power to challenge the status quo of Moroccan politics and the legitimacy of the monarchy, encouraging 'engaged distance' for the sake of reform of society, dismissing politics but not the community (*umma*).⁴⁶⁶

An interesting and well-documented example of all these attitudes is pre-Revolution Syria.⁴⁶⁷ Since independence the state has exerted influence over the Sufi *ṭuruq* and *zawāya* through their control of the *awqāf*, and under the Ba'th

⁴⁶⁴ Klinkhammer, 'Sufism Contextualised', 209–210.

⁴⁶⁵ Heck, 'Introduction', 3–4.

⁴⁶⁶ Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism', 25–28.

⁴⁶⁷ Annabelle Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria* (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2002), 14; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism', 15; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 114.

party this evolved to control over the public religious debate on 'official Islam' – a debate that happened within the parameters set by the Ba'th regime and was meant to provide the regime with legitimacy. This debate aims to define which traditions 'will constitute the normative framework of society', and who will interpret and implement them. The limits of the debate are controlled by setting the terms of the debate, establishing the issues under discussion, and supporting those involved in the debate by tolerating their activities and giving them access to the media.⁴⁶⁸ Participants in this debate were most notably *Shaykh* Ahmad Kuftaru (1912-2004), a Naqshbandi *shaykh* and the Grand Mufti of Syria from 1964-2004,⁴⁶⁹ his disciple and son-in-law and member of parliament Muhammad al-Habash (1962),⁴⁷⁰ and Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti (1929-2013).⁴⁷¹ Many of these '*ulamā*' were from a Kurdish Sufi background and had moved to the Syrian cities from Turkey in the 1920s and 30s.⁴⁷² When the Ba'th regime came to power, it was eager to replace the old Sunni religious establishment from the notable families with the Arabized Kurdish '*ulamā*'. This gave them an

⁴⁶⁸ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 113; Paulo Pinto, 'The Limits of the Public: Sufism and the Religious Debate in Syria', in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. A. Salvatore and D. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 191.

⁴⁶⁹ Frederick de Jong, 'The Naqshbandiyya in Egypt and Syria: Aspects of Its History, and Observations Concerning its Present-Day Condition', in *Naqshbandis: Cheminements et Situation Actuelle d'un Ordre Mystique Musulman*, ed. Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic, and Thierry Zarcone (Istanbul: Les Éditions Isis, 1990), 583–96; Éric Geoffroy, 'Soufisme, Réformisme et Pouvoir en Syrie Contemporaine', *Égypte/Monde Arabe* 29 (1997): 11–22; Annabelle Böttcher, *Syrische Religionspolitik unter Asad* (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut, 1998); Leif Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus: Strategies to Establish and Strengthen the Order in a Changing Society', in *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1999), 101–16; Itzhak Weismann, 'Sufi Fundamentalism between India and the Middle East', in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 115–307; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 311–314.

⁴⁷⁰ Paul L. Heck, 'Religious Renewal in Syria: The Case of Muhammad al-Habash', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 15 (2004): 185–207; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism.'

⁴⁷¹ A. Christmann, 'Transnationalizing Personal and Religious Identities: Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti's Adaptation of E. Xanī's "Mem ū Zīn"', in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg.

⁴⁷² al-Buti came to Damascus in 1934. Ahmad Kuftaru's father Muhammad Amin Kuftaru (1877-1938) was a Kurd from the area of Mardin who had moved to the Rukn al-Din neighbourhood (a Kurdish neighbourhood) in Damascus, but it is unclear when exactly. Ibid.; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 133 note 32; Pinto, 'The Limits of the Public', 191; Leif Stenberg, 'Young, Male and Sufi Muslims in the City of Damascus', in *Youth and Youth Culture in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Jørgen Bæk Simonsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 70; Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*, 7; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 311; De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques', 214.

opportunity to participate in society in a way that would have been difficult due to their Kurdish background and regime repression.⁴⁷³ This official Islam has therefore been described as a reformed, spiritualized and rationalized Kurdish Sunni Sufi Islam that is not associated with *ṭuruq* but is a set of ideas and practices enshrined in the holy scriptures.⁴⁷⁴

Even though this 'official Islam' is negative towards the *ṭuruq* (al-Buti for example strongly opposes them⁴⁷⁵), some of these participants in the debate created extensive networks of disciples and Sufi groups. The most famous is the Kuftariyya in Damascus, a branch of the Khalidiyya-Naqshbandiyya, founded by Muhammad Amin Kuftaru (1877-1938) who traced his lineage through Isa al-Kurdi (1831-1912). Upon his death in 1938 the *ṭarīqa* was taken over by his son Ahmad Kuftaru, who turned the small mosque into a large complex with offices, class rooms, a library, etc., from which he engaged in education and *da'wa*.⁴⁷⁶ The mosque also housed the tomb of his father, and he cultivated his memory in order to stress that he was from a well-established family.⁴⁷⁷ Kuftaru was a founding member of the League of Muslim Scholars, a member of the *majlis al-iftā'*, and since 1964 Grand Mufti of Syria. His Kurdish background and his 'newcomer' status however initially made the Sunni establishment hesitant to accept him, and his ties to the Ba'th regime did not help.⁴⁷⁸

Weismann stresses that Kuftaru re-interpreted the Sufi tradition in line with Traditional Islam, focusing on Qur'an and sharia and the primacy of reason in

⁴⁷³ The Kurds in Syria had experienced ethno-nationalist repression since Syria was proclaimed the Syrian Arab Republic in 1961 and all non-Arab Syrians were forced to become Syrian Arabs or denied full citizenship, leading to the Arabicisation of Kurdish cultural and religious heritage. This pressure was especially strong on those Kurds who had moved from the Kurdish areas to the urban centres of Aleppo, Damascus and Hama. Christmann, 'al-Buti's Adaptation of "Mem û Zîn"'; Stenberg, 'Young, Male and Sufi Muslims in the City of Damascus', 70; Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*, 15.

⁴⁷⁴ Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*, 14; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism', 15; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 114.

⁴⁷⁵ Christmann, 'al-Buti's Adaptation of "Mem û Zîn"', 39.

⁴⁷⁶ *Da'wa* means 'call, invitation', used by all Muslims to refer to the 'invitation to Islam', education and proselytizing.

⁴⁷⁷ Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus', 102–106; Stenberg, 'Young, Male and Sufi Muslims in the City of Damascus', 85.

⁴⁷⁸ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 311; Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus', 106; Stenberg, 'Young, Male and Sufi Muslims in the City of Damascus', 71; Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*, 9.

interpreting them, opposing the *madhāhib*, together with an emphasis on ethics and morality. Kuftaru's understanding of the brotherhood was inspired by the Indian Naqshbandi Hasan al-Nadwi (1914-1999), who called for the replacement of traditional Sufi terminology with Qur'anic terminology: he talks about *tarbiya rūḥiyya* (spiritual education), *iḥsān* (spiritual excellence, being constantly aware of God's presence) and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) rather than of *taṣawwuf* and *ṭarīqa*. This was to be done through *dhikr* (recollection of God's name), moral ascetism and *rābiṭa* (tying your heart to the *shaykh*). He also opposed Sufis who followed Ibn Arabi. Weismann says Kuftaru downplayed the tradition of the Naqshbandiyya to stress his relations with the moderate Islamists.⁴⁷⁹ The break with tradition might not have been as stark as Weismann suggests, however, as the Kuftariyya's organisation can still be considered a traditional *ṭarīqa*, and as he does not break with the *silsila* (as can be seen from the cultivation of his father's memory).⁴⁸⁰

Kuftaru's focus on *da'wa* leads to an interesting doctrinal contradiction. On the one hand Kuftaru sees Islam as 'the most final and perfect religion', while he also participates in interreligious dialogue with the argument that all three monotheistic faiths are Abrahamic religions and that they are all 'different traditions of the one universal religion'.⁴⁸¹ This approach made the Kuftariyya very attractive for the regime, as his universalist interpretation included the controversial Alawi sect and therefore legitimized Alawite leadership over Syria.⁴⁸² The political stance of the brotherhood is subject of debate. Annabelle Böttcher and De Jong see Kuftaru as a tool of the regime, which used it as a counterweight to the Naqshbandi *shaykhs* in Northern Syria and the Kurdish areas who had joined the Islamist opposition to the regime,⁴⁸³ specifically Sa'id Hawwa, the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue from Hama.⁴⁸⁴ Leif Stenberg on the

⁴⁷⁹ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 312–313; Weismann, 'Sufi Fundamentalism between India and the Middle East', 117–119.

⁴⁸⁰ Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus', 106–114.

⁴⁸¹ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 314.

⁴⁸² Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus', 108.

⁴⁸³ De Jong, 'The Naqshbandiyya in Egypt and Syria', 594–595; Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*.

⁴⁸⁴ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 311.

other hand sees the relation as a mutual one, from which the regime gained Islamic legitimacy and Kuftaru gained the power to influence the political leadership (a perfect example of Heck's advisory model).⁴⁸⁵

While some Syrian Sufi *shaykhs* thus supported the status quo, many Arab and Kurdish Sufi *shaykhs* and their followers had been active in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood since its beginning in the 1940s and opposed to the Ba'th regime and the religious elite associated with them, and participated in the 1982 Islamist uprising.⁴⁸⁶ As recently as 2005, the Kurdish *Shaykh* Ma'shuq al-Khaznawi was assassinated by the secret service for his anti-regime statements and his meetings with the Syrian opposition in exile.⁴⁸⁷

Pinto points to the less explicitly political ways of limiting the government's absolute power:

The personally embodied forms of power, justice, and moral authority as expressed in the cult of saints and the public activities of the Sufi shaykhs challenge the disembodied constructions of power consecrated by the "official" religious debate. These foci of embodied power can create alternative arenas for the expression of public dissent beyond state control, negotiate the boundaries of independence from and compliance with the regime, and enhance the capacity of social control through Sufi participation in official networks of clientship.⁴⁸⁸

In their writings, Sufi leaders such as Abd al-Qadir Isa and Sa'id Hawwa supported a more socially engaged Sufism that has a space for the guidance of Sufi *shaykhs*, whose authority derives from and is exercised through their knowledge, *karāmāt* and *baraka*, an embodied power challenging the "official" consensus of power enshrined in the sacred texts'.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ Stenberg, 'Naqshbandiyya in Damascus', 107; Stenberg, 'Young, Male and Sufi Muslims in the City of Damascus', 70; Böttcher, *Official Sunni and Shi'i Islam in Syria*, 15.

⁴⁸⁶ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 122; Christmann, 'al-Buti's Adaptation of "Mem û Zîn"', 31.

⁴⁸⁷ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 111 and 133 notes 36 and 37; Paulo Pinto, 'Kurdish Sufi Spaces of Rural-Urban Connection in Northern Syria', *Études Rurales* 186, no. 2 (2010): 153.

⁴⁸⁸ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 124.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 114–116.

By challenging the ways of attributing authority, this is part of the competition for the right to define and speak for Islam described as 'Muslim Politics'. Asad argues that those who are most powerful in defining the tradition and enforcing behaviour are considered to be the 'orthodox', which is 'a normative framework that links conceptually the past and present of religious practices through the establishment of power relations with exemplary, pedagogical or corrective qualities.'⁴⁹⁰ Sufi *shaykhs* and communities can be affiliated with this hegemonic interpretation. These hegemonic transmissions are hardly ever completely hegemonic, however, as there always tend to be rival lines of transmission that define the tradition differently and instil different modes of behaviour, leading to 'various normative codifications of the mystical path', and sometimes shift to outright opposition centred around the *shaykh* as an alternative focus of power with great mobilizing possibilities. The Syrian Sufi *shaykhs* hardly ever use their social and political power to explicitly confront the state, but they use it 'to negotiate the limits of their religious and social autonomy in relation to the state', or to 'obtain a privileged place in the networks of clientship that connect the state to local social groups in Syria.' Pinto points out that they 'have to manage a delicate balance (...) between worldly subordination to the Ba'thist political rule and the absolute mystical power that constitutes their religious persona.'⁴⁹¹

Despite these examples, Sufism is commonly seen as apolitical and quietist, solely concerned with the spiritual realm (for which it is both praised and criticized). Even when a Sufi movement is not participating in the affairs of the state at all, we should still consider its political role from the viewpoint of Eickelman and Piscatori's 'Muslim Politics'. A group that is characterized as 'quietist' – either in the general sense of the word or in the sense of Heck's understanding of spiritual protest – is implicitly participating in politics by not challenging the status quo. The understanding that Sufis are 'quietist' and 'apolitical' stems from a narrow understanding of the 'political', as limited to

⁴⁹⁰ Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 118.

⁴⁹¹ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 120.

'actions within a set structure of politics concerned with states, nations or institutions' and performed by politicians and political parties. As Stjernholm points out, following Saba Mahmood and Peter Mandaville:

Social activity, because of its relational qualities, is also political, in that it is an ongoing negotiation concerning how, why and where one should act in a certain way. This negotiation is not confined to concrete attempts of persuasion (e.g. political debates or public demonstrations), but also includes social activities involving ethics and attempts to reform the self, engaged as it is in a negotiation regarding what 'the good' is, and why.⁴⁹²

Especially in the case of Sufi movements centred around the relationship between *shaykh* and disciple, the transmission of Sufi thought and the cultivation of mystical experience affects the social sphere through the cultivation of Sufi ethics. The analysis of Sufism as a discursive tradition in which knowledge is transmitted and values are embodied through disciplinary practices (see paragraph 1.2) proves to be especially useful when looking at the socio-political role of a Sufi movement that does not engage in politics directly, but does influence the socio-political sphere on the level of moral performances and in the field of 'Muslim politics'. As Pinto points out in the Syrian context:

the ongoing production and affirmation of competing models of social morality and self-correctness framed by Islamic values (...) shape the interface between Islam and the political processes in Syrian society. The social mobilization of both embodied and discursive principles of Sufism, which instruct and guide the social actors in correct or appropriate performance in the public sphere, has led to their affirmation as a normative framework that competes to define the moral order of Syrian society.⁴⁹³

The discursive transmission of knowledge and the embodiment of morals is a social act which happens in the social sphere and should be seen in the

⁴⁹² Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 84.

⁴⁹³ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 106.

context of the struggle for the right to speak for Islam and interpret the sacred texts in terms of doctrine and practice which Eickelman and Piscatori call 'Muslim politics', both within the movement and on the national and global levels.⁴⁹⁴ No religious group that is concerned with the production and transmission of knowledge and values, organizes its members and occupies space can be termed 'apolitical' (see paragraph 1.4.2). Therefore, in order to understand the place of Sufi movements in society and in national and global politics, we need to look beyond the labels 'quietist' and 'apolitical' and examine the power structure that is at work in a society, and how religious leaders and movements relate to this – in Eickelman and Piscatori's words, we need to examine the locational aspect of authority.

We have discussed in paragraph 1.2 that the transmission of knowledge in the Sufi discursive tradition that happens between *shaykh* and follower not only leads to the transfer of knowledge and the experience of mystical states, but also to the embodiment of the *ḥarīqa*'s norms, and the creation of communities based on them. This 'creates dispositions which produce cumulative social effects through their enactment as moral performances.'⁴⁹⁵ When seeking to understand how Sufi movements participate in their societies therefore, one must not only look at the religious, social and political leaders and their actions in the socio-political field, but also at their relationships with their followers and how the tradition is transmitted through teaching, devotional practices and the instilment of *ādāb*. The contemporary focus on moral reform found in many Sufi movements enhances this aspect of Sufism and its socio-political role.

1.5.3 Translocality

Religious movements have always operated on several levels, from the local to the translocal and global. With the expansion and strengthening of global

⁴⁹⁴ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 72.

⁴⁹⁵ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 127.

political, economic, and communication networks and the increased population movement, people and ideas are connected like never before, trying to find ways to meaningfully connect the local and the global. Frishkopf sees globalisation as 'a global network of political, economic and communication links', the centres of which are situated in the West, 'the primary beneficiary (in terms of wealth, power, or information) of its operations. Outside the West, benefits are skewed towards a narrow elite, links are less plentiful, and flows are impeded by state control.'⁴⁹⁶

Globalisation is the interaction of the global process with local contexts, such as the state or the larger diasporic community. In the words of Beyer:

Global religion (...) is globalized only in and as particular variations. It is both global and local at the same time; any variation can be global only as a series of localized forms. Hence the globalization of religion has taken the form of the glocalization of religions; the authentic variations are not only plural, they are located both at the centres and at the margins or at neither, irrespective of how one conceives these.⁴⁹⁷

In today's globalized world the struggle over the interpretation of Islamic symbols happens on an ever larger scale. Salafis are often seen as part of a globalized, delocalized, deterritorialized and universal vision of Islam, calling for the abandonment of local elements – but it should be stressed that their 'universal' views originate and operate in concrete contexts just as other religious movements do.⁴⁹⁸ Salafis see Sufism as a localized version of Islam which incorporated local non-Islamic elements Sufism, such as saint veneration and shrine cults – even though Sufism has always had a strong global character as it spread along routes of trade and conquest and as Sufi warriors, ascetics, scholars and pilgrims have travelled in search of spiritual masters and knowledge

⁴⁹⁶ Frishkopf, 'Changing Modalities', 34.

⁴⁹⁷ Peter Beyer, 'Glocalization of Religions. Plural Authenticities at the Centres and at the Margins', in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 14.

⁴⁹⁸ Voll, 'Contemporary Sufism and Current Social Theory', 291–292.

and *ṭuruq* have spread all over the world.⁴⁹⁹ Nowadays, these traditional translocal Sufi networks have been transformed by modern communications and global flows of ideas, goods and people, into new modalities of global Sufi networking.⁵⁰⁰

Several writers on Islam and Sufism use the concept of ‘transnationalism’⁵⁰¹ to understand contemporary Islamic trends and movements. In this study I prefer the term ‘translocal’ as this circumvents the problematic terminology surrounding the concepts ‘nation’ and ‘nation-state’ and allows for the discussion of different communities both within the same state and outside it.⁵⁰² Mandaville understands the translocal as

an abstract category denoting socio-political interaction which falls between bounded communities; that is, translocality is primarily about the ways in which people flow *through* space rather than about how they exist *in* space. It is therefore a quality characterised in terms of *movement*.⁵⁰³

It is ‘the sum of linkage and connections *between* places’⁵⁰⁴ and deals with the flows of information, ideas, practices and meanings that makes specific localities interdependent and shows us the interconnectedness of what was previously

⁴⁹⁹ Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 3–4; Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 11; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 142; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 4–5.

⁵⁰⁰ Hermansen, ‘Global Sufism’, 26–29; Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 11.

⁵⁰¹ In his introduction to the Routledge Transnationalism Series, Steven Vertovec defines the concept as ‘multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states’. Research on transnational movements focusses mainly on migrants, diasporas, kinship and family networks, and transnational nation-state building. Activist movements are also subject of analysis if they appeal to global forums to strengthen national or local demands. Paul Kennedy and Victor Roudemetof, ‘Transnationalism in a Global Age’, in *Communities across Borders. New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures*, ed. Paul Kennedy and Victor Roudemetof (London: Routledge, 2002), 1–4.

⁵⁰² Roman Loimeier, ‘Translocal Networks of Saints and the Negotiation of Religious Disputes in Local Contexts’, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 135 - Reveils du Soufisme en Afrique et en Asie (2006): note 1.

⁵⁰³ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 6. Quoted in Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 7.

⁵⁰⁴ Mandaville, *Transnational Politics*, 50. Quoted in Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement’, 84.

analysed as bounded communities.⁵⁰⁵ At the same time, we should keep in mind that translocality is not necessarily the same as deterritorialisation. We cannot lose sight of the specific localities in which these communities are embedded. As Raudvere points out, while translocality connects localities physically and emotionally, 'in their memories of the past and their dreams of the future', it also draws attention to the different realities in which they are located, e.g. in terms of living conditions and the religious milieu.⁵⁰⁶

As Sufi movements reorganize themselves in the modern pluralist context (see paragraph 1.5.2), as migrants and refugees encounter new environments, and as modern means of organisation and communication tie previously loose networks closer together, new forms of Sufi organisation with an even stronger translocal character are evolving.⁵⁰⁷ Pilgrims, migrants and converts connect the geographical sacred centre with its periphery and/or establish new sacred centres through their travels, communications and relationships, and the flow of sacralised objects,⁵⁰⁸ leading to new modalities of saint veneration.⁵⁰⁹ The construction and communication of narratives shows a similar flow and adherence to both local and translocal levels as narratives explicitly discuss these spatial connections and relate to themes that are shared by all adherents but articulated in a local vocabulary.⁵¹⁰ As we have seen in paragraph 1.5.2, some of these movements range 'across transcultural "world-systems" from the

⁵⁰⁵ Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 84; Dan Rabinowitz, 'The Palestinian Citizens of Israel, the Concept of Trapped Minority and the Discourse of Transnationalism in Anthropology', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 1 (2001): 64–85.

⁵⁰⁶ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 52.

⁵⁰⁷ Hermansen, 'Global Sufism.', 26–28.

⁵⁰⁸ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 11; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 27.

⁵⁰⁹ Frishkopf, 'Changing Modalities.'

⁵¹⁰ Werbner argues against the idea of the plurality of Islam (supported by Clifford Geertz) as she argues that 'Sufism everywhere shares the same deep structural logic of ideas' which she summarizes as follows: 'World renunciation (asceticism) = divine love and intimacy with God = divine 'hidden' knowledge = the ability to transform the world = the hegemony of spiritual authority over temporal power and authority.' She argues that this global plot 'is valorised through its concrete localisation and embodiment in myths and effective demonstrations of power, morality, and social-cum-material investments.' Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 25, 81–83, 286–290. While the question whether this broad generalisation holds true falls beyond the scope of our discussion, it is a useful approach when discussing the underlying paradigm that ties a particular *ṭarīqa* together in different localities and levels of commitment.

West to Asia and Africa and even beyond the bonds of Muslim communities of discourse'.⁵¹¹ This fluidity of people and sacred centres leads to the diminishing of the usefulness of traditional centre-periphery models, to the point that 'the meaning of East and West starts to lose its geographical significance'.⁵¹²

'Classical Sufi networking' overlapped with other webs of relationships, such as family and trade, and nowadays we see similar overlapping.⁵¹³ Sufi movements often exist within ethnic and/or religious diasporas.⁵¹⁴ Gabriel Scheffer defines 'diaspora' as

a socio-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands.⁵¹⁵

Roger Bubaker identifies three elements that characterize a diaspora: a concrete dispersion in space, the prevalence of an orientation towards a real or imagined homeland and the maintenance of boundaries versus the host society.⁵¹⁶ To this Werbner adds that diasporas can be understood as 'aesthetic and/or moral communities of co-responsibility' as many engage in cultural and/or in political activism on behalf of co-diasporans within their host societies in order to maintain their identification with the diaspora. Through these activities alternative centres of diaspora are created in addition to the 'homeland'. As such 'global diasporas exist through the prism of the local.'⁵¹⁷

Werbner also notes that people can participate in several diasporas at once, and shift between them when this suits them. Regarding Pakistani immigrants in Britain, Werbner notes that they are part of both the Pakistani

⁵¹¹ Hermansen, 'Global Sufism', 28–29.

⁵¹² Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 'Introduction', 4.

⁵¹³ Hermansen, 'Global Sufism.'

⁵¹⁴ Werbner, 'Seekers on the Path.'

⁵¹⁵ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 3.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ Werbner, 'The Place Which Is Diaspora', 129.

diaspora which focuses on the Pakistani homeland, and at the same time of the cultural South Asian diaspora and the abstract Islamic diaspora. The latter focuses on the deterritorialized *umma* and therefore does not imply the wish to return to a lost homeland. The extent to which a Pakistani British Muslim focuses on one or the other depends on many factors and might shift over time as British-born Pakistani Muslims shift their attention to a less localized, Pakistan and shrine-focused Islam and more universal deterritorialized approach to Islam (either of a Salafi or a Traditional Islamic variant) that enables them to be British Muslims.⁵¹⁸

In addition to this, Sufi movements themselves spread in ways that are similar to diasporas. As we have seen in paragraph 1.3, Werbner analyses the spread of Sufi movements through the concept of the 'regional cult', introduced by R. Werbner,⁵¹⁹ which spreads in a 'chaordic way' similar to diasporas, i.e. replicating itself transnationally without a centralising force yet in a predictable process, giving the diaspora a feeling of connectedness yet with strong autonomy. Sufi movements are thus able to expand across borders, recognizing 'regional, national and international extensions while practising locally.'⁵²⁰ Werbner sees them as sacred networks that focus on a sacred centre from which people branch out and either return to the centre regularly, or develop new sacred centres. As we have already discussed in paragraph 1.3, in her analysis, these movements 'wax and wane' as the sacred centre increases or decreases in importance, depending on the charisma of the leader associated with it. She suggests that *ṭuruq* are revitalised and new branches appear around old or new sacred centres, 'energized through the emergence of a charismatic saint', and argues that shrines of saints who passed away may 'remain points of personal pilgrimage and seasonal ritual celebrations', but cannot sustain a large regional cult or transnational network.⁵²¹ According to this model, a truly translocal Sufi movement can only be created by a charismatic leader who engages in

⁵¹⁸ Werbner, 'Seekers on the Path', 129.

⁵¹⁹ Werbner, 'Introduction.'

⁵²⁰ Werbner, 'The Place Which Is Diaspora'; Werbner, 'Seekers on the Path.'

⁵²¹ Geaves, 'Learning the Lessons', 152, 159 note 30.

proselytizing and who maintains control of the centre and sub-centres – but this will decline with the death of the founder ‘into a series of localised traditions orbiting around the location of the shrine of the founder after his death.’⁵²²

Geaves challenges Werbner’s model of ‘waxing and waning’ as he notes the development of a different pattern in modern Britain as leaders from South Asian shrine cults in Britain shift attention away from the shrine in order to promote their version of Islam in the British context, encouraging a revival without the presence of a charismatic *shaykh*. This challenges Werbner’s Weberian theory of ‘waxing and waning’ in terms of charisma and institutionalisation. These revivals should rather be seen as ‘an integral part of Islamicisation processes across the Muslim world’, and Geaves suggests approaching them using Asad’s model of contestation.⁵²³

Werbner also discusses the issue of shifting centres and multiple-centredness in diasporas.⁵²⁴ An interesting case of shifting centres is that of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in East Africa, also discussed in paragraph 1.3. These Saba Ishrin ceremonies studied by Ahmed and Von Oppen are rooted in the *ṭarīqa*’s history in East Africa and have no counterpart among the followers in the Levant, and thus in themselves are an interesting example of the local aspect of a translocal *ṭarīqa* that begs further research into the exact relations between these different centres of the *ṭarīqa*. For the purpose of our argument here, we limit ourselves to drawing attention to the comparison of several centres in East Africa. In addition to the innovation of the Saba Ishrin Caravan in Tanzania, differences between the ceremony in Moroni and Kilwa-Pande include the sequential arrangement of the elements, the spatial arrangements, the range of social participation (including the role of women), and the degree of emotionality – which they see as adaptations of the same ceremony to local contexts that do not challenge the translocal connections. Through their adaptation to the different cultural contexts and the different socio-economic situations of the followers over time, physically manifested in their migration movements and shifting centres, the

⁵²² Geaves, ‘Cultural Binary Fission’, 98.

⁵²³ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 46–47; Geaves, ‘Cultural Binary Fission’, 99–100.

⁵²⁴ Werbner, ‘The Place Which Is Diaspora’, 129.

ṭarīqa's local leaders manage to maintain the original charisma in spite of the *ṭarīqa*'s routinization and the hereditary (hence traditional) nature of their succession.⁵²⁵ This thus further challenges Werbner's model as both the *ṭarīqa*'s vitality and the leader's charisma remain constant.

The research into contemporary transnational Sufi *ṭuruq* has mainly focused on research of transnational movements that have their centre in the Muslim World and that have branched out to the West through missionary movements or migration, or on movements that operate entirely in the West. Several typologies of modern Sufi movements in the West have been suggested, the most influential being that of Marcia Hermansen. Hermansen's first category consists of 'transplants', *ṭuruq* which maintain their original organisation and ethnic make-up in the new environment (referred to by Geaves as 'cultural binary fission'⁵²⁶). Her second category consists of 'hybrids'. Raudvere sees this hybridity happening in 'innovative border zones (...) where received and transmitted ideas merge into ritual practices.'⁵²⁷ Finally Hermansen mentions 'perennials', Sufi *ṭuruq* that are based on the idea that Sufism is a manifestation of perennial philosophy or universal truth, and is therefore not intrinsically connected to Islam.⁵²⁸ In a later article she distinguishes between 'theirs' and 'ours', which uses an even starker West/non-West dichotomy.⁵²⁹

The problem with this classification is first of all that it treats a *ṭarīqa* as a single unit without taking into account local diversity, even though it has been shown that different approaches can co-exist within the same *ṭarīqa*, even within local communities.⁵³⁰ Dominguez Diaz further challenges this approach because it classifies a *ṭarīqa* according to its relation to the West, while 'the processes of

⁵²⁵ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini', 92–93.

⁵²⁶ Geaves, 'Cultural Binary Fission'

⁵²⁷ Catharina Raudvere, 'Between Home and Home. Conceptions of Sufi Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Swedish Bosniak Diaspora', in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 53.

⁵²⁸ Marcia Hermansen, 'In the Garden of American Sufi Movements', in *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam*, ed. Peter B. Clarke (London: Luzac Oriental, 1997), 155–78; Marcia Hermansen, 'Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements', in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 28–48.

⁵²⁹ Hermansen, 'Global Sufism.'

⁵³⁰ See for example Lewisohn, 'Persian Sufism in the Contemporary West'; Webb, 'Third Wave Sufism.'

religious rerooting are diverse and manifold and cannot be reduced to the westernised / unwesternised dyad'.⁵³¹ In addition to this, it is increasingly hard to define what is 'the West' and 'Westernisation', and the classification is not useful in the case of transnational *turuq* that spread throughout the Muslim world.

Stjernholm agrees that an analysis of 'what larger historical narratives the religious agents in a given setting experience and express a degree of resonance with' is a more important factor than geography in classifying a Sufi movement. He proposes an analysis that focuses on the individual's efforts to establish a personal connection with a spiritual teacher – such a relationship is intensely personal and at the same time situated within a local context and a historical tradition. An analysis therefore needs to focus on

activities and narratives of socially situated Sufis, relating these in turn to competing conceptualizations of Islamic tradition, to transnational flows of people and information, and to the politics of belonging and identity on both individual and collective levels.⁵³²

Such an analysis can be applied to Sufi movements in all contexts, and is in line with the focus on the relationship between *shaykh* and disciple that we have advocated in paragraph 1.2.

Stjernholm has researched the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya, which has received a lot of scholarly attention due to the successful and high profile promotion of its message and its social accessibility.⁵³³ The *ṭarīqa* has been classified as 'hybrid', as Tayfun Atay noted significant divisions on ethnic lines between followers.⁵³⁴ Stjernholm, however, argues that the *ṭarīqa* is distinctly Islamic in character and that 'a degree of ethnic division does not exclude ethnic mixing', as he noted both *dhikrs* organised along ethnic lines and a striking multi-

⁵³¹ Marta Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity: Ritual Variations in the British Qadiriyya', *Religion, State and Society* 39, no. 2–3 (2011): 230.

⁵³² Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 205–206.

⁵³⁴ Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 92–93. Reference to Tayfun Atay, 'Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting', unpublished thesis for the degree of PhD, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 1999.

ethnic presence in the London Haqqani Islamic Priory and in *Shaykh* Nazim's home in Cyprus.⁵³⁵ He also discusses the hybrid *dhikr* that has developed recently – while at first they only engaged in the Naqshbandi *khatm al-khwajagan*, they now also practice a North-African-style *ḥaḍra* (a type of communal *dhikr*) and whirling associated with the Mevlevis. Rather than rising from postmodern 'new spiritual' eclecticism, Stjernholm sees it as an adaptation to the diverse cultural milieus of the adherents, and

as resulting from a desire to present a set of ideas and practices as part of a generalized, unified 'Sufism' in order to counter anti-Sufi sentiments that characterize much global Islamic discourse. To the shaykhs, it was apparently more important to present Sufism as inclusive and adaptive than to uphold strict separation between various *turuq* and particular ritual practise as exclusively 'belonging' to different spiritual paths. (...) The significant Muslim Other against whom identity is shaped is currently not primarily other Sufi *turuq*; it is Muslims of anti-Sufi orientation.⁵³⁶

The unifying impact of the *Shaykh's* visits has been commented upon, to the point that Jorgen Nielsen, Michael Draper and Galina Yemelianova conclude that there is no *ṭarīqa* without the *Shaykh*. They argue that the *ṭarīqa* is transnational on the ideal level and local on the social level – according to them, the transnational only becomes 'real' in the *Shaykh*.⁵³⁷ Stjernholm, however, has shown that the local communities continue to be organised around the *Shaykh* even if he is not physically there, as followers visit him and discuss those visits with those who stayed behind, constructing a shared narrative and vocabulary:

The recounting of Shaykh Nazim's sayings is a common practice among the attendees, which means that a shared language of symbols, emotionally charged phrases and frames of reference is produced. Thus, language use becomes a

⁵³⁵ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 210–211.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 211–212.

⁵³⁷ Jorgen S. Nielsen, Mustafa Draper, and Galina Yemelianova, 'Transnational Sufism. The Haqqaniyya', in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 103–14.

shared cognitive definition, to cite Melucci, and one aspect of a person's behaviour from which the attendees are able to recognise fellow brothers.⁵³⁸

This approach shows the role of the flow of information and communication within and between local communities in creating and maintaining belonging to a *ṭarīqa*, focused on love for the shaykh that is enacted both locally and translocally.

Pinto has shown that the analysis of a Sufi group's ritual structure can help explain the authority of a *shaykh* and the social structure of his movement both in the presence and the absence of a *shaykh* (see paragraph 1.3).⁵³⁹ Dominguez Diaz uses a similar approach to analyse the local and translocal aspects of the Budshishiyya in Morocco and in Western Europe (France, Spain, and the UK), arguing that the variations of the performance of the collective *dhikr* illustrate how a translocal *ṭarīqa* operates on different levels.

The Budshishiyya underwent a major transformation in the 1980s as it transformed from a small exclusive group of dedicated disciples in a local *zāwiya* in Madagh, Morocco, to a proselytizing transnational *ṭarīqa*. The *ṭarīqa's* *Shaykh*, Sidi Hamza, continues to live in Madagh, and the *ṭarīqa* in Europe is led by his grandson Sidi Mounir and inspired by Faouzi Skali (anthropologist, director general of Spirit of Fes Foundation and Sacred Music festival), the two of which act as 'cultural brokers' advocating a cosmopolitan form of religious life. Dominguez Diaz sees their new way of conceptualizing authority (combining informal charisma, embodied saintly power and dialectical persuasion) as one of the reasons the *ṭarīqa* has spread through Europe – she conceptualizes it as a shift from *baraka* to *tarbiya*. The *ṭarīqa* in Europe consists of both Moroccan migrants, constituting groups of a 'transplant' character, and non-Moroccan adherents which form the 'hybrid' groups, either converts or reaffiliates. The

⁵³⁸ Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 96.

⁵³⁹ Pinto, 'Performing Baraka', 205–206.

diversity of adherents is seen by themselves as a sign of the *Shaykh*'s saintliness.⁵⁴⁰

When the *ṭarīqa* spread, the ritual collective *dhikr* became more important as it took the place of direct relations with the *Shaykh*:

The personalised method of transmitting knowledge was replaced by a new concept of religious instruction, in which the idea of 'Sidi Hamza's spiritual love' (mahabba) for his disciples was to acquire the status of a 'tool' for knowledge acquisition, thus replacing the personal training once imparted by the master. In order to feel the sheikh's love and improve his/her 'spiritual knowledge', what the devotee had to do was to perform collective wazifat. In this way, religious instruction and knowledge were substituted by religious practice, and ritual adopted an unprecedented relevance in this religiosity.⁵⁴¹

The precise prescription of the formula and its enactment are renewed annually, which Dominguez Diaz interprets as both a way to keep the authority of the *ṭarīqa* centralised and to keep the ritual relevant for the followers who might otherwise move on to a different *ṭarīqa* (not an ungrounded fear as the *ṭarīqa*'s membership is very transient⁵⁴²). The enactment is supervised by a *muqaddim/a* who is appointed by the central *zāwiya*, further centralising authority. On the other hand, the *ṭarīqa*'s leader in Europe has realized that local groups should have space to do things their own way, which is indeed seen in the differences among local groups in Europe (the group in Birmingham for example, one of the largest in Europe, is more ecstatic than the other groups). In this way, the regular ritual fosters solidarity with the local group. The annual international meetings, on the other hand, foster solidarity and cohesion with the larger *ṭarīqa*.⁵⁴³ Dominguez

⁵⁴⁰ In France and Spain, the *ṭarīqa* has both 'transplant' groups (consisting of Moroccan migrants) and 'hybrids'. In 2002, Draper noted that the British groups were connected to British New Age spirituality (what he calls the 'Glastonbury experience'), but Dominguez Diaz argues they have since become more traditional. Most members are of South Asian origin. Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?'

⁵⁴¹ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity', 233.

⁵⁴² Marta Dominguez Diaz, 'Shifting Fieldsites: An Alternative Approach to Fieldwork in Transnational Sufism', *Fieldwork in Religion* 6, no. 1 (2011): 76–77.

⁵⁴³ Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?', 128–129.

Diaz sees this as a successful balance between unity and diversity, the universal and the local – recognising the ultimate truth and the sharedness despite difference in appearance and performance, ‘creating a transnational network of separate small groups in which the sense of solidarity mainly focuses upon devotees of the same enclave’.⁵⁴⁴

Rather than a case of shifting centres, Dominguez Diaz sees the Budshishiyya as multi-centred as ‘all the branches of an Order exercise a certain influence over all the others, so that enclaves become "glocal",’ leading to ‘characteristic eclectic religiosities typical of a glocalized religious hybridity.’⁵⁴⁵

Another interesting example of a multi-centred *ṭarīqa* is the spread of the Burhaniyya, a branch of the Disuqiyya revived by *Shaykh* Muhammad Uthman Abduh al-Burhani (c.1900-1983),⁵⁴⁶ which spread from Sudan to Egypt and to Europe. Frishkopf argues that the Burhaniya appealed to Egyptians because it filled a spiritual vacuum that had existed since the defeat of 1967 and the subsequent falling from grace of Jamal Naser’s socialist and nationalist ideology, the materialism and economic inequality that was the result of Sadat’s policy to open up to Western markets, and was an alternative to the Islamist groups that were suppressed by Anwar Sadat. He attributes the specific appeal of the Burhaniyya to the fact that it combined familiar Egyptian Sufism with exotic Sudanese Sufism (which was considered more mystical and pure), and provided ‘traditional esoteric-ecstatic’ Islam ‘within the legitimizing framework of a modern ‘international’ religious organization with pan-Islamic potential, as a revivalist model for a universal mystical Islam’, stressing adherence to Quran, Sunna and sharia, and at the same time to the tradition of Sufism as a path to God through the charismatic *shaykh*.⁵⁴⁷ The *ṭarīqa* and the *Shaykh* were not accepted by all of Egyptian society, however. The *ṭarīqa*’s pan-Islamic potential challenged the post-colonial nationalist government.⁵⁴⁸ As an extremely popular transnational

⁵⁴⁴ Dominguez Diaz, ‘Performance, Belonging and Identity’, 239.

⁵⁴⁵ Dominguez Diaz, ‘Shifting Fieldsites’, 73.

⁵⁴⁶ Frishkopf, ‘Changing Modalities’; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 300–327.

⁵⁴⁷ Frishkopf, ‘Changing Modalities’, 19–28.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

ṭarīqa with a foreign *shaykh* that was not under control of the national Supreme Sufi Council, it challenged the Egyptian government's control over the Sufi *ṭuruq* and did not fit the 'official Sufism' as spread by the SSC and the Azhar '*ulamā*'. It most famously clashed with the Supreme Sufi Council when its publication *Tabri'at al-Dhimma* (1974), a compilation of quotes from other Islamic and Sufi works, was banned in 1980 – not so much for its contents, which was not original, but for publicizing Sufi doctrines that according to the SSC should have not be made public.⁵⁴⁹

On an overlaying transnational level, by the 1980s and 90s the Burhaniya had begun to spread in the counter-culture 'new spirituality' and New Age milieu in Europe, particularly in Germany. In this period, the European followers developed the *ṭarīqa* in a perennialist direction, focusing on universal themes of mysticism rather than on its Islamic aspects, and male and female followers performed *ḥaḍra* together.⁵⁵⁰ Because of this, the image and role of the *Shaykh* was different for the European followers as it conformed more to Western expectations of 'a compassionate, but distant, wise spiritual master'.⁵⁵¹

When *Shaykh* Muhammad Uthman's son *Shaykh* Ibrahim took over in 1983, the different approaches drew closer together. *Shaykh* Ibrahim visited Germany more often, which led to a stronger influence and stronger adherence to the sharia – for example, women and men started to do *ḥaḍra* separately. At the end of his life he ordered that women were no longer allowed to participate in the *ḥaḍra*. While first they saw *ḥaḍra* as a way to reach a 'physical and spiritual opening of a transcendental realm within or outside the self' that enabled them to attain charisma themselves, now they have shifted their focus from their own

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–34.

⁵⁵⁰ Gritt Klinkhammer, 'Traditionalizing Spirituality: The Burhaniya Sufi Order in Germany', in *Islam and the New Europe. Continuities, Changes, Confrontations*, ed. Sigrid Nökel and Levent Tezcan (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2005), 263–82; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 319–323.

⁵⁵¹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 326–327.

embodied charisma to the charismatic *Shaykh*, in which they participate through the *ḥaḍra*. Klinkhammer characterizes this as ‘traditionalizing spirituality’.⁵⁵²

The *ṭarīqa* is multi-ethnic, but the Sudanese are considered to be closest to the spiritual source and therefore assume positions of authority. Søren Christian Lassen argues that while spiritual and religious authority lies with the Sudanese, organisational and practical matters are dealt with by the Germans.⁵⁵³ The European followers provide access to opportunities for further dissemination of the *ṭarīqa* by benefiting from ‘a high degree of organizational and religious freedom, as well as ready access to globally dominant political and economic centers and a global communications network.’⁵⁵⁴ Lassen argues that this balance might be challenged in future as the younger German generation might seek positions of authority.⁵⁵⁵ For now, however, authority is still firmly tied to the connection to the ‘authentic tradition’ and ‘spiritual source’ of Sudanese Sufi Islam that is embodied by the family of the founding *Shaykh*, and in a lesser manner by all his fellow Sudanese – pointing to the central role of the centre in Sudan.⁵⁵⁶

Beyer argues that religious movements

are no longer regional affairs with a core region as centre of authenticity and authority, but have become multi-centred, and their claims of authority no longer depend on geographic location or concentration of adherents or longevity of existence.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵² Søren Christian Lassen, ‘Strategies for Concord. The Transformation of Tariqa Burhaniya in the European Environment’, in *Sufism Today*, ed. Raudvere and Stenberg, 189–207; Klinkhammer, ‘Traditionalizing Spirituality.’

⁵⁵³ Gritt Klinkhammer, ‘The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany. From Mysticism to Authenticity’, in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dresser and Klinkhammer, 130–47; Lassen, ‘Strategies for Concord’; Søren Christian Lassen, ‘Growing up as a Sufi. Generational Change in the Burhaniya Sufi Order’, in *Sufis in Western Society*, ed. Geaves, Dresser and Klinkhammer, 148–61.

⁵⁵⁴ Frishkopf, ‘Changing Modalities’, 34–35.

⁵⁵⁵ Lassen, ‘Strategies for Concord’, 206.

⁵⁵⁶ An interesting aspect of this is the narrative of the first visit of the first European followers to the *Shaykh* in Khartoum, which has become an invented tradition bolstering the authority of the centre in Sudan. Lassen, ‘Strategies for Concord’; Klinkhammer, ‘The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany.’

⁵⁵⁷ Beyer, ‘Glocalization of Religions’, 13.

While the first part of this statement rings true, the three examples examined above challenge this claim, as the claims of authority of their leaders are still connected to the original centres – Sudan, Morocco, Cyprus – as abodes of the living *shaykh* or as the authentic spiritual source. Through the spread and development of narrative and ritual symbolic structures, local communities are connected to these centres and position themselves in relation to them and to each other.

What we have seen in our discussion of the development of the Islamic revival movement and of 'Traditional Islam' (see paragraph 1.5.2), is a trend towards deterritorialisation and individualism as the roles of space and *shaykh* are redefined. As we have seen in the British context, the displacement of migration specifically leads people to embrace deterritorialisation, and this is specifically the case in the situation of refugees whose ties with their homelands have been completely disrupted. The displaced focus more on theological notions and rituals that are not tied to one particular place,⁵⁵⁸ 'an imagined or symbolic unity built around shared meanings (...) a purely symbolic notion of locality'.⁵⁵⁹ This can lead to the decline of the importance of Sufi leaders, but one can also say that Sufi leaders are well placed to provide this focus:

The saint as charismatic fulfils the highest ideals of a society while at the same time appearing unique and beyond society. This effect of power is so compelling for followers that they believe him to reach into their minds, souls and hearts wherever they are, transcending physical obstacles of space and geographical distance.⁵⁶⁰

On the other hand, the trend of shifting centres and multi-centredness in diaspora movements, might strengthen the shift towards individuality and 'decentring of authority', a looser organisational structure, a large role for modern modes of communication, and a stronger focus on the community rather than the *shaykh*

⁵⁵⁸ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Kennedy and Roudemetof, 'Transnationalism in a Global Age', 24.

⁵⁶⁰ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 284.

(see paragraph 1.5.2).⁵⁶¹ We have also seen examples in which translocal Sufi movements maintain the centrality of their *shaykh* (and his shrine) and balance the local and translocal through the development of narrative and ritual symbolic structures.

Clearly the authority of a Sufi leader could go both ways, and we need to examine individual cases to see what is happening. As we discussed in paragraph 1.4.1, a Sufi *shaykh's* bases of authority are dependent on different levels – local, translocal, global. A *shaykh's* spiritual (and sometimes genealogical) lineage might connect him to other parts of the Muslim world, and his educational credentials often have a regional tinge. On the other hand, the shrines of his predecessors, the lodge where he is based, the material resources belonging to his family, the shrine and/or the lodge, and the social and political ties to followers and rulers, link him to specific localities. Other aspects of his authority are tied to his person and understood in local contexts, especially the embodiment of transcendent values in 'ascetic practices and technologies of the body.'⁵⁶² The narratives that support his authority are both translocal and local as they are transferred and communicated through travelling followers and in sacralized objects. The attribution of charisma and the construction of authority – shaped by the values the community attaches to certain elements of authority – takes place in a local setting, even if it is influenced by regional or global trends. Finally, the ultimate Sufi base of authority – that of spiritual travel and experience – is understood to take place both in the spiritual realm and in the body of the *shaykh*, and as such is not tied to any particular place. Even so, images used to discuss this spiritual travel can be tied to specific places and thus have an impact on material space – the Prophet's *mi'rāj* being the ultimate example of a heavenly journey that influenced Islam's sacred topography, increasing the

⁵⁶¹ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 5, 10; Geaves, 'Cultural Binary Fission'; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism.' See for example Y. Sikand, 'The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama'at: The Case of the Meos of Mewat, India', in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 147–148; Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks'; Raudvere and Gaši, 'Home, Nation and Global Islam..'

⁵⁶² Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 25.

sacred status of Jerusalem, the Haram Sharif and the sites there: Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and al-Buraq.⁵⁶³

Therefore, when the relations between the local and the global and all intermediate levels shift, as has happened quite dramatically in the modern world in general and for the Palestinians in particular, it is to be expected that the authority of the *shaykh* will be transformed. Especially when the followers of a particular Sufi movement are uprooted and start a new life in a different environment, one would expect this to influence the authority and role of the *shaykh* in their life and in the movement as a whole. When people need to come to terms with their new experiences and reconstruct their identity and their community both in relation to their host country and their homeland, one expects the role of the leadership to be reconstructed accordingly. On the other hand, if the community and the leadership are and remain sufficiently strong, they can provide the people with a sense of continuity.⁵⁶⁴ The strength of this organisation depends on the nature of the movement's institutionalisation and its process of socialisation, transmission, and education – in Sufi terminology, its *tarbiya*.

We have seen that the Sufi *shaykh's* bases of authority have been challenged and adapted in response to reformist critique and changing relations between the local and the global. The possibility of the spiritual journey leading to direct contact with God and the possibility of mediation have been questioned. The concept of *baraka* and its transmission by people, living or dead, is seen as *bid'a*, leading to a diminished importance of the lineage. The role of the *shaykh* as a teacher and Prophetic exemplar rather than mediator is stressed. Increased global migration and communication impact the *shaykh's* roles and authority. It has therefore been observed that there is more space for individuals in Sufi movements to study and interpret scripture, leading to a 'decentering of authority', a looser organisational structure, a large role for modern modes of communication, and a stronger focus on the community rather than the

⁵⁶³ Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 47–56; Gerhard Böwering, 'Mi'rāj', *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, vol 9 552-556.

⁵⁶⁴ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 9; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 142; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 4–5.

shaykh.⁵⁶⁵ Therefore this chapter has argued that the role of the followers and the relationship between *shaykh* and follower is crucial when studying contemporary Sufi movements and authority, and the next chapter will discuss the implications this has for the methodology of this research.

⁵⁶⁵ See for example Sikand, 'The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama'at', 147–148.

Chapter 2

Methodology

In the previous chapter we have seen the value of the focus on ‘vernacular religion’ and on Sufism as a discursive tradition which is centred on the relationship between the *shaykh* and the follower in which tradition is transmitted. This is best researched through anthropological fieldwork focusing on the ‘fully embodied, materialized, local and varying practice’ of a religious tradition.¹

2.1 ‘The Shaykh is always Right’

As we have discussed, Leonard Primiano sees all religion as ‘vernacular’, but to understand the process of individual interpretation, we are better served using Bowman’s understanding of three interacting components of religion: official religion, religion of the community (which she calls folk religion) and individual religion (see paragraph 1.2).² In the case of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the belief that the *Shaykh* is always right, and shows his love through his concern that they understand and practice their religion correctly, is present among all followers. While focusing on ‘vernacular religion’, I therefore use the term ‘official narrative’ to denote the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* as taught by *Shaykh* Ahmad, and will examine how his followers engage with this knowledge – how it is produced, transmitted and maintained.

According to the *Shaykh* and his followers, the essential teachings and practices of the *ṭarīqa* are not subject to change as they are derived from the Qur’an and the Sunna, God’s revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, and are therefore considered to be the essential divine truth. The manifestations of these

¹ Harvey, ‘Participant Observation’, 217–218; Geaves, ‘The Borders between Religions’, 23; Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 241–244.

² Bowman and Valk, ‘Vernacular Religion’, 4.

teachings, practices and powers do change in different times.³ They believe that the access followers have to this essence depends on their progress on the path and their spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh*, which in turn depends on their individual character and efforts, which leads to different levels of understanding. Hence the possibility of a diversity of understandings is part of the teachings of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya – but within limits, as the *Shaykh* is always right. The essential truth that the followers seek through their religious practices can only be known in full by the *Shaykh*. It was pointed out to me repeatedly by followers that their knowledge was not perfect, that whatever they told me might be wrong, and that my ultimate source and reference should be the *Shaykh*.

This is a classical Sufi doctrine according to which a Sufi *shaykh* is attributed absolute authority to guide his followers on the Path.⁴ As we have seen in paragraph 1.2. Sufis say that ‘when someone has no *shaykh*, Satan becomes his *shaykh*.’ The disciple should be in the hands of his *shaykh* as in the hands of a corpse washer. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali wrote that absolute obedience is necessary, even if the *shaykh* is wrong: ‘Let him know that the advantage he gains from the error of his *shaykh*, if he should err, is greater than the advantage he gains from his own rightness, if he should be right.’⁵ Sufis often refer to the Qur’anic story of Moses and ‘one of God’s servants’ (identified with al-Khidr) in *Sūrat al-Kahf* 18:65-82 to illustrate that the gnostic should be obeyed due to his superior knowledge of the hidden consequences of acts.⁶ A spiritual master has reached high levels on the Path and as such can see into the heart of hidden things (*firāsa*), including the hearts of his followers, which enables him to teach them exactly according to their needs and abilities. Although this is subject of discussion, many believe that inspirations and unveilings (*ilhām* and *kashf*) come

³ Meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti and Dr. Ali al-Yashruti on 26-03-2013 at *Shaykh* Ahmad’s office in the *zāwiya* in Amman.

⁴ Geoffroy, ‘*Shaykh*.’ See especially Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-Arabi, n.d.) iii 75-6, and Umar al-Suhrawardi, *‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-Arabi, 1983), 83.

⁵ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 103–104; Geoffroy, ‘*Shaykh*.’ Schimmel quotes al-Ghazali from Hamilton A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 150.

⁶ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 39–42.

from the same source as the sharia and can therefore never contradict it, but that it is superior to human reasoning and the human interpretations of sharia in the body of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (1445-1505) for example granted the knowledge of the Sufis infallible status and argued it should be given recognition in exoteric circles.⁷ In his *Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl (Deliverance from Error)*, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali reaches the conclusion that the knowledge of the Sufis is the certain knowledge he was looking for.⁸

However, social scientists cannot take for granted that there is such a thing as an ‘eternal truth’, nor that one particular group or individual has exclusive access to this. Social science is based on an empiricist epistemology and does not acknowledge *a priori* ideas, which makes it possible to study a religious group as an open-minded outsider without judging the value of their beliefs and practices. The interpretivist approach associated with anthropological methods is based on the idea that all truth is socially constructed.⁹

This tension is known in religious studies as the insider/outsider debate. It is based on the epistemological problem of the possibility to know ‘the other’ and his/her meanings, motivations and experiences. When religion is defined by either scholars or religious people as pertaining to the transcendental, experiential sphere, it becomes unreachable for those who do not participate in this experience.¹⁰ Therefore, social scientists who base their approach on the natural sciences concentrate on empirically observable behaviour with the aim of finding general laws of human behaviour, without taking this experiential realm into account – thus remaining an outsider. This has been called the ‘positivist’ or

⁷ Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, transl. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington IN: World Wisdom Inc., 2010), 62–64.

⁸ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl: Erreur et Délivrance*, 2nd ed., transl. Farid Jabr (Beyrouth: Commission Libanaise pour la Traduction des Chefs d’Oeuvre, 1969).

⁹ H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*, 3rd ed. (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 19–23.

¹⁰ Russell Tracey McCutcheon, *The Insider/outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London etc: Cassell, 1999), 68–69. In the West, this approach was developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). It is also a basic tenet of Sufi writers and practitioners throughout the centuries who say that mystical experience and knowledge of the divine cannot be achieved through the mind, but only through the soul, which places a complete understanding of the experience out of reach for scientific researchers and makes their work superficial and irrelevant for the followers themselves.

'reductionist' approach.¹¹ Other scholars believe in the universal basis of human experience and seek ways to participate in the other's experience, seeking to become an insider. This has been called the 'religionist', 'perennialist', or 'empathetic' approach.¹²

In *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), Berger argues for 'methodological atheism' as the only way in which religion can be studied empirically, bracketing 'the ultimate status of religious definitions of reality'. He argues that from a sociological perspective, religion is a human product or projection, 'grounded in specific infrastructures of human history'. He points out that the question whether this is *all* that religion is cannot be answered sociologically and should therefore be bracketed.¹³

'Other worlds' are not empirically available for the purposed of scientific analysis. Or, more accurately, they are only available as meaning-enclaves within *this* world, the world of human experience in nature and history. As such, they must be analysed as are all other human meanings, that is, as elements of the socially constructed world.¹⁴

As he reiterates continuously throughout his work, this should not be understood as a reductionist point of view. He continuously points to the dialectic between ideas and social structure, and between social structure and religion.¹⁵ He also stresses that this does not logically exclude the transcendent as the process of externalization in which human beings pour meaning into reality and construct society does not say anything about the source of this meaning – an atheist might say it springs from the human subconscious, while a believer might say it is inspiration from God who works through the human being:

¹¹ Ibid., 4–5, 127–128; Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism.'

¹² McCutcheon, *The Insider/outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 69; Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism.'

¹³ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 25–26, note 34, 144–153.

¹⁴ Ibid., 88. Quoted in Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 74–75.

¹⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 42–43.

Indeed, if a religious view of the world is posited, the anthropological ground of these projections may itself be the reflection of a reality that *includes* both world and man, so that man's ejaculations of meaning into the universe ultimately point to an all-embracing meaning in which he himself is grounded.¹⁶

In the words of O'Dea:

As a social science, sociology seeks to understand behavior in terms of natural causes and effects. This is not an anti-religious ideological position, since even causes beyond nature, if they act upon men, must act though men and the nature of men.¹⁷

Ninian Smart prefers the term 'methodological agnosticism', and also calls for *epoché* (bracketing out truth claims) and aims to describe the 'diversity, similarity and utter complexity' of beliefs, behaviours and experiences without judging the truth claims of the traditions under scrutiny, 'not to explain this belief system as a product of social or economic forces but to take it as a given and to understand it from within, all the while suspending critical judgments'.¹⁸ Again in the words of Berger: 'The scholar is therefore neither an insider nor an outsider but is, instead, in the middle and interested not in determining the truth of anyone's claims but in describing and comparing them accurately.'¹⁹

As Wouter Hanegraaff points out, the methodologically agnostic approach²⁰ is often misunderstood by both reductionists and those who follow the empathetic approach. The latter tend to see the agnostic approach as reductionist because it restricts itself to what can be empirically observed. To this he replies:

¹⁶ Ibid., 146–147.

¹⁷ O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 18.

¹⁸ McCutcheon, *The Insider/outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 216–217.

¹⁹ Ibid., 216.

²⁰ Hanegraaff, who bases his methodological discussion mainly on the work of Jan Platvoet, calls this approach 'empirical'. This is confusing in the context of the concepts we have used so far, and I will therefore continue to use the term 'agnostic'. Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism.'

empirical researchers do not limit themselves to the empirical because they wish to claim that it is the only reality (privately they may believe the opposite), but simply because it is the only one accessible to them for investigation.²¹

This does not mean that alternative realities do not exist, or are not valuable – it simply means that they cannot be researched empirically. Similarly, reductionists have criticized the methodological agnosts for not being critical enough of religious points of view. Hanegraaff argues that these are misunderstandings of the methodological agnostic approach – it aspires to objective knowledge that can serve as a ground to inform all actors involved further and improve discussions between them. He notes that in order to balance between the hermeneutical approach and search for objectivity, the balance between etic and emic is essential.²²

In this thesis, we shall be confronted with references to alternative realities and experiential realms beyond the empirical, in the forms of dreams, visions, and the ‘zāwīya of the heart’ where spiritual relationships, communication and education are experienced. As we have already touched upon in paragraph 1.3, these experiences are essential for the believer’s understanding of their world and cannot be left out of our analysis. I have taken the methodological agnostic approach – not commenting on their truth, but discussing the meanings given to the phenomena, how they are interpreted and acted upon, and how they impact relationships in the empirically observable world.

George Chryssides argues that emic definitions and the believers’ self-understanding should be treated as religious and social phenomena, and that ‘the believer is the final authority when it comes to telling us what he or she believes,’ while on the subsequent level of analysis – contextualisation, comparison, etc. – it is the scholar who is the authority.²³ In distinguishing clearly between the descriptive and analytical levels of research, the researcher

²¹ Ibid., 101–102.

²² Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 4–6.

²³ Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 72–74.

becomes a translator from one setting to another, and from one ontological and epistemological framework to another.

In what came to be known as the 'reflexive turn', Postmodernist scholars argue that a scholar can never transcend his or her own position and should be as explicit as possible about it.²⁴ First of all, the notion of 'reflexivity' refers to the explicit discussion of the personal attributes of the researcher as in participant observation and interviews the researcher becomes 'the instrument for data collection and analysis through [his/her] own experience.'²⁵ I am a white woman of Dutch nationality, born and raised a Christian. When people asked me about my religious background, I called myself a Christian; when pressured further, I admitted that I adhere to the values of Christianity, but do not practice regularly. *Shaykh* Ahmad and his followers respected me as a non-Muslim, and although it was pointed out to me occasionally that I will never be able to truly understand without participating, there was no pressure at all for me to convert and join the *ṭarīqa*. Similarly, my gender was not an issue. *Shaykh* Ahmad and his followers are very clear that women and men are equal and it is very normal for them to meet in social gatherings, sit and discuss, and I was very welcome in these meetings.²⁶ During my first visit, I was careful not to discuss sensitive religious and political issues. During my second visit I gave my opinion when asked, which gave me a clearer picture of people's opinions and gave me a chance to challenge my own ideas.²⁷

To avoid 'the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other',²⁸ the notion of 'reflexivity' goes beyond these individual characteristics as it heeds the fact that qualitative research is based on

²⁴ McCutcheon, *The Insider/outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 8–9.

²⁵ Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 270.

²⁶ For some preliminary observations of the role of gender in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see paragraph 6.3.2.

²⁷ On this issue, see Delmos J. Jones, 'Culture Fatigue: The Results of Role-Playing in Anthropological Research', *Anthropological Quarterly* 46, no. 1 - Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Mirror for Self and Culture (1973): 30–37.

²⁸ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press 1989), 7, quoted in Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 131.

an interaction between researcher and informant. David Hufford's understanding of reflexivity acknowledges this relationship:

Reflexivity is a metaphor from grammar indicating a relationship of identity between subject and object, thus meaning the inclusion of the actor (scholar, author, observer) in the account of the act and/or its outcomes. In this sense reflexivity shows that all knowledge is 'subjective'.²⁹

Robert Orsi argues that research should acknowledge the 'intersubjective nature of particular social, cultural, and religious identities and indeed of reality itself', and should appreciate that the researcher becomes part of this network of connections and that therefore research also has an essentially intersubjective nature. 'Once religion is understood as a web not of meanings but of relationships between heaven and earth, then scholars of religion take their place as participants in these networks too, together with saints and in the company of practitioners.'³⁰ Contemporary scholars are therefore increasingly seen as 'partners in communication, participants in a heteroglot dialogue of indefinite numbers of voices and points of view.'³¹

Graham Harvey also stresses the relational nature of fieldwork and the importance of dialogue and interaction to reach a full understanding of the phenomenon under study, and discusses the variety of roles the fieldworker can take.³² Based on his research with Maori communities he chooses to understand fieldwork as 'methodological guesthood' which he sees as an 'ethical decolonising research method'. He considers this method decolonizing because

²⁹ David J. Hufford, 'The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies', *Western Folklore* 54, no. 1 - Reflexivity and the Study of Belief (1995): 57.

³⁰ Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth. The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars who Study them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2–5.

³¹ Bowman and Valk, 'Vernacular Religion', 2.

³² He mentions Claude Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, Gilles Deleuze's nomad, Julia Kristeva's foreigner, and roles such as the tourist, child or neophyte. Based on performance studies he mentions Douglas Ezzy's 'engaged audience' in which the audience has to 'conspire' with the performers, and André Droogers 'methodological ludism' in which the audience joins the performers on the stage, 'dealing simultaneously with two or even more realities.' He also discusses the parallels between researchers and hunters in Rane Willerslev's study on Yukagir hunters in Siberia. Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 224–228.

it goes beyond the colonial mindset of 'us' versus 'them' as it allows hosts and guests to think in terms of 'us'.

This third position that is neither 'subjective native' nor 'objective outsider' has always been a possibility and, indeed, has often been offered. Only the compromising entanglement of academia in colonial power dynamics has prevented us knowing the full benefits of being guests among or with those we research.³³

Harvey notes that the particular codes in which this guesthood is enacted are specific for each (sub)culture and community.³⁴

The influence of the researcher goes beyond the 'observer effect' as everyone involved in the relationship is influenced by the interaction.³⁵ As much as they like to portray themselves as objective observers, academics are part of society and connected to other social, political and economic actors. Therefore, their presence and work influences a community's operations and place in society just as other actors and events in society do, as 'religions and people are continuously adjusting and developing in reaction to their multifaceted contexts and wider relationships,' including those with academics.³⁶ Those with whom we interact are of course aware of this dynamic, and might also be consciously concerned to present their community at its most advantageous and present the ideal rather than the real, either because they think this is what the researcher wants to hear and they want to be helpful, or because they experience criticism and problems in their society.³⁷ Therefore, not only are codes of guesthood culture-specific, they also depend on socio-political considerations.

³³ Harvey, 'Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method', 142–143; Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 227–228.

³⁴ Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 227–228, 233–235.

³⁵ Harvey, 'Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method', 142–143; Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 227–228; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 42.

³⁶ Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 227, 234; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 301; Thomas A. Tweed, 'On Moving across: Translocative Religion and the Interpreter's Position', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, no. 2 (2002): 253–77.

³⁷ Chrystides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 77, 259.

The contextualisation of a religious phenomenon, such as a paradigm of authority and the social practices related to it, is an essential aspect of the critical study of religion but might clash with the interests of the religious group. As Bruce Lincoln points out, the reversal of religious discourse is inherent in the historical study of religion:

Religion, I submit, is that discourse whose defining characteristic is its desire to speak of things eternal and transcendent with an authority equally transcendent and eternal. History, in the sharpest possible contrast, is that discourse which speaks of things temporal and terrestrial in a human and fallible voice, while staking its claim to authority on rigorous critical practice. History of religions is thus a discourse that resists and reverses the orientation of that discourse with which it concerns itself.³⁸

According to Lincoln, the scholar's critical task is more important than the offense this might cause to believers.³⁹ While this attitude is problematic on a personal level when the researcher has undertaken extensive fieldwork and has been welcomed and helped by the community, it becomes especially problematic when the results of this critical attitude could impact the internal or external relations of individuals or of the group as a whole, and the researcher's impact could go beyond the offensive to the outright damaging. The researcher therefore has to perform a balancing act that is more nuanced than Lincoln's thesis calls for, 'working the hyphen' in the roles the researcher has taken on, 'always acknowledging the roles we inhabit, including what they allow and what they deny.'⁴⁰

During my fieldwork in Amman, Acre and Jaffa, I have taken up the role of guest-researcher. As I will discuss at length below, the specific hospitality codes and socio-political circumstances of these communities indeed influenced my

³⁸ Bruce Lincoln, 'Theses on Method', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, no. 3 (1996): 225.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 226–227.

⁴⁰ George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis, 'Focus Groups: Strategic Articulations of Pedagogy, Politics, and Inquiry', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, 2005), 904.

access to people and to information. On the other hand, it made me a bit more of an insider and enabled me to get a glimpse of how knowledge is transmitted within the community, and gave me the impression that the way my access to knowledge was regulated was similar to the way this was done in the community in general, albeit to a different degree.

To represent the believer's point of view as accurately as possible I have aimed to let my respondents speak for themselves and to give an account of their experiences in their own words, images and categories – without judging on the truth of this worldview, but analysing how this worldview influences the concrete structure of authority related to the community. This aim, combined with the fact that little research has been done on the community, leads to a predominantly inductive approach, a 'pragmatic version of grounded theory'.⁴¹ As I did enter the field with historical and theoretical knowledge on contemporary Sufism in the Levant I did not start from scratch, but did not know what to expect and therefore could not prepare detailed research questions. My first fieldwork pointed to the importance of the *Shaykh* and the question of authority. Subsequent reading pointed to the need to identify the paradigm(s) of authority for the tradition or community under scrutiny and strengthened the need for an inductive approach.

As my research progressed, three interrelated issues related to the question of authority seemed paradoxical and drove the rest of my research. The first is that the translocal *ṭarīqa* explicitly adapts to its local context, but at the same time is experienced as centralised – a common issue in translocal *ṭuruq*. Related to this is the potential paradox between *fikr* and *taslīm*. We will see that these potentially conflicting elements are allowed to co-exist through the mode of communication with the *Shaykh*. The third paradox is that of the significant differences in the message communicated to outsiders by the *Shaykh* (and most of his followers in Amman, Acre and Jaffa), and by AKR, the *mutawallī* of the *waqf*, who presents himself as the representative of the *ṭarīqa* in Acre. To solve this paradox, AKR refers to the same mode of communication that solved the first

⁴¹ Rosaline S. Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*(Los Angeles CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 120.

two paradoxes, but even though the different narratives are allowed to co-exist, the paradox does not seem resolved.

2.2 Access to the Community

When approaching hierarchical structures, it is usually best to start from the top (through ‘gatekeepers’).⁴² After arriving in Acre, I asked around in the town – especially in the mosques – and was put in contact with AKR, the *mutawallī al-waqf*, who acts as representative of the *ṭarīqa* in Acre and who took a lot of time to share his understanding of the ideas of the *ṭarīqa* and invited me to the weekly prayer meeting and other events hosted in the *zāwiya*. In the first stage of my research, he was my key informant. When meeting other members of the *ṭarīqa* I realized his interpretation differed substantially from theirs and most of them did not accept his role of mediator between the *ṭarīqa* and outsiders. This divergence between key informers and others is a well-known experience in anthropological fieldwork.⁴³

The hierarchy of knowledge in the *ṭarīqa* and the belief that the *Shaykh* is always right led to some obstacles as many people did not understand why I was interested in talking to them. Harvey points out that this is a normal occurrence when undertaking fieldwork in religious communities.⁴⁴ Potential respondents referred me to people higher in the hierarchy: first and foremost the *Shaykh*, but the *muqaddamīn*⁴⁵ were also seen as having a thorough understanding of the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* and were more approachable. Similarly, those followers who published academic studies on the philosophy of the *ṭarīqa* were held in high

⁴² The exception being when there are known factions and entry through one faction might close the possibility to talk to other factions. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 336; Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 263, 267.

⁴³ Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 187–190.

⁴⁴ Harvey, ‘Participant Observation’, 234.

⁴⁵ The *muqaddam* is one of the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya who has been authorised by the *Shaykh* to be responsible for his local community and look after the followers (see chapter 3)

esteem, but at the same time were considered followers who have their own interpretations. Finally, there was AKR, to whom several people referred me.

As Chryssides points out, 'even when the scholar has been granted access, such permission probably does not amount to an authorization to explore every aspect of the religious community.'⁴⁶ Especially in the case of guest-researchers, the host remains in control over the guest's degree of access.⁴⁷ Regarding the extent and nature of my access to the different local communities, I noted strong differences. In Acre, while my initial contacts asked for approval from AKR (and presumably from the *Shaykh*), I was able to meet up with people informally and freely within quite a short time – presumably either because it was known I had permission or because they had become used to me. Therefore most of my data from Acre was gathered during (semi-structured) individual interviews.

My contacts in Acre helped me get in touch with other communities in Jaffa, Umm al-Fahm, Nablus and Tubas. Several individuals can be considered key informants in this part of my fieldwork, providing me with a lot of information, introducing me to other followers, arranging interviews and accompanying me to meetings and visits. A marked difference between the different communities was perceptible. In Jaffa, after a first formal meeting, meetings were extremely informal and if there was any form of approval-seeking, I was not aware of it. I visited a lot of people but due to the nature of the visits most information was gathered in informal discussions with individuals or in groups.

In Umm al-Fahm my one and only visit was very formal, after which I was not encouraged to return; I had spoken to the *muqaddam* and that was deemed enough. The issues of physical access to the town and a language barrier in the form of a particularly difficult accent made me completely dependent on support from within the community, and lack of this support made it impossible for me to research this community further. In Nablus and Tubas, I encountered a similar attitude. While I was hospitably introduced to many members, it was made very

⁴⁶ Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 74.

⁴⁷ Harvey, 'Participant Observation', 227–228, 233–235.

clear I could only take information from the *muqaddam*. When visiting the weekly meeting in Nablus I was allowed to speak to the person who functioned as imam in that particular meeting. As was the case in Umm al-Fahm, difficulties of physical access made me more dependent on inside assistance, and made it impossible for me to arrange informal meetings on my own.

In Amman the *Shaykh* assigned two ladies from the Welcome Committee to accompany me whenever I visited the *zāwiya* and to arrange meetings and interviews. Meetings were more formal and to the point and always done in a group setting. While this complicated the comparative aspect of my research as I had initially planned to do individual interviews (as I had done in Acre), these group settings led to a new way of exploring my research questions together with the respondents as these group interviews acquired characteristics associated with focus groups. Because focus groups place great value on the experiences, worldview, concepts and categories of the participants, it is a method that 'ensures that priority is given to the respondents' hierarchy of importance, *their* language and concepts, *their* frameworks for understanding the world,⁴⁸ and is known to 'decenter the authority of the researchers',⁴⁹ thus further consolidating the host's control over the guest-researcher's access to information. At the same time, this enabled me to receive a glimpse of an insider's experience of the transmission and interpretation of elements of tradition and knowledge. Several participants remarked that these group meetings were just like *mudhākara*⁵⁰ – in this setting, my semi-structural interviews in a group setting had turned into an act of participant observation!

These dynamics controlled my access to information, but I believe they were genuine and are used – at a lower level of intensity – to define the boundaries for the followers' discussions as well. These interviews were done in settings reminiscent of official religious settings (as they came close to the practice of *mudhākara*), and the consensus achieved on the topics we discussed

⁴⁸ Jenny Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups', *Sociology of Health and Illness* 16, no. 1 (1994): 108.

⁴⁹ Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 'Focus Groups', 893.

⁵⁰ Meaning here the practice of the followers to discuss the *Shaykh's mudhākara* and other sources, such as sacred scripture, the books of the *ṭarīqa* and religious poetry.

came close to the official narrative as spread by the *Shaykh* in his *mudhākarāt*, writings, and interactions with the followers. The concern that I 'got it right' should be seen in the light of the followers' belief that the *Shaykh* is the only true source of knowledge and the ultimate reference, and it guides all transmission of knowledge, and they all wanted to make sure that I would get the best answers possible. As we shall see in chapter 7, the followers experience this concern as a sign that the *Shaykh* cares for them, for their education and spiritual progress, and the *Shaykh's* concern with my work is considered an honour, which I greatly appreciate.

This control over my access to information was palpable in all my interactions with the *ṭarīqa* in Jordan. The *Shaykh* and the Welcome Committee were careful that I would get the right information, to the point that the *Shaykh* offered to check my work. This resulted in eighty pages of comments on my draft, sent to me by the anonymous Review Panel in Amman (see paragraph 2.4). The image presented to outsiders is a genuine concern as the *Shaykh* and his followers feel the need to protect themselves and their *ṭarīqa* in an increasingly tense environment. The main concern seemed to be that they would be portrayed as proper Muslims. In Jordanian society, rumours exist that the *ṭarīqa* engages in transgressions,⁵¹ and the *Shaykh* and followers feel the *ṭarīqa* has been misrepresented by earlier outside researchers.⁵² Going beyond the issue of reputation, in the current religious and political climate in the Levant these rumours could have serious consequences for the followers.

During the research period it seemed that local leaders of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya became more concerned about the image they conveyed. Particularly the situation in Syria and the rise of Islamist groups seems to have influenced this. I did my fieldwork in the Spring of 2012 (Israel), Spring of 2013 (Jordan and Israel) and Autumn of 2013 (Jordan). During this whole period the region was in turmoil, as Syria was in the throes of a brutal civil war (in which

⁵¹ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 140.

⁵² Followers told me that he invited Jozef van Ess and Hassan Abu Hanieh after their publications. This was confirmed to me by Hassan Abu Hanieh on 28-11-2013. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 31.

Islamists grew increasingly powerful) that slowly spilled over into Lebanon. Syrian refugees flooded into Jordan and upset the already precarious economic situation even more. In the West Bank and Gaza the Israeli occupation continued to raise a plethora of issues, the most severe among them the continued attacks on Gaza (especially in November 2012), but also continued attacks on civilians, maltreatment of prisoners, restriction of movement, dispossessions and house demolitions, expansion of the settlements and the building of the Separation Wall. In late 2012, Palestine was granted the status of non-member observer state in the United Nations after a vote in the General Assembly, and the 'peace process' was tentatively revived, but these were considered symbolic acts with little impact on the ground. Acts of resistance took the form of hunger strikes, protest villages, and demonstrations, especially against the attacks on the Gaza Strip (most notably in November 2012) and the Praver Plan (August and December 2013).

I therefore account for the differences in access by referring to the different codes of guesthood in these societies in general, to the differing socio-political circumstances and to the different experiences with previous researchers. In Israel and Palestine the relationship was more informal, as I was invited to people's houses for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and coffee in between. In Amman the relationship was regulated more strongly: I was always received formally in the *zāwiya* and was only invited to people's houses in the context of pre-arranged interviews and through the mediation of the two ladies of the Welcome Committee. The resulting different research settings and research methods – while equally valid – provided problems at the data analysis stage. We shall discuss the implications of this issue in more detail in paragraphs 2.3.3 and 2.4.

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Written Sources

There is a wealth of written resources that are considered to contain the ‘official narrative’ of the *ṭarīqa*. As this study deals with the lived religion of the followers and how this ‘official narrative’ is transmitted and engaged with, and is therefore primarily based on anthropological fieldwork, I do not analyse these written sources in their own right but use them when the followers refer to them. I fully appreciate that a full understanding of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, its concepts, its history, and its place in the Sufi tradition requires a thorough analysis of their publications and other written materials. My aim for the present study is more limited, however, as it focuses on the followers’ contemporary understandings of their *ṭarīqa*, their *Shaykh*, their concepts and practices, and their history. It does not claim to be the final word on this *ṭarīqa*. As Dominguez Diaz points out, textual analysis ‘prioritizes an exploration of the leadership of the Order and its "official discourse" over the religious subjectivities of the devotees,’⁵³ while the present study aims to prioritize the believers’ views over that of the religious leadership. Hopefully, in a future study the two approaches can be combined to give a fuller understanding of the *ṭarīqa*.

First of all, as Muslims they adhere to the Qur’an and the Sunna. After the Qur’an and Sunna, the *wazīfa*⁵⁴ and the *wird* are the most important texts of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya (see chapter 6 and 10). They are a combination of passages from the Qur’an and *ad’iya*,⁵⁵ and as such are treated with the utmost respect and veneration, both in spoken and written form. They cannot be treated

⁵³ Dominguez Diaz, ‘Shifting Fieldsites’, 70.

⁵⁴ The *wazīfa* is a ‘task’, devotional text or litany recited daily by the members of some *ṭuruq* as part of their assignment of daily devotions, and also as part of a *ḥaḍra* or communal *dhikr*, usually consisting of prayers, invocations, and Qur’anic verses. In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is the great *wird* (litany), a combination of Qur’anic texts and prayers which is read twice a day, after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and *ṣalāat al-‘ishā*, either individually or in a group (see chapter 6)

⁵⁵ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad, 14-10-2013, p.6-11. The Review Panel adds that these prayers are a version of the *ṣalāa mashishiyya* (the prayer of of Ibn Mashish (1140-1227), a famous prayer on the Prophet in the Shadhili tradition), and prayers by Muhammad al-Arabi al-Darqawi (1760-1823). Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-08-2014, 5.

and studied as mere written texts – their performance is what conveys their meaning, sanctity and power. The right posture is very important when ‘reading *wazīfa*’ (reciting the *wazīfa*) out of respect for the *wazīfa*: one has to sit upright, both feet on the floor; during some passages the hands are put on the knees with the palms facing upwards. Even when only observing, my posture was corrected. The booklet used to distribute the *wazīfa* is considered a powerful artefact as well; for example, I have seen it placed in a baby’s cradle for protection.

Other texts related to ceremonial meetings of the Yashrutiyya include the *mawlid*,⁵⁶ *nashīd*,⁵⁷ and other poetry written by prominent followers. Texts related to the education of the followers include the *mudhākarāt* by the *Shaykh* and texts prepared for discussion in study meetings in close collaboration with the *Shaykh*. These texts should also be treated with respect as they contain quotes from the Qur’an and sayings from the *Shaykh*. I was once told off for putting my cup on the copy of the study text for that month’s women’s meeting, as it contained quotes from the Qur’an and from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.⁵⁸

The most important books of the Yashrutiyya are the books written by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din’s daughter Fatima al-Yashrutiyya (see Introduction). These books are considered to be the best sources for the life and teachings of the founding *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti:

She lived with the founder of the *ṭarīqa* in her childhood as he [*Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti] was her father. She continued the journey of the *ṭarīqa* after him; and she was closest to the truth and the reality (*al-ḥaqīqa wa-l-wāqiʿ*) of all people, and the most worthy (*awlāhum*) in this delicate task. And she fulfilled this in the most perfect way.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The poem read by *abnā al-ṭarīqa* at the occasion of the *mawlid al-nabī*, composed by *Shaykh* Abd al-Qadir al-Homsi. The *mawlid al-nabī* is the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday on the 12th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal. It is the biggest celebration for the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya and the occasion for which most followers gather in the *zāwiya* in Amman.

⁵⁷ A *nashīd* (pl. *anashīd*) is a poem composed by a follower of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as a result of divine inspiration, chanted during the *ḥaḍra* and other formal and informal meetings.

⁵⁸ Form of address used by *abnā al-ṭarīqa* to address the *Shaykh* and to refer to him. *Ḥaḍra* is a title of respect; *Sīdnā* is colloquial for *sayyidunā*, ‘our master’.

⁵⁹ *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yahruti, Foreword to the 4th edition, Fāṭima al-Yashrutiyya, *Riḥla Ilā Al-Ḥaqq*, 4th ed. (Beirut, 1997), 12. See also *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, Foreword to the 3rd edition (1990) *ibid.*, 29–30.

Other books are written by followers, either by prominent *muqaddamīn*⁶⁰ (e.g. the late nineteenth-century *muqaddam* of Damascus Mahmoud Abu al-Shamat) or by followers with an academic background. These are considered their personal interpretations, but due to the support of the *Shaykh* throughout the process of writing, editing and publishing, they can be considered part of the official narrative. The *Shaykh* explicitly referred me to them as sources of right information on the *ṭarīqa*.

I did use written sources produced directly by *Shaykh* Ahmad, in order to understand the *Shaykh*'s 'official narrative': forewords to books published by the *ṭarīqa* written by *Shaykh* Ahmad, speeches he made during public events, and interviews published in local newspapers. Most importantly, *Shaykh* Ahmad was kind enough to respond to my questions in writing.

2.3.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation enables us to go beyond the official narrative, to understand the local interpretations based on this narrative and the practices derived from it. It helps to phrase questions using local concepts and to reduce the problem of reactivity. It provides us with a better and more comprehensive understanding of what a certain phenomenon *means* for people, how it is lived and experienced: what it means for people to belong to the Yashrutiyya, to follow the *Shaykh* and be part of the community.

Altogether, I spent around three months based in Acre (February – April 2012 and April – May 2013), which due to the extreme helpfulness and hospitality of the community and the size and character of the town gave me a good understanding of the community and its context. It is too short a period however to uncover and/or understand sensitive issues related to internal

⁶⁰ One of *abnā al-ṭarīqa* who has been appointed by the *Shaykh* to be responsible for his community.

frictions and politics. H. Russell Bernard pointed out that it takes a year to grasp such issues, if not more.⁶¹ I visited Jaffa for a weekend in April 2012 and for a week in May 2013, during which time I attended two meetings, visited many people and had many informative informal discussions. I also visited Umm al-Fahm, Tarshiha, Nablus and Tubas on isolated occasions. I spent around three months based in Amman (March – April and October – December 2013) where I also experienced this helpfulness and hospitality, but due to the size and character of the town and the code of hospitality I did not achieve as deep an insight into the community as in Acre. All meetings were arranged by two ladies who were assigned to look after me and there was little space for informal interaction (see paragraph 2.2).

While on fieldwork I was welcomed in the *zāwiya* every time there was a meeting. There are several types of meetings.

- Every Thursday evening, there is a meeting in the *zāwiya*. In small local communities such as Acre and Nablus, such a meeting consists of praying *ṣalāa*, reading *wazīfa* and performing silent *dhikr*. In larger local communities such as Jaffa, this is followed by *ḥadra*⁶² and *nashīd*. In the main *zāwiya* in Amman, this is followed by *Shaykh Ahmad's mudhākara*.⁶³
- Once a month, usually on the first Friday of the month, there is a *ḥadra* in the *zāwiya* in Acre for all the followers in Israel and their guests.
- There are regular prayer and study meetings, with different times, places and customs in each local community. For example in Amman, there are meetings to study Qur'an and to learn *nashīd*, and a monthly women's meeting. In Zarqa the followers join the *ḥadra* in Amman and hold their own meeting on Sunday evening. In Jaffa, there is a weekly meeting for the whole local community to pray *ṣalāa*, read *wazīfa*, discuss a text by

⁶¹ Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 331.

⁶² Ritual in which the followers stand in a circle or in lines holding hands and cite the name *Allah* accompanied by subtle prescribed movements, while some sing *nashīd*.

⁶³ Meaning here the *Shaykh's* lecture, delivered during the weekly meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman. In Sufism in general it means spiritual exhortation. Jean-Louis Michon, 'The Spiritual Practices of Sufism', in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 279–280.

the *Shaykh* (both the text and the discussion are called *mudhākara*), and chant *nashīd*.

2.3.3 Interviews

2.3.3.1 Sampling Strategies

Since the followers believe that there is a clear hierarchy of knowledge, they were of the opinion that cultural data provided by expert informants would help me most. Due to the hierarchical nature of the *ṭarīqa* and my entrance via ‘gate-keepers’, at first I was introduced to the people that were deemed appropriate for me to interview: the *muqaddamīn* and academics. I also received extensive written answers to two sets of questions I asked the *Shaykh*. In places where I had more freedom to arrange meetings on my own I had more control over my sample, but due to the limits of access described above I could not move beyond a combination of convenience and purposive non-probability sampling.⁶⁴

In Acre, AKR told me there are five members⁶⁵ – in line with the custom of only counting the male heads of household this turned out to be a community of approximately 25 people (women and children included), half of them members of an extended family. During my first stay in Acre (February – April 2012) I did not conduct any formal interviews other than with AKR (unstructured), but I made notes of informal discussions, either afterwards or during the discussions. I attended several prayer and study meetings and as people got more used to see me and I managed to explain my research better in terms that made sense to them, I gained more freedom to meet and interview other people. During my second stay in Acre (April – May 2013) I conducted five semi-structured

⁶⁴ Due to the absence of a public list of members and contact details probability sampling was not an option. This is a characteristic of qualitative interviewing. Susan E. Kelly, ‘Qualitative Interviewing Techniques and Styles’, in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Health Research*, ed. I.L. Bourgeault, R. de Vries, and R. Dingwall (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 317.

⁶⁵ Interview with AKR at the *zāwiya* in Acre on 23-02-2012 (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview AKR 23-02-2012.

interviews with individuals, sometimes accompanied for part of the interview by one or more family members. I continued to make notes of informal discussions, either afterwards or during the discussions.

Because of the size of the community, I deem the sample size to be representative for the community as a whole. I spoke to the *muqaddam* and AKR, the people that travelled to Amman most often and those people that frequented the weekly meetings most often while I was there. Half of the semi-structured interviews and informal discussions came from the extended family, which represents their percentage of the community. My approach of getting to know people in prayer meetings and adding an element of snowballing meant that those people who were active in the community, close to the *Shaykh*, assertive, and/or regularly attended meetings, are overrepresented in the study. This became clearer to me in the course of the fieldwork and I tried to balance it by actively searching for people who were less involved, but the bias remained.

The community in Jaffa consists of around 200 people,⁶⁶ all of them belonging to one family. I conducted one group interview there in 2012. I returned to Jaffa for one week in 2013 and met many people with whom I had informal discussions, individually or in a group context. Altogether I spoke with ca. 25 people, some of them more than once.

In Amman, I visited the *zāwiya* every Thursday night and spoke to several followers at different moments before and after the *ḥaḍra*⁶⁷ or during other meetings in the *zāwiya*. I conducted five group interviews in Amman where there were between ten and fifteen people present – some of whom participated more than others. Some people participated in several meetings. This led me to meet a total of ca. 40 people. As there are no statistics for the number of followers in Amman and Zarqa, I cannot accurately say how representative the sample size is. Every week I counted between 120-150 women attending the *ḥaḍra*, and I

⁶⁶ There are around 20-30 heads of family. Adding wives and children, this number will approximately reach 200 followers in Jaffa. JA1 in Interview JA1 with twelve followers in Jaffa on 16-04-2012, hereafter referred to as Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁶⁷ The *ḥaḍra* is a ritual in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in which participants stand in a closed circle or line holding hands, slightly bending back and forth, and cite the name *Allah*, often accompanied by the singing of *nashid*.

would estimate the number of attendants at a *ḥaḍra* between 250-300 followers each week. *Shaykh* Ahmad appointed two ladies who were responsible for me and who arranged my meetings. In some cases I asked to meet someone, in other cases they decided whom it would be good for me to meet. I told them I preferred to meet people from different backgrounds, and was introduced to people with different occupations from the middle and higher class. I explained that I preferred to do individual interviews but there were always other people present – family members and friends. During the first three interviews I tried to focus on one or two people in the group, while other people present occasionally added their opinions or clarified previously made points. During my final two interviews I decided to make the most of this particular research setting as people seemed to be more comfortable in this setting (and even saw it as an example of *mudhākara*), as they were very busy and doing individual interviews would put a huge strain on their time, and switching to a different interview technique halfway through my fieldwork in Jordan seemed to cause more methodological problems than solve them.

I acquired written informed consent from some participants, and oral informed consent from others, depending on the preference of the participant or the flow of the meeting and/or interview. Everyone I interacted with knew I was a researcher and knew the basic focus of my research. I took care to explain my research when introducing myself and whenever anyone asked for it. I handed out copies of my information sheet, in Arabic and English. I listened to their remarks and incorporated these into my questions and analysis as much as possible in order to include the followers in the definition of my research question and the process of conceptual ordering, using their words as much as possible. As described above, all this was limited however due to our fundamentally different epistemological frameworks.

2.3.3.2 Individual and Group Interviews

My initial plan was to do semi-structured interviews throughout as they are efficient and provide 'reliable, comparable qualitative data'.⁶⁸ My first set of interviews with AKR were indeed semi-structured but bordering on unstructured as I aimed to gain a multifaceted introduction to the *ḥarīqa* from which to develop further questions and ideas. For most respondents however, this was not a comfortable way of being interviewed, and I had to adapt my interviewing techniques. Several respondents preferred not to be recorded. Several respondents requested the questions beforehand, ranging from a few days to thoroughly prepare their answers to a few minutes to collect their thoughts, to ensure I got the best answers. The questions were sometimes shared with a larger group of people. In most cases I still managed to ask follow-up questions, but in a few instances (as with the answers of the *Shaykh*) there was no space for this.

For these reasons, in Acre and Jaffa I increasingly depended on informal discussions to gather information, especially to collect data on the local and individual levels. I went to the prayer meetings and was invited to people's homes, which enabled me to gather information through informal interviewing. They all knew me as a researcher and I made notes on the spot.

In Amman, I conducted group interviews rather than individual interviews, which measured group interaction and consensus rather than individual opinions or the proportion of the opinions held among the subgroup, placing the individual and his or her opinions in a collective and 'accessing cultural frameworks'.⁶⁹ Focus groups generate emic data by offering 'access to tacit, uncodified and experiential knowledge' and enabling the contextualisation and categorisation of data in the interviewees' own framework,⁷⁰ providing 'insight into the operation of group/social processes in the articulation of knowledge (e.g. through the

⁶⁸ Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 205.

⁶⁹ Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 107; Alan Johnson, "'It's Good to Talk': The Focus Group and the Sociological Imagination", *Sociological Review* 44 (1996): 517–36.

⁷⁰ Johnson, 'It's Good to Talk', 521.

examination of what information is censured or muted within the group).⁷¹ Group interviews and focus groups explicitly use the group interaction as research data, focussing on similarities and differences in perceptions and how these are employed when negotiating group consensus.⁷² These differences can be made explicit through a discussion, or remain implicit in modes of communication, e.g. which questions are asked, which arguments are used, which sources and stories are referred to to back up these arguments⁷³ – in our context for example miracle stories illustrating the power of the *Shaykh* and historical stories to stress his social role. We should not be concerned with establishing the truth value of a story but we should ‘look beneath the content of stories to uncover the functions that such storytelling accomplishes for participants.’⁷⁴

In group settings, familiarity and hierarchy might lead to some participants being more outspoken than others.⁷⁵ In the case of the group interviews in Amman, all participants were invited by the two ladies or by the hosts. As such they were very close groups of family members and friends, making the degree of familiarity extremely high and the issue of (informal) hierarchy very prominent. Within the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, there is space for different opinions and attitudes, but it was pointed out to me repeatedly that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* had taught them that the *muqaddamīn* and those more advanced in years should speak first. It happened that a *muqaddam* or another prominent participant (most notably AM1-1 and AM1-3) took on the role of co-moderator or explained someone’s answer.⁷⁶ Those who were considered more advanced spiritually and/or in terms of worldly education spoke first and more comfortably, confidently and eloquently, which was not conducive for those with other views (which might be considered lesser levels of understanding) to speak up. There was a significant gender discrepancy as well as women tended to be more shy, although there were some women with very outspoken views who did not shy away from a

⁷¹ Kitzinger, ‘The Methodology of Focus Groups’, 116.

⁷² Ibid., 103.

⁷³ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁴ Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 34.

⁷⁵ Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 228.

⁷⁶ These are frequent occurrences in similar situations. Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 136.

debate.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, this led to a high degree of consensus which was in line with the 'official narrative'. Even so, there were individuals who spoke extensively regardless of these limitations, and it hardly ever happened that someone's contribution was contradicted, although a thought was not always followed up on.

On the other hand, focus groups have the advantage that they are 'closer to 'real-life' social setting in which interaction and construction of meaning actually takes place.'⁷⁸ This was certainly the case with the group interviews conducted in Amman, as several followers remarked on the similarities between the interviews and their *mudhākara* (see paragraph 2.2).

Individual interviews are generally seen as more trustworthy evidence than other types of interviews, because the potential problem that respondents tell the researcher what they think s/he wants to hear might be exacerbated in group settings due to peer pressure.⁷⁹ Rosaline Barbour however argues that all research encounters are artificial in one way or another, and that we should 'regard the research encounter itself as a site of "performance" in which we find inconsistencies and contradictions. This is only a problem if one views attitudes as fixed.'⁸⁰ Jenny Kitzinger sees these different research encounters as leading to different kinds of truth, different kinds of discourse, that are all equally valid in their own right.⁸¹

While both interview methods are valid, the comparison of data gathered in such dissimilar research settings is complicated and points to a severe challenge in undertaking multi-site fieldwork in a transnational *ṭarīqa*. It is to this issue of data analysis that we will now turn.

⁷⁷ For some preliminary observations of the role of gender in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see paragraph 6.3.2.

⁷⁸ Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 46; Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 'Focus Groups', 887; Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups', 105.

⁷⁹ Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 34.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸¹ Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups', 117.

2.4 Data Analysis

When analysing the data, I searched for patterns of relationship, interaction and communication to arrive at an underlying paradigm of authority of *Shaykh Ahmad*, and to understand how the three potential paradoxes I had identified are resolved in the community. In order to identify these patterns, I used a combination of deductive or *a priori* coding (using codes derived from theory) and inductive or *in vivo* coding (using codes deriving from the texts themselves, preferably using the respondents' own words), starting with general themes derived from literature and adding more themes and subthemes as the research unfolded.⁸² I checked which responses and response patterns were most frequent in a certain interview, after which I examined the patterns behind these frequencies: was this response given by several people or was it always the same person? Was a certain response given spontaneously or in reaction to a prompt?

The analysis of group interviews and interviews in a group setting presented specific issues, as the unit of analysis is the group and not the individuals within the group. While one should listen to individual voices, one should not take them to represent individual views, but always keep in mind in which context an opinion was voiced or a story told and how it occurred within the exchange of opinions. One also has to take into account the differences within and between groups.⁸³ Therefore I kept in mind the general mood of each particular group, the particular hierarchy, who was more articulate, confident and/or dominant, and who less so. I also checked the reaction of the group to particular responses. To what extent did they agree or disagree? Was it deemed an important or interesting point and taken up for further discussion? This gave me an idea of the consensus of a particular group, which I could then compare to other groups. In order to maintain transparency, I have given a summary of the

⁸² Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 464–465; Graham R. Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data* (Los Angeles CA: Sage Publications, 2007); Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 119–120.

⁸³ Barbour, *Doing Focus Groups*, 143.

discussions on the nature and the role of the *Shaykh* in chapter 5. To enable the followers' own voices to be heard and to pay attention to the context in which views were given, I have included extensive quotes.

The different research settings and the resulting different methods of interviewing and analysing make a comparison between the different communities problematic. I account for the differences in access and the resulting different research settings by referring to the different codes of guesthood in these societies in general, to the differing socio-political circumstances and to the different experiences with previous researchers (see paragraph 2.2). In addition to these factors that relate to the dynamic between host and guest-researcher, the differences also reflect the specific mode of interaction of the community and the degree of central control. The particular interpretations of some of the *ṭarīqa*'s values and practices such as hospitality, *fikr* and *mudhākara* created the boundaries within which I could obtain knowledge. These boundaries differed per locality, and influenced my research methods in these different localities. These different research settings made it difficult to compare between the different research sites and to understand the links between them.

This problem is a little discussed aspect of 'multi-site ethnography' of translocal movements – discussions of this method tend to focus on the global as emerging from the local, and the need to follow connections between localities rather than approach them as isolated units.⁸⁴ In her study of female religious identities among the Budshishiyya in several communities in Morocco and Western Europe, Dominguez Diaz explicitly undertakes a multi-sited ethnography, as she has selected local communities (which she calls 'enclaves') to understand their connections to the main lodge in Madagh (Morocco) and to each other – the study is 'translocal' because these relationships and 'manifestations of connectedness' are central to her effort to understand 'the

⁸⁴ The seminal article for this approach is George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95–117. See also Mark-Anthony Falzon, ed., *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research* (Farnham etc: Ashgate, 2009).

whole picture'.⁸⁵ While this is indeed a very important point, she does not discuss the different research circumstances she most probably encountered during her fieldwork and the effect this had on her research and its comparative potential. The social codes of different communities might cast the researcher in different roles and might produce different relations between researcher and community in each locality, which might result in different ways of accessing and interpreting information, making comparison and the construction of 'the whole picture' difficult. Raudvere acknowledges the different characters of separate locations of fieldwork, even when they are connected in a translocal network, but does not discuss the influence this has on research experiences in these locations.⁸⁶

George E. Marcus refers to this problem in his discussion of reflexivity and of Haraway's notion of 'positioning'⁸⁷ (even though he speaks more of research among different spheres and sectors of the same society, rather than of geographically dispersed sites):

In practice, multi-sited fieldwork is thus always conducted with a keen awareness of being within the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer required renegotiation. Only in the writing of ethnography, as an effect of a particular mode of publication itself, is the privilege and authority of the anthropologist unambiguously reassumed, even when the publication gives an account of the changing identities of the fieldwork in the multi-sited field.⁸⁸

Marcus argues that these difficulties can only be overcome in the process of writing and not in the field, and I have therefore chosen to discuss all sites separately, structuring my chapters in a way that seemed appropriate for the locality without forcing a comparison upon the material. Rather than being

⁸⁵ Dominguez Diaz, 'Shifting Fieldsites.'

⁸⁶ Raudvere, 'Between Home and Home', 52.

⁸⁷ He advocates 'the qualification or effacement of the traditional privileged self-identification as ethnographer that seems inevitable in multi-sited research in favor of a constantly mobile, recalibrating practice of positioning in terms of the ethnographer's shifting affinities for, affiliations with, as well as alienations from, those with whom he or she interacts at different sites.' Marcus, 'The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', 112.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

comparative, the discussions of the different communities complemented each other.

Through this method I have identified the patterns of authority and constructed a paradigm of authority as found amongst the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, Acre, and Jaffa. While individuals might stress different elements of this paradigm (often related to the locality in which they find themselves), the overarching paradigm is sufficiently coherent to understand the functioning of authority in the translocal *ṭariqa* and in its local manifestations.

Following this, I have analysed how the paradigm operates in the different contexts, how it is enacted and by whom. I have focused mainly on the internal dynamic as it was presented to me by the followers, attempting to verify this by discussing the actual practice of the people (an attempt that was limited due to my limited access to many parts of the community). Without an historical focus we can only speculate how the paradigm and its local manifestations came into being, but by taking into account the community's position in society we can make a first attempt at hypothesizing the dynamic behind the development of this paradigm.⁸⁹

As the *Shaykh* had repeatedly voiced the wish to read my work before submitting it, I sent a draft to my contact person in Amman. This resulted in eighty pages of comments, sent to me by the anonymous Review Panel in Amman. In the case of typos, historical facts and mistranslations of Arabic concepts their help was much appreciated, but their concern for me 'to get it right' led them to request quite far-going changes. These included changing the wording of interview quotes (either to change the respondents' turn of phrase or to change the content of their statement) and deleting large parts of interviews and analysis, sometimes even material based on published sources, when these were not considered to reflect the *'aqīda*. Their main concern was to help me improve my thesis based on their belief that there is only one correct way of

⁸⁹ In qualitative research, and especially in grounded theory, hypotheses serve to explore possible relationships between elements that have come up in the study, 'a way of postulating the relation between different aspects of an analytical framework'. William J. Gibson and Andrew Brown, *Working with Qualitative Data* (London: SAGE, 2009), 139–140.

writing about the *ṭarīqa*, but this clashed with my anthropological aim to focus on ‘lived religion’ and to give a voice to the followers and their understandings – including the differences in opinion and interpretation that I encountered. In such cases, I mentioned the Review Panel’s opinion on the subject either in the main text or in a footnote so as to make their voice heard, without privileging it over the respondent’s, and without changing my wording or analysis. In this I followed the advice of Geaves and Chryssides, who write that when believers reject an etic definition the scholar can make a note of this, but cannot change the definition.⁹⁰

While it is common ethical practice to heed requests from interviewees who request their words be deleted or rewritten, it is not common to heed such requests from third parties such as the anonymous Review Panel – but not to pay their remarks any attention in such cases would not have been acceptable either. Thomas A. Tweed, who encountered criticism of his interpretation of *Santería* from several Cuban Catholic priests in the US, advocates the incorporation of criticism in footnotes:

It is not unusual to find that those you interpret challenge your interpretations. It bothered me, but I did not find it too difficult to resolve. I simply decided to include, word for word, the priest’s criticism of my analysis. I did not grant him veto power, but I did allow him to dispute my reading, so that readers may adjudicate the disagreement between us (even if I inevitably and unintentionally privileged my version of the disagreement).⁹¹

Therefore in some cases I have taken their comments on board, in others I have added their comments in footnotes, and yet other remarks I have not heeded at all. Due to the large amount and the nature of some comments, it was imperative to be selective.

In several cases I have used the Review Panel’s comments as additional sources of primary information (representing the ‘official narrative’ of the *Shaykh* in Amman) to enhance my analysis, sometimes after requesting further

⁹⁰ Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 72.

⁹¹ Tweed, ‘Translocative Religion and the Interpreter’s Position’, 267.

explanations of their comments. This was for example done in my analysis of the different attitudes towards the Palestinian religious and national leader Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, as the Review Panel's comments on AKR's interpretations shed further light on both AKR's attitude towards Palestinian history and its consequences for the contemporary *ṭarīqa* in Israel, and on the *ṭarīqa*'s socio-political attitude in Jordan (see paragraph 9.3). Another example is the Review Panel's comment on the attitude I observed towards the *mubāya'a* in Acre and Jaffa which diverges from that in Amman. The Review Panel tried to explain the difference by suggesting a conclusion – which actually makes the divergence stand out more clearly (see paragraph 10.2). Finally, the additional interpretation they gave of a story about *Sīdī* Ahmad's youth shed new light on the story for and helped me to take my interpretation further (see paragraph 5.3).

The most far-reaching comment was that I had misunderstood the role of AKR, the *mutawallī* of the *zāwiya* in Acre, who acts as representative and 'responsible for external relations in Israel and the West'. The latter claim was heavily contested by the Review Panel, who stressed that he is not an official representative but that he only represents them in matters of *waqf* and other than that is simply one of the followers who represents them 'on a case by case basis'. They said I had given him too much weight in my thesis and requested that I delete most of my discussion of his views because they do not reflect the *'aqīda*. Also, they requested I delete my discussion of the confusion surrounding the controversial social projects in Acre – which AKR said he was doing in the name of the *Shaykh*, while *Shaykh* Ahmad claimed he had never heard of them (see paragraph 11.5).

I decided to refuse the Review Panel's requestst regarding AKR. No matter what might be his mandate from Amman, in Acre he acts as the official representative of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel, and he is the only person most outsiders visiting the *zāwiya* – students, tourists, and spiritual seekers – meet. His views are widespread in the Israeli 'new spirituality' milieu among those who are interested in Sufism. He is in charge of many social activities in the name of the *ṭarīqa* and therefore has a large role to play in how Israeli society

sees the *ṭarīqa*. Therefore I do not think we can treat his ideas and activities as if he were ‘simply another follower’, and I felt it imperative to discuss and contextualise his views at length, despite the Review Panel’s opposition. I did however heed their request not to refer to him as ‘the representative in Israel’, as I had done in the draft I sent them, but changed this to the acronym AKR. This way I distance him from the other followers – to whom I refer using a code for their location and a personal number – without having to draw attention to the ambiguous nature of his claim to be ‘the representative’ every time I refer to him. Instead, I can discuss his position properly when it is relevant. The Review Panel’s comments have actually enabled me to be much bolder regarding my analysis of the role of AKR, as they gave me very explicit material as to which aspects of his thought can and cannot be seen to represent the ‘official narrative’ of the *Shaykh* in Amman.

The interactions we had because of this feedback yet again stressed the observations I had made during my fieldwork on the different modes of control of a guest’s access to knowledge and of the information that is disseminated regarding the *ṭarīqa*. Their considerable effort in helping me write the best thesis possible is tied to the belief that the *Shaykh* is the only true source of knowledge and the ultimate reference who guides all transmission of knowledge. The *Shaykh*’s concern for his followers to have the right information, and in turn their concern to help me write the right thesis, is not only an effort in limiting the boundaries in which the tradition is transmitted, but is also an indication of their helpfulness and hospitality and as such is greatly appreciated.

Thus we return to the central dilemma: the belief that ‘the *Shaykh* is always right’. Chryssides argues that emic definitions and the believers’ self-understanding should be treated as religious and social phenomena, and that ‘the believer is the final authority when it comes to telling us what he or she believes,’ while on the subsequent level of analysis – contextualisation, comparison, etc. – it is the scholar who is the authority.⁹² In my dealing with this *ṭarīqa* I have adhered to this principle. When undertaking fieldwork, I have

⁹² Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 72–74.

behaved as a guest-researcher within the different codes of guesthood employed by the different local communities, and as such my access to knowledge has been limited. This I think is an important proof of respect towards those people whose universe the anthropologist enters and an unavoidable aspect of anthropological fieldwork. When writing, I have sought to show the same respect by sharing my draft and not working 'behind their back', carefully weighing their comments and my response, but ultimately staying true to my role as an anthropologist: giving voice to different interpretations of the Shadhuli-Yashruti tradition, comparing and contextualizing these, to arrive at a deeper and more rounded understanding of the *ṭarīqa* in its local manifestations and translocal connections. To show respect does not equal being censored. I have listened respectfully to their views on the world and on my thesis, but have here presented my own opinions and conclusions from a methodologically agnostic social science perspective. As Hanegraaff points out, the balance between emic and etic is essential in this approach.⁹³ I have balanced the emic and the etic to the best of my abilities, and appreciate the help and suggestions I have received from many quarters, but any fault remains my own.

⁹³ Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 4–6.

Chapter 3

Historical Background

For all followers, the arrival of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti in Acre in 1850 – which is known as *tashrīf* – marks the start of their *ṭarīqa*. This chapter will briefly give the background of the Shadhiliyya in North Africa, and an overview of the development of Islam in general and Sufism in particular in Palestine to give an impression of the situation in which *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din arrived in Acre, and with what baggage. Then we shall sketch the history of the *ṭarīqa* until 1948. To understand the broader historical context of the Palestinian people at large we shall give a brief overview of their history, and will finish with the history of the Shadhiliyya-Yashrutiyya in the Levant and the way the *ṭarīqa* is organised under *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti.

3.1 The Shadhiliyya

Abu al-Hassan al-Shadhili (ca. 1196-1258) was born in northern Morocco and studied religious sciences in Fes, after which he travelled east to search for the *quṭb* until one of his masters sent him back to Morocco, where he became the only disciple of Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish (d. 1228).¹ After his *Shaykh*'s death his master's rank passed to him, and he stated that henceforward the *quṭb* would always be found within the ranks of the Shadhiliyya. He left Fes and settled in Shadhila, a village near Kairouan. Many miracles were attributed to him and he was considered to be in touch with al-Khaḍr and the Prophet, which brought him into conflict with the '*ulamā*' (religious scholars) of Kairouan. He moved to Egypt,

¹¹ For Abd al-Salam al-Mashish, see R. le Tourneau, "Abd Al-Salām b. Mashīsh," *EI* 2 | 91.

where he died on his way to Mecca. After his death his tomb in Humaythira (Upper Egypt) became a centre for pilgrimage and the locus of festivals.²

Based on al-Shadhili's teachings (found in letters, litanies, prayers, and the writings of his followers³), the Shadhiliyya is considered a 'moderate', 'orthodox' brotherhood which places strict importance on the practice of the sharia. The message of the Qur'an and Sunna takes precedence over inspiration, and the followers are encouraged to participate in social life. Abandoning worldly concerns, the struggle against the *nafs* and acceptance of one's fate are meant to be done within a social framework.⁴

The Shadhiliyya is not a centralised *ṭarīqa* and takes many different forms in diverse environments. The *ṭarīqa* first developed in the urban milieus of Tunis, Alexandria and Cairo, and also found appeal in the rural areas of the Maghreb and the Nile Valley.⁵ The Shadhiliyya appealed to people from different social classes and could either be allied with the rulers or act as an oppositional force, as can be seen by Muhammad Zafir al-Madani's good relations with Sultan Abdulhamid II (r.1876-1917), and his older brother Hamza's opposition to the French conquest of Tunisia.⁶ The elements of the Shadhili tradition that were stressed and developed depended on the context in which a particular sub-branch developed. It is therefore important to give an impression of the environment in which the Shadhiliyya rooted when Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti – who at that time still considered himself part of the Shadhiliyya-Madaniyya – settled in Palestine.

² P. Lory, 'Al-Shādhilī', *EI2* IX 170–172.

³ Most notably the writings of Ibn Ata Allah al-Iskandari (d.1309). For a bibliography, see G. Makdisi, 'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh', *EI2* III 722-723.

⁴ Lory, 'Al-Shādhilī', 171.

⁵ P. Lory, 'Shādhiliyya', *EI2* IX 172-175.

⁶ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 23–24. The different manifestations of the Shadhiliyya in the Maghreb are illustrated by Scott Kugle in his account of the milieu of fifteenth-century Fes. He describes the ideal of the juridical or *usūlī* Sufi that developed in the *madrasas* (patronized by the Berber Marinid rulers) and was strongly influenced by the writings and example of Ibn Ata Allah. In the same period the local Shadhili *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Jazuli (d.ca.1465) became the leader of a revolutionary mass movement which fought the Spanish and Portuguese, aimed to reform rural and political life, and became a real threat to the Marinids in the countryside and the coastal areas. He presented himself as *quṭb al-zamān* and as descendent of the Prophet, and supported the claim that the political ruler should be a *sharīf*. After his death he became known as Sidi Ben Sliman, one of the seven patron saints of the city of Marrakesh. Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law*, 46–64, 83–84; Lory, "Shādhiliyya," 172.

3.2 Sufism in Palestine pre-1948

Daphna Ephrat stresses the importance of Islamic leaders in the development of Palestinian society: they ‘disseminated their traditions, formed communities, and helped shape an Islamic society,’ adding to the ‘development of a public space around pious and charismatic leaders,’ and ‘imprinting Islam on the human and physical environment and in consolidating an Islamic society and space.’⁷

Ever since the early days of Islam, when Palestine was conquered by the Muslim armies, it became incorporated in the larger cosmopolitan Islamic world. The early Islamic world was characterized by religious travellers and Palestine occupied an important place in this network. As *al-ard al-muqaddisa*⁸ – home to Jerusalem, the third holy city in Islam (known in Arabic as *bayt al-maqdis* or *al-Quds*) and to the tombs of many Islamic prophets – it attracted many pilgrims and wandering scholars, some of whom settled there. They felt that the holiness of the place enhanced their spiritual struggle, and they described the Holy Land in ascetic terms. A typical asceticism of the frontier flourished in the *ribāṭāt* on the Mediterranean coast where warrior-scholar-ascetics gathered. Other ascetics withdrew to the isolated hills of Palestine, settling in Ramla or Nablus.⁹ In the Abbasid period the centre of the empire shifted eastward and Palestine became politically and economically marginalised. Jerusalem lost its important political and economic status, even though it remained an important religious centre. Similarly the other Palestinian towns remained spiritual centres and pilgrimage destinations, and in this way remained linked to the larger Islamic world.¹⁰

In this early period the norms of Islam and of Islamic society were still taking shape, and the scholar-ascetics (*zuhhād muḥaddithūn*) – increasingly seen as the embodiment of the Prophetic values and as renewers (*mujaddidūn*) of religion – played an important part in shaping the moral and social life of the community along the lines of the Qur’an and the Sunna. As we have seen in

⁷ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 1–3.

⁸ ‘The Holy Land’, a Qur’anic term which is not clearly defined.

⁹ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 19–20.

¹⁰ Ibid., 79–80. Important visitors to the Holy Land included Ali al-Hujwiri (ca.990-1077), Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi (1165-1240).

chapter 1, their training was a combination of doctrinal learning and practice which made the *shaykh* both a teacher and a role model. Sufism was seen more as an ethical discipline than a mystical doctrine, and moral behaviour was a more important base of authority than spiritual transformation. An important aspect of these values was service to others, which led to a strong social activism. The need to instil emotional trust led to the rise of the image of the *shaykh* as a paternal guide who loves his followers and knows everything about them, including their inner thoughts. These leaders functioned as important role-models for the growing Islamic community and ‘objects of pilgrimage’ that ‘were the focus of common rituals.’ By the tenth century disciples increasingly sought out these leaders to bind themselves to the *shaykh* in companionship (*suḥba*) so he might teach them how to travel the spiritual Path.¹¹

Against the background of Abbasid disintegration this relationship became more institutionalised. The *silsila* (and the *isnād*) – both spiritual and intellectual – became more important to legitimize the *shaykh*’s role as ‘a disseminator of righteous Islamic belief and conduct’.¹² The institutions with which these *shaykhs* were affiliated – the *khanqa*, *zāwiya* and *ribāṭ* – developed into ‘organized systems of affiliation, instruction, and ritual’. In the end it was the person of the *shaykh* that mattered, not the institution with which he was affiliated – but this affiliation contributed to his personal appeal.¹³

As the Islamic world was ruled by a succession of foreign dynasties, the Sufi *shaykhs* and their institutions provided stability. The many rulers that sought to control the region tried to connect to the local population through this network of Sufi institutions by sponsoring the building or renovation of mosques, schools, lodges and tombs. Through these *awqāf* they showed their shared adherence to Islamic (Sunni) norms and values and aimed to generate the support of the religious elite and the favourable opinion of the population.¹⁴ They strengthened the devotion to the many prophets that were buried in Palestine and

¹¹ Ibid., 31, 35, 51–54, 96–99.

¹² Ibid., 74.

¹³ Ibid., 108–110.

¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

institutionalised *ziyārāt* and *mawāsīm*, especially those of Nabi Musa, Nabi Ruben and Nabi Saleh.¹⁵

During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (from the thirteenth century onwards) the *ṭuruq* expanded around a *walī* and his or her tomb, linking Sufism and local ideas on sanctity and cults of saint veneration as we saw in chapter 1. Sufi theosophy gave the theoretical basis for the understanding of the concept of *wilāya*, and local ideas on sainthood provided the values which a Sufi charismatic *shaykh* had to embody and the practices with which he would be approached.¹⁶ Because of their outstanding behaviour, the *walī* was seen as ‘arbiter of true knowledge and proper Islamic conduct’.¹⁷ They were patrons and intercessors on the social and spiritual levels, fulfilling several social and religious roles in different dimensions, appealing to many different people from all social levels and backgrounds. The lines between ‘popular’ and ‘official’ or ‘elitist’ religion were blurred as the devotion to the *awliyā’* for many centuries was the foremost aspect of people’s religious identity and practice, and the *zāwiya*-tomb complexes became the physical centre to which this devotion turned and around which communities were built, making them the centres of both sacred and mundane topography.¹⁸

Palestine continued to be connected to the larger Muslim world as *shaykhs* of foreign *ṭuruq* settled in the holy cities. For example, in the fourteenth century the Bistamiyya from Eastern Iran established a *zāwiya* in Jerusalem, developed close links with the Salahiyya *madrassa* and had a plot on al-Mamilla

¹⁵ Mahmoud Yazbak, ‘The Muslim Festival of Nabi Rubin in Palestine: From Religious Festival to Summer Resort’, *Holy Land Studies* 10, no. 2 (2011): 172–174.

¹⁶ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142–143, 147.

¹⁸ For the term ‘sacred topography,’ see Yazbak, ‘Nabi Rubin’, 171. Sometimes villages evolved around a *zāwiya* and the *Shaykh*’s families became important socio-political families. An example is the Wafa’i family, whose ancestor Sayyid Badr al-Din Muhammad (d.1253) came from Iraq and first settled in Dayr al-Shaykh, but moved to Sharafat when this village became too small for his descendants and followers. The tombs and the *zāwiya* of this family became a centre of pilgrimage, described as the pillars (*a’ māḍ*) of the holy land and its surroundings.’ Later descendants moved to Jerusalem where they established a *zāwiya* near the Bab al-Nazir leading to the Haram al-Sharif. Another example is that of Shihab al-Din Abu Abbas Ahmad – Abu Thawr – who was a ‘pious warrior’ who fought with Salah al-Din. The latter established a *waqf* for him in a Christian village that thus became Islamized and came to be known as Dayr Abu Thawr. His tomb became a pilgrimage site. Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 130–131, 147, 156–159, 169.

cemetery. The Qadiriyya mainly settled in Jerusalem, Ramla and Hama. Despite these links to larger *ṭuruq* however, Sufism in Palestine had quite an informal character as it was heterogeneous, inclusive, and more focussed on the local *shaykh*, his particular method, *zāwiya* and tomb, than on the translocal *ṭarīqa*.¹⁹

This state of affairs continued in late-Ottoman Palestine. Many *ṭuruq* were present but the adherents seemed to focus on local *shaykhs* rather than on the translocal *ṭuruq*. Some *shaykhs* were initiated into several *ṭuruq* at the same time. If there was a concern for the authenticity of an *ijāza*²⁰ or *silsila*, this was not reflected in any central organisation on the regional level, as had begun to develop in Egypt – although Frederick de Jong notes that there are indications that on the local village and town level the *mukhtār* was involved in certifying *ijāzāt*. Because of his focus on the institutional aspect of Sufism, De Jong concludes that the *ṭuruq* in nineteenth-century Palestine were socially insignificant and had few adherents.²¹ I think this conclusion goes too far, as the only thing this shows is that people did not attach great importance to the institution and the central organisation of the *ṭuruq* – it says little about their relationship with a living *shaykh*, which might be important to them as it could be that a *shaykh*'s personal attributes were considered more important than his *silsila*.²² As we have seen in paragraph 1.2, Pinto noted that this is actually a common attitude in the Levant.²³

Mawāsim were the main recorded events during which the *ṭuruq* participated in public life. They are annual religious festivals, usually to mark the birth or death of a prophet or saint, consisting of large processions from the nearby town to the *maqām* (shrine), and festivals that lasted for days as people

¹⁹ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 133–135, 162.

²⁰ An *ijāza* is the authorization to transmit a *ḥadīth* or the teachings of a *ṭarīqa*, and the document given to the authorized person.

²¹ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 155–156, 165–167. De Jong notes the presence of several *ṭuruq*: the Ahmadiyya, Disuqiyya, Rifa'iyya, Qadiriyya, Sa'diyya, Yunusiyya, Wafa'iyya, Shadhiliyya-Wafa'iyya, Shadhiliyya-Yashrutiyya, Khalwatiyya-Sammaniyya, Khalwatiyya-Sawiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Mawlawiyya. According to De Jong the 'focal points of dervish life in Palestine' were Hebron, Jerusalem, Nablus, Jaffa, Gaza, Acre, Sha'b, Qaryat al-Irab and Dayr al-Asad.

²² A similar point is made about the Shadhiliyya at large. Lory, 'Shādhiliyya', 174.

²³ Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 118.

camped near the shrine. The most important festival was Nabi Musa. While the Bible does not specify where Moses is buried, Muslims have come to believe that he is buried in the desert between Jerusalem and Jericho, a belief that became entrenched in Ayyubid and Mamluk times due to the rulers' explicit sponsorship of the shrine and festival. During one week in April, people came from all over Palestine to camp at the shrine and participate in the *ḥaḍrāt* of the many *ṭuruq* that were present. The other famous festival was Nabi Ruben to the south of Jaffa, which was celebrated for a month in August-September.²⁴ In addition to this, the *ṭuruq* are also recorded to have participated in processions for circumcisions, marriages and funerals.²⁵

According to De Jong, the *ṭuruq* started to decline from the nineteenth century onwards due to secularisation processes and the rise of different interpretations of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by changes in the social order. During Ibrahim Pasha's agricultural reforms (1831-1840) many *awqāf* were dissolved, impacting the socio-economic power of the *zawāya* and *shaykhs*. In the Mandate period, these rituals and festivals were incorporated in the nationalist struggle. Since the first years of the Mandate period *ḥaḍrāt* were held near the Wailing Wall, which were prohibited in the wake of the Wailing Wall crisis of 1929. Grand Mufti Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, who was in charge of the Nabi Musa festival, turned it into a Muslim Palestinian nationalist event.²⁶ The *mawsim* of Nabi Rubin also acquired nationalist overtones.²⁷

²⁴ Yazbak, 'Nabi Rubin'; Salim Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2009), 27–31.

²⁵ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 151.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 155–156, 177–179.

²⁷ A *mawsim* is an annual religious festival, usually to mark the birth or death of a prophet or saint. Yazbak, 'Nabi Rubin', 185.

3.3 The Yashrutiyya in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine

3.3.1 Shaykh Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti (1794-1899²⁸)

Ali Nur al-Din grew up in an affluent sharifian bourgeois family in Bizerte. His father was an official, and his mother came from a merchant's family and was well educated. He had contacts with a branch of the Shadhiliyya-Isawiyya but did not feel at home there and joined the Shadhili *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Hamza Zafir al-Madani (1780-1847) in Misrata. He stayed with his *Shaykh* for thirteen years, alternatively secluding himself (*tajrīd*) in the *zāwiya* and undertaking proselytizing travels. In this period he also married twice in Bizerte and fathered three children (Aisha, Ibrahim and Khojiya).²⁹

When *Shaykh* al-Madani died in 1847 his son Muhammad Zafir took over the leadership of the *ṭarīqa*. Ali Nur al-Din also claimed to be his *shaykh's* successor and left, continuing his earlier travels for three more years.³⁰ En route to Jerusalem in 1850 his boat was thrown off course by a storm and he landed near the prophet Yunus's tomb, where he received a vision in which the prophet Yunus told him to go to Acre. Another story says he received a vision from the prophet Ibrahim while in Mecca.³¹ After settling in Acre *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din began to teach at the Zaytuna Mosque – probably Hadith, Law and Sufi theosophy.³² He stressed the importance of education for his family and

²⁸ According to the literature of the *ṭarīqa*, the founder of the Shadhiliyya-Yashrutiyya was born in 1794. Van Ess thinks the year 1794 has a strong symbolic meaning, but argues that a date near 1815 is probably closer to the truth. Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 5–10.

³⁰ Van Ess points out that Fatima's account of his travels is confused as she wrote that he travelled for fourteen years, but arrived in Palestine in 1850, which would make the journey only three years. Van Ess attributes this to Fatima's ignorance of the year of *Shaykh* al-Madani's passing. Ibid., 10–12. Sawafta argues that she included the eleven years during which Ali Nur al-Din travelled before his *Shaykh's* passing, making it a total of fourteen years. Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 222–224. With thanks to the Review Panel for pointing this out.

³¹ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 12.

³² Based on oral information from Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, Van Ess writes that he taught Ibn Arabi's *Futūḥat al-Makkiya*. Weismann also argues that the teaching of Ibn Arabi was an important part of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's teaching. Ibid., 29, 58; Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 219–224, 252–255. The Review Panel however states that 'Ibn Arabi was not given special attention during that period.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 6.

followers, men and women equally. He soon counted many people among his followers from all levels of society in the Galilee, in the Biqa' valley, and in the rural areas surrounding Jerusalem and Nablus (especially in the village of 'Arraba). The first known *ijāza* was issued in 1858 to one of his followers to spread the *ṭarīqa* in Gaza (still in the name of the Shadhiliyya-Madaniyya). In 1862 he built the first *zāwiya* in Tarshiha.³³

The next episode of the history of the *ṭarīqa* is shrouded in mystery and has been subject of heavy discussions amongst scholars and members of the *ṭarīqa*. In 1864 Ali Nur al-Din was exiled to Rhodes with some of his followers. It is unclear why exactly, but it is probable that his success led to accusations from those with Salafi leanings, and made the government nervous as other Sufi groups had participated in political unrest; most notably Emir Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (1808-1883), who had been exiled to Damascus in 1860. The duration of Ali Nur al-Din's exile and the circumstances under which he was released are also unclear. Either way, he seems to have returned to Acre in 1868, determined to prevent further accusations of antinomianism and political activities.³⁴

On his return he established the main *zāwiya* in Acre.³⁵ The *ṭarīqa* continued to spread throughout the Levant and beyond to Istanbul and East Africa. In Palestine it was especially strong in the Galilee and in the areas around Jerusalem and Nablus, and there were *zawāya* in Acre, Tarshiha, Haifa, Gaza, Beirut, Damascus, Rhodes and Istanbul.³⁶ *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din enjoyed patronage at the highest levels of the Ottoman state as he counted officials at the Porte, local Ottoman officials, and effendis of Jerusalem among his followers.³⁷ Most importantly, Ali Rida Pasha, one of the secretaries of Sultan Abdulhamid II,

³³ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 14, 29, 52–58, 69; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 159–160.

³⁴ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 18–21; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 159.

³⁵ A copy of the *waqfiyya* can be found in the University Library of Leiden University, F.Or.A. 681/1-4.

³⁶ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 15; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 161. De Jong mentions several villages in the Galilee where the majority of the inhabitants belonged to the Yashrutiyya, namely Sha'b, 'Amqa, al-Kabri, Kafr Sumay', al-Rama, and al-Ruways. *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁷ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 161–163.

was initiated into the order by Mahmoud Abu al-Shamat, the *muqaddam* of Damascus, but the exact relation between *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and the Sultan is unclear.³⁸

A letter sent by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din to Abu al-Shamat informs us about the difficult circumstances in which he found himself in the 1880s. His rival Baha'ullah had left prison in 1877 and had started proselytizing in Acre. His son and prospected successor Muhyi al-Din had died at the age of 25, after which he sent for his son Ibrahim who had spent all his life in Bizerte and had had little contact with the *ṭarīqa* until that point.³⁹ At the same time – and Josef van Ess suspects not coincidentally – he had to deal with a strong schismatic movement led by Amin al-Sha'bi, the *muqaddam* of Sha'b. These Sha'bis showed antinomian tendencies (probably based on a less orthodox interpretation of Ibn Arabi's thought) and contested the authority of the *Shaykh*. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din severed all links with them and stated in no unclear terms that anyone who did not adhere to the sharia would be banished from his *ṭarīqa*, as he adhered ever more explicitly to the Shadhili approach of combining Sufism with scripture and Sunna, combining spirituality and asceticism while remaining in the world, open to relations with all levels of society and people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.⁴⁰ When he passed away he was buried in the *mashhad* in the *zāwiya* in Acre. Thus during his life the foundation was made for the strong link between *Shaykh*, *zāwiya*, and community in Acre.

³⁸ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 22–23.

³⁹ Van Ess argues that Muhyi al-Din had been *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's prospected successor and that he sent for Ibrahim after Muhyi al-Din's death. *Shaykh* Ahmad writes that the decision to send for Ibrahim had been made before the death of Muhyi al-Din as *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din had foreseen his early death. The latter interpretation bolsters Ibrahim's legitimacy. Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, conducted in Beirut in 1999, in Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 835–842: 842.

⁴⁰ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 26–29, 68–69; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 174; Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 195, 219–224.

3.3.2 *Shaykh Ibrahim al-Yashruti (1844-1927⁴¹)*

Ibrahim al-Yashruti was born in Bizerte and summoned by his father to come to Acre in the 1880s. He became *shaykh* when *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din died on 28 January 1899, and continued the work his father started by expanding the organisational base of the *ṭarīqa*.⁴² He was *Shaykh* during 28 eventful years, during which the Young Turks took power, launched the Ottoman Empire into the First World War on the side of the Axis and lost. The Levant was ravaged during the war and cut up into different Mandates under British and French rule. The Mandate of Palestine faced the additional issue of increased Jewish immigration, supported by the British as stated in the Balfour Declaration. Ibrahim had to cope with another schism as his *muqaddam* Abd al-Rahman al-Sharif left the Yashrutiyya and adopted a Khalwati lineage.⁴³ Apart from this, not much is known about the history of the *ṭarīqa* in this period.

3.3.3 *Shaykh Muhammad al-Hadi (1900-1980⁴⁴) in Mandate Palestine*

Muhammad al-Hadi was born in Acre in 1900 and became *shaykh* when his father *Shaykh* Ibrahim died in 1927,⁴⁵ two years before the relative calm of the first decade of the Mandate erupted in the Wailing Wall clashes, after which the situation in Palestine became increasingly violent. He was probably associated with the ‘moderate’ faction opposing the Mufti, but additional historical research is

⁴¹ Van Ess, “Die Yašrutiya,” 69; Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 806–807. De Jong says he passed away in 1928. De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 175.

⁴² Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 806–807. On the succession of the *Shaykhs* within the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see paragraph 5.3.

⁴³ De Jong, “The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine,” 175; De Jong, “Les Confréries Mystiques,” 220. For more on this *ṭarīqa*, see *Shaykh* Afif ibn Husni al-Din al-Qasemi, *Aḍwā’ alā al-Ṭarīqa al-Khalwatiyya al-Jāmi’a al-Rahmāniyya*, 1997; Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 159–165.

⁴⁴ Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 807–808. Van Ess and the Review Panel say he was born in 1897. Van Ess, ‘Die Yašrutiya’, 69. Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-08-2014, 6.

⁴⁵ Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 807–808. On the succession of the *Shaykhs* within the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see paragraph 5.3.

needed (see chapter 9). It is known that preachers linked to the Supreme Muslim Council – the Grand Mufti’s main institutional power base – preached against the Shadhuliyya, responding to a 1931 letter in *al-Hidāya al-Islāmiya* which called on them to act against the Shadhuliyya.⁴⁶ The events of 1948 severely affected the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as many followers fled,⁴⁷ many properties were lost, and *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi fled to Beirut.

3.4 The Palestinians after 1948

In 1948, Palestinian society was destroyed. Most Palestinians became refugees and continue to live in diaspora. As we have seen in paragraph 1.5.3, a diaspora consists of a translocal network of communities of dispersed people who consider themselves to belong to the same ethno-national group and who orientate themselves towards a real or imagined homeland, acting as ‘aesthetic and/or moral communities of co-responsibility’ and maintaining boundaries versus the host society.⁴⁸

In the words of Rosemary Sayigh, the dispersion of 1948

had both centrifugal and centripetal effects upon Palestinian social structure and consciousness. By scattering them and exposing them to different political systems and influences, it increased their tendency to form small groups and factions. Yet at the same time, it constituted a

⁴⁶ Van Ess, ‘Die Yašrutiya’, 71.

⁴⁷ The Review Panel prefers to use the word ‘left’. In English, the discussion whether the Palestinians ‘fled’ or ‘left’, in other words whether they left voluntarily or were forced to leave, is an important discussion in the larger discussion of the refugees’ right of return. In Arabic, the word used to refer to this event is *hijra*, the basic meaning of which is ‘migration’. Religiously and historically, it refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, which is the start of the Islamic calendar, but it is also used for migration in general. The question whether the Palestinians were forced to leave or left voluntarily – a topic that has been essential in defining Israel’s attitude towards the Palestinian refugees since 1948 – is thus left in the middle.

⁴⁸ Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 3–7; Werbner, ‘The Place Which Is Diaspora.’

condition that all suffered from, even if not equally, and against which most would ultimately rebel.⁴⁹

According to Rashid Khalidi, 'the pull of competing loyalties' has been very strong for Palestinians as there has always been an 'interplay between the different narratives that make up Palestinian history.' These narratives have been and are religious, secular, local, national or supranational, or kinship-related.⁵⁰ As Khalidi points out, 'the trauma of 1948 reinforced [these] preexisting elements of identity.'⁵¹ For some, the trauma led to an entrenchment of these old patterns of identity and behaviour, while for others it led to a change in these patterns, or an attachment to these patterns for different reasons.⁵²

Contemporary Palestinian identity has thus been formed by the events of 1948, and has continued to develop within this framework of dispersion and marginalization. Other events that have not affected all Palestinians to the same degree have nevertheless been etched on the collective consciousness: the 1967 Six-Day War (resulting in the *naksa* (setback)), Black September in 1970, Land Day in 1976, the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, the Intifadas of 1987-1993 and 2000-2005 and the attacks on Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012 and 2014. Continuing Judaization and settlement policies in what became Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, have since the 1990s been understood as an 'ongoing *nakba*'⁵³

⁴⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979), 101.

⁵⁰ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10–12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10–12, 22.

⁵² Liza Taraki and Rita Giacaman, 'Modernity Aborted and Reborn. Ways of Being Urban in Palestine', in *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation*, ed. Liza Taraki (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), xxv–xxvi.

⁵³ K. Luísa Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan. The Politics of Identity* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 111; Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*, 2nd ed (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*.

The different positions Palestinians occupy in their host countries⁵⁴ also influence their sense of identity. The situations of the Palestinians in Israel and in Jordan shall be discussed in more depth in chapters 4 and 8, but an important point should be made here: Both the Israeli and the Jordanian governments are concerned to undermine the Palestinian identity and mobilization while only partially absorbing them in the economic and political life of society, leaving the Palestinians with a 'complex usage of identity' as they have to 'navigate between a declarative and a behavioural mode of identity depending on context.'⁵⁵

In research and writing, scholars and activists have mainly focussed on either the local issues of Palestinians as minorities in their host countries or on the transnational parties and organisations of national liberation. In addition to this, there is increasing attention for concrete ties that connect people (other than the abstract national one). First of all, there is the simple fact that families are dispersed over different countries. This is of course first of all the result of the *nakba*, but additional population movements since have added to this situation, due to labour migration, wars within host countries or marriages across borders. When possible, people visit relatives and friends. Economic ties also bind people together: whenever possible, traders and shoppers will cross the borders; when these are closed, trade and visits still happen illegally.⁵⁶ Palestinian activists and artists increasingly work together, which is facilitated and stimulated by the internet and social network sites. Last but not least, there is the area of religion, by nature a combination of local and translocal elements (see chapter 1).

This study hopes to add to the understanding of a Sufi *ṭarīqa* with strong roots in Palestine, with many Palestinian followers in all parts of the Palestinian diaspora (though it is by no means an exclusively Palestinian membership), and sharing in the experience of dispersion and fragmentation of the Palestinian people as a whole as the physical link between *Shaykh*, community, and shrine

⁵⁴ Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 216–217.

⁵⁵ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 116.

⁵⁶ For example, Porizet gives an interesting account of the links Naqab Bedouin maintained with Bedouin and Palestinians in general in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and how this affected their position in Palestinian society as a whole and in these local contexts. Cédric Parizot, 'Gaza, Beersheba, Dhahriyya: Another Approach to the Negev Bedouins in the Israeli-Palestinian Space,' *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français a Jérusalem*, 9 (2001): 98–110.

has been disrupted in 1948. Thus it is a unique case study of a translocal Sufi movement with additional barriers in the form of obstructions of movement to its followers and its *Shaykh*. Despite these obstructions, the organisation is strongly centralised and the followers form a cohesive community with a substantial homogeneity of doctrine and practice.

3.5 The *Yashrutiyya* after 1948

3.5.1 The *Ṭarīqa* from 1948-1980

Like most other Palestinian notables, it is likely that *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi left for Beirut in 1947, before the fighting escalated. It is told that he dreamt that one of the arches in the *zāwiya* in Acre fell down and that *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi knew that Palestine was going to fall. He preferred to be with his followers in Lebanon and left for Beirut. The arch still stands and even though the whole *zāwiya* is being renovated, it is maintained.⁵⁷

Acre fell on 17 May 1948⁵⁸ and by the end of 1948, many of the towns and villages in the Galilee in which there had been followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya were taken by the Zionist forces. Most followers became refugees, either in the refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria or Jordan, or were internally displaced in Israel. The followers in Safad, Tiberias, Jerusalem, and in the Galilean villages of Sha'b, Amqa, Kafr Sumay, al-Rama, and al-Ruways all became refugees.⁵⁹ The village of al-Kabri near Acre was occupied on 21 May 1948 and completely destroyed in revenge for a nearby attack on a Jewish convoy and many villagers were killed.⁶⁰ Tarshiha was bombed on 28 October 1948 and fell 3 days later. Most of its inhabitants fled to Lebanon, and

⁵⁷ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁵⁸ Mustafa Abbasi, 'The Fall of Acre in the 1948 War', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 4 (2010): 6–27; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 100.

⁵⁹ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179. De Jong mentions three other villages that had *zawāya* that I have not been able to locate: al-Lubtumat, Tall al-Rish and Majdal al-Sadiq.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 141.

none of the followers remained. The *zāwiya* was damaged in the bombardment and abandoned.⁶¹ In Haifa, the two *zawāya* were lost and only a handful of followers remained.⁶² In Jaffa the *zāwiya* was lost; many followers fled to Gaza but one family remained.⁶³ In Wadi Ara fighting was fierce as it was part of the area Israel had claimed in its pact with Jordan, but the Iraqi soldiers stationed there refused to give it up. In 1949 the Jordanians handed the area, including its original inhabitants, to Israel. There were followers in the villages of Mu'awiya and Umm al-Fahm, which became an important Palestinian town and is now a major centre of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel. The village of al-Walaja near Bethlehem switched hands several times until it was finally occupied on 21 October 1948 and completely destroyed. The armistice line was drawn through the village lands and some of the villagers resettled on the Jordanian side of the line, but most became refugees in the West Bank, Lebanon or Jordan. After 1948 most followers in Amman were refugees from al-Walaja.⁶⁴

Shaykh Muhammad al-Hadi fled to Beirut. There had been followers of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din in Beirut since the time of the first *muqaddam*, Mufti Mustafa Naja (1853-1932), but in the 1970s Van Ess wrote that the followers were mainly Palestinian refugees. Fatima al-Yashrutiyya wrote her books during this period in Beirut.⁶⁵

Not much is written about the *ṭarīqa* in Syria in this period. Van Ess, De Jong and Weismann focussed on the schism that took place in the Ghuta, where *muqaddam* Abd al-Rahman Abu Risha (d.1977), the nephew of *Shaykh*

⁶¹ Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 177–178.

⁶² De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179 note 2. Data from interviews.

⁶³ Ibid. Data from interviews. Informal discussion with JA1 on 10-05-2013.

⁶⁴ Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 321–323; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179 note 2. AM1-1 in Interview AM1 with three followers in Amman on 12-04-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview AM1.

⁶⁵ Van Ess was quite cynical about *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's position in Beirut. He wrote that the *Shaykh* lacked spiritual charisma and was more interested in power and in people's loyalty to the *ṭarīqa* than in their religious practice. According to him, people preferred Fatima and her niece Anisa as spiritual leaders. Without references, arguments and examples to back up this observation, we should not place too much value in these remarks until more research has been done. The devotion to *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi I witnessed particularly in Israel certainly contradicts this statement. Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 70, 75–76, 83.

Muhammad al-Hadi, became increasingly independent. De Jong, who based his findings on oral information of the followers of *Shaykh* Ahmad in Umm al-Fahm and Nablus, wrote that Abu Risha had had few adherents in Palestine (mainly in the Nablus region) and that by the 1970s their activities had ceased, ‘thus testifying to its insignificance’.⁶⁶ However, nowadays there are at least two *shaykhs* who trace their lineage to Abd al-Rahman Abu Risha: *Shaykh* Sidi Muhammad Jamal (1935) on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, who presents himself as an independent *shaykh* and hardly mentions his lineage;⁶⁷ and *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil al-Ansari in Amman who does claim to be a part of the Yashrutiyya but who is not accepted as such by *Shaykh* Ahmad and his followers.⁶⁸

The followers who stayed in Israel lived under a harsh military regime until 1966. Even travelling around Israel was difficult for them, and they were isolated from their *Shaykh* and from the followers outside of Israel. In the Gaza Strip, administered by Egypt, the pre-1948 communities in Gaza City and in al-Qarara were bolstered with refugees from Jaffa and the surrounding villages.

Before 1948 there had been a few followers in Amman, who had come from Lebanon in the 1930s.⁶⁹ In 1948 many followers fled to Amman, most of them from al-Walaja. The West Bank was annexed by Jordan and the Palestinians began to look to Amman as their capital, including the followers in Bayt Hanina (East Jerusalem), Tubas, Nablus, Tallouza, Bayt Rima, and the new Walaja, whose communities had also received many refugees.⁷⁰ *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi occasionally visited Amman and several places in the West Bank, including Jericho, Tubas, and Tallouza. Many followers from the area came to Jericho to see him – ‘all of Palestine, from the towns in which we were,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 83; De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 175.

⁶⁷ Interview with a former follower of *Shaykh* Sidi Muhammad Jamal in Jerusalem on 02-04-2012. hereafter referred to as Interview D. See his website, Sidi Muhammad Press, Website of Sidi Muhammad Jamal, sufimaster.org, accessed 19-10-2014. For his connection to Abu Risha, see shadhilisufiorder.blogspot.nl/p/our-shaykh.html, a website connected to Sidi Muhammad.

⁶⁸ Meeting with *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil in his home in Amman, June 2011. Informal discussions in Acre and Amman.

⁶⁹ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 139.

⁷⁰ De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 180.

they all came out to meet him, it was like a wedding (*urs*) in the street.⁷¹ In 1960 *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's son *Sīdī* Ahmad moved to Amman where he became responsible for the followers in Jordan and the Gulf.

In 1967 the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel and many Palestinians fled, many for the second time. Many followers of the *Yashrutiyya* fled to Amman and flocked around *Sīdī* Ahmad, who suddenly became responsible for a massively increased community in Amman. While the *ṭarīqa* is still strong in Tubas, in other parts of the West Bank and in Beit Hanina only a few followers remain.

For the followers in Israel, 1967 meant the end of their isolation. Military Rule with its restrictions of movement had been lifted in 1966 and contacts with followers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the Arab world at large were restored. In the late 1960s the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was taken back and in 1970 a new *zāwiya* was built in Umm al-Fahm. As it had become possible to send money, the first renovations of the *takiya*⁷² (1979) and the *mashhad* (early 1980s) in Acre were completed.⁷³ In the 1980s De Jong noted 'a limited resurgence of al-*Yashrutiyya* in Palestine which may well be a manifestation of a limited revival of organized Islamic mysticism in the area in general.'⁷⁴ As we have seen in chapter 1.5, such a Sufi revival was part of the general Islamic revival all over the world. We shall discuss in the conclusion if the activities of the *Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya* should indeed be seen as such a revival.

3.5.2. *Shaykh Ahmad al-Yashruti (1928)*

Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi al-*Yashruti*, the oldest son of Sheikh Muhammad al-Hadi, was born in the *zāwiya* in Acre in 1928 and spent his youth in Acre. He had three younger brothers – Ibrahim, Salah and Khaled – and a sister, Sukayna. He went

⁷¹ AM2-2 in an Interview AM2 with nine followers in Amman on 15-04-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview AM2. These visits are also discussed in Interviews AM1, NA1, and TU1.

⁷² The *takiya* is the domed hall in the *zāwiya* in Acre where most meetings happen.

⁷³ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

to the Firka High School in Acre and kept to himself – a follower who grew up in the *zāwiya* at the same time recalls that while his brothers always came out to play, *Sīdī* Ahmad would keep to his room.⁷⁵ The whole family left to Beirut in 1947 and *Sīdī* Ahmad studied Political and Economic Science at the American University of Beirut, from which he graduated in 1950. He then proceeded to study Law and Fiqh at the Institute of Higher Arabic Studies at the Arab University (where he studied with Azhari teachers such as *Shaykh* Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Shaykh* Ali al-Khafif, and *Shaykh* Ali al-Khalaf, among others), and Law at the University of Cairo.⁷⁶ Like the other followers, he was also guided by his father on the Path – but because his father had chosen him to be the next *Shaykh* at a young age, he was also prepared for his future role as *shaykh*: the *murīd* has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his *sulūk*.⁷⁷ He was given an *ijāza* by his father– like the *muqaddamīn*, yet different, since it was known from the start that he would be his father’s successor.⁷⁸

He married Bahiya al-Asi, the daughter of a well-off Palestinian family who had also fled from Acre in 1948. She was not a follower of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. Their oldest son Ali was born in 1956, and they have two more children, their son Essam (who lives and works in Beirut) and their daughter Sirin.⁷⁹

He settled in Amman in 1960, where he practised law as a lawyer in a private firm and was responsible for the Shadhuli-Yashruti community,⁸⁰ acting as his father’s deputy (*mustallim*) with his father’s blessing to serve the followers in Jordan (both East and West Bank), and the Gulf, and from 1960 to 1980 the meetings and rituals of the *ṭarīqa* were held in his residence in al-Weibdeh and in two houses of followers.

Not much is known about his private life and he keeps his views on controversial topics such as politics and economics to himself. The official line of

⁷⁵ Informal discussion with AK3 on 07-08-2015.

⁷⁶ Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 811.

⁷⁷ ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

⁷⁸ This *ijāza* is not published. Informal discussion with AK6 on 07-08-2015.

⁷⁹ Informal discussions with AK3 and AK6 on 07-08-2015.

⁸⁰ Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 808–809.

the *ṭarīqa* is that they do not engage in politics and that the *zāwiya* depends purely on donations from the followers, and true to this the *Shaykh* does not make any statements on his views on these matters.⁸¹

When his father died in 1980, *Sīdī* Ahmad became *shaykh*. He had been his father's deputy since 1960 and all followers accepted him as the successor through spontaneous collective agreement (*ijmā' 'afawī*), and those who were present at the funeral of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi renewed their pledge (*mubāya'a*) to him (see paragraph 5.3 for a discussion of the succession of the *Shaykhs*). His *zāwiya* in Amman became the centre of the *ṭarīqa*. Between 1980 and 2005 the *zāwiya* was near the Fourth Circle, and in 2005 the new *zāwiya* near the Eighth Circle was inaugurated – the old *zāwiya* is now *Shaykh* Ahmad's house. One of his first acts as *shaykh* was to go on *ḥajj*⁸² accompanied by many followers, including ca. forty from Israel.⁸³ He began to republish Fatima al-Yashrutiyya's books and other books of the Yashrutiyya. By 1983, De Jong remarked that *Shaykh* Ahmad was revitalizing the *ṭarīqa*.⁸⁴ He built several *zawāya*, for example in Lebanon (in Beirut and Kamid al-Lawz) and a new *zāwiya* in Amman.⁸⁵

Shaykh Ahmad also made an effort to reconnect to Acre. In 1981 special permits were arranged to rebury his father *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in the *zāwiya* in Acre, a visit on which many followers from all over the world accompanied him. The residents of the *zāwiya* were requested to leave (with compensation if they wished) so large-scale renovations could be undertaken. In 1996, another journey to Acre was made – which became known as '*riḥlat al-*

⁸¹ To my knowledge, the one newspaper article and television interview available focus on the *ṭarīqa* and not on his personal life, and he sticks to the official line that they do not talk about politics or economics. There are no entries in *The International Who's Who of the Arab World* (London) and *Who's Who in the Arab World* (Beirut: Publitec) dedicated to any member of the Yashruti family, nor are there any entries in Arabic bibliographical dictionaries.

⁸² The *ḥajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a duty for every Muslim to go on *ḥajj* at least once in his life, if s/he has the opportunity.

⁸³ Interview AK3 with a follower in Acre on 03-05-2013 at his home (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview AK3.

⁸⁴ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 180.

⁸⁵ Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 803.

khayr – for the centennial of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din’s passing (according to the *hijrī* calendar). He started large-scale renovations of the *zāwiya* in Acre in 2006.

Nowadays followers from all over the world can travel to Jordan, including those from the West Bank. For the followers in Gaza travel in general has been very difficult, but they manage to go via Egypt, a journey which takes them three days. In 1996 after the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, it became easier for followers holding Israeli passports to visit the *Shaykh* in Amman.

3.5.3 The Organisation of the *Ṭarīqa* under *Shaykh Ahmad*

The *Shaykh* is the head of the *ṭarīqa*, but he is assisted in this task by many. In his *zāwiya* in Amman, his son *Sīdī* Ali assists him, and he has staff and other followers who assist him by taking up specific tasks, such as the welcoming of guests, the education of followers, or maintenance of the *zāwiya*. His main assistance in Amman and in all other local communities are the *muqaddamīn*.

Every local community has a *muqaddam* who has two tasks: First there is the *wazīfa ṭarīqiyya*: the *muqaddam* leads the *ḥaḍra* (together with the *Shaykh* if he is present) and other meetings, and performs the *mubāya’a*. On the other hand there is the *wazīfa ijtimā’iyya*: he is in charge of the affairs of the community, he visits and communicates with the *Shaykh* regularly, and he receives the *Shaykh*’s teachings and communicates them to the followers in meetings in the *zāwiya* or in their houses. He connects with *ikhwānnā* and he listens to their problems. When there are big problems he might ask the *Shaykh* for help, but in principle it is his task to mediate and help solve these issues.⁸⁶ One follower in Amman described the *muqaddam* as ‘*ayn al-shaykh*, the eye of the *Shaykh*, ‘through him he sees the *fuqarā’* and the *ikhwānnā* and their problems.’⁸⁷

⁸⁶ AM1-1 in Interview AM1; AM2-2 and AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

⁸⁷ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

The role of the *muqaddam* is officially the same in all communities, but the different circumstances of each community influences which of these roles takes precedence and how big the role of the *muqaddam* is in the local community. In Amman there are two *muqaddamīn* because of the immense workload. The participation in the *ḥaḍra* is less important as most of the time the *Shaykh* and his son are present to conduct the *ḥaḍra* (although they always let the present *muqaddamīn* conduct part of the *ḥaḍra*). On the other hand, the communal role of the *muqaddamīn* is very big. The community in Amman is large and many followers visit from all over the world. In addition, several followers in Amman partake in these duties, welcoming visitors and preparing study meetings. In communities in Israel and Palestine, the *muqaddam*'s *wazīfa ṭarīqiyya* is more pronounced due to the physical absence of the *Shaykh*.⁸⁸

The *muqaddam* is not considered to have a higher position than the other followers: 'The *muqaddam* is a beloved brother (...) whom *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* chose to serve the *fuqarā*'.⁸⁹ While he is responsible for serving *ikhwānnā* and transmitting the words of the *Shaykh*, all followers are encouraged to share their knowledge in formal and informal ways. 'We are like bees. Every member helps, every member adds something.'⁹⁰

When a new *muqaddam* has to be appointed, usually the followers write to the *Shaykh* to let him know their preferences, and he makes the decision (for an example, see the story of the *muqaddam* in Jaffa in chapter 10). A *muqaddam* remains *muqaddam* until he passes away – when he has difficulties to do the job an assistant might be appointed. Only in Jordan I have heard of cases where a

⁸⁸ AM2-2 in Interview AM2. As a further example, he noted that the *muqaddamīn* in the Comoros have a very big role, both in terms of devotional and communal leadership, because of the large communities and the distance from the *Shaykh* in Amman. This is confirmed by Ahmed and Von Oppen's research, who do not use the term *muqaddam*, but refer to them as 'leader', *shaykh* and *khalīfa* (terms which among the Levantine Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya are only used for the current head of the *ṭarīqa* and his designated successor), and (in Tanzania) *Shehe Mkuu* (head *shaykh*). The founders of the *ṭarīqa* in the Comoros and Tanzania are buried in their *zawāya*, and are the centre of the celebrations and pilgrimages to commemorate their death – which according to Ahmed and Von Oppen are the most important celebrations of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in East Africa. For a discussion of these pilgrimages, see paragraphs 1.3 and 1.5. Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini'; Ahmed, 'Un Pèlerinage Maritime.'

⁸⁹ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

⁹⁰ Am1-1 in Interview AM1

muqaddam was replaced when he travelled to a different city or country.⁹¹ One person in Amman pointed out that *Shaykh* Ahmad preferred a younger person as *muqaddam*, as the world developed it became important to have someone who could relate to the younger generations and understood the dynamics of the information age.⁹² All other interviewees said the *muqaddam* was always an older person who had experience and knowledge. All agreed that the most important factor was that someone could serve the community and take responsibility for *ikhwānnā*. Being accepted by the rest of society is also considered important. More often than not one of the deceased *muqaddam*'s sons was appointed to take over, although this was not mentioned as a consideration by any interviewees.

A few years after 1948 a refugee from al-Walaja became *muqaddam* in Amman and remained *muqaddam* until he was around 100 years old. The borders with Lebanon were open and he regularly travelled to Beirut with other followers. During the final fifteen years of his life the *Shaykh* appointed an assistant, but out of respect for the *muqaddam* he did not appoint someone else as *muqaddam* in his stead. When he passed away in 1987 his grandson was appointed *muqaddam*, and later a second *muqaddam* was appointed to share the immense workload.⁹³

There has been a *muqaddam* in Jaffa for as long as there has been a community there. When the *muqaddam* of Acre died in 1973, the community in Acre was deemed too small to appoint another *muqaddam*. The *muqaddam* of Umm al-Fahm, Ibrahim Abu Hashish, became responsible for Acre as well. De Jong considered him to be the *de facto* leader of the Yashrutiyya in Israel in this period.⁹⁴ When he passed away in 1999, *Shaykh* Ahmad appointed two new *muqaddamīn*: one for Umm al-Fahm, and one for Acre.⁹⁵ The community in Acre counts around 25 followers and is one of the smallest in Israel and Palestine; similar communities in Beit Hanina and Nablus do not have a *muqaddam*

⁹¹ Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9; Interview ZA1, Interview AM1.

⁹² Am1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁹³ Am1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁹⁴ De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques', 239 note 73.

⁹⁵ Interview AK3.

(Nablus, Tallouza and Farrah share one *muqaddam* who is very old). This is a sign that the status of Acre was raised again, probably in preparation for the renovations that *Shaykh* Ahmad was planning for the *zāwiya* there (see chapter 11).

Dominguez Diaz notes that the ritual function of the *muqaddamīn* in the Budshishiyya is mainly to minimise variations and thus safeguard the legitimacy of the ritual. As a link between the local community and the central *zāwiya* in Morocco, the *muqaddam* reinforces the central *zāwiya*'s authority and accommodates the tensions between the central and the local. This is also done by the European leaders, who act as 'cultural brokers' by providing a link with the *Shaykh*, yet at the same time allowing for local variations.⁹⁶ We could say the same for the *muqaddamīn* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the localities I have encountered as they have a regular connection to the *Shaykh* enabling them to transmit his teachings, act as 'custodians of tradition', and thus to a degree control the transmission of knowledge and minimise variations, yet acting within their local contexts. AKR can be seen in a certain way to act as 'cultural broker'. As we shall see in chapters 6 and 10, however, many followers actually participate in these mediating functions and the process of transmission of knowledge and providing communal guidance is in no way limited to the *muqaddamīn*.

In addition to this translocal organisational structure of the *muqaddamīn*, there are local administrative structures dealing with the *zawāya* and other real estate properties as appropriate in their local contexts. For example the properties in Acre are registered and administered by a 'board of *mutawallīs*' headed by a main *mutawallī*, nominally under the supervision of the sharia court (see chapter 8). Van Ess notes that the previous main *mutawallī* Mahmoud Abbasi (son of Ibrahim al-Hashish, then *muqaddam* of Umm al-Fahm) seemed to be the main representative (*Hauptrepräsentant*) of the *ṭarīqa*.⁹⁷ In 1996 he was

⁹⁶ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity', 234.

⁹⁷ De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques', 239 note 73; Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 72; Yitzhak Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel since 1965. The Case of Acre Reconsidered', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-*

replaced by AKR, who is responsible for the renovations. In addition to this, he acts as representative and undertakes several social projects with a strong interfaith character (see chapter 11).⁹⁸ While he claims to do this in the name of the *Shaykh*, the Review Panel stressed that he is ‘a public relations person (...) in the absence of the Sheikh on [a] case by case basis’:⁹⁹

After consulting with the Sheikh and with AKR himself, it became clear to us that AKR has responsibilities that are limited to managing the endowment (Waqf), and does not represent the Sheikh nor the Path in other matters.¹⁰⁰

3.5.4 *Abnā al-Ṭarīqa*

The followers are referred to as Shadhulis. When they want to be more specific, they talk about the ‘*ṭarīqa Shadhuliyya Yashrutiyya*’ or ‘*Yashrutiyya*’. The term ‘*Yashrutis*’ is reserved for the family of the *Shaykh*, al-*Yashruti*. The main terminology used by the followers to refer to themselves however is *abnā al-ṭarīqa* or *ikhwānā*, sometimes *fuqarā’* or *murīdīn*. This indicates that while they relate to the Shadhuliyya at large, their main identification is with the community of followers, seen as a family, which they consider to be brought together by the *Shaykh*, the *ṭarīqa* and the lifestyle this entails, all *min faḍl Sīdnā*.¹⁰¹

There are no official statistics of the *ṭarīqa*.¹⁰² Firstly, this is due to the fact that there are no clear ‘members’ of the *ṭarīqa*. Officially, the *mubāya’a* is considered the distinction between those who are considered *abnā al-ṭarīqa*, and the *muḥibbīn* who like the *Shaykh*, the *ṭarīqa*, the people, but do not commit to following the rules of the *ṭarīqa*: ‘They come to the *zāwiya* and meet (*yajlisū*) and

Palestinian Conflict: Confrontation and Co-Existence, ed. Marshall J. Breger, Leonard Hammer, and Yitzhak Reiter (London: Routledge, 2010), 114, 126 note 42.

⁹⁸ Interview with AKR 23-02-2012.

⁹⁹ Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-09-2014, 56.

¹⁰⁰ Review Panel, ‘General Comments and Remarks’, 30-09-2014, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ *Min faḍl Sīdnā* means ‘from the grace of *Sīdnā*’, a common expression among followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, expressing the conviction that everything good they do or that happens to them should be attributed to the *Shaykh*.

¹⁰² Informal discussion with AM1-1 on 21-11-2013.

pray (*yuṣallū*) and perform *dhikr* and they go.¹⁰³ There are no records of those who did *mubāya'a* however, and definitely no indications of numbers of *muḥibbīn*. In practice this distinction is also not clear as some who self-identify as followers never did *mubāya'a*, while others who did *mubāya'a* have later disassociated themselves from the *ṭarīqa*.¹⁰⁴

In the 1970s, Van Ess gives the following numbers of followers in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

Israel	1200
Acre	200
Tarshiha	none
Shefa 'Amr	1 family
Jaffa	300
Umm al-Fahm	600
Mu'awiya	50
Lydda	a few
Ramla	a few
East-Jerusalem	200
West Bank	700
Tubas	400
Nablus	300
Gaza Strip	500

Table 1. Estimated numbers of followers in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 1972. Source: Van Ess, "Die Yašrutiya," 72. Data from Erik Cohn and Hermona Grunau, *Seqer ha-Mi'ūṭim be-Yisra'ēl* (Overview on the minorities in Israel) (Jerusalem 1972), 42. Data collected in 1971 by Erik Cohn and Hermona Grunau.

These numbers do not strike me as very accurate. The number of 200 followers in Acre seems inflated, as all followers in Acre at the time lived in the *zāwiya* and

¹⁰³ Am1-1 in Interview AM1.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of the *mubāya'a* and its role in the *tarbiya* of the followers, see chapters 6 and 10.

not all residents of the *zāwiya* were followers; it should also be remembered that this is the period where no *muqaddam* was appointed because the community was too small. Around this period the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was reclaimed by the *ṭarīqa* and one follower from Acre moved there. Van Ess says that the 500 followers in the Gaza Strip are probably mainly refugees, but this cannot be true as there were communities in Gaza City and in al-Qarara before 1948 that still exist today. Other places that had or have followers are Bayt Rima, al-Walajah, Bayt Ur, Tallouza and Farrah in the West Bank.¹⁰⁵

AKR estimates that there are now around four million followers world-wide. This number is impossible to verify, but again seems inflated. According to him, there are 5,000 followers in Amman, 200-300 in Israel (mainly in Jaffa and Umm al-Fahm), 300 in the West Bank (mainly in Tubas), 30,000 in Syria, 30,000 in Lebanon, 850,000 in the Americas (mainly Lebanese migrants), some people in the Gulf and Europe (mainly Levantine migrant workers) and a staggering 1,5 million in the Comoros Islands.¹⁰⁶ The last figure is impossible, as in July 2013 the population of the Comoros Islands was estimated at 752,288 people.¹⁰⁷ The number in Israel seems accurate, as there are ca. 25 followers in Acre, ca. 200 in Jaffa,¹⁰⁸ and ca. 100 in Umm al-Fahm.¹⁰⁹ AKR omitted the followers in Gaza.

In chapter 2 we have discussed the idea that ‘the *Shaykh* is always right’ and the discursive control the *Shaykh* therefore has over the teachings of the *ṭarīqa*. We have touched upon the ways in which this control is enacted in Amman through meetings, hierarchies of speaking, and control over publications. So far we have only discussed this in so far as it touched upon my research methods, and we shall discuss these dynamics further in the following chapters. In paragraph 3.5,

¹⁰⁵ De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 180. Informal discussions with followers in Acre and Nablus.

¹⁰⁶ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

¹⁰⁷ CIA World Factbook Comoros, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cn.html>, accessed 09-10-2013.

¹⁰⁸ There are around 20-30 heads of family. Adding wives and children, this number will approximately reach 200 followers in Jaffa. JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with a follower in Umm al-Fahm on 10-04-2012, hereafter referred to as Interview UF1.

we have discussed the *ṭarīqa*'s structure under *Shaykh* Ahmad and the high level of organisational control he has. His main aides are the *muqaddamīn*. While the followers are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and give their preferences, the *Shaykh* appoints the *muqaddam* – and very often appoints the son of the previous *muqaddam* (even if this person might be hesitant, as we shall see in the story of the *muqaddam* of Jaffa in chapter 10). The *Shaykh* is further helped by other people who take on specific tasks, such as the welcoming of guests, the education of followers, or maintenance of the *zāwiya*. There is thus space for *ikhwānnā* to take up formal or informal roles in the community and to have their voice heard – but all within the limits posed by the doctrine that the *Shaykh* is always right.

This is a very simple and effective administrative structure that ensures the *Shaykh*'s centrality yet also encourages the followers to get involved. The adherence to a translocal *ṭarīqa* representing a universal truth is therefore well balanced with the local needs of the community, both through the positions of the *muqaddamīn* and specific 'cultural brokers', as we also see in Dominguez Diaz's discussion of the Budshishiyya.¹¹⁰ The local and translocal are also balanced by the level of autonomy the followers have in transmitting the tradition, which differs per locality, as we shall further examine in the following chapters. There is therefore no sign of what O'Dea called the dilemma of administrative order characterized by bureaucratization, elaboration and alienation.¹¹¹

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is clearly not part of the trend of 'Sufism without a *shaykh* or *ṭarīqa*' discussed in paragraph 1.5. Theirs is in fact quite a traditional mode of organisation in Sufi movements, albeit quite centralised. De Jong and Weismann note that the *ṭarīqa* was already quite centralised under the founder *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din,¹¹² and this has only increased due to modern ease of communication and travel. The *nakba* led to a forced fragmentation and travel between Israel and Jordan is still difficult for many, but the centralised

¹¹⁰ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity', 234.

¹¹¹ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 80–82.

¹¹² De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179–180; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 316.

character of the *ṭarīqa* is slowly being restored to the extent that circumstances allow. The absence of statistics further point to a traditional rather than a bureaucratic organisation as there is no registered membership, merely a strong sense of community. As we shall see in the following chapters, this sense of community is attributed to the *Shaykh* and his spiritual power to instil love in their hearts, and therefore has a distinct charismatic aura as well. This continuation of charisma in a traditional institution seems to agree with criticism of Weberian ideas of ‘routinization of charisma’ and Werbner’s thesis of waxing and waning, discussed in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.5.3, which shall be further examined in later chapters.

Based on this preliminary information, how should the *ṭarīqa* be classified? It could be seen as an example of ‘classical Sufi networking’ in which Sufi networks overlap with other webs of relationships (see 1.5.3),¹¹³ as the local communities we have examined exist within the Palestinian diaspora and kinship networks. Here it should be noted that while all followers in Jordan, Israel and Palestine are Palestinians and more or less connected through family networks, the *ṭarīqa* is much more widespread and also has adherents from different ethnic backgrounds. Further research among followers from other backgrounds would shed further light on the translocal character of the *ṭarīqa*, but here we have restricted ourself to the analysis of the Palestinian followers of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel and Jordan, which shows us that Hermansen’s classification¹¹⁴ is confusing. The community in Jordan is the result of an ethnically homogeneous diasporic refugee movement from the original centre to the periphery and should therefore be classified as a ‘transplant’, but at the same time is the absolute centre of the movement which shifted together with the diaspora. On the other hand, the communities in Acre and Jaffa found themselves in a ‘Westernized’ society and in Hermansen’s classification would therefore be classified as a ‘transplant’, even though the followers there are the original inhabitants and they still have the original centre of the *ṭarīqa*, the *zāwiya* in Acre. AKR’s connection to ‘perennialist’

¹¹³ Hermansen, ‘Global Sufism.’

¹¹⁴ Hermansen, ‘In the Garden of American Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements.’

groups further complicates the matter. As suggested in paragraph 1.5.3, Stjernholm's approach¹¹⁵ seems to be more promising in understanding this *ṭarīqa*.

As we have seen in chapter 1, to understand a Sufi group we should examine the relationship between *shaykh* and follower, the transmission of knowledge, practice, and the cultivation of certain behaviour, and how this is placed within a specific historical narrative. We shall now turn to our analysis of these matters among the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, the home of *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti and the centre of the *ṭarīqa*.

¹¹⁵ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?'

Part II

THE SHADHULIYYA-YASHRUTIYYA IN AMMAN

Chapter 4

Palestinians and Islam in Jordan

The presence of followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Jordan started in 1948 as refugees from al-Walaja and other parts of Palestine fled to Amman. To understand the context in which their relationship with the *Shaykh* and with each other should be understood, this chapter will give an overview of the situation of the Palestinians in Jordan and of the different Islamic trends that have been struggling for the right to interpret Islam, followed by some basic information on the Yashrutiyya in Jordan.

4.1 Palestinians in Jordan

In 1921, the Emirate of Transjordan was separated from the British Mandate of Palestine and handed over to Emir Abdallah, the son of Sharif Husayn al-Hashemi of Mecca. Emir Abdallah had to build a country from scratch in what was mainly desert territory inhabited by nomadic and semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes who had never been subject to strict government control, some farming communities in the Western hills and a few towns, most of them established in the late nineteenth century by Circassians and Chechens. Transjordan became independent in 1946 with Emir Abdallah as its king.¹

Wiktorowicz shows that in his attempts to forge a cohesive political identity, Emir Abdallah focussed on the Bedouin identity and stressed his own Bedouin ancestry as part of the tribe of Quraysh and the clan of al-Hashemi, which gave him a genealogical link to the Prophet Muhammad. As such his ancestors had executed religious and worldly authority as the custodians of the

¹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 4th ed. (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2009), 213–215; Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 82.

holy cities of Mecca and Medina from 1201 to 1925. This claim to legitimacy was further boosted by his claim to uphold the principles of the sharia in Jordanian law and by establishing government bodies that controlled Islam: the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, the *Dār al-Iftā'* (the national institution responsible for the issuing of fatwas) and the Department of the Supreme (Islamic) Justice. Finally, the government's responsibility over Islamic sites in Transjordan – and since 1948 also over those in Jerusalem and the West Bank – have enabled King Abdallah and his descendants to call himself the protector of the holy sites.²

This attempt at nation-building was severely disrupted by the influx of a large number of Palestinian refugees when Transjordan occupied the West Bank in 1948 and annexed it in 1950 (changing its name to Jordan).³ The demographics of the country were severely disrupted as 900,000 Palestinians joined the 450,000 Jordanians. The Christians and the Muslim elites settled in the towns, the rest in the refugee camps in both East Bank and West Bank.⁴ According to Gandolfo this was a difficult time of adjustment: During the Mandate period many Palestinians had been exposed to concepts of trade unionism and democracy and were critical of the monarchy relying on the tribes and the military.⁵ Among the majority Bedouin population of the East Bank on the other hand, tribal identity remained strong. Some minorities also constructed

² Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 50; Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 11. In Prince Ghazi's essay *The Tribes of Jordan* one can see how Bedouin and Islamic identity are combined to provide an Eastern Jordanian identity and legitimacy for the King: 'the tribes without their tribalism; the Arabs in the desert, rather than the desert in the Arabs – will personify and manifest the very essence of Islamic virtue, as embodied super-eminently by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself, this being the ultimate realization of harmony between Islam and the Arab tribesman, and the fulfilment of the promise under every distant black tent in the deserts of Arabia.' Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, *The Tribes of Jordan at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century*, 1999, 29.

³ As Avi Shlaim has argued, King Abdullah openly joined the other Arab leaders in opposing the partition plan, but negotiated secretly with the Jewish Agency and with the blessing of the British over the partition of Mandate Palestine between the Zionists and Jordan. When the Arab armies attacked the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, the Jordanian army took control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 125. For more information see Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁴ Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 217, 222.

⁵ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 2.

themselves as a tribe to be part of this social structure.⁶ Palestinian refugees held on to kinship and old ties of village or neighbourhood as these traditional institutions provided a sense of refuge.⁷

The Palestinians received Jordanian nationality and the King tried to incorporate them into the state as much as possible without disrupting his power base. Gandolfo writes that Amman became Jordan's capital and the East Bank received more government subsidies, while Jerusalem and the West Bank dwindled in importance. The highest ranks of government, administration and the army remained in the hands of East Bankers, leaving the Palestinians to rise in the realms of business and education. The Palestinian notable families that had been allied to the Western powers and the Hashemites allied themselves to the King soon after 1948 – the Nashashibis for example acknowledged Jordan's annexation of the West Bank in return for high positions in Jordanian society. The Palestinians in the refugee camps found themselves in a worse socio-economic situation than those living outside. Many Jordanian Palestinians emigrated to find work abroad, especially in the oil-rich Gulf countries, and the remittances they sent back to Jordan greatly boosted the Jordanian economy.⁸

The international political representation of the Palestinians remained in the hands of the Arab rulers, but many Palestinians realized they did not have the interests of the people at heart and resorted to unorganized groups of *fadā'iyyīn* (guerilla fighters) who conducted cross-border raids into Israel, and to transnational Arab nationalist and Communist movements and their local parties and organizations. King Abdullah's negotiations with the Zionists and his attitude towards Palestine and the Palestinians made him subject to severe criticism and led to his assassination in 1951 as he visited the Haram al-Sharif. Under his grandson King Hussayn (r.1952-1999) tensions between Jordanians of Palestinian origin and East Bankers increased. These tensions exacerbated

⁶ Ibid., 17, 86.

⁷ Ibid., 112; Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 223–224.

⁸ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 1–41, 160–195.

when Jordan lost the West Bank in 1967 and another influx of Palestinian refugees settled in the country, many of whom were uprooted a second time.⁹

The defeat of the Arab armies and the failure of Arab nationalism strengthened the development of Palestinian nationalism as the *fadā'iyīn* became more powerful. A new leadership emerged from the new middle class in the diaspora and took over the existing political structures or established new ones. Their ideology was mostly secular nationalist and socialist, and their fighters and supporters were mainly recruited from the refugee camps.¹⁰ Most notably, in 1969 Yasir Arafat and his organisation Fatah took over leadership of the PLO (an umbrella organisation bringing together several resistance organisations) and established a state-within-a-state in the refugee camps in Jordan.¹¹ When the PFLP (one of the PLO's organisations) hijacked four civilian airplanes in September 1970, King Husayn confronted the *fadā'iyīn* in a civil war, and expelled the PLO to Lebanon. King Husayn's rule became increasingly authoritarian – mainly through the *mukhābarāt* (security services) – and by propagating 'a Hashemite-oriented form of Jordanian nationalism' in which there was no space for Palestinian identity and nationalism.¹²

After a brief respite in the 1970s due to the booming economy, the First Intifada in 1987 again increased tensions as the PLO became strongly based in the West Bank. King Husayn denounced his claim to the West Bank in 1988, claiming to support the PLO in their struggle for an independent Palestinian state and to act in the Palestinians' best interests. Gandolfo points out that on the flip side however it made personal, professional and commercial connections between Palestinians in the West Bank and in Jordan more difficult, and it paved the way for the official peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994 and

⁹ Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 227, 240–241; Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 10–13.

¹⁰ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 3; Sayigh, *From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 144–187; Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 240–273.

¹¹ The PLO had been established in 1964 by the Arab League to represent the Palestinians but in effect acted as a mouthpiece of the Arab leaders. When it was founded, its members were from the traditional notable class, and its first chairman was Ahmad Shuqayri, son of As'ad Shuqayri. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 358–362.

¹² *Ibid.*, 362–363; Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 13, 32–35, 95.

stronger economic and security relations with Israel and the West, none of which have benefited the Palestinians.¹³

Under severe economic strain King Hussayn lessened his authoritarian rule and in 1989 parliamentary elections took place, in which the Muslim Brotherhood won overwhelmingly.¹⁴ To counter this political trend the election system was reformed to give more weight to the loyal tribal areas. *Mukhābarāt* control was replaced by bureaucratic control and regulations as every political party, NGO and social organisation had to register with the government and was severely restricted in its operations. Because of this Quintan Wiktorowicz characterises Jordan as a 'facade democracy' which relies on 'management strategies' and occasional 'instruments of repression' rather than coercive force. In his view the Jordanian system of control is not complete nor hegemonic, leading to a constant fluctuation in the level of regime control and the possibilities to 'challenge the boundaries of the political.'¹⁵

The economic situation was exacerbated by a third wave of Palestinians who had to be incorporated into the Jordanian socio-economic and political system during the Gulf War 1990-91 as 300,000 Jordanians – most of them of Palestinian origin – were expelled from Kuwait in a reaction to the PLO's support for Saddam Hussayn.¹⁶

In 1999 King Abdullah II succeeded his father. He continued to cultivate good relations with the US and Israel and mainly undertook neo-liberal economic reforms such as extensive privatization and the conclusion of a free trade

¹³ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 21, 36–38.

¹⁴ The Jordanian economy was largely dependent on subsidies, aid and remittances from the oil states (mainly Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia), and when throughout the 80s the oil prices dropped due to war and political turmoil in the Gulf region, Jordan's economy experienced a severe recession. The government turned to the IMF and imposed austerity measures. Riots in the southern loyal regions fed the need for political reform and led to the end of martial law and political liberalization. Yann le Troquer and Rozenn Hommery al-Oudat, 'From Kuwait to Jordan: The Palestinians' Third Exodus', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 40; Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 69, 164–167; Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 12.

¹⁵ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 12–43. Every NGO has to register with a ministry which means it has to limit its activities to what is covered by that particular ministry, leading to fragmentation of social activity. 'Political activities' (as defined by the state) and opposition to the state are not allowed. Self-disciplinary mechanisms are put in place through the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) which acts as an umbrella organisation for NGOs and falls under the Ministry of Social Development.

¹⁶ Le Troquer and Hommery al-Oudat, 'From Kuwait to Jordan.'

agreement with the US and the establishment of Qualified Industrial Zones in which Israel and Jordan produce for the US. Gandolfo points out that these privatization measures increased the socio-economic gap as the (mainly Palestinian) business elites drew closer to the government, and the middle and lower classes became poorer.¹⁷ Additional economic strain was put on Jordan as Iraqi refugees poured in after the American invasion in 2003 and Syrian refugees from 2011 onwards – among whom were also Palestinian refugees.¹⁸

Because the identity of individual Palestinians is formed both by their collective experiences and by individual socio-economic and cultural experiences, identities of Palestinians in Jordan and their manifestations have shifted over time.¹⁹ Gandolfo argues that nowadays the Palestinian middle class who no longer live in the camps are less likely to wish for return to Palestine than the Palestinians who live in the refugee camps. They occupy 'a grey area of identity' as each individual combines his or her Palestinian identity – often enacted through kinship relations, an appreciation of a shared history and feelings (and sometimes acts) of solidarity with other Palestinians – with an attachment to the Jordanian socio-economic system and life-style.²⁰ On the other hand, the Palestinians who remained in the camps largely hold on to their refugee status and hope to return to Palestine. It has been argued that this loyalty to the right of return has made people hesitant to leave the camps in order to advance themselves socially and economically, but one could also say that their low social and economical status made it impossible for them to move out of the camps and led them to hold on to their refugee status even tighter in hope of a better future in Palestine.²¹

¹⁷ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 169.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 112–118, 160–195.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27, 177–183.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 187–195.

4.2 Islam in Jordan

With the failure of secular Palestinian nationalism, many Palestinian refugees turned to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi movements. During the 1980s and 1990s discontent was increasingly articulated and enacted in Islamic terms, and Islamic grassroots organisations had more space to develop after the political liberalization in 1989. As these movements combined their Islamist agenda with support for the Palestinian cause, the connection between identity and religion became stronger.²²

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Jordan in 1945, is considered moderate as its criticisms are always aimed at government policies rather than at the political structure or the legitimacy of the regime. Wiktorowicz argues that it has enjoyed limited government support (though fluctuating over time) as the 'loyal opposition'²³ and as such developed as the largest and most organized social movement in Jordan, focussing on charitable and cultural activities and offering grassroots support to those in need, particularly those in the refugee camps. The Islamic Action Front, the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood established in 1993 has become the largest opposition party.²⁴

The Muslim Brotherhood's slow grassroots approach and its operations within the framework of the government have led to criticism by other Islamic movements who embraced different attitudes towards politics and struggle. Several of these movements came from Palestine, such as Hamas, while others had links to Salafi groups and the Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many were influenced by Wahhabism as many Jordanians went to Saudi Arabia to study and to work. The 1994 peace treaty with Israel increased their fervour. These groups found especially fertile ground in Zarqa, which had absorbed many returnees from the Gulf.²⁵

²² Ibid., 197.

²³ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 93.

²⁴ For an historical overview of the relation between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the Hashemites, see Ibid., 4–5 and chapter 3 Islamic Social Movement Organizations and the Muslim Brotherhood 83–110; Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 221–222.

²⁵ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 226–232.

As bureaucratic regulation limits the space for NGOs and political parties, Wiktorowicz argues that most Islamist activity happens through informal social networks. The Salafis, who challenge the political structure and the legitimacy of the regime (and some of whom resort to violence), are severely limited in their opportunities both for ideological and practical reasons and therefore resort to informal organisation which is mainly based on traditional social structures such as the family and the neighbourhood, embedding 'collective action in everyday interactions'.²⁶ The main social tie is the teacher-student relationship, which links network clusters together. Due to the inflexibility of Salafi dogmas and the importance of scholarly and personal reputation, disagreements often lead to fragmentation in the movement.²⁷

With the growth of political Islamism and Salafism the king's traditional Islamic authority is questioned. Wiktorowicz sees this as a prime example of Eickelman and Piscatori's understanding of 'Muslim politics' (see chapter 1). In the contemporary world, the struggle over the interpretation of Islamic symbols mainly means that rulers who have based their legitimacy on Islamic credentials are being challenged by Islamist groups.²⁸ King Abdullah II attempts to establish himself as the spokesperson of 'moderate Islam' based on his family's credentials as descendants of the Prophet, custodians of the Holy Places in Jerusalem and former custodians of Mecca and Medina. He supports an individual, ritualized, nonconfrontational and depoliticized interpretation of Islam as opposed to political Islam in all its forms.²⁹ The regime's approach operates both in the national and the international arena as it aims to delegitimize Islamist

²⁶ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 2, 6–9, 15. Wiktorowicz's work adds to the development of Social Movement Theory and its Resource Mobilization approach which is based on the idea that 'movements require resources and organization of some kind to mobilize sustained collective action.' Formal organizations are seen as mechanisms of collective empowerment as they link individuals through an organizational structure and provide institutional resources. Informal organizations on the other hand are seen as a transitory phase, bound to become more institutionalized. Recent studies however, such as the one by Wiktorowicz, show that this informal organisation is particularly effective in more repressive political systems and as such can be a strategic choice rather than a mere transitory phase.

²⁷ Ibid., 138–139.

²⁸ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5; Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 45–48.

²⁹ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 77.

opposition at home, and acts as an ideological contribution to the US's 'War on Terror'.

The main initiative of the king to boost his religious legitimacy and participate in this ideological attack on what he calls 'takfiris' (those who pronounce others to be infidels) is the Amman Message. Without attention for the socio-economic and political grievances that underly this trend in Islam, these 'radicals' are portrayed as uneducated 'misguided fanatics', killing 'whenever and wherever they can', implying that proper guidance and education will do the trick to strike a blow at their roots. Most importantly, they need to be instilled with the proper respect for tradition as taught and transferred by the '*ulamā*' and protected by the royal family.³⁰ The Amman Message claims to constitute 'a definitive demarcation of true Islam in all its forms, and an authoritative identification – if not a definition – of orthodoxy in Islam.' As such, it 'amounts to a historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijmā*³¹) of the *Ummah* (nation) of Islam in our day, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam' that has not existed since the Caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib. It is made clear that only the Hashemites are able to do this: 'This is in accordance with the inherited spiritual and historical responsibility carried by the Hashemite monarchy, honored as direct descendants of the Prophet, the Messenger of God – peace and blessings upon him – who carried the message.'³²

As Islam is such an important factor in the King's legitimacy, Islamic institutions in Jordan are strongly controlled by the government. Mosques, *awqāf*, *zakāa* committees, religious courts, religious schools etc. are under government control. Imams and preachers performing the *khuṭba*³³ are civil servants (although due to a lack of qualified preachers sometimes preachers are appointed who are not directly linked to the government). In Wiktorowicz's view,

³⁰ King Abdullah II of Jordan, *Our Last Best Chance: A Story of War and Peace* (Penguin, 2011).

³¹ Unanimous consensus of the community, one of the bases of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Usually, this means consensus of the *ulamā*' (Islamic scholars).

³² Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, 'Introduction to True Islam and the Islamic Consensus on the Amman Message', ammanmessage.com, last accessed 07-05-2014.

³³ The *khuṭba* is the sermon in the mosque on Friday and during a religious festival.

mosques have become a 'mouthpiece of the state'.³⁴ The government also sponsors organisations, people and events to propagate its own understanding of Islam. Examples are the Islamic Cultural Centers run by the Ministry of Awqāf, NGOs sponsored by members of the royal family,³⁵ and prayer meetings for religious occasions (such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Ramadan,³⁶ and Ra's al-Sana al-Hijriya) in the King Abdullah Mosque in Abdali. This support of religious institutions and public Islamic space underlines the religious legitimacy of the regime, while at the same time allowing them to exercise extensive control.³⁷

Even so, NGOs manage to challenge this government-sponsored Islam. Wiktorowicz and Suha Taji-Farouki call for a broader understanding of the term 'politics' to not only include state bodies and political parties but also 'symbolic struggles over the rules that guide everyday life'.³⁸ Even though the government controls many aspects of the activities of NGOs, there still exists space within them to challenge the status quo. Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki argue that:

While Islamic NGOS are ostensibly apolitical development organisations tightly regulated by the state, we argue that, because they are contextualised by struggles over culture and values, they are inherently political. (...) Rather than directly confronting the state or participating in formal politics, Islamic NGOS are engaged in social struggle at the level of cultural discourse and values.³⁹

³⁴ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 46.

³⁵ Most notably the Young Muslim Women Association (est. 1972), the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institution for Islamic Thought (est. 1980, <http://aalalbayt.org/>), and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (est. 1994, <http://www.riifs.org/>). Ibid., 81; Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 205.

³⁶ For example, through control over *khutbas* and religious programs on television, the 'discourse of Ramadan – the expressed interpretation of Ramadan through both speech and ritual – is controlled by the regime, which channels it into ritualism and concern with the hereafter. (...) The state sponsors Islam as individual rather than as a framework for social activism.' On the other hand, Islamists focus on concern for equality and justice: 'It is a time to revolt, whether physically or spiritually.' Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 75.

³⁷ Ibid., 15, 51–70.

³⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz and Suha Taji-Farouki, 'Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan', *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2000): 687–688. Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki stress the importance of 'new social movements' which deal with 'issues of identity, culture, and post-materialism' and struggle through society and cultural bodies rather than state institutions.

³⁹ Ibid., 686.

4.3 Sufism in Jordan

Hassan Abu Hanieh has written the only study on Sufism in Jordan that is translated to English.⁴⁰ While it is somewhat inconsistent in its conclusions and limited to interviews with *shaykhs* and as such does not give an idea of the relations between these *shaykhs* and their followers, how the followers experience their religion, and how far the reach of these *shaykhs* really goes, it is useful to start mapping Sufism in Jordan.

The *ṭuruq* in Jordan have their roots – like its inhabitants – in all corners of the Middle East. Some go back to the nineteenth-century settlement of Islamic scholars in the area, encouraged by the Ottomans. Some *ṭuruq* originated in the networks connecting Jordan to Syria, such as the Syrian *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hashimi's branch of the Shadhiliyya-Alawiyya, to which *Shaykh* Nuh Keller belongs. Several *ṭuruq* were brought to Jordan by Palestinian refugees, such as the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya, the Qadiriyya, the Rifa'iyya, and the Shadhiliyya-Darqawiyya-Filaliyya. The Kasnazaniyya came from Iraq in the 2000s, as the *Shaykh* and many followers (both Arabs and Kurds) fled the war there. There is also a branch of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya, and there are several groups and individuals who are affiliated to Sufism outside of the framework of the *ṭuruq*.⁴¹

Today the *ṭuruq* seem to play a minor role in contemporary Jordanian society. Their numbers have dwindled and they are mainly inward looking.⁴² Sufi leaders engage in educational activities, and Abu Hanieh writes that some *ṭuruq* have established charitable institutions and are experimenting with new media to reach out to society.⁴³ A good example is the role *Shaykh* Nuh Keller has in the Traditional Islam network (see paragraph 1.5.2). Abu Hanieh mentions that the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya has established several institutions that include a

⁴⁰ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 116–122.

⁴² Interview with an expert on interfaith dialogue in Jordan on 25-11-2013.

⁴³ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 14.

mosque, an orphanage, and a soup kitchen (but provides no reference).⁴⁴ Some scholars are intellectually interested in Sufism and attend a *dhikr* occasionally, but do not consider themselves active members of a certain *ṭarīqa*. Very few people are actively committed to spreading the Sufi message. In the contemporary climate in Jordan in which Islamism and Salafism are growing, all aspects of Sufism become less pronounced.⁴⁵ All accounts of these activities however are mainly based on interviews with *shaykhs* and should be followed up by anthropological fieldwork among their followers to see what is happening and what this means for the followers and for society at large.

The royal family are considered practicing Sufis, even though no one knows which *ṭarīqa* they belong to.⁴⁶ According to Abu Hanieh, Emir Abdallah incorporated Sufism into the ideological and organisational state apparatus (as did other Arab states) as many official religious posts since the establishment of Jordan have been held by people 'who displayed moderate Sufi tendencies of a particularly centrist socio-religious nature.'⁴⁷ During the 1980s the government tried to further incorporate Sufism as a counterweight to the rise of the Islamist movements by making several attempts to establish a Higher Council for Sufism. This did not succeed – based on Abu Hanieh's account it seems that the main reason was the bickering of the *shaykhs* and their unwillingness to accept one of them as the head of such a council, but there was also the realization that such a body would become a tool in the hands of the government.⁴⁸

As we have seen in paragraph 4.2, King Abdullah presents himself as the champion of 'moderate Islam' in opposition to political Islam in the national and international arena of 'Muslim Politics'. One can find a Sufi streak in initiatives like the Amman Message. Prince Ghazi's book *Love in the Holy Qur'an* and the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 162–163.

⁴⁵ Interview with an expert on interfaith dialogue in Jordan on 25-11-2013.

⁴⁶ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11. According to Abu Hanieh the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs has mainly been staffed by moderate Islamists, but in 1941 the first Grand Mufti of Jordan, *Shaykh* Hamza al-Arabi, was a Sufi, and the *Dār al-Iftā'* has mainly been held by Sufis. Also, the supreme judge and the *mufti* of the army have often been a Sufi. He bases this analysis on interviews with Sufi *shaykhs*. Ibid., 186–188.

⁴⁸ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 13, 190–194.

focus on 'love' in A Common Word shows a distinct influence of Sufi thought. Sufism is presented as the spiritual part of Islam 'that intersects with the tenets and the fundamentals embraced by all religions.'⁴⁹ This use of Sufism as a religion of love and tolerance in such political projects is widespread (see paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2), and can be seen as what Ernst calls 'Sufism and the politics of peace' (see paragraph 1.5.2). We see these 'politics of peace' in Jordan on the national and international level, as some of the royal NGOs and research centres are committed to spreading what they see as the moderate, tolerant version of Islam articulated in these messages. The list of signatories shows that these initiatives are supported by political leaders and traditional Islamic authorities who support a reformed Islam, for example in Egypt Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi (1928-2010, then Grand Imam of al-Azhar), Ali Gomaa (1952, Grand Mufti of Egypt), Ahmad al-Tayyib (1946, then President of al-Azhar University, now Grand Imam of al-Azhar, from a well-known Sufi family in Upper Egypt) and in Syria Ahmad Kufaro, Muhammad al-Buti, and Muhammad Habash (see 1.5.2). It also includes more independent Islamic scholars and Sufi leaders, such as Tariq Ramadan (1962), Yusuf Qaradawi (1926), Nuh Ha Mim Keller (1954), Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri (1951, leader of Minhaj ul-Quran), and *Shaykh* Nazim al-Haqqani (1922-2014). The reformist approach of Traditional Islam is well represented, and as we have seen, many Sufi leaders are included.

In the twenty-first century, US policy makers also see the benefits of sponsoring Sufism to counter 'radical Islam', 'supporting and encouraging the building of "moderate Islamic networks" in an attempt to universalize the model of tolerant Islamic Sufism.' These networks consist of research institutes, think tanks, Sufi orders and governments cooperating in conferences and studies etc. Abu Hanieh sees this as a contemporary manifestation of the old 'loyalty-patronage' model (also discussed by Heck, see paragraph 1.5.2) as Sufi groups

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9, 205. The official website of the Amman Message, <http://www.ammanmessage.com>; A Common Word, <http://www.acommonword.com>; Love in the Holy Quran (revised 6th edition 2012), <http://altafsir.com/LoveInQuranIntroEn.asp#.VEPjyFfUef8>. All of them last accessed on 19-10-2014.

bolster the legitimacy of the authorities. Needless to say, some Sufi movements' connection to Western powers discredited Sufism even further in the eyes of those opposed to Western influence.⁵⁰

Abu Hanieh writes that Jordanian Sufis have never rebelled against the government (with the exception of Laith al-Shbeilat, a Sufi who was arrested in 1992 for opposing the government, but who denied the charges) and that most Sufi *shaykhs* in Jordan support the regime verbally, even though they all claim independence of any outside influence. He attributes this to the fact that the Sufis adhere to the principle of 'obedience to the guardian', and that they accept the genealogical legitimacy of the Hashemites and consider them to be Sufis. The participation of some Sufi *shaykhs* in official Islamic occasions hosted by the King in his mosque in al-Abdali is an example of this support. Abu Hanieh, however, raises the question if this support is genuine, referring to one *shaykh* he interviewed who said that this support is only superficial as the *shaykhs* oppose the regime amongst their followers.⁵¹ These comments are of course extremely generalizing and need to be verified by additional research in all Jordanian *turuq*, not relying on the words of the *shaykhs* alone, but taking into account the relationship between *shaykh* and follower.⁵² In an oppressive state like Jordan, the truth of this matter will be difficult to verify by an outsider.

Abu Hanieh adds that 'to date, none of the Sufi orders in Jordan has developed a strategy for engaging or participating in political life, or for establishing political parties specific to their orders, as their counterparts have done in numerous other Arab and Islamic countries.'⁵³ However, as noted for example by Lincoln, Heck, Stjernholm and Pinto and in the Jordanian context by Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki, if we define 'politics' as broader than participating

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13–14, 194–195.

⁵¹ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 201–203.

⁵² The Review Panel stresses that '[t]his is the opinion of Abu Hanieh. We think that not all sheikhs are with the regime or against it, each sheikh bears the responsibility of his own opinion.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 8; Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁵³ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 14.

in party politics but include other kinds of social participation⁵⁴ – especially in a situation where almost every kind of social activity is in some way controlled by the government – then many Sufi *shaykhs* and *ṭuruq* are politically active. Especially when we take into consideration Eickelman and Piscatori's understanding of 'Muslim politics' as the competition over the interpretation of Islam then Sufi *shaykhs* are definitely involved in 'Muslim politics'. Before we can conclude anything on the matter however, we need to examine the internal authority structures of the *ṭuruq*, as the degree of influence a *shaykh* has over his followers influences their degree of participation in this broader 'Muslim politics'. The attitude of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya shall be examined in chapter 7, and the conclusion to Part II.

4.4 The Yashrutiyya in Jordan

Before 1948 there was a small community of followers who had come to Jordan in the 1930s from Lebanon.⁵⁵ In 1948 many followers fled to Amman, most of them from al-Walaja. As the West Bank was annexed by Jordan, the communities in the West Bank also fell under Jordanian rule. *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi visited Amman and Jericho several times and some followers visited him in Beirut. In 1960 *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's son *Sīdī* Ahmad moved to Amman where he became responsible for the followers in Jordan (both East and West Bank) and the Gulf.

In 1967 the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel and many Palestinians fled, many for the second time. Many followers of the Yashrutiyya fled to Amman and Zarqa and flocked around *Sīdī* Ahmad, who suddenly became responsible for a massively increased community. His house in al-Weibdeh was the centre of the *ṭarīqa* in Jordan from 1960-1980. When *Shaykh* Ahmad became

⁵⁴ See paragraph 1.5.2. Lincoln, 'Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution'; Heck, 'Introduction'; Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 84; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria'; Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki, 'Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics', 686.

⁵⁵ Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 139.

shaykh, the *zāwiya* near the Fourth Circle became the international centre of the *ṭarīqa* until 2005. *Shaykh* Ahmad built a new *zāwiya* in the neighbourhood of Wadi al-Sir, near the Eighth Circle, which was inaugurated in 2005. In Jordan most of the followers live in Amman, but there is also a community in Zarqa. Especially in earlier years they did not have the possibility to visit the *zāwiya* in Amman often and they were more dependent on themselves, but nowadays the followers from Zarqa join the activities in the *zāwiya* on such a regular basis that one can include them in the analysis as part of the community in Amman.

Nowadays, the community is considered the largest Sufi *ṭarīqa* in Jordan.⁵⁶ The community is very close, but at the same time aims to participate in wider society. *Shaykh* Ahmad is not involved in the Amman Message, but does show his respect for the King by attending religious events hosted by the King in his mosque in Abdali, and indirectly supports the King's interpretation of Islam. In the next three chapters, we shall discuss the authority of the *Shaykh* within the *ṭarīqa* and the place of the *ṭarīqa* in society and its relationship to the regime.

⁵⁶ Meeting with Hassan Abu Hanieh on 28-11-2013.

Chapter 5

The *Shaykh*

In this chapter, we will discuss the doctrinal and functional aspects of the *Shaykh's* authority in Amman. We shall first discuss how the idea that 'all the *Shaykhs* are one' is understood by the followers in Amman, and what this means for their attachment to the previous *Shaykhs* (especially *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din) and the current *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* Ahmad. Following from this, we shall discuss how they understand the spiritual and physical succession of their *Shaykhs*, particularly the succession of *Shaykh* Ahmad, and how they see the *Shaykh*, what he means to them and which practical roles they attribute to him. Then we shall discuss what are the traditional and charismatic aspects of his authority, and what this means for theories of the institutionalisation of charisma.

5.1 All the *Shaykhs* are One

Shaykh Ahmad explains that there is an essence (*asās*) in the *ṭarīqa* that is unchanging while the forms (*shakl*) or manifestations change. This essence is the spiritual link between past and present. For example, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi dressed according to his time, while *Shaykh* Ahmad always dresses in a suit: dress codes change but the *Shaykh* is and remains the *Shaykh*. Similarly, books look different in different editions but the content is the same. Also the *zāwiya* changes – the design of the building changes, the social role changes, but the religious practices performed in the *zāwiya* stay the same.¹

This essence of the *ṭarīqa* is the '*aqīda*', a concept that is often translated into English using the words 'belief', 'creed', 'dogma' or 'doctrine'. For the followers however, it means much more. 'The '*aqīda* is bigger [than the sharia], it

¹ Meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti and Dr. Ali at the *zāwiya* in Amman on 26-03-2013.

is the umbrella; the 'aqīda is *īmān*, and the *īmān* is in the heart (*qalb*).² It encompasses not only their beliefs, but also the rules on which they base their life: the sharia, both devotional practices (*'ibādāt*) and social rules (*mu'amalāt*). The 'aqīda is not just an abstract theoretical concept; it is present in the hearts and minds of the followers. When a follower is considered a good follower of the *Shaykh*, he or she is described as 'having the 'aqīda inside'. The *Shaykh* does not shy away from theological discussions about the 'aqīda in his *mudhākara*, and the followers are encouraged to discuss this among themselves.

On a theological level, the *Shaykh* receives and transmits the Islamic 'aqīda, believed to be the same 'aqīda that Muhammad received and transmitted.³ It is said to be the unchanging essence of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya – and in their view, of Islam as a whole. As the *Shaykh* explained: the Islamic 'aqīda teaches that God is one. The Sufi 'aqīda teaches that there is a special connection between God and the Prophet Muhammad, that God is always present (*ḥāḍir*) and that a person always has a connection (*ṣilla*) with God, whatever he or she is doing. Along with most Sufi orders, the Yashrutiyya teaches that Muhammad has a *khalīfa* (pl. *khulafā'*, successor), the *wārith muḥammadī* (Muhammadan heir) or the *nūr muḥammadī* (Muhammadan light) – they believe this *khalīfa* to be the *Shaykh* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya.⁴ *Shaykh* Ahmad explains that every human has a link (*waṣl*) to God, that God chooses how to operate that link, and that the *Shaykh* puts this into practice. As such he himself is the link to God. He is the *murabbī* (educator, pedagogue): he raises the followers, like a father raises a child.⁵

The belief that 'all the *Shaykhs* are one' is found among all *ikhwānā*. In Amman, it is often followed by the expression 'the 'aqīda is one,' which is considered to be the explanation. The *Shaykhs* are considered the same

² AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

³ *Shaykh* Ahmad's *mudhākara* during the meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on Thursday evening 28-03-13 (unrecorded).

⁴ Explanation of *Shaykh* Ahmad during a semi-informal meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad, Dr. Ali, and five followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman, 06-04-2013 (unrecorded).

⁵ Meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti and Dr. Ali at the *zāwiya* in Amman on 26-03-2013.

because they transmit the same *'aqīda* – even more, for the followers they *are* the *'aqīda*:

When I see him I feel in my heart he is my *'aqīda*, what he asks me to do about God, how to see God, how to worship our Lord, what the *mubāya'a* asks from me. I feel him in my heart.⁶

For the followers, the *'aqīda* is therefore very much alive and present, embodied by the *Shaykh* in its most perfect and complete form. Further explanations stress in different combinations that all *Shaykhs* follow the path of Muhammad, that they are the inheritors of Muhammad and that the *nūr muḥammadī* shines in all of them. As we have seen in paragraph 1.4, this is a classical Sufi doctrine according to which the *nūr muḥammadī* is passed on through the *awliyā* as inheritors of the Prophet. For this reason, they consider the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya the mother of the *ṭuruq* because it embodies the direct message of the Prophet Muhammad.⁷

As such, for them all the *Shaykhs* are essentially the same even though their outward forms – their bodies – are different. They transfer and embody the *'aqīda*, the *nūr muḥammadī*, and because of this they are an extension (*imtidād*) of each other: 'They are all *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, there is no difference.'⁸

Important to note is that without exception all respondents mean the four *Shaykhs* from the Yashruti family: *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, *Shaykh* Ibrahim, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, and *Shaykh* Ahmad. The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya was founded by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti and his coming to Acre is considered the moment when it all began.⁹ While they respect the previous Shadhuli masters – and all Sufi masters for that matter – the *Shaykhs* they spiritually connect to, are these four. Through them, the followers connect to the

⁶ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁷ Women's meeting at the *zāwiya* in Amman 30-03-2013.

⁸ AM3-2 in Interview AM3 with seven followers in Amman on 16-11-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview AM3.

⁹ Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9.

Prophet, the Islamic *'aqīda* and the divine light. Through them, they are educated in the Islamic *'aqīda* and in the Islamic behaviour and worship.

How I see the *Shaykh Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, so I see the previous *Shaykhs*. The same view (*nazara*), one view. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ibrahim, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Muhammad al-Hadi, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad, together. The same view. The *'aqīda* is one. God is one, *'ibāda* (worship) and *dhikr* is one. The *tarbiya* is one. The goal is one. A religious and a social goal... the same *'aqīda*. The axis in place of (*qutbe niyābatan 'an*) *Sayyidnā* Muhammad. The same path, the same conduct (*sīra*), the same Muhammadan path/behaviour (*sulūk muḥammadī*) on which the four *Shaykhs* of the *ṭarīq* walked.¹⁰

[This relation] is an extension (*imtidād*) of our relation with *Sayyidnā* Muhammad pbuh. When *Sayyidnā* Muhammad lived on earth as a man, 1435 years ago – until now, we feel that *Sayyidnā* Muhammad [is] with every one of us. (...) And this is an extension of the Muhammadan principle. He did not do anything outside of this context ever, it started and it ended with him. This is why we see this extension in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, then in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ibrahim, then in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Muhammad al-Hadi, then in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad – and after a long period we will see it in *Sīdī* Ali and in *Sīdī* Hadi. It is an interior extension. (...) *Sayyidnā* Muhammad pbuh, we feel him in everything we did and do and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* tells us we need the *ta'lim* (teaching) of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Muhammad pbuh who came 1435 years ago. And until now we walk and continue the Noble Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet and in addition to it the *ta'lim* of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din – we walk and educate (*netrabba*) accordingly.¹¹

AM3-6 The divine secret (*al-sirr al-ilāhi*) is transferred from one to one.

AM1-3: She says she sees no difference between *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* now and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* before, because they are one thing. The main reason is that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*

¹⁰ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1. The connection to the Prophet was strongly stressed in this interview, especially by ZA1-1, who was the main respondent throughout Interview ZA1.

¹¹ AM2-3 in Interview ZA1. This answer was given in the context of the discussion of the importance of the succession within the family. The connection to the Prophet was strongly stressed in this interview. This respondent was also the one who brought up this point in Interview AM2 when it had not yet received much attention, which means this answer reflects her individual opinion as much as the group consensus of Interview ZA1.

is light, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is light, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is light, she sees *Sīdnā Ahmad* as light and he who was before him as light.¹²

Therefore we should understand the doctrine ‘all the *Shaykhs* are one’ as ‘all the *Shaykhs* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya are one’ because all four transmit and embody the divine light and the ‘*aqīda* and teach this to their followers, thus exhibiting both traditional and charismatic authority at the same time. As we shall see in paragraph 5.4, they are all considered to be spiritually present even after their death, especially in the *zāwiya* in Acre where they are buried,¹³ but the main relationship is with the current *Shaykh*. Because of this focus on the four Yashruti *Shaykhs*, we will now turn to examine the founding *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti more closely, referring to the early history of the *ṭarīqa*, but focussing on how this history is interpreted by the followers in Amman.

5.2 The Authority of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din

One cannot discuss *Shaykh* Ahmad’s role without referring to the founding *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. When I told *Shaykh* Ahmad I want to focus my research on the role of the *Shaykh* in the *ṭarīqa*, he said I should first read about *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, then write about how he passed the *ṭarīqa* on to his son,¹⁴ which shows how important he is considered to be. Fatima al-Yashrutiyya’s books about her father’s life, sayings and *karāmāt*¹⁵ are still read by the followers. Therefore, the official narrative of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din’s life and teachings and the follower’s understanding of this narrative is essential when understanding

¹² AM3-6 and AM1-3 in Interview AM3. AM1-3 often explained the answers of female respondents, sometimes adding new information as she did here. In this case, she referred to the theme of light that was discussed earlier in the interview.

¹³ For an extensive discussion of the role of the tombs of the previous *Shaykhs* in Acre, see chapter 11.

¹⁴ *Shaykh* Ahmad during a semi-informal meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad, Dr. Ali, and five followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman, 06-04-2013.

¹⁵ *Karāma* (pl. *karāmāt*) means ‘dignity’, often translated as ‘miracle’. Muslims distinguish between *mu’jizāt*, miracles performed by prophets, and *karāmāt*, performed by other people with God’s grace, although this distinction is not always very clear.

Shaykh Ahmad's position. Rather than provide an historical analysis of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's authority (which has been done by Van Ess¹⁶), I am concerned here with the image that the contemporary *Shaykh* and followers have of their founder and his milieu, in other words of the 'charismatic moment' in which the *ṭarīqa* originated.

Shaykh Ahmad says that the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya began when *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din arrived in Palestine as he did not want to keep his grace (*ni'ma*) to himself but wanted to spread it.¹⁷ He was

the carrier of the banner of the Muhammadan *da'wa*, in a time and condition in which the area in which he settled was in real need for someone to bring life and Islamic and spiritual vitality among its children, and in their thoughts and hearts (*af'ida*).¹⁸

Shaykh Ahmad calls *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din 'the axis of his time (*quṭb zamānihi*), and the inheritor of the Muhammadan knowledge (*wārith al-'ilm al-muḥammadī*),¹⁹ the perfect guide (*al-murshid al-kāmil*),²⁰ 'al-quṭb al-ghawth', the lamp of the sharia and truth (*nibrās al-sharī'a wa-l-ḥaqīqa*):²¹

He was not just a *shaykh*, but he was a scholar and a jurist, a *murabbī* and a *muwajjih* (guide, someone who points you in the right direction), and the master of the message (*ṣāhib al-risāla*) that he spread among the people, following in Muhammad's perfect footsteps.²²

Shaykh Ahmad uses concepts from the Sufi tradition that have been used to describe Sufi masters for centuries (see paragraph 1.4), using terminology that

¹⁶ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 46.

¹⁷ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 15-03-2014, p.2, *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to the third edition (1990) of al-Yashrutiyya, *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 16.

¹⁸ *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Masīratī fī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, 1981), 14.

¹⁹ *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to the third edition (1990) of al-Yashrutiyya, *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 16.

²⁰ Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, conducted in Beirut in 1999, in Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 835–842: 841.

²¹ *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to al-Yashrutiyya, *Masīratī fī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*, 12.

²² *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to the third edition (1990) of al-Yashrutiyya, *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 16.

points to his connection to the Prophet (inheritor of the Muhammadan knowledge, following in Muhammad's footsteps) and his highest rank among the *awliyā* (*quṭb zamānihi*, *al-quṭb al-ghawth*), and at the same time stresses his orthodoxy according to the tradition of Sufi scholars, in which sharia and *ṭarīqa* together lead to the ultimate Truth (*ḥaqīqa*) (see paragraph 1.4). According to this description, he spread the message and guided people according to the principle that Islam should be a living tradition of inner spirituality and adherence to the sharia, a combination of *zāhir* (exterior, material and physical) and *bāṭin* (interior, spiritual), which is presented as a spiritual renewal. The spiritual renewal is an important part of this description, reinforced by the image of the *Shaykh* coming from abroad, and gives us a first glimpse of the importance that is attached to renewal in this *ṭarīqa*.

In his introduction to *Mawāhib Al-Ḥaqq*, *Shaykh* Ahmad chose to draw specific attention to two *karāmāt* recorded in the book. Firstly, he shows *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's high rank and great power through the story that he brought one of his followers back from the dead. In his discussion of this story, *Shaykh* Ahmad stresses that the *Shaykh* – and the *awliyā'* and the righteous worshippers (*'ibād ṣāliḥūn*) in general – are essentially distinct from normal people.²³ Secondly, *Shaykh* Ahmad stresses his predecessor's adherence to the sharia as *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din continued to pray *ṣalāa* and additional prayers standing all night despite his extremely old age.²⁴ The choice to mention this particular *karāma* stresses that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's high spiritual rank did not absolve him from adhering to the sharia, as some people have claimed throughout history (see paragraph 1.4), but that the two are inseparably connected.

In an interview, *Shaykh* Ahmad explains why the succession always passes within the *Shaykh's* family. He says that some followers have tried to 'carry the message', but the burden was too big to bear. He illustrates this point with the story of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Sharif al-Maghrebi, a follower who had

²³ *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to the third edition (1997) of Fatima al-Yashrutīyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 3rd ed. (Beirut, 1997), 10. The story referred to can be found in *Ibid.*, 78-79.

²⁴ *Shaykh* Ahmad's introduction to the third edition (1990) of al-Yashrutīyya, *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 16.

asked *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din if it was possible for a *murīd* to reach the *martaba*²⁵ of the *Shaykh*. They went for a walk and the *Shaykh* took wider strides with each step until he flew high in the air. The follower also rose up into the air, but could not follow his *Shaykh*, who was soon out of sight. The *murīd* understood that ‘whatever his elevation in the divine stages (*al-marātib al-illāhiyya*), the *murīd* will not reach the *maqām* of his *Shaykh*.’ This point is connected to the notion that the *Shaykh* is essentially distinct from normal people. As a point of doctrine, the *nūr muḥammadi* is passed on in the Yashruti family, and the *Shaykh* is therefore always succeeded by his most able son, who has to fulfil certain conditions: he has to have something special (*khuṣūṣiyya*), the ability (*al-mukna wa-l-istaṭā’a*), aptitude of knowledge and religion (*ahliyya ‘ilmiyya wa-dīniyya*), receiving (*talaqqī*) from the *Shaykh* on the exterior and interior level, and preparation of *nafs* and *rūḥ*.²⁶

This idea and practice of hereditary succession, based on the idea that the *nūr muḥammadi* is passed along the line of genealogical descent, has become a very common occurrence in contemporary Sufism. While it has been criticized by some as a corruption of ‘golden age’ Sufi ideas and practices, it is not seen as such by its followers (see paragraph 1.4.1).²⁷ The doctrine that the *Shaykh* always comes from the founding *Shaykh*’s family is thus a common – if not universal – element in the wider Sufi tradition, and is explicitly taught by *Shaykh* Ahmad himself. According to this doctrine, the ability to reach the highest levels of the Path is reserved for the *Shaykh* from the Yashruti family who embodies the *nūr muḥammadi* and is essentially different from the normal followers, ensuring that the charismatic connection to the *nūr muḥammadi* will always be found exclusively in the *Shaykh*, making the follower forever dependent on him to

²⁵ *Martaba* (pl. *marātib*) means level, rank, office. In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya also used to refer to spiritual level

²⁶ Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, conducted in Beirut in 1999, in Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 835–842: 841. The story can be found in al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 54–55. Fatima al-Yashrutiyya mentions that *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Sharif was a scholar of the sharia, who had fled to Damascus in 1948 and there told the story to another follower, Muhammad Ali al-Kurdi. She further gives details that this walk was along the beach, towards the tomb of *walī Allāh* ‘Izz al-Dīn near Acre.

²⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 87–88, 128–129, 390 note 129.

access this force. While *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's charisma is thus institutionalised in the traditional model of family inheritance, this doctrine denies the idea of the 'drying up' of charisma, as charisma will always be embodied by the current *Shaykh*.

Like *Shaykh* Ahmad, the followers also consider *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din to be the founder of the *ṭarīqa*, and they also consider his arrival in Palestine (*tashrīf*) as the moment when it all began. They believe that he was destined to come to Palestine to spread his teaching and to benefit his followers, who were similarly destined to be found and taught by the *Shaykh*. The idea that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din travelled to find his followers is of importance for the followers in Amman. Previously people had to travel to find their *shaykh*— as indeed *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti and before him Muhammad ibn Hamza Zafir al-Madani and Abu Hasan al-Shadhili had done – but *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din had come to find *them*.²⁸ On the one hand it shows them the love and care the *Shaykh* has for his followers in the physical and spiritual realms, and on the other hand it makes the followers feel they partake in the chosenness of their *Shaykh* as they consider themselves destined to be found by him. Just as the *Shaykh* is chosen before time, they are chosen to be his followers before time.

In this discussion of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's arrival, little attention is given to his youth and to the period he spent with his *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* al-Madani, and the moment of succession after *Shaykh* al-Madani passed away. Van Ess points to the possibly problematic nature of the succession as Ali Nur al-Din contested the succession of *Shaykh* al-Madani's son Muhammad Zafir and left Misrata. *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi told Van Ess that *Shaykh* al-Madani's daughter had proclaimed Ali Nur al-Din to be the new *quṭb* and had sent him East, thus legitimizing his claim and his spread of the *ṭarīqa* in Palestine. Van Ess sees this story as a later attempt to legitimize Ali Nur al-Din's claim.²⁹ Either way, this issue does not seem to be of great concern to the followers and does not seem to play

²⁸ Informal discussion with AM2-2 in the *zāwiya* Amman on 14-11-2013.

²⁹ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 10–11.

a role in the legitimacy of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din in their eyes, as they focus on his arrival in Palestine and his spread of the message from there.

Nowadays *abnā al-ṭarīqa* stress *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's role as a teacher and role model who taught them to live according to the Book and the Sunna. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din taught at the Zaytun Mosque in Acre, even though he had no particular educational credentials other than his studies with *Shaykh* al-Madani. One of the values of the *ṭarīqa* is that while formal education is extremely desirable, it is not that which makes one knowledgeable. This attitude is still voiced by followers, as was done for example during a women's meeting in Amman where one of the ladies told the story of a university graduate who had a discussion with her father and asked him which university he had attended, even though he had not finished high school. They all agreed it is the *ṭarīqa* which taught him, and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.³⁰

The followers believe that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din called on his followers to follow his successors as they followed him, as was illustrated by one of the followers through a *ḥadīth*:³¹

There is a *ḥadīth* on *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the founder, may God sanctify his secret, that says: 'Take our words, [they are] spirit for you. We are continuous.

(*Khudū kalāmnā, rūḥ laykum. Eḥna mustamrīn*)'

Not *my* word, *we*... in the process of renewal. The *wilāya* is renewing

(*mutajaddida*) because *wilāya* is remembered (*maḥfūẓa*) in the Qur'an:

'For the friends of God there will be no fear upon them, nor will they grieve.'³²

He explained that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din not only referred to himself, but also to his successors. He connected this to the concept of *wilāya*, which he reminded us is both rooted in the Qur'an and in a continuous process of renewal as it is transmitted by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and his successors. Again we see the

³⁰ Women's meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-11-2013.

³¹ A *ḥadīth* (pl. *aḥādīth*) is a 'narrative, talk, speech', used by all Muslims to refer to the traditions about the words and deeds of the Prophet, and of his Companions and Successors. The followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya also use the term to refer to traditions about the words and deeds of their *Shaykhs*, particularly *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din.

³² AM3-2 in Interview AM3. The Qur'anic quotation can be found in *Sūrat Yūnus* 10:62.

importance attached to the concept of renewal in this *ṭarīqa*, legitimized by referring to the Qur'an and enacted through the *wilāya* embodied in the *Shaykhs*.³³

The *wilāya* is transferred from *Shaykh* to *Shaykh* and the followers are taught anew in every generation by the living *Shaykh*. In addition to this the teachings are transmitted within the community, as membership of the *ṭarīqa* continues mostly within families over generations. Connecting to the history of the *ṭarīqa* and to the earlier *Shaykhs*, is therefore intertwined with the connection to the followers' own ancestors and personal history, a transhistorical bond which is re-enacted in this generation through the bond with the living *Shaykh* and the community:

The *Shaykhs* that came before the current *Shaykh*, we heard about them from our fathers, because we did not live in the period in which they did. And the *abnā al-ṭarīqa* took teachings (*ta'limāt*) and guidance (*irshādāt wa-tawjihāt*) from the previous *Shaykhs* and transmitted them to us.³⁴

This transhistorical experience, based on traditional kinship lines, enhances the followers' feeling that they participate in the 'charismatic moment' through their relationship with the living *Shaykh* and the community.

Shaykh Ali Nur al-Din not only shaped the spiritual attitudes and concrete practices of his followers, he also shaped the environment in which they could form a community. The followers continue to acknowledge that their community life is due to their *Shaykh*, *min faḍl Sīdnā* (for example, see chapter 10). Most concretely, this happened by establishing *zawāya*.

The *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was a villa with private quarters for the *Shaykh* and his family and facilities for the guests, all arranged around a courtyard. When walking through the empty rooms one gets an impression of the activity that must have happened there. Especially impressive are the two largest halls which

³³ AM3-2 in Interview AM3. He did not go deeper into the matter of *wilāya* and none of the other participants took it up.

³⁴ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

housed the two kitchens used to prepare the food that was brought in from the *ṭarīqa*'s lands in the Galilee and to cater for all the guests.³⁵



Figure 1. The courtyard of the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha. The door on the left leads to the main kitchen which occupies the entire building on that side of the courtyard. The space underneath the arch in the back was the summer kitchen. Photo by author, 15-05-2013.

The *zāwiya* in Acre consisted of the house of the *Shaykh*, the *takiya* where the prayer meetings took place, and the rooms and facilities for the guests and the *mutajarridīn* (followers who live in the *zāwiya*). Every day people prayed together: the *ṣalāa* five times a day, and the *awrād* and *wazīfa* twice a day. A few evenings a week they would perform the collective *ḥaḍra* after reading the *wazīfa*. As mentioned there were also study meetings (*durus*). The *mutajarridīn* performed the household tasks in the *zāwiya* and everyone lived and ate together. Food

³⁵ Visit to the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha and interview with two members of the caretaker's family on 15-05-2013 (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview TA1.

was distributed among the poor in the neighbourhood as well. Thus a strong community developed around the *Shaykh* and his house which reached out to the neighbourhood. The *zāwiya* was based financially on the private wealth of the *Shaykh* (acquired through heritage and marriage), the donations from followers and the *awqāf* belonging to the *ṭarīqa*. These *awqāf* consisted of land, buildings, and the *zawāya* themselves. The Galilee being an extremely fertile region, the returns from the land must have been considerable.³⁶

Van Ess argues that this community life played a large role in the appeal of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's Path as people from all social classes and ethnic backgrounds came together in the *zāwiya*. This was particularly visible and experienced emotionally during devotional exercises, as there was no hierarchy among the followers when sitting or standing in a circle for the reading of the *wazīfa* and the performance of the *ḥaḍra*.³⁷ While Van Ess does not refer to it, this understanding fits Buehler's idea of life in the *zāwiya* as an example of Turner's *communitas* and anti-structure (see paragraph 1.4).

This period is seen by today's followers as the 'golden age' of the *ṭarīqa*. People came from all over the area to visit the *Shaykh* and participate in life in the *zāwiya*, and the *Shaykh*, the community and the *zāwiya* were respected throughout the region, enjoying wealth and social prestige due to the *Shaykh's* spiritual status and his willingness to share this with his followers. It was the ultimate 'charismatic moment', but the lines between charisma, tradition and institutionalisation are blurred. This charismatic moment was firmly rooted in the Shadhuli tradition. While nowadays the focus is on the four Yashruti *Shaykhs* and the preceding lineage is downplayed, it is not negated. Also, we see that institutionalisation already started in the period of the founding *Shaykh*, who sent disciples to proselytize, and built the *zawāya* to function as religious and social centres, thus constructing a traditional yet strongly centralised *ṭarīqa*. This further

³⁶ Van Ess, 'Die Yaśrutiya', 54–58.

³⁷ Ibid., 58.

proves the point discussed in paragraph 1.3.2, that rather than a clear break, there is a continuum between charisma and institutionalisation.³⁸

A number of followers expressed what *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din means for followers today:

Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din, he is the founder of the *ṭarīqa*. And the founder of the *ṭarīqa* in my belief didn't go, he went by the body as the Prophet, but the teaching (*ta'lim*) of the *ṭarīqa* is with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* now. Because I feel that this information with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is the same. We *ikhwānā* say [that] *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* passed away (*intaqal*), he went to another world. I cannot say he died (*māt*), because in my heart he passed away. (...) We love *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad, everybody in *ikhwānā* love him, but not in his shape. No no. If I leave this country to go anywhere, the same meaning [is] in my heart for *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* because I love him from my heart, not from his appearance. This is the rule in my heart for the *ṭarīqa*. This is my opinion. (...)

I still feel it now. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, I feel him in my heart. Because a relationship between a *Shaykh* and *murīd* is not his body, it's from inside, it's from the heart. When I heard about *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din before, I didn't see him but I feel him in my heart, I love him, I feel I love him, because he is my *Shaykh*. And now *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad in my belief he is the *Shaykh*. I feel him as I feel for *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din. The same feeling you know. Because the *'aqīda* is one, this is what I feel, this is my opinion. The relationship between me and him [is] in my heart. When I see him I feel in my heart he is my *'aqīda*, what he asks me to do about God, how to see God, how to worship our Lord, what the *mubāya'a* asks from me. I feel him in my heart. (...) Of course the person is very important for anyone, but the relationship does not depend on whether I see the person. The *'aqīda* [is] in my heart.³⁹

This quote illustrates this follower's belief that the *Shaykh* not only possesses and transmits the *'aqīda*, he actually *is* the *'aqīda*, as were his predecessors. The relationship with the *Shaykh* and with the *'aqīda* is present in the heart of the

³⁸ Most notably, see Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 42, 58.

³⁹ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

follower and it does not matter if the *Shaykh* is present or even alive – the *Shaykh* and his message are always a spiritual and emotional presence.

Another participant stresses strongly that even as this is so, the relationship with the living *Shaykh* should be the strongest:

AM1-1: Really we love all the *Shaykhs* in the *ṭarīqa*. (...) But in our period, we turn towards the living *Shaykh* (*tawajjuhā ittijāh al-shaykh al-ḥayy*) (...) We have a saying: 'Take something living from the living.' Not from one who passed away, because the relation between the *murīd* and the *Shaykh* is not only information or education; there is a relationship between two hearts. Sometimes some people received information from the *Shaykh* or – as our sister said – by way of *ilhām* (divine inspiration). That's what she wanted to say. (...) So my connection, my relationship, [is] direct with the new *Shaykh*. With the living *Shaykh*. This is the very important thing.

AM1-3 [agrees with this]: You love everyone but your relationship [is] with the *Shaykh* [who is] alive.

AM1-1: The relationship is not just education, *tarbiya* and *ta'lim* etc., there is a relationship that connects through *ilhām* (*tattaṣil bi-l-ilhām*).

AM1-3: As he said, the relationship between you and the *Shaykh Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, it is alive, to feel alive, as *madad*,⁴⁰ as *ilhām*. (...) We cannot forget Acre, never we cannot, of course, Acre is the mother *zāwiya*, and you've seen the *maqām* of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* in Acre? (...) Of course we *ikhwānā* love Acre and everything in Acre. But the most important in our life is the relationship between us and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ahmad* because we believe he is alive. The *madad*, the *ilhām*, is from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* to me.

AM1-1: You can't receive *madad* or something from the past. [It has to be] alive. If you love somebody, you love somebody who is a human being. We cannot deny our bodies or emotions, so I have somebody else to see him, to sit with him, to connect with him. (...) From the physical we deepen to the spiritual. That

⁴⁰ *Madad* literally means 'assistance, protection', especially the spiritual aid granted by a *walī* due to his proximity to God which allows him to intercede on behalf of those who place themselves under his protection. Rachida Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order? Revisiting the Concept through a Case Study of the Khalwatiyya in Contemporary Egypt', in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Howell and Van Bruinessen, 29; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 422. In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is used in the sense of spiritual energy, divine inspiration.

is why we say the stones, or the place, is not the important thing, it is an appearance of the *Shaykh*. (...) So we concentrate on the meaning behind the stones. Otherwise we worship stones, if you only concentrate on this *ka'ba* or this stone. First of all, the spiritual relationship is the most important. This is the relationship. We love him and he loves us. In the Holy Qur'an about the Prophet Muhammad God says he loves them and they love him. We need love. I didn't see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din...

AM1-3: But you love him!

AM1: I love him, but I need something living for there to be a connection, integrated, close connection (*tarābut*), and an interlocking (*tadākhul*). Every person who believed in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din and he didn't or he doesn't believe in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad it is...

AM1-3: Not acceptable!

AM1-1: He makes a big mistake. He stopped in a period. (...) The relationship should be modern and renewed.⁴¹

This discussion happened in the context of a conversation on the meaning of the *zāwiya* in Acre for the followers, which will be analysed at greater length in chapter 11. It shows an important aspect of the ideas on both people and buildings in the *ṭarīqa*, and on the way the world works in general: the distinction between the *zāhir* and the *bāṭin*. While the *zāhir* cannot be neglected it serves as a portal to access the *bāṭin*, which is the true essence and which is what really counts. But as people living in the *zāhir*, in the physical world, one has to be a part of this physical world. This is why when a follower decides to officially join *abnā al-ṭarīqa*, s/he takes the pledge to the living *Shaykh* (see paragraph 6.2).⁴² Even so, they are still emotionally and spiritually connected to the original charismatic moment of the founder as can be seen from their comments on *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, such as the one above, and in their attitude to the *zāwiya*, which we shall discuss extensively in paragraph 11.1.

Therefore the current *Shaykh* is at the same time essentially the same as his predecessors – the *wārith muḥammadī* connecting to the original and

⁴¹ AM1-1 and AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁴² AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

timeless revelation of Muhammad and transmitting the true Islamic *'aqīda*, and the *nūr muḥammadī* – and the contemporary *Shaykh* adapting the outward forms of this *'aqīda* to contemporary society.

While there was no explicit discussion of the concept of renewal, it was omnipresent in the references to renewal, innovation, and the importance of a connection to the *Shaykh* who is alive in this time, and to the dynamic 'living' nature of the faith. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's message and charismatic presence remain relevant and 'alive' through his living successor. The spiritual connection remains 'alive', and the *Shaykh* adapts the outward manifestations of this spirituality to the physical world. As we shall see, the very act of adaptation leads to the followers' view that this makes the *ṭarīqa* suitable for the present time, i.e. 'modern', while preserving respect for the tradition and maintaining the spiritual depth of the original message, adds to the followers' understanding of him being a holy (*muqaddas*) person. What O'Dea sees as the 'dilemma of delimitation', arguing that concretization leads to ossification and literalism,⁴³ in this case is not a dilemma at all as concretization and adaptation does not dilute the charismatic message, but makes it speak to people and enhances the contemporary leader's charisma and spiritual authority.

5.3 The Succession of the Shaykhs

In paragraph 5.2, we have discussed the official doctrine on the hereditary succession of the *Shaykhs* within the Yashruti family. According to the *'aqīda* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din was essentially different from his disciples as he alone embodied the *nūr muḥammadī*. He passed this on to his most able son, whom he appointed based on his *ma'rifa*.

The interpretation of this doctrine was discussed mainly in interviews ZA1 and AM3. In both interviews, the participants made a distinction between the

⁴³ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 82–84. See paragraph 1.3.

spiritual and the practical levels of the succession. The starting point is the relation between the *Shaykhs* as discussed in the previous paragraphs.

The first reaction in Interview ZA1 was that the followers do not know why a person becomes the next *Shaykh* – this question is beyond them. It is related to the transmission of the Muhammadan inheritance making the *Shaykh* the inheritor of the Prophet, which shows through his exemplary behaviour:

We do not enter those issues. Of course the level (*martaba*) of the *Shaykhs* has certain characteristics (*muwaṣafāt*) that we do not enter. (...) But of course the level of the *Shaykhs* is characterized by the *wirātha muḥammadiya* (Muhammadan inheritance). The descent (*nasab*) of the Prophet is by way of *iqtidā'* of *Sayyidnā* Muhammad (making him into the *quḍwa*, role model). And he is behaving according to the Muhammadan *sulūk*.⁴⁴

Another participant explained that they believe (*bi-l-'aqīda*) that the *Shaykh* is chosen since time immemorial (*mundhu 'ālam al-azal*) and that the previous *Shaykh* knows who is thus chosen and will prepare his successor for this office (*martaba*). He is made to 'carry the charge he is entrusted with (*ḥaml al-amāna*).' This is where the issue of the succession becomes practical and visible to the followers. This preparation is referred to as *tarbiya*: 'He educates him according to the Muhammadan *'aqīda*, the *akhlāq Muḥammadiya*, to carry the Muhammadan *'aqīda*, and our Lord helps him.'⁴⁵

In Interview AM3, the first reaction in this discussion related to the practical *tarbiya* of the *Shaykh* within the community, among the other *murīdīn*, after which they discussed the spiritual aspects:

The *Shaykh* is raised (*yatarabba*) like the *murīd* is raised. (...) He lives with the people (*al-qawm*), with the *fuqarā'*, with the *murīdīn*, he lives like the student of a school, like the son of a king or of a minister or a prime minister – there is no

⁴⁴ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1. From the very first minute of this interview, the *Shaykh* has been described by this respondent as the *niyāba* (substitute) of the Prophet Muhammad, so the stress on the link with the Prophet in this reply fits the rest of the interview.

⁴⁵ AM1-3 in Interview ZA1.

difference between them. The education (*tadrīs*) is one, *madad* comes to him like it comes to that *murīd* – that means he goes step-by-step in the states of the world (*aḥwāl al-dunya*) and the states of *dhawq* and of *wilāya*, he is not suddenly a *murshid*. This situation takes ten years, fifteen years, until the first *Shaykh* passes away, and hands over to the next *Shaykh*. And he took his place in the hearts of the *fuqarā'*, of the *murīdīn*, the followers of the *ṭarīqa*, and he has influence, they act with him like they acted with the *wārith* that was before him. From these issues he becomes the *Shaykh*.⁴⁶

But more important than this is the deeper question, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* chooses him, not because he knows most or least or because he is the best in anything. Our belief is that the *nūr muḥammadī* transfers from this person, from this image (*ṣūra*) to this image. And we follow the light, we do not follow the person. We love them because the light is embodied in them. The body will leave and deteriorate. Abu Bakr al-Sadiq said 'Who worshipped Muhammad – Muhammad has died. And who worships God – God is alive, he does not die (*man kāna ya'budu Muḥammadan fa-inna Muḥammadan qad māt, u man kāna ya'budu Allah, fa-inno Allah ḥayyan lā yamūt*)' And our *Shaykh* is living, he does not die (*wa eḥna shaykhnā ḥayyan lā yamūt*). Why? Because we follow the light.⁴⁷

On first reading, this last statement seems to say that the *Shaykh* is more important than the Prophet Muhammad. On closer reading we see that the most important thing is the light, by which is meant the *nūr muḥammadī*, which existed before all the prophets, including before the historical Prophet Muhammad as he lived on earth. The Prophet Muhammad was a human being in which shone the *nūr muḥammadī* – similarly, the *Shaykh* is a human being in which shines the *nūr muḥammadī*. The followers follow the light, focusing 'on the *Shaykh* and the Prophet, to varying degrees, considering that they are various manifestations carrying the same message.'⁴⁸ They follow the living embodiment of the light in this age as this is the path to the light of God – by focussing on this living human

⁴⁶ AM3-2 in Interview AM3.

⁴⁷ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

⁴⁸ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 13.

being and seeing beyond his human form the follower can see the light of Muhammad and of God: ‘We always follow the Muhammadan light which is embedded in our *Shaykh*. So, in that sense the *Shaykh* is always alive.’⁴⁹

The choice who will be the next *Shaykh* is communicated to the followers by signs (*ishārāt*).⁵⁰ Because of these *ishārāt* ‘we do not have to talk about who will be his *khalīfa*, we know in our hearts who will be his *khalīfa*.’⁵¹ Regarding the succession of *Shaykh* Ahmad, a lot of weight is placed on the fact that he came to Amman in 1960 where he became a deputy (*mustallim*) of his father and looked after *ikhwānā* in Jordan (which was still comprised of both East and West Bank at the time) and in the Gulf. An older follower said he himself witnessed that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Muhammad al-Hadi had said: ‘Ahmad speaks with my tongue (*Aḥmad yaḥkī bi-lisānī*).’⁵² This sign was also mentioned in Interview AM3, complemented by ‘I placed my trust (*thiqqa*) in Ahmad.’⁵³ This became even more relevant in 1967:

The first and most obvious sign (*‘alāma*⁵⁴) was how many *ikhwānā* were in Jordan as a result of the *hijra*⁵⁵ from Palestine to Jordan when *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad was based in Jordan. They gathered around him as son of the *Shaykh*. There was a relation with the son of the *Shaykh* who was based among them when they were the largest number who came from Palestine. It was a large number, who came from Palestine. (...) This is why *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* [Muhammad] al-Hadi blessed this step (*bārak hay al-khutwa*) in Amman and said about *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad that ‘he speaks with my tongue, continue with him, there is no

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For a thorough discussion of the meaning of the concept *ishāra* in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see paragraph 6.4.

⁵¹ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

⁵² ZA1-2 in Interview ZA1.

⁵³ AM1-1 in Interview AM3.

⁵⁴ The word *‘alāma* can also mean reason, but as he uses the word *ishāra* later for the same occurrence, I choose the translation ‘sign’.

⁵⁵ The basic meaning of *hijra* is ‘migration’. Religiously and historically, it refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, which is the start of the Islamic calendar, but is also used for migration in general. The question whether the Palestinians were forced to leave or left voluntarily – a topic that has been essential in defining Israel’s attitude towards the Palestinian refugees since 1948 – is thus left in the middle.

problem that he represents me (*yimathilnī*)' (...) And it was natural that there was spontaneous collective agreement (*ijmā' 'afawī*).⁵⁶

In addition to the signs that stress the relation between *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, there are also signs that stress his pious behaviour and his link to the Prophet: a follower who is about the same age as *Shaykh* Ahmad and remembers life in the *zāwiya* in Acre before 1948 – told a story about *Shaykh* Ahmad when he was around six or seven years old:

One day thousands of *ikhwānnā* came from Gaza, from the Hawran, from Aleppo. All of them slept in the *zāwiya*. *Sīdī* Ahmad woke them up and said: “*Yalla* wake up *ikhwānnā*, go to pray! It is four o'clock in the morning. *Yalla* go to pray, go to pray, go to pray.”⁵⁷

In the interview in which this story was related, the participants see this as a sign that he was chosen to be the next *Shaykh* because it showed his pious behaviour.⁵⁸ In their comments, the Review Panel add their understanding and say that this story shows that he adhered to the sharia from an early age, and that he was responsible and cared for the followers.⁵⁹ These characteristics of piety (in the form of adherence to sharia) and a loving responsibility for the welfare of the followers are common elements in the view that followers have of both *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and *Shaykh* Ahmad (see paragraph 5.4), so while there is no explicit tie to his father here, the mode of his pious behaviour still recalls *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's memory and thus shows him to be the true successor of his father. Other elements in this story are his young age, stressing the notion that he was destined to be the *Shaykh* from the beginning of his life. It furthermore stresses *Shaykh* Ahmad's connection to the *zāwiya* in

⁵⁶ ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1. One of the bases of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is *ijmā*, unanimous consensus of the *umma* (Islamic community). Usually, this means consensus of the *ulamā'* (Islamic scholars).

⁵⁷ ZA1-2 in Interview ZA1.

⁵⁸ ZA1-2 and other participants in Interview ZA1.

⁵⁹ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 14. For a discussion of the role of the Review Panel in my thesis, see paragraph 2.4.

Acre, the sacred centre connecting him to the charismatic moment, as it draws attention to the fact that he grew up there. On another level, it portrays the *zāwiya* as the centre of the translocal *ṭarīqa*, explicitly by mentioning followers from all over Greater Syria, but implying a vaster area as Gaza, Aleppo and the Hawran are situated to the South, North, and East of Acre, positioning the *zāwiya* at the centre of the *ṭarīqa*'s translocal expansion, and stressing that *Shaykh* Ahmad's authority ranges beyond the local community to include the entire translocal *ṭarīqa*.⁶⁰

Today it is very clear that *Sīdī* Ali is chosen as successor as he helps his father in everything and sits next to him during the meetings in the *zāwiya*. When *Shaykh* Ahmad travels to Beirut, *Sīdī* Ali takes over the business of the *zāwiya* and leads the *ḥaḍra* (but does not do *mudhākara*). The desktops of the computers in the *zāwiya* have a picture of *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali. And as one follower said: 'At several points we asked *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* a question and he would say for example "ask Ali".'⁶¹ Similarly, *Sīdī* Ali's son *Sīdī* Hadi is already being prepared to become *Shaykh*. When he is in Amman, he sits next to his father and grandfather during the meetings. In some households his picture is already shown next to that of his father and grandfather. I was told *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* [Muhammad] al-Hadi gave a prophecy about *Sīdī* Hadi when he was born: 'This is the sixth *Shaykh*.' One of the participants referred to an episode that had happened shortly before the interview when I was introduced by *Sīdī* Ali to his son *Sīdī* Hadi with the words that he is the future *Shaykh* of the *ṭarīqa*.⁶²

The followers accept the doctrine and the fact that since the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din the succession has always been within the Yashruti family, passed from the *Shaykh* to his eldest son (see paragraph 5.2). They explain it

⁶⁰ The speaker mentioned one other place which unfortunately was not audible on the recording of the interview. It might have referred to a Western place, but this is speculation. The West could also be absent because the *ṭarīqa* had not yet begun to spread to the Americas, or because the image of Acre as a port town was so predominant in the speaker's image that he did not include this diaspora.

⁶¹ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

⁶² AM1-3 in Interview ZA1. In my memory the words he used were 'This is the future of Sufism,' to which *Sīdī* Hadi replied: 'All of Sufism?' and *Sīdī* Ali said 'Well, the *ṭarīqa* at least.' This final sentence is the one the followers referred to in this example.

from a doctrinal perspective by referring to classical Sufi concepts (*khatam al-wilāya*, *al-irith al-muḥammadī*) and applying them to the Yashruti family:

And this house of Yashruti, founded by *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, is the Seal of the Sainthood (*khatam al-wilāya*). Muhammad pbuh is the Seal of Prophethood (...) and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, may God sanctify his secret, is the *khatam al-wilāya*. And this thing is tied with the people of God (*ahl Allah*). As a state is tied with the president, we are tied with *al-Haqq* (the Truth, meaning God). And *al-Haqq* is the one who distributes the trust among her keepers (*aṣḥābihā*). And he favours whomever he wants with his mercy (*rahma*). God has chosen Adam and Nuha and the family of Ibrahim, and the family of Imran from among all the people. And this family [al-Yashruti], God conferred distinction upon them (*ikhtassaha*). The *Ḥadra Muḥammadiya* conferred distinction upon them to be part of this list [of prophets] to carry the Muhammadan heritage (*al-irith al-Muḥammadī*).⁶³

In addition to this doctrinal explanation, the followers also argue that the concrete preparation and the education in the community plays an important role:

You believe that this *Shaykh* directs you with a strong spiritual connection. You are tied to everything in him, including his son, the one who is prepared! From the founding of the *ṭarīqa* it has been the habit that there was a son of the *Shaykh* who was prepared. (...) When the son of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din was grown up, he came from his land and accompanied him in this *martaba*, and he ascended (*nizef*) among *ikhwānā* to live with them until he drank the whole *ṭarīqa* completely.⁶⁴ And after that there was a unanimous consensus (*ijmā' dimnī*) (...) that we find as a result of the strong spiritual connection (*irtibāt*). This pulls us (*bijitnā*) even to his son. Even to the son of the *Shaykh* who is still a child, we are tied in a connection which has a part of the holiness (*naw'an min al-qudsiya*). This is what we have inherited and what we believe in. (...) This relation

⁶³ AM3-2 in Interview AM3.

⁶⁴ To this the Review Panel adds: 'He lived at the *zāwiya* as one of the followers, as one of the *mutajarridīn*, and he stayed like this until he was ready to assume his responsibilities as a Sheikh.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 14.

is historical, spiritual, just like our fathers and grandfathers before us, we are a *ṭarīqa*.⁶⁵

The love for and connection with the current *Shaykh* extends to his family because they share part of his holiness. This is why his son is the right choice to take over the *ṭarīqa*. For this participant, an important part of the preparation of the future *Shaykh* is his experience with the community. This ties the issue of the succession more strongly to the historical and social experience of the community, which he also refers to in the final sentence. It is the way it has always been since the founding of the *ṭarīqa* – this is how the *Shaykhs* chose and prepared their successors, and this is how the previous followers, his ancestors, accepted it. This attitude is an excellent example of institutionalisation of charisma along traditional lines, both in the sense that the position of *Shaykh* is hereditary, and in the sense that the acceptance of this position is transmitted in the family.

Another follower takes an even more worldly approach to the issue of the role of the family in the succession: Something precious needs to be kept within the family and just like any other inheritance, the *Shaykh* will pass it on to his son – the oldest son if he is suitable, otherwise a younger one. ‘*Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* [Muhammad] al-Hadi saw in his oldest son *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ahmad* the adequacy (*kifāya*) and the qualifications (*kafā’a*)’ and handed him the heritage of the *Shaykh*.⁶⁶

This respondent means to explain what for him is a spiritual truth in worldly terms, but inadvertently draws attention to the fact that the inheritance also includes material assets. The implication of this is different in all local contexts in which the *ṭarīqa* and the Yashruti family have properties. In Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, the *ṭarīqa*’s and the family’s properties were registered as *awqāf*, meaning that they would pass within the family regardless of what would happen to the spiritual authority of the inheritor. We see a similar situation in Jordan, where the *zāwiya* is registered as the private property of the *Shaykh*,

⁶⁵ ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

⁶⁶ AM1-3 in Interview AM3.

and will pass to his son. It was stressed to me that it should pass specifically to the son *who becomes the next Shaykh* – whether it is actually registered like this is a moot point, since by the time the *zāwiya* was registered, it was already generally accepted that *Ṣīdī* Ali and *Ṣīdī* Hadi, both the eldest son, will succeed. In both the Palestinian and the Jordanian contexts, this arrangement gives the *Shaykhs* a material base from which to enact their role of religious leaders and implement their ideals, e.g. to host, feed, educate, publish, build and renovate *zawāya*, etc., strengthening their ‘functional authority’ which derives from the performance of particular functions (again, pointing to the circular nature of authority noted by Eickelman and Piscatori).⁶⁷ Furthermore, it allows them to do so with minimal outside interference, providing them with space to practice what Heck calls ‘engaged distance’.⁶⁸ Control over the assets of religious movements in the form of *awqāf* is a great concern of centralising governments, as we saw in the Ottoman Empire and in many colonial and post-colonial states, including Syria and Israel,⁶⁹ and the family’s continued control over the *ṭarīqa*’s assets therefore strengthens both their position, and that of the *ṭarīqa*. This strengthens the followers’ belief that the Yashruti family, the *ṭarīqa* and the community of *ikhwānnā* belong together, and they trust that the *Shaykh*’s management of the *ṭarīqa*’s financial flows is for the benefit of the community.⁷⁰

The actual ceremony of the succession is very sober. After the funerary rites are finished, those *ikhwānnā* who are present convene as representatives of all *ikhwānnā* all over the world and decide who they want to be their next *Shaykh*.⁷¹ This happens through ‘spontaneous collective agreement’ – one follower compared this process to the election of Abu Bakr as *khalīfa* because everyone agreed how much the Prophet loved him. Due to the communications

⁶⁷ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58–59. See paragraph 1.3.

⁶⁸ Heck, ‘Introduction’, 3–4. See paragraph 1.5.2.

⁶⁹ For Syria, see paragraph 1.5.2, for Israel, see paragraph 8.2.2.

⁷⁰ How this arrangement works out in practice is impossible to analyse, as access to the financial accounts of the *ṭarīqa* and the Yashruti family are not available for a researcher. Since my concern is the image the followers have of the *Shaykh* and his family and they do not have insight into these figures either, I do not deem this a shortcoming in my research.

⁷¹ Interview ZA1, Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti in *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9.

by way of *ishāra* (sign)⁷² and the preparations that already took place during the previous *Shaykh*'s life, this is not a real decision, but more an affirmation that indeed they want the appointed *Shaykh*. This process is called *mubāya'a*, which implies that this is a kind of renewal of the initial *mubāya'a* every *murīd* has taken and which has to be done to the living *Shaykh*.

As we have seen, apart from the spiritual aspect which is related to the essence of the *Shaykh* and is beyond the full comprehension of *ikhwānnā* but must simply be accepted as part of the *'aqīda*, for most participants the practical aspect of the succession comes down to *tarbiya* of the outer form and behaviour of the chosen successor. The *Shaykh* raises his successor and communicates his choice to the followers through signs – in fact, the preparation of the *Shaykh* is itself a string of signs. This *tarbiya* takes place within the family and the community at large as the future *Shaykh* lives among them, and works for them together with his father. The *Shaykh* prepares his successor, and *ikhwānnā* raise their children to accept this:

ZA1-4: Our children know that after *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* will come his son, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad or *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali or *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Hadi. This *ṭarīqa* is in the form of *wirātha* and *tarbiya*. There is no one for example [who says] I raise my son to be *Shaykh*. Something like that does not happen. The *tarbiya* is the basis (*asas*) that *ikhwānnā* and the son of the *faqīr* is a *faqīr*. And of course *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is one of the *mashyakha* of the *ṭarīq* who is qualified.

ZA1-3: The *murīd* has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his *sulūk*.⁷³

We have thus examined how the followers' belief that the successor has to be the most able son of the *Shaykh* is transmitted discursively through the teachings of the *Shaykh* and the experience of the community, and comes to be

⁷² In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the *Shaykh* communicates with his followers spiritually through signs. These range from 'allusions' in the classical Sufi sense to quite explicit speech acts and gestures and everyday occurrences, which are all to be interpreted according to the follower's spiritual level and in community to receive guidance from the *Shaykh*. For a discussion of the concept *ishāra* in the Sufi tradition in general, and in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in particular, see chapters 6 and 10.

⁷³ ZA1-4 and ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

seen by the followers 'as an entirely natural process that follows the typical flow of the grace of God', as Hoffman argues regarding the same practice in contemporary Egyptian Sufism.⁷⁴ The doctrine that the *Shaykh* always comes from the Yashruti family is thus a common – if not universal – element in the wider Sufi tradition, and explicitly taught by the *Shaykh* himself. According to this doctrine, the ability to reach the highest levels of the Path is reserved for the *Shaykh* from the Yashruti family who embodies the *nūr muḥammadi* and is essentially different from the normal followers, ensuring that the charismatic connection to the *nūr muḥammadi* will always be found exclusively in the *Shaykh*, making the follower forever dependent on him to access this force. While *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's charisma is thus institutionalised in the traditional model of family inheritance, this doctrine denies the idea of the 'drying up' of charisma, as charisma will always be embodied by the current *Shaykh*.

Once a follower has completely internalized the *ṭarīqa*'s teachings and the community's attitude, and has become cognitively and emotionally convinced of the *Shaykh*'s charisma and superior spiritual rank and knowledge, this explicit teaching will ensure that s/he does not accept anyone but the son of the *Shaykh* as the new *Shaykh* – the 'most able one', as chosen by the *Shaykh* himself through his superior knowledge of what is hidden from normal human beings. Through the process of *tarbiya*, pedagogy, or in more sociological terms, socialisation, the followers come to see the *Shaykh* as the only possible leader and his teachings as the ultimate truth, giving the symbolic universe and its structure of authority a strong air of objectivity and facticity. They thus accept the *Shaykh* and his decisions for their community without question.

Berger points to the importance of the internalisation of 'roles' in the socialisation process, as the social universe is continuously re-enacted through the performance of embodied roles – through these roles, people participate in the social order, making it subjectively real and experiencing its power over them. Some roles represent the symbolic system as a whole and those embodying that

⁷⁴ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 128–129. See paragraph 1.4.1.

role are seen to embody the entire social and symbolic system. When this symbolic system is connected to the sacred, such a role gives the system an aura of existence that transcends everyday reality.⁷⁵ A similar process is clearly at work in the maintenance of the hereditary succession of the *Shaykhs* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya – both *Shaykh* and followers simply cannot imagine an alternative reality in which an ordinary follower would reach the level of *shaykh* and take over leadership of the *ṭarīqa*.

The anthropological focus on the followers' point of view obscures the actual decision making process that led to the succession of *Shaykh* Ahmad. *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi left no records of this process, and followers will give an answer based on their belief: 'because he is the *Shaykh* and he knew'. We are therefore left to guess his reasons for adhering to this custom of choosing the oldest son. I think it reasonable to assume that he himself adhered to this custom because of the socialisation he received into the *ṭarīqa* and into his specific role, internalizing these doctrines and expectations: 'The *murīd* has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his *sulūk*.'⁷⁶

The succession of *Shaykh* Ahmad was uncontested. He has no rivals for his authority, although an earlier schism still reverberates. Abd al-Rahman Abu Risha, nephew of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and *muqaddam* in the Ghuta in Syria, did not accept *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's authority. He initiated *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil al-Ansari who also lives in Amman and claims to be a *shaykh* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, a claim which is not accepted by *Shaykh* Ahmad and his followers.⁷⁷ It is unclear what this schism was based on, which part of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's authority was rejected and which alternative modes of authority were employed to justify it. In the local communities I visited, a schismatic *muqaddam* would be unthinkable, for the reasons discussed above. A *muqaddam*, while being appointed by the *Shaykh* and having received an *ijāza*,

⁷⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 33–34, 91–92.

⁷⁶ ZA1-4 and ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1. Why *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi decided that Ahmad was indeed the most able of his four sons, is also lost in history. The youngest, Khaled, became a well-known politician and died in Beirut in 1970 under suspicious circumstances. The other two sons, Ibrahim and Salah, are not active in the *ṭarīqa*, although they do visit followers from time to time.

⁷⁷ Informal discussions with followers in Amman and Acre.

is considered one of *ikhwānnā* and is respected for his role in the community, but has not necessarily reached high spiritual levels. The *Shaykh*'s successor, who is called *khalīfa* and who acts as the *Shaykh*'s deputy, is considered not only his genealogical but his spiritual heir, to whom the *nūr muḥammadī* will pass on his father's death. These are two completely different lines within the *ṭarīqa*'s organisation.

Considering the social prestige, material assets and socio-political power that go with the succession, it is beneficial for the family from a socio-political point of view to keep the *shaykhd*om within the family – but this goes together with a responsibility to use this power for the good of the community. The love and care that the followers experience from both *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and *Shaykh* Ahmad are part of their base of legitimacy, as we shall discuss more extensively in the next paragraph, and they are thus expected to use the material assets and socio-political power for the good of the *ṭarīqa*. In addition to the functional authority provided by the material assets and social prestige, the *zāwiya* in Acre provides them with charismatic authority, which we shall discuss in chapter 11.

5.4 The Role of the *Shaykh*

We have now discussed the *Shaykh*'s doctrinal authority, the beliefs that underly the authority of the *Shaykh*, as he is connected to the *nūr muḥammadī* and the *'aqīda* as a direct manifestation and through the spiritual and biological connection to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, and through him to the Prophet. But how is this authority envisaged on a more practical level? Which roles does the *Shaykh* take on, and which are attributed to him? Because these interviews were done in a group setting, we shall discuss each interview separately so we can appreciate the different focuses of the groups.

Interview AM1

In this interview, the role of the *Shaykh* as a teacher is stressed. He is seen as a *mu'allim* (teacher) and *murabbī* who teaches and transfers teachings, and he is the *murshid* guiding the followers to God. He is the *qudwa* (role model) who teaches the *akhlāq* through his example. The *ta'lim* he transfers is the same as that of his predecessors: it is the '*aqīda*. The *mabādi'*' (principles) stay the same but the *waṣā'il* (tools, mediums) change according to the times.

This understanding is mentioned in the first part of the interview when discussing a different topic:

AM1-1: And who teaches us (*'allamnā*) all these things? The *Shaykh*. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the *Shaykh* is the one who cultivates (*yazra*) this '*aqīda* and this love in our hearts.

AM1-3: He raises us (*yurabbīnā*). Because we *ikhwānnā* see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* always, how he is, [his] treatment of all the people [in] all the world, and he teaches us how to grow good manners in ourself. How? Because we watch *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, what he is doing. And you see every time and we learn everything from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, because he is the first one in the *ṭarīqa* to give us the manners.⁷⁸

Shaykh Ahmad 'concentrated on the *ta'lim* of the *Shaykh* his father, and the teaching of the *Shaykhs* who came before him. He concentrated for more than half a century on the *tarbiya* of *abnā al-ṭarīqa al-Shadhuliya*.⁷⁹

In response to the direct question 'how do you see the *Shaykh*?' the answer is the following: 'The *Shaykh* is my *murshid*, he guides me, and I take directions and teachings (*atalaqa al-tawjihāt wa-ta'limāt*) from the *Shaykh*.⁸⁰

When AM1-2 brings up the point that there is *qudsiyya* (holiness) in the *Shaykh*, AM1-1 develops this line of thought by explaining this holiness from a social point of view:

⁷⁸ AM1-1 and AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁷⁹ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁸⁰ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

Because the person who guides you towards God – and when you have ten thousand or one hundred thousand or more of people who follow this person and his teachings have an effect on these people to be good people, a good citizen (*muwāṭin sāliḥ*), a good person. (...) And if there is a certain person who can lead you (*yaqūdak*) and guide you (*yurshudak*) to be a righteous person, to be righteous in society and towards your family and your neighbours, then he has all sanctification (*taqdīs*) and appreciation (*taqdīr*) and respect (*iḥtirām*).⁸¹

When discussing their first impression of the *Shaykh* more emotional language is used. AM1-2 does not come from a family that belongs to the *ṭarīqa*, but married someone from *ikhwānnā*. When she first saw the *Shaykh*, she felt: ‘He is not a normal person. There is something about him. And this thing touched me in my heart. And then I read the *wazīfa* and went to the *zāwiya*.’⁸²

AM1-1 and AM1-3 grew up in the West Bank in the 1950s and 60s and therefore did not have extensive contact with the *Shaykh*.

The first time I saw him was when *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Muhammad al-Hadi came to Jordan when I was 6 or 7 years. My grandfather (...) took me to sit with the *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and I found [he had] sympathy for me. I was a child and he gave me a charge. I loved him from that time. He took care of me, he treated me as mature, so I loved that *Shaykh* from that time.⁸³

In this account, love for the *Shaykh* comes from the feeling that the *Shaykh* cares for the follower and looks after him. Also important for this follower is the feeling that he was respected and taken seriously even though he was still a young child. This feeling of being respected no matter what someone’s age or position is a very important value among *ikhwānnā*. They stress their equality amongst each other because they are all brothers and sisters in ‘faith and *‘aqīda*’,⁸⁴ no matter their gender, age, social background, etc. AM1-1 continues to describe

⁸¹ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁸² AM1-2 in Interview AM1.

⁸³ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁸⁴ Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-09-2014, 15.

that an older man from the *ṭarīqa* invited him to his home and treated him as mature when he was in his teens, and how he appreciated this gesture (see paragraph 6.3.2). This follower feels both looked after and respected by his *Shaykh* and his community.

AM1-2 refers extensively to the community aspect of this experience:

When he was in Lebanon he came to Jordan, everyone of *ikhwānnā* here was very happy when he heard that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* was coming to Jordan and they were waiting for this moment to see the *Shaykh*. We were maybe 4 or 5 years old but from the beginning – I am speaking for myself – I feel something very great – very very great, inside. (...) This was the first time maybe to everybody here because *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* honoured (*tusharraf*) to come from Lebanon to Jordan, every *ikhwānnā* big and old and young [came] to see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* because we believe in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and you see *ikhwānnā*, how we love *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.⁸⁵

The importance of this love is expressed throughout the interview:

AM1-1: *Maḥabba* (love) is the centre, everything revolves around *maḥabba*. The *ṭarīqa* teaches (*btrabbī*) *maḥabba*.

AM1-3: This is the *Shaykh* who taught us, how to love the people, how to deal with the people. (...) This is the ethics that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* needs *ikhwānnā* to be.⁸⁶

The stress in this interview is on the role of the *Shaykh* as a teacher. The participants love him and this is why they follow him and his teaching. First they mainly discuss the teaching as *akhlāq*; as he embodies the *'aqīda*, he can be the *quḍwa* who teaches by example. When the *Shaykh* is not present, he transfers his knowledge on the physical plane through the *muqaddam* or other followers, through letters or technology. The *'aqīda* is also transferred through the spiritual relationship between the hearts of the *Shaykh* and the followers, by way of *ilhām*

⁸⁵ AM1-2 in Interview AM1.

⁸⁶ AM1-1 and AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

or *madad* or *mawārid*,⁸⁷ transferring the *'aqīda* directly into the heart of the follower. Typical in this interview is that there is no mention of the *nūr muḥammadī* and the *Shaykh* as the *wārith Muḥammadī*. The importance of adhering to the five pillars of Islam is stressed, but there is little explicit discussion of the link of the *Shaykh* with the Prophet Muhammad. This is not to say that these interviewees do not value these concepts, as can be seen by their statements in later interviews.

Interview AM2

Throughout this interview, the stress falls on roles related to education and guidance: the *Shaykh* is the *mu'allim*, the *murshid*, the *muwajjih*, the *ustādh* (teacher), the *dalīl* (guide). The *Shaykh* teaches as a *qudwa* and by communication – by physical communication in the *mudhākara* and by spiritual communication known as *'ilm al-ishāra* (knowledge of the sign) (see paragraph 6.4). He guides the followers to know God⁸⁸ and guides them to do well in all aspects of life: 'directly to the good, in everything, whether meeting God, or dealing with people, or how to deal with yourself.'⁸⁹

Like in Interview AM1, most of those present grew up in the West Bank in the 1950s and 60s and they saw *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi for the first time when he visited Jericho in the 60s:

When he visited Jericho in Palestine, I was 17-18 years old and I had heard of the *Shaykh* and seen pictures of the *Shaykh*, but I did not know who the *Shaykh* was, and what he looked like. And when I saw him and the way he was dressed it was – from the outside (*zāhir*) you would say a normal person. But you feel that your heart beats heavily when you look at his face, it will seem that there is a halo of light evolving him, but you cannot perceive it with your eyes – you

⁸⁷ *Mawārid* (sg. *mawrid*) are sources and resources, source of knowledge and spirituality, spiritual knowledge.

⁸⁸ AM2-5 in Interview AM2.

⁸⁹ AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

perceive it with your heart. This was the first time, and the body of the human being was trembling (*ra'sha*) for the vision of the *Shaykh*.⁹⁰

Another follower was a child on this occasion and did not understand what he saw, but says his views developed when he moved to Amman and he came to understand that 'there is a secret (*sirr*), there is something that distinguishes (*bimayyiz*) this person, he is different from a normal person.'⁹¹

These answers refer to the traditional distinction between the *zāhir* and the *bāṭin*, and are related to the idea that the *Shaykh* seems a normal person but when you look closer and get to know him better he is something special. Similar stories can be found in *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*.⁹² It is a very personal experience but told in a known format – maybe even experienced because of its known format as Katz pointed out (see chapter 1).⁹³

It is mentioned that everyone sees the *Shaykh* differently depending on their spiritual level, but some participants became upset when I asked for their opinions and they stress all their opinions are the same: 'Our words are not going to differ much from the words of *ikhwānnā*, because we were all raised in almost the same *tarbiya*, with the same principles.' Even so, those who said this then continued to raise new points, such as stressing the connection between the *Shaykh* and the Prophet: 'We see in them the true (*saḥīḥ*) Islam that springs from the message of *Sayyid* Muhammad based on the Qur'an and the Sunna of *Sayyidnā* Muhammad, in them the *wirātha muḥammadiya* is completed.'⁹⁴ Another participant says that the *Shaykh* is 'all our essence (*kull duwitnā*)', stressing the strong internal connection she feels with the *Shaykh*. Another participant exclaimed: '*Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, the light of my eyes!' People laugh when she says this, but AM1-3 explains that the answer is very right and should be

⁹⁰ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

⁹¹ AM2-2 said something similar in a later informal discussion with eight followers on 18-06-2013.

⁹² al-Yashruṭiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 37–38, 118–119.

⁹³ Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism'; Katz, 'The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience'.

⁹⁴ AM2-3 in Interview AM2.

taken seriously, because 'he shows us (*biwaḍḍih ilna*) the way (*ṭarīq*), and we see better.'⁹⁵

Finally, a participant takes up these themes of *nūr* and *wārith muḥammadī* that were mentioned once before at the very beginning and not discussed further. He ties them all together, placing the *ṭarīqa* in the Sufi tradition while doing so and stressing how important it is for the *ṭarīqa* to be accepted in society as it makes Islam more acceptable in society.

If I want to accept Islam in this age, I don't accept it in the old way, I have to accept it by way of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. First of all because he is the *wārith Muḥammadī*; second because he gave us Islam in a contemporary way [so] that we can live our life with *ikhwānā*, in a social and spiritual way. Before a *mutaṣawwif* went to live in the mountain or in the wood to practice *dhikr*. When *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din came, he brought the *ṭarīqa* into society. It is better. Maybe if we had lived in those times it would have been different.⁹⁶

In this interview there is a strong stress on the role of the *Shaykh* as a teacher and guide, but the discussion deals more with the issue of developing a deeper insight into the essential reality of the *Shaykh* and of the world, than with the *akhlāq*. The theme of light is strong throughout the interview and towards the end the link with the Prophet Muhammad is stressed, both with the Prophet as a human being and with the more abstract *wirātha muḥammadiya* and the *nūr muḥammadī*. The last speaker stressed the importance of the renewal of Islam so that it continues to speak to people and fulfils their social and spiritual needs.

Interview ZA1

In this interview, again the role of the *Shaykh* as teacher is stressed, but there is more discussion of his relation to the Prophet and to the cultivation of *ādāb* than

⁹⁵ AM1-3, AM2-4, and AM2-5 in Interview AM2.

⁹⁶ AM1-2 in Interview AM2.

in other interviews. ZA1-1 sees the *Shaykh* as the *niyāba* (representation, replacement) of *Sayyidnā* Muhammad and as such as the *qudwa*, the Prophetic exemplar. 'Also, there is love between him and me, as a result of the *ādāb*. "And all of Islam is *ādāb* and *akhlāq*," as are the other revealed religions.' In this final sentence and throughout the interview, he stresses that all of this is found in Islam and is according to Islam: '*alḥamdulillah* we benefit from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* as he opens our eyes to the *ṭarīqa*, the Sufi effort, according to the Islamic *dīn*.'⁹⁷

A large part of this interview is dedicated to the succession of the *Shaykhs*, both on the spiritual and practical level (a distinction they make themselves) which has been discussed previously. The choice for the successor is based on his connection to the Prophet as the *Shaykh's* essence is part of the Muhammadan inheritance and as he shows the Muhammadan behaviour (see paragraph 5.3).

Also in this interview, the role of the *Shaykh* as a teacher and a guide is stressed: 'And the relation with the *Shaykh*, in our view, is *tarbiya*. *Tarbiya* to us and everyone.' The link of the *Shaykh* with the Prophet Muhammad in every possible way is presented as the most important aspect of the *Shaykh*. His behaviour, his teaching, and his spiritual genealogy in the form of the *wirātha muḥammadiya* are considered of the utmost importance, and when discussing the spiritual side of his succession, the only reference is to his Muhammadan qualities. Several participants talk about their love for the family and the *ṭarīqa* from a socio-historical point of view and this is accepted by the group but not taken up in the most of the conversation.

Interview AM3

The discussion starts with AM3-1 stressing the connection between the *Shaykh's* link to the Prophet Muhammad and his teaching role:

⁹⁷ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

Our relation with the *Shaykh* is a relation based on the *'aqīda*, and we consider him from the Muhammadan inheritance, following the path of Muhammad (*'ala al-ṭarīq al-Muḥammadī*). He teaches *ikhwānnā* that with which *Sayyidnā* Muhammad came, and there is a continuation.⁹⁸

He gives the word to AM3-2, who stresses the need to love the *Shaykh* in order to truly know him. Several participants continue to stress the dual nature of the *Shaykh*: he is a man (*bashar*) but also something deeper.⁹⁹

The *Shaykh* has two images. (...) The exterior picture (*al-zāhiriya*), the physical, when you visit the *Shaykh* or sit in front of him, in the *zāwiya* or any other place, this is the exterior image from which we learn the *akhlāq* and the praiseworthy qualities (*awṣāf ḥamīda*). And there is an inner image, it remains with the *murīd* wherever he goes.¹⁰⁰

This dual nature is also expressed through a common expression which is used later in the interview when one of the followers discusses *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's health: '*Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* was *zāhir al-'amr* – he was living in a coastal area and he got asthma *zāhiriyan*.'¹⁰¹ The expression '*zāhir al-'amr*' is used when the followers want to refer to the exterior aspect of the *Shaykh* (his human form) as opposed to the internal spiritual (*bāṭin*) matters related to the *Shaykh* – in this case because they refer to his health.¹⁰² Again this expression shows how they consider the *Shaykh* to embody the divine *'amr* (order) in a human body.

Another follower gives the conversation a new turn by stating that he is attracted by the light embodied by the *Shaykh*:

⁹⁸ AM3-1 in Interview AM3.

⁹⁹ AM3-2, AM1-1, AM3-3, AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹⁰⁰ AM3-2 in Interview AM3.

¹⁰¹ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹⁰² Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 17. It is a combination of the concept '*amr*,' which is used to refer to the order from God – and in a wider sense to something holy which comes from God – and the concept '*zāhir*,' which is a common Sufi term which refers to the exterior, the form, and in this case refers to the human form of the *Shaykh*. Informal discussion with a former follower in Acre on 15-09-2013.

When we see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* we feel comfort (*rāḥa*). Anyone who wants to see something comforting is attracted (*binjadheb*) by this comforting thing. We feel that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is a magnet. He attracts us to something more – more – above feelings. There is a realm inside feelings, you feel that this human being attracts you to it as if he has high energy – we use the concept ‘*nūr*’. The light – a large part of the light – is present in a big quantity. (...) As soon as you see him this thing in your heart attracts you (*bishiddak*). And as soon as you speak with him you will feel more comfortable. As soon as there is a connection (*tawāṣul*) in the middle between you and him, you will feel more comfort and connection (*rāḥa wa-tawāṣul*).¹⁰³

He continued to stress that in order to truly see the *Shaykh* one has to ‘become more active with God’ and activate the eye of the heart.

Everyone sees according to his point of view. You maybe do not see. And our brother sees something else than I see. Every one of us feels with the *Shaykh* according to the experience he lived in the *ḥarīqa*. (...) Everybody sees *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* according to the depth of his view (*ru’ya, naẓara*). One of *ikhwānnā* sees *Sīdnā* as a normal *shaykh*: ‘Hello *Shaykh*, how are you?’ He prays, he fasts, etc. Someone else sees him as slightly more than a *shaykh*, for example like a *walī* from *awliyā Allah* whom God has given big energy. Another sees him slightly bigger, and everyone sees him according to the strength of his *naẓar*. (...) The eye of the heart (...) is the eye with which we can see the *Shaykh*. And we say as *mutaṣawwifīn* that we have an active heart, and in this activity we can see our *Shaykh*. Whenever one becomes more active with God, the light increases for him.¹⁰⁴

Everyone will thus see the *Shaykh* based on the spiritual level that he or she has attained, and because of this diverse opinions are accepted by some participants, while others stress that everyone has the same view.

¹⁰³ AM3-3 in Interview AM3.

¹⁰⁴ AM3-3 in Interview AM3.

A participant who came in late explains that he who wants to deepen his religious experience and go from *islām* to *īmān* and *iḥsān* needs a *ṭarīqa* and a teacher (*ustādh*) to show him the path because there is not much written about this aspect of religion. This is why God sent the prophets, and when the prophethood ended, the *awliyā'*.

AM3-5: And we see in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* a perfect *walī* for the messages of all the *anbiyā'* (prophets), not just *Sayyidnā* Muhammad. (...) And our view is that he perfects the *nūr muḥammadī*, that he is the light that our Lord *subhanuhu wa-ta'ala* placed in the *anbiyā'* (prophets) until Muhammad. And he is our continuation (*istimrār*) of that light.

AM1-1: Inheritor (*wārith*).

AM3-5: The *wārith muḥammadī* connects us to this goal. And he is the *wārith muḥammadī*, he is the *walī*, he is the *ustādh*, he is the *murshid* for us, who takes us in either hand and takes us from the sharia to the *ḥaqīqa*, and thus we reach God faster.

This dual nature of the *Shaykh* is a recurrent theme in this interview, and the need to develop the relationship with the *Shaykh* to see his deeper meaning and his light is an important topic for most participants. In this sense he is described as teacher and guide through his sayings and example. Some try to bring the discussion back to the practical implications of this for the follower in the form of *'ibādāt*, but the interest of the most outspoken interviewees lies with the understanding of this deeper meaning. The link to the Prophet Muhammad is very strong in this interview.

Interview AM4

In this interview the main theme is *maḥabba*: 'The *ṭarīqa* is love for the *Shaykh*, and that's all. Whatever else comes later. Beyond that is supererogatory

(*nawāfil*).¹⁰⁵ This love leads them to follow his example and teachings and guidance.

The first question – how do you see the *Shaykh*? – is answered by all participants in turn. The first says that the *Shaykh* is the *wārith muḥammadī* and represents the *nūr muḥammadī*, which means

all of him – his essence (*dhāt*) and characteristics (*ṣiffāt*) – are the same characteristics of the Prophet pbuh. This we believe. Because the Prophet as a human being (in his human form) passed to the highest Friend (*rafiq*). But what remained? The light remained. And the light does not end and does not die and is irrefutable. This we believe. That he is *wārith* and represents (*yumaththil*) the *nūr muḥammadī* for us.¹⁰⁶

AM4-3 explains this further by referring to the *ḥadīth* ‘the ‘*ulamā*’ are the inheritors of the *anbiyā*,’ but quickly takes the answer in a different direction by stressing the *Shaykh*’s role as a guide to God as a great *murabbī* and *ustādh* and a *quḍwa*, guiding the disciple through *akhlāq* to the light of inner knowledge:

They inherit the ‘*ilm* (knowledge), he told you light – the light is the light of *ma’rifa*, inner ‘*ilm ladunnī*.¹⁰⁷ And we believe the *Shaykh* is a magnificent (*jalīl*) *Shaykh* or a spiritual master. He leads us – he reveals us to ourselves. And as a first step we learn the *akhlāq* from him. Me personally, I became a member because I wanted to have revelations (*kushūf*) and know God. In the beginning that was the case, but later I realized I wanted to know the Path to become a better person. I became a member of the Path to be a much better human being (*insān afdal*). Because in the Noble Qur’an God, the Glorified and Exalted, says in many verses that God loves the righteous (*muttaqīn*), ‘God loves the *ṣādiqīn*.’ And whenever I purify myself I become closer to God. (...) There is no reaching

¹⁰⁵ AM4-1 in Interview AM4 with nine followers in Amman on 23-11-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview AM4.

¹⁰⁶ AM4-4 in Interview AM4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ilm ladunnī* is knowledge that is with and from God, granted by an act of divine grace. Both are often translated as ‘gnosis’. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 193.

God but through God. I cannot reach God in my own way [points to his head]. He brings us there now, he takes me by my hand, he brings me there.¹⁰⁸

AM4-5 describes *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* as *murshid*, 'I see him as *al-amān wa-l-āmin* (both a feeling of security and a place that is secure), I see him as contentment (*qana'a*) and goodness (*jayda*), I see all things beautiful in him.'¹⁰⁹

AM4-1 stresses that it is a matter of belief and that you get from the *Shaykh* what you see in him. If you want to receive something from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, you have to love him, be humble and believe that he has something to give, 'you have to believe that he knows, that he has a higher rank. If you are equal you don't get anything from him.' He uses the story of Musa and al-Khidr in *Sūrat al-Kahf* 18:65-66 – well known among Sufis and often employed for the same purpose – to illustrate that you have to accept the *Shaykh*'s authority and go to him humbly.¹¹⁰

AM4-2 exclaims enthusiastically 'I see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* as everything. He is the basis, he is life.' AM1-3 explains this short statement by adding the element of *tarbiya*: 'She says that he is everything in the world, he is the one who educates us (*rabbīnā*) he is the one who acts for us (*biya'malnā*), he is the one who teaches us (*bi'allimnā*).'¹¹¹

AM4-6 stresses the diverse opinions people have of the *Shaykh* based on their spiritual development, but how they are all based on one thing:

¹⁰⁸ AM4-3 in Interview AM4. To this the Review Panel adds: 'There is no reaching God but with God's will. I cannot reach God in my own way. I need help and guidance.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 17.

¹⁰⁹ AM4-5 in Interview AM4.

¹¹⁰ AM4-1 in Interview AM4. AM4-7 also stressed this humility. In the story referred to here, 'one of our servants, to whom we had granted compassion and whom we had taught the special knowledge (*'ilm ladunnī*)' orders Musa to obey him without question and orders him to do three things that go against the sharia, because due to his superior spiritual knowledge he sees the hidden consequences of things. In the Sufi tradition this spiritual teacher became known as al-Khidr, 'the Green One', an immortal prophet who continues to appear and initiate people in *'ilm ladunnī*. In Sufi understandings of this Qur'anic passage, the prophet Musa symbolizes the exterior law, while al-Khidr symbolizes the interior spiritual truths. See Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 39–41. See paragraph 1.2.

¹¹¹ AM4-2 in Interview AM4.

The *Shaykh*, the *murshid*, the master, *ṣāḥib al-waqt*, it all aims in one thing: love. We love our *Shaykh*. And we take from him tangible and intangible beliefs. We don't imitate or copy blindly, we follow his good behaviour, we follow his good attitude, internally and externally.¹¹²

AM4-7 says that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*'s goal is to make you know God, and that you will get rewards in the form of *mu'jizāt* and *karamāt* – he stresses that each member of *ikhwānā* can give at least ten pages of *mu'jizāt* that happened to him or her 'min riḍā *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* (because *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is pleased with you)' or by following the signs (*ishārāt*) of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.¹¹³ Again AM4-1 stresses that if you believe, you receive things through his guidance, and you will see the deeper meaning behind things. This happens through *madad*.¹¹⁴

Led by AM4-1 they sing a verse of *nashīd* to illustrate this, and explain it:

Anta wajdī wa-ḥayātī ya 'Alī / Anta sirr Allāh dhū al-faḍl al-jalīl
Ashraqat shams al-kamāl bi-l-wujūd / Ḥayyat min nūrihā ahl al-shuhūd
Kull man dhāqa ma'anāhā ya'ūd rūḥ quds ba'da dhāk al-haykal
Qarrabatnī ba'da bu'dī bi-l-manā / 'Arrafatnī ba'da jahīlī man ānā
Ashhadatnī dār 'Akkā wa-Minā / wa-banayta fī ṭūr Sīnā manzilī

You are my ecstasy and my life, O Ali
 You are God's secret who has the majestic grace
 The sun of perfection has risen in the existence
 She greeted the people of witnessing with her light
 Everyone who tastes her meanings
 Returns as a holy spirit after being that skeleton
 After I was far she brought me close through fate
 After my ignorance she made me know who I am
 She made me witness the abode of Acre and Mina
 And you built my house on Mount Sinai

¹¹² AM4-6 in Interview AM4.

¹¹³ AM4-7 in Interview AM4. In general, Muslims distinguish between *mu'jizāt*, miracles performed by prophets, and *karāmāt*, performed by other people with God's grace, although this distinction is not always very clear as can be seen in this case.

¹¹⁴ AM4-1 in Interview AM4.

AM4-1: ‘*Anta wajdī wa-ḥayātī yā ‘Alī*’ – Ali is *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, the first *Shaykh*. You are my love and you are my life. You are God’s secret, you are God’s hidden secret. (...) When I came to know you, I came to know his Acre (...) I started to know the real things – deeper into things. That’s when I believed in you and I fell in love with you. (...) [Acre] made me see – bear witness.

AM4-4: You bear witness of God. You don’t see God, you bear witness in your heart.

AM4-1: From the darkness it made me know who I am.¹¹⁵

In this *nashīd* we see the attitude that the *Shaykh* is everything, as some followers exclaim when they are lost for words. The *Shaykh* is the *wajd* – the joy and core of existence, giving a strong feeling of existence and ecstasy – and the life of the follower. The *Shaykh* is God’s hidden secret, but he can be known and his message can be known as he manifested in the world like the sun rises – a symbol of the divine light and of the spiritual renewal that the *Shaykh* brings the followers and society at large, to which *Shaykh* Ahmad also referred in his description of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din (see paragraph 5.2). In this *nashīd*, Mina symbolizes the revelation of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad and the start of the spread of his new religion, and Acre symbolizes the *Shaykh*’s embodiment of the same Islamic revelation and the start of the spread of his message.

The word ‘*dār*’ might also refer to the role of the descendants of the Prophet and the *Shaykh* in the transmission of the revelation. In classical Arabic, the word ‘*dār*’, ‘abode’, has a locational connotation, meaning region, house (the physical structure of a residence), and home,¹¹⁶ from which derives the vernacular meaning of ‘family’. The connection of the revelation to the descendents of the Prophet and specifically of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din is thus strengthened. By knowing the *Shaykh* and his message the followers can see ‘deeper into things’ and participate in the religious experience: Mount Sinai

¹¹⁵ AM4-1 and AM4-4 in Interview AM4. This *nashīd* was probably written in the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. It appears in a handwritten collection of *anāshīd* that was compiled at the beginning of the twentieth century, kindly shown to me by the *muqaddam* of Acre.

¹¹⁶ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed.

symbolizes the religious experience and the revelation of God to Moses – the use of the word ‘*manzil*’ for ‘house’ here also has the connotation of a spiritual stage equivalent to the word *maqām*.¹¹⁷ Moses’s experience is not of the same intensity as the revelation to the Prophet and his spiritual status is not of the same rank, however, as the Prophet saw into the essence of God, whereas Moses did not, and his understanding was limited in comparison to that of the archetype Sufi, al-Khidr.¹¹⁸ Just as Moses needs al-Khidr to guide him, so the followers need the *Shaykh*. They can witness the ‘house’, the experience and revelation of the Prophet and of the *Shaykh* from the outside, but they can enter the ‘house’ of Moses. The idea that the *Shaykh* is essentially different from the followers, and that they can never reach his level (see paragraph 5.2) but can reach a deeper vision of the Islamic revelation, is thus confirmed in this *nashīd*.

An hour into the interview someone else comes in who gives the discussion a new turn by giving his view of the *Shaykh*:

Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din who founded the *ṭarīqa* said ‘all of me is Muhammadan (*anā kullī Muḥammadī*)’ because he embodied the *ta’līm* of Islam that came with Muhammad pbuh, as it is, in every detail. (...) We as *abnā al-ṭarīqa* love *Sīdnā* Muhammad. And in our *Shaykhs* we see how he behaves, how *Sīdnā* Muhammad behaved. I love to see *Sīdnā* Muhammad in this age, how he would behave. And I almost feel that my *Shaykh* behaves as if *Sīdnā* Muhammad lives today. He embodies the true Islam. The balanced, moderate and tolerant (*al-mu’tadil wa-l-wasaṭī wa-mutasāmiḥ*)... And our *ṭarīqa* embodies Islam in the new age, the true Islam.¹¹⁹

Again we see the element of renewal through love and good behaviour in the footsteps of Muhammad. AM4-1 agrees and stresses the connection to Muhammad even more: ‘As we say, we love God in Muhammad and we love

¹¹⁷ Elisséef, ‘Manzil.’

¹¹⁸ Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 39–42.

¹¹⁹ AM4-8 in Interview AM4.

Muhammad in *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*... and we love *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* in us.’ Later AM4-7 also adds: ‘He also loves us.’¹²⁰

AM4-7 continues a story he had told me during an earlier meeting¹²¹ when he said his wife and her relatives had made him love the *Shaykh* when they lived in the Gulf because she loved the *Shaykh* so much and talked about him all the time. When he said he joined the Yashrutiyya through his wife, she exclaimed ‘No, through *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*!’ and he added ‘Yes, and through *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.’ He saw the *Shaykh* for the first time when he and his wife were sitting in a bakery in Amman and ‘suddenly her face lit up like a thousand torches were shining on it,’ because the *Shaykh* had come in. When he walked out again *Shaykh* Ahmad looked at him and... [lost for words he made a movement with his arms along his body as if he dropped everything]. Back in the Gulf he lost his voice and while praying he asked *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* to give his voice back, and the next morning he prayed in such a booming voice that it scared him and he prayed the rest of the prayer in silence. Then he decided to go to Amman to see the *Shaykh*.

I came here, but he was not here. I had to wait until he came and I went to the *zāwiya*, it was full of *ikhwānnā*. They were chanting *nashīd*. My wife’s brother introduced me to the *Shaykh*. (...) When I came to him I was full with love for him. I sang the *nashīd* there which I always treasure and cherish with my life. It says “*Mā ahlā yawman*... [he starts crying]...

Mā ahlā yawman kāna fīhī liqā’u / wa-l-nāsu bayna mukabbirīn wa-muhallīlīn
Ya ka’batan ḥajjāt lahā arwāhuna / min qabli fīnati Adam mutabatili

What a beautiful day that I saw him, I met him. And everybody was chanting *Allahu akbar, Allah Allah Allah*. *Ya ka’batan* – the *ka’ba* is in Mecca,¹²² but he is our goal which our spirits visit. Before Adam – our spirits dwelt together before

¹²⁰ AM4-1, AM4-3 and AM4-7 in Interview AM4.

¹²¹ Semi-formal meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad, Dr. Ali, and seven followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 28-03-2013.

¹²² The *ka’ba* is the most sacred place in Islam, the centre of the mosque of Mecca (al-Masjid al-Haram), the *qibla* (direction which Muslims face when praying *ṣalāa*), and around which pilgrims circumambulate when on *ḥajj* and *’umra*.

Adam was born. And now I come to see him in person, in flesh and blood. My spirit was longing for him from eternity, and that moment was the culmination of my love and communication (AM4-7: and belief) when spirits meet together.¹²³

He again points to the equation of the *Shaykh* and the *zāwiya* – here the *zāwiya* in Amman – with Mecca, and the ongoing religious experience of the revelation that is accessible through the *Shaykh*. He also refers to the moment before time in which the spirits came together and accepted God as their Lord, which is recreated in the highest spiritual experience of *fanā'*, here presented as *fanā'* in the *Shaykh* – through love and spiritual communication.¹²⁴

Another follower tells us that when he was living in the Gulf he was desperately seeking for God in a state of deep despair, and when he met AM4-1 who told him about the *Shaykh* in Amman, he decided he wanted to visit him.

The night before I went, I felt something strange. I felt a strong *maḥabba* before seeing the *Shaykh*. The love I felt in the beginning was of a special kind... [he cannot find the right word and the others give suggestions until he goes for] elevated (*sharaf*). I was amazed by myself, what is happening? (...) I wanted to cry and I had not even seen the *Shaykh* yet. He [AM4-7] did not tell me anything about him ever, but I heard several recordings of *nashīd* and *ḥaḍra*, love (*hiyām*, *maḥabba*) happened to me.¹²⁵

He wanted to meet the *Shaykh* and he travelled to Amman, mentioning that a previous visit had been very difficult because the airport officials wanted to check his papers and his bags, whereas this visit was very easy.

God, the Glorified and Exalted, bears witness that God made things easy. It was as if this *Shaykh* had *baraka*, grace. And I went to Amman, I met *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* for the first time. And I was filled with longing (*mutashawwaq*) that I saw him. (...)

¹²³ AM4-1 in Interview AM4.

¹²⁴ Lings, 'The Koranic Origins of Sufism', 5–9; Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love', 150–151, 158. See paragraph 1.2.

¹²⁵ AM4-3 in Interview AM4.

We sat together for two hours (...) and I told him my whole life story, the positive and the negative.¹²⁶

In this story there is the main element of love which precedes everything else and is the main drive for the follower. But there are more elements to consider. He portrayed the love as coming suddenly, miraculously, but he was prepared to love the *Shaykh* through the strong attachment that he felt towards the members of *ikhwānnā* he had already met and the *nashīd* he had heard (see also chapter 6). Secondly, the fact that the *Shaykh* takes an active interest in his followers and guests is a recurrent element in the followers' descriptions, which they value deeply. In this story, he took care of his follower both miraculously, by easing his way in the face of the airport officials, and concretely, by sitting down with him and listening to him.

In this interview the focus is on how much the followers love the *Shaykh*. But between the lines we can also hear the conviction that the *Shaykh* loves them as well and takes care of them. This attitude can also be seen in other interviews in Amman (e.g. compare AM1-1's account of his first meeting with *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in Interview AM1) and is even more pronounced in Acre. Throughout this interview the idea is articulated that love comes first, inspiration comes first, and this pushes you to act and develop your relationship with the *Shaykh*. This decides how you look at him and what you get from him and will push you further on the path. While there is the notion to return to the Qur'an to look for teachings and the idea that the *Shaykh* acts as 'Muhammad in our age,' the stress is on the role of love for the *Shaykh* and within the community. The *anashīd* sung refer to higher spiritual states which further strengthen attitudes to authority described in earlier paragraphs, but this is not taken up by the respondents, apart from a comment referring to the spiritual unity and communication between *Shaykh* and follower.

¹²⁶ AM4-3 in Interview AM4.

Informal Discussions and Observations

While the idea of the *Shaykh* as a father is not articulated in any of the interviews, this is mentioned in more informal settings. In one of my last visits to the *zāwiya* during my first period of fieldwork, one of the ladies said she and many other followers see him as a father, because he cares for them and is so involved in their development, and she thought the reason so many people have the determination to study more is because of his encouragement. He always encourages them to continue to develop themselves, like a parent who wants his children to do well.¹²⁷ Another female follower told me on a different occasion that the *Shaykh* stimulates them to study, to keep developing themselves. When someone graduates, he prays a *du'ā'* that they will continue studying.¹²⁸

5.5 Conclusion

In chapters 2 and 3 we have noted that the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is a strongly centralised movement that is both doctrinally and organisationally revolving around the *Shaykh*. In this chapter we have examined the ideological and functional authority of the *Shaykh* (and its circular logic) and we have analysed on which elements the *Shaykh's* authority is based. First of all, the basic doctrine that 'all the *Shaykhs* are one' is adhered to by all followers. The words and images used to explain this statement were recurring combinations of elements and concepts that derived from one body of thought, a paradigm or pattern of authority. Followers subscribe to all these elements but have their own individual focus and articulate their beliefs and emotions using different elements depending on their own focus and on the context of their speech.

¹²⁷ Informal discussion with one of the followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥaḍra* on 18-04-2013.

¹²⁸ Informal discussion with one of the followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥaḍra* on 11-04-2013.

In Amman, the most important element in the paradigm of authority is the doctrine that the *Shaykh*'s position is based on the concepts of the *'aqīda* and the *nūr muḥammadī*. The embodiment of this spiritual essence is what makes him the inheritor of Muhammad and places him in a spiritual genealogy of Muhammadan inheritors that have embodied this light throughout history: the *anbiyā* and *awliyā* and finally the Yashruti family. This connection to the *nūr muḥammadī* makes them essentially different from the normal followers, who can only participate in this light through the *Shaykh*.

This is at the same time a traditional and a charismatic image of the *Shaykh*. The *Shaykh* both transmits the *'aqīda* and the *nūr muḥammadī* – a traditional image – and he *is* the *'aqīda* and the *nūr muḥammadī* – a charismatic image. We could say that the traditional image equals the physical body of the *Shaykh*, his *ẓāhirī* image, and that the charismatic image equals his spiritual form, his hidden *bāṭinī* image, but making too stark a distinction would misrepresent the beliefs and experiences of the followers, who believe that both exist at the same time and who strive to know the *Shaykh* in both forms. The one cannot exist without the other.

The *Shaykh*'s authority is institutionalised on kinship lines through the doctrine that the next *Shaykh* will always be the son of the current *Shaykh* – a doctrine that is common in contemporary Sufism. The followers believe that the current *Shaykh* knows who has been chosen to be the next *Shaykh* – knowledge that is hidden from the followers – and communicates this choice through *ishārāt*. The actual behaviour of the next *Shaykh* can also be seen as a sign, as it shows he follows the Muhammadan Path and reminds them of his predecessors, and makes it clear he is to be the next *Shaykh*. The *tarbiya* of the *Shaykh* happens within the concrete community and social context of the *ṭarīqa* and the followers connect to this as they are involved in it as witnesses. Similarly they connect to the previous *Shaykhs* as their ancestors witnessed the same process with the previous *Shaykhs*. The *'aqīda* is thus transmitted both spiritually and discursively from *Shaykh* to his son who will be the next *Shaykh*, a process that is paralleled by the followers who transmit their adherence to the *Shaykh* and his teachings

within the community. These parallel processes of *tarbiya* create the setting in which the *Shaykh* can teach and guide the followers, and the followers can participate in the *Shaykh's* charisma.

This institutionalisation and routinization of the founding *Shaykh's* charisma on traditional kinship lines does not mean that the founding *Shaykh's* charisma is lessened. The followers are convinced intellectually and emotionally that they can and do participate in this light of God. The relation between the heart of the *Shaykh* and their own which allows the *Shaykh* to inspire them with the '*aqīda*' ties them to the *Shaykh* and makes them participants in his light. This does not absolve them from the duty to do '*ibādāt*' – it affects their interior soul, not their exterior human form. This is a state that has also been described by the word '*fanā*,' but this is not a concept that was used by the followers unless I explicitly asked about it.

This belief that the current *Shaykh* embodies the ultimate value of their religious community and can connect them to it, and the continued love and devotion he inspires, shows that Weber's idea of 'routinization of charisma' needs revising, a point which is also made by scholars studying contemporary Sufism such as Lindholm and Pinto.¹²⁹ They argue that the 'charismatic moment' can happen within a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, invoked through attitudes and practices, and is still considered by believers to be the absolute 'breaking through' of the transcendent, the ultimate religious experience. As Lindholm puts it: 'Charisma here, while thoroughly personal and primary, is also thoroughly structured and systematic.'¹³⁰

We can see this in *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's time, as he acted within the centuries-old tradition of Sufism, its ideas, practices, and institutions, and was also considered charismatic. While his coming to Palestine is considered the founding moment of the *ṭarīqa* and there is relatively little attention to the tradition before it, this tradition is in no way completely negated. The *ṭarīqa* was modelled

¹²⁹ Pinto, 'Performing Baraka', 196; Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9. See paragraph 1.3.

¹³⁰ Lindholm, 'Introduction', 24–25.

on the Sufi 'existing template for sainthood'¹³¹ and organisational model of the *ṭarīqa* – if more centralised than was common in the pre-modern world.

Geaves notes that the institutionalisation process often already starts in the charismatic moment.¹³² In order to ensure the survival of his message and of his charismatic authority with its spiritual and material power within his family, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din began to proselytize, build a *zawāya*, and train his son, whom he had asked to come from Tunisia for this purpose, to be his successor. Thus the original charisma of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din has been institutionalised in the traditional model of kinship succession, sometimes presented as succession through appointment and signs (three options that Lindholm presents as separate,¹³³ but that here co-exist) ensuring the continuation of the religious experience for the followers, and securing the 'distribution of grace', the social prestige and the material assets, within the family. As Weber pointed out, this monopolizes the 'privileges reserved for those charged with religious functions',¹³⁴ but it also transmits the responsibilities that come with them as they are expected of the *Shaykh* as bases of his authority.

One of these responsibilities is to inspire spiritual renewal: through the institutionalisation of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's charisma on traditional genealogical lines, the followers continue to participate in this charisma through his spiritual and genealogical successors. His message of spiritual renewal is continued as adaptation to society, and continues to add to the *Shaykh's* charisma. The coming of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti to Palestine is seen as historical evidence of the spiritual truth that the *Shaykh* came to the *murīdīn*, rather than the other way round. Historically, *murīdīn* went in search for a spiritual master and travelled the known world to find their one master – *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din broke this pattern and came in search for them. This communicates a sense that the followers are chosen as well, just as the *Shaykh* is. It is also seen as an example of his care for his followers and the efforts he is willing to make for their

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 24. See paragraph 1.3.

¹³² Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 42, 58. See paragraph 1.3.

¹³³ Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9–10.

¹³⁴ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, quoted in Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 1.

spiritual welfare, attesting to the greatness of the *Shaykh*. The encouragement of *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali towards all their followers to develop themselves on both a spiritual and a mundane level is also seen as a manifestation of this care for them, and as an illustration of the importance the *ṭarīqa* attaches to the participation in society. As one follower puts it, the *Shaykh* wants them to be good people and good citizens. The coming of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din to Palestine strengthens the image of him as a spiritual renewer, and is considered to continue in the current *Shaykh* who aims to adapt the *ṭarīqa* to his time.

This innovative role taken by the *Shaykh* points to the circular nature of functional authority that Eickelman and Piscatori noted, as the *Shaykh*'s strong position due to his receiving of the spiritual and material heritage of his predecessors allows him to be innovative, which in turn strengthens his charismatic authority as he complies with the followers' expectations and ensures that the *ṭarīqa*'s symbolic universe continues to speak to them.

The stress on renewal shows the degree to which they value adaptation to society. According to O'Dea's 'five dilemmas', such adaptation might lead to the 'dilemma of delimitation', but we see here that this is actually seen as one of the most valued aspects of the *ṭarīqa* and of the *Shaykh*, and is experienced as a way for the religious experience to break into everyday life, rather than a diluting of the charismatic message. The 'symbolic and organizational embodiment of the experience of the ultimate in less-than-ultimate forms and the concomitant embodiment of the sacred in profane structures'¹³⁵ is not considered a diminishing of the grace, but an enhancement as it offers all followers a way to access to this grace. Here the 'routinization of charisma' does not limit the religious experience of the 'charismatic moment', the 'breaking through' of the transcendent, but rather gives the *Shaykh* the platform to teach the followers to see it in everyday life beyond the bounds of what has come to be narrowly defined as 'religion' (an attitude we shall discuss further in the following chapter).

Werbner's idea that expansion can only happen because of a *shaykh*'s charisma is shown to be more complicated: in this case innovation and charisma

¹³⁵ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas'; O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 90–98.

strengthen each other, and a charismatic *shaykh* may well be seen charismatic *because* he is expanding and innovating. Werbner herself inadvertently points to this as she argues that in the case of Zindapir and his *khalifa* Sufi Sahib travel and sacralizing of space provides them with charisma.¹³⁶

We have seen in paragraph 1.3 that charisma is not an inherent personal attribute, but has to be performed and ‘recognized’ by people based on culturally specific characteristics. In the case of *Shaykh* Ahmad, his followers see him as charismatic because of the support given to him by his predecessor, his lineage, his pious and charitable behaviour in line with what is expected of him based on the example of his predecessor, including his visible care for the spiritual and social wellbeing of the community, and a feeling of love and awe that is cultivated in the follower by his or her loved ones, often from a very early age. They consider him to provide them with an emotional connection to the essence of their religion, and to their own history as well: the ‘charismatic moment’ of the revelation of the Prophet embodied in the *Shaykh*.

The followers in Jordan mainly see the *Shaykh*’s practical role as that of teacher and guide, teaching the ‘*aqīda*’ through his sayings and through his example, making him the supreme *quḍwa*. The view of the *Shaykh* as a father who cares about the development of his children did not come up during official interviews, but was communicated to me in more informal settings. In other words: the authority bestowed upon the *Shaykh* because of his relationship to Muhammad, from both a *ẓāhir* and a *bāṭin* perspective, is exercised within the community through his role as a caring teacher and guide.

The comments on the importance of *tarbiya* in the acceptance of the succession remind us of Berger and Luckmann’s argument of the importance of the internalisation of ‘roles’ in the socialisation process as the social universe is continuously re-enacted through the performance of these roles. Through the process of *tarbiya* both *Shaykh* and followers are prepared for the roles they play in the community to the point where they internalize these roles and through

¹³⁶ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 43–47, 73–81; Werbner and Basu, ‘The Embodiment of Charisma’, 13.

them the social order, giving it an air of objective reality, of the 'natural order of things' as willed by God.¹³⁷ Through the enactment of these roles of *Shaykh* and follower, the symbolic universe and its social structure are maintained and endowed with facticity. Pinto points to the usefulness of Asad's model of the transmission of tradition and disciplinary mechanisms to analyse the character of relationships within the Sufi group, noting that charisma has to be enacted in the group, and different enactment leads to 'divergent configurations of religiosity, community, and religious subjectivities within the normative framework of a shared Sufi tradition'. Different systems of *tarbiya*, similarly, lead to different relationships between *shaykh* and disciple, and between disciples themselves.¹³⁸

We therefore turn to the analysis of this *tarbiya*, the transmission of social and spiritual attitudes and values through discursive means and disciplinary practices. This transmission happens all the time in everyday life, but specifically amongst the followers in their houses and in the *zāwiya*. The practice of the *ṭarīqa* and the places where this happens are intrinsically linked to the experience of the followers' relationship with the *Shaykh*, as the authority of the *Shaykh* is enacted through them, especially in his role as a teacher and a guide. The next chapters examine the practical aspects of the *Shaykh's* authority: how are the roles we have found in this chapter enacted by the *Shaykh*, or to turn the question around: how are they attributed to him? Which processes and dynamics are at play here?

¹³⁷ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 33–34.

¹³⁸ Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles', 73. See paragraph 1.2.

Chapter 6

Tarbiya in Amman

This chapter examines the practical aspects of the *Shaykh*'s authority: how does the *Shaykh* enact his roles, or to turn the question around: how are they attributed to him? How is the paradigm of authority in this *ṭarīqa* maintained? We have seen that the *Shaykh* is envisaged as a caring teacher – how is this role enacted? How is the relationship between the *Shaykh* and the follower developed, and what is the role of the community and the individual in this process? In other words, which processes and dynamics of education and communication are at play here as the tradition is transmitted through discursive and disciplinary means in the process of *tarbiya*?

Shaykh Ahmad al-Yashruti describes the development of the relation between him and his followers as follows:

The *murīd* develops his spiritual relation with the *Shaykh* in the *ṭarīqa* through commitment to the teachings and guidance (*ta'limāt wa-tawjihāt*) of the *Shaykh* that he receives from him directly (*mubāsharatan*) or that were provided by the guidance (*tawjihāt*) of the founder of the *ṭarīqa*, may God be pleased with him, that are present in the books of *Sittī* Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, may God have mercy on her (...) and that are transmitted orally by the *abnā al-ṭarīqa* and that concentrate on the adherence to the performance of the *'ibādāt* of the sharia in their spiritual dimensions, in its form and meaning (*shaklan wa-maḍmūnan*), and the commitment to the Islamic *akhlāq*, and the Sufi *ādāb*. And this commitment to worship (*iltizām ta'abbudī*) develops the spiritual relation of the *murīd* with his *Shaykh* in the *ṭarīqa*; it provides the *murīd* with a deep vision of the heart towards the *'ibādāt* (*ru'ya qalbiya 'amīqa li-l-'ibādāt*), it illuminates (*yakshifu*) for him the *Shaykh*'s spiritual position (*makāna*¹) in his capacity of the *wāriṭh muḥammadī*,

¹ Also translated as place, location, situation, office, authority, rank.

which means [he has] the clear Muhammadan teachings and rules (*al- ta'ālīm wa al-aḥkām al-muḥammadiya al-ṣarīḥa*) (...)

The *murīd* connects (*yatawāṣil*) with his *Shaykh* by way of his commitment to the orders (*awāmir*) and the teachings of the *Shaykh*, and making him his role model (*iqtidā' bihi*), and God will disclose meanings through the senses (*ma'ānī dhawqiyya*) to the heart of this *murīd*, so he will reach a state of spiritual witnessing of his *Shaykh* (*ḥāla mushāhada rūḥiya li-shaykhihi*), going beyond the corporeal human reality. Just as the *murīd* connects with his *Shaykh* through undertaking a *ziyāra*² to his *Shaykh* (*sa'y li-ziyāra*) and stand in his presence³ to receive *tarbiya* through his good example (*bi-l-qudwa al-ḥusna*) and the taking over (*iqtibās*) of the positive characteristics (*ṣiffāt*), this also happens through the *muqaddamīn* (...) or through his brothers who possess hearts full with the knowledge of God and his Prophet (*al-qulūb al-'amira bi-ma'rifat Allah wa-rasūlihi*).⁴

We can see from this quote that while the *murīd* should first of all turn to the *Shaykh*, the *muqaddamīn* and the other *murīdīn* also transmit the teachings. The stress is on adherence to the sharia, and the performance of *'ibādāt* and of proper *akhlāq* and *ādāb* enables the follower to develop an inner understanding of the true spiritual nature of the *Shaykh* in his capacity of the *wārith muḥammadī*. In this chapter we will see how this happens in practice within the community.

6.1 Cultivating Attitudes

As we have seen, the *Shaykh* is the one who directs the followers on this path, who teaches them 'through his action and sayings (*af'āluhu wa aqwāluhu*)' just

² A *ziyāra* is a visit; in the Sufi context pilgrimage to a *shaykh*, tomb or shrine.

³ The expression used is *'bayna ṭdayhu*, lit. 'between his hands.' This expression implies that the person is of a very high rank.

⁴ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 15-03-2014, p. 1-2.

as the Prophet Muhammad did. How does a follower obtain these teachings?

One of the followers in Amman summarizes the process:

The human being has to go to the teacher so he can learn from him. (...) We have to stay connected to him, we see how he practices his daily life, how he deals with things, how he behaves, and he is a *qudwa* for us. And we learn from his actions and sayings (*af'āluhu wa aqwāluhu*). In this way we learn from him. And every person who stays close to the *Shaykh* will be more informed. He who does not have the opportunity to be close to the *Shaykh* is close to *ikhwānnā*, who are always connected to him and he learns from *ikhwānnā*, because every one of *ikhwānnā* teaches the other, they work together, we learn from each other.

After a period of time there will be a spiritual relation between you and the *Shaykh*. The relation will be more spiritual than physical (*zāhiriyya*) (...) First of all we feel our *Shaykh*, he feels us, and the spiritual connection is more than the material connection. When he looks at us, or when we look at him, or we think about him, *ilhām* will come.⁵ Furthermore, this connection (*ittiṣāl*) with the *Shaykh* is both material and spiritual.⁶

The *Shaykh* teaches through his actions and words. The actions are what makes him the *qudwa* as the followers see how he behaves and interacts with people and they try to follow his behaviour and this way learn *akhlāq*.⁷ He is considered to walk the Muhammadan path, embody the Muhammadan ethics – some say it is as if the Prophet Muhammad is alive and they can see how he acts in the contemporary world.

The *Shaykh's* words are heard once a week during his *mudhākara* in the *zāwiya*, but everything he says outside of this context is also discussed among *ikhwānnā* as part of his teachings, in addition to the teachings of the previous *Shaykhs*, mainly the founder *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din through the books of his

⁵ In the words of the Review Panel: 'He is the source of *ilhām* for us.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 19.

⁶ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

⁷ E.g. AM1-3 in Interview AM1, AM1-3 and AM3-2 in Interview AM3.

daughter Fatima al-Yashrutiya, but also their teachings and actions as transferred orally among *ikhwānnā*.

The discussion among *ikhwānnā* is also called *mudhākara* as they remember the *Shaykh*'s words and actions in order to understand the deeper meanings and the practical lessons they can take from them for their life and spiritual development. It is essential, as this quote shows: *ikhwānnā* always discuss issues of the *ṭarīqa*, and mainly the teachings and person of the *Shaykh*. When one or all of the followers in a certain community do not have physical access to the *Shaykh*, their pool of knowledge about the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa* is an officially sanctified substitute: 'There is a *ḥadīth* for *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, that if you cannot meet with the *Shaykh*, meet with your brother and he gives you as if you take from the *Shaykh*.'⁸

This is of course extremely relevant for the followers living outside of Jordan, but also for those who do live in places frequently visited by the *Shaykh*, as these interactions among *ikhwānnā* form the backdrop to an important part of their life from the moment they are born. This is the way in which roles and attitudes are internalized which enable them to see the *Shaykh* in all the ways we have seen in the previous chapter, and that make them see him as a teacher. This is where the elements of tradition related to his authority are transmitted and engaged with, where his words and actions are interpreted and added to the stock of tradition.

This is true for those who are raised among *ikhwānnā* and for most of those who join the *ṭarīqa* later in life in what can be seen as a 'conversion' or 'reaffiliation'.⁹ There are a few conversion stories told about others that lack this element of communal preparation – for example, a Cypriot woman saw the

⁸ AM4-7 in Interview AM4.

⁹ While conversion is the changing from one religious tradition to another, reaffiliation entails changing from one group to another within a tradition. The latter is more relevant here as they were born and raised as Muslims and now join a particular Islamic sub-group, immersing themselves into a 'sub-world' within the larger reality which they internalised during the process of primary socialisation. I continue to use the word 'conversion', however, as this is the word they themselves use. Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 157–166; Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'i Tariqa in Britain', 151; Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?', 120–121. See paragraph 1.3.

Shaykh in a dream and travelled to find him and join the *ṭarīqa* – but all converts I spoke to stressed that they came to love the *Shaykh* through their spouses or friends, seeing their love and hearing about the *Shaykh* from them – even though they consider this *min faḍl Sīdnā*. In Interview AM4 we have come across the conversion story of a follower who learnt to love the *Shaykh* through his wife: When he said he joined the Yashrutiyya through his wife, she exclaimed ‘No, through *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā!*’ and he added ‘Yes, and through *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*’. Another convert was put in touch with the *Shaykh* through a dear friend (see paragraph 5.4 Interview AM4).

Mostly the concrete teaching happens first within the family and then within the community (which overlap). This is where the attitudes are formed that enable the followers to learn from the *Shaykh*: the wish to belong to the community and to connect to and learn from the *Shaykh*. This is where the worldview is developed which places the *Shaykh* at the centre and where the particular mechanisms of interpreting words and events in the community and the world at large are put into place. This is where they assume the role of *ibn al-ṭarīqa*, follower of *Shaykh Ahmad*. This process is referred to as *tarbiya*.

My parents took me to the *zāwiya*, they took me to meetings of *ikhwānnā*, in these meetings I heard *wazīfa*, I read the *wird*, the *dhikr*. When I grew up I started to watch my parents and my brothers and the whole of my family, what they do. (...) I became convinced, and I started to do it and I became a member and I grew up (*nasha't*) in the *ṭarīqa*. This was my *tarbiya* since I was small. I witnessed it with my eyes, then I practiced these things. (...) And from here we also raise our children, the same *sulūk*. We make them listen when they are small, and they observe and read, then they visit the *Shaykh* and observe the *Shaykh* and respect the *Shaykh* and treasure the *Shaykh*.¹⁰

ZA1-4: The *ṭarīqa* is based on *tarbiya* and legacy (*wirātha*), it means that our small children when they see us go to the *zāwiya* they go with us, they will be from *ikhwānnā*, *fuqarā'*, we will all be *ikhwānnā*. (...) And the same thing for

¹⁰ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

example, our children know that after *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* will come his son, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ahmad* or *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ali* or *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Hadi*. (...) There is no one for example [who says] I raise my son to be *Shaykh*. Something like that does not happen. The *tarbiya* is the basis (*asas*) that the son of the *faqīr* is a *faqīr*. And of course *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is one of the *mashyakha* of the *ṭarīq* who is qualified.
ZA1-3: The *murīd* has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his *sulūk*.¹¹

Ikhwānnā as a whole are considered to be one family and they are all involved in this communal *tarbiya* to educate themselves and each other. During one of the monthly women's meetings, the ladies mentioned this communal *tarbiya* several times. One of the teenage girls said 'It is not just your father and mother who raise you, we raise ourselves, and then we raise each other.' Another girl said it is important to respect your elders and take their advice. She also said that 'we are a group, we complete each other.'¹² One example of this communal *tarbiya* is given by a follower who grew up in a family of *ikhwānnā* but who was very sceptical. He read philosophy and was influenced by ideas that Sufism was strange to Islam. His family was not well educated and could not help him with his doubts, but some of his friends from *ikhwānnā* with whom he went to high school and university did. They made him understand, they brought him closer to the *ṭarīqa* and made him see it was part of Islam. Even though it remained difficult to combine his beliefs with his philosophical thoughts,

AM2-2: Reading helped me, *ikhwānnā* helped me, and most of all *dhikr* helped me.

AM2-6: And the *mudhākarāt* among *ikhwānnā*.

AM2-2: The *mudhākarāt* and the *mudhākarāt* of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* also (...) made things much easier for me.¹³

The *zāwiya* is another primary place where *ikhwānnā* are educated. *Shaykh Ahmad* stresses the importance of exposing children to the *ṭarīqa* from

¹¹ ZA1-4 and ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

¹² Women's meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-03-2013.

¹³ AM2-2 and AM2-6 in Interview AM2.

the earliest age and has dedicated a room in the *zāwiya* for this very purpose: a nursery where the youngest children can be taken during the meeting, equipped with video screens on which the meeting is shown, to ensure exposure to the happenings from the earliest age. As soon as they are old enough to act appropriately, their mothers are encouraged to take them to meetings, both the prayer meetings on Thursday night and study meetings, and to let them participate in the rituals. The *Shaykh* also encourages followers to discuss matters related to the *ḥarīqa* among themselves. In the next chapter we will discuss in more detail what role the *zāwiya* plays in the *tarbiya* of the followers.

Finally, there is the spiritual connection which dwarves the physical connection, and which is the ultimate means of communication between *Shaykh* and *murīd*, rather than the personal physical communication:

He helps me through his *madad*. Directly and indirectly. (...) It is not necessary for me to sit with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* because there are those who are instructed by *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* who do not see him. You have other means of communication between the *murīd* and the *Shaykh*. And these are known in all Sufi *ṭuruq*. For example through *dhikr*, through dream visions.¹⁴

Several respondents stress that this relationship has to begin with the *murīd*, who has to be open, prepared, awake, ready to receive the communications of the *Shaykh*.¹⁵ The *murīd* has to have the right attitude:

It's a matter of belief. If you believe in him as a teacher of physics, you get physics from him. If you believe in him as a lawyer, or a judge, you get this from him. If you believe that he is a messenger (*rasūl*) who gives you spiritual knowledge, you get spiritual knowledge from him. (...) There is a *ḥadīth* about *Sayyidnā* Muhammad pbuh, he said: 'If you believe in a stone, you will benefit

¹⁴ AM4-4 in Interview AM4.

¹⁵ AM4-1 and AM4-4 in Interview AM4.

from that stone.’ *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* commented on that, he said ‘it’s not the stone that benefits you, it’s your belief.’ You get the benefit because of your belief.¹⁶

First of all one has to accept that the *Shaykh* has something to give, and you have to be humble enough to receive it: ‘You have to love him. And you have to believe that he knows, that he has a higher rank. If you are equal you don’t get anything from him.’¹⁷ Then you have to develop the ability to understand the words and actions of the *Shaykh* through moral and spiritual practice. Everyone will understand the *Shaykh*’s words and actions differently, depending on his/her spiritual level:

Everybody gets something other than what other people get. That’s up to the level in which they are. [There is] a story which says [that] one man was selling wild za’atar (thyme) outside: ‘*Ya za’atar barri!*’ People at different levels in the *ṭarīqa*, one of them he heard it: (?) ‘Work, you get my (...) rewards.’ The second one, at the higher level, he said ‘*Sā’atha sawfa tara birri,*’ ‘In a few minutes you will see my rewards’. The third one heard it ‘*Issa law tara birri,*’ ‘had you seen my rewards, you would be rushing into things.’ So we get from the *Shaykh* as much as we believe in him, and (...) our spiritual level. (...) First you got to love him, and believe that he has got something to give.¹⁸

All of this points to the parallels between the *ṭarīqa*’s system of *tarbiya* and Berger and Luckmann’s ideas on socialisation.¹⁹ We have seen that socialisation happens first of all through interaction with significant others, and secondly with the larger community. This is the same in cases of ‘conversion’ or ‘reaffiliation’, where we see the same pattern of socialisation through significant others and the

¹⁶ AM4-1 in Interview AM4. *Shaykh* Ahmad also discusses this *ḥadīth* in his interview with *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9.

¹⁷ AM4-1 in Interview AM4. In the words of the Review Panel: ‘If you think that you are on the same level with him, then you will not be able to gain knowledge and guidance from him.’ Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-08-2014, 20.

¹⁸ AM4-1 in Interview AM4.

¹⁹ See paragraph 1.3

larger community.²⁰ The role of the community in the socialisation process, which is an ongoing process of world-maintenance as challenges to the individual's belief structure arise and need to be incorporated in the worldview, is clear, as it is referred to explicitly and seen from the account of AM2-2 who was helped by the *mudhākara* of *ikhwānnā* to overcome his doubts. Finally, the internalisation of the roles of follower and *Shaykh* and the relationships between them is an essential part of this process of *tarbiya*. When these basic attitudes have been established, the travelling of the Path can be taken to the next level.

6.2 Joining the Ṭarīqa

Most followers in Amman are born and raised in the *ṭarīqa*, but this does not mean they are automatically considered *abnā al-ṭarīqa*. They do *mubāya'a* to pledge allegiance to the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa*. In Amman and Zarqa it is stressed that not everyone is allowed to do *mubāya'a* and that the *muqaddam* makes sure the person is a good Muslim and a good person before he allows him or her to do the *mubāya'a*. Being from a family that is from *ikhwānnā* is not enough, the criterium is that the follower is a good person, with good behaviour, and mature. 'Before he is one of *abnā al-ṭarīqa* he has to be a human being, he has to have humanity, love human beings, not just focus on the members of the *ṭarīqa*.'²¹

When someone has the appropriate age, he goes to the *Shaykh* or *muqaddam* and asks to be part of the *ṭarīqa*. The *muqaddam* decides whether the applicant is a good person based on his own knowledge and by asking family and friends.

You know that *abnā al-ṭarīqa*, we know each other, the families. (...) And *abnā al-ṭarīqa* raise their children, the right *tarbiya* of the *ṭarīqa* (...) And the *Shaykh* or the

²⁰ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42, 91–92, 157–166. See paragraph 1.3.

²¹ AM1-1 and AM1-3 agree on this in Interview AM1.

muqaddam [knows] through his *ma'rifa* because of our family relations how the person is, how his behaviour is.²²

The *mubāya'a*²³ is considered to be a practice that goes back to the Prophet's time and that is mentioned in the Qur'an in the *Āyat al-Mubāya'a* (*Sūrat al-Fath* 48:10, more commonly known as *Āyat al-Bay'a*). The *Shaykh* or the *muqaddam* takes the *murīd*'s hand, says '*Bismillāh* (in the name of God)' and asks him/her: 'I am taking from you the pledge of allegiance to *Ḥaḍrat Sayyidunā* and to the *ṭarīqa Shadhuliyya-Yashruṭiyya*, where my *Shaykh* and your *Shaykh* (in this time) is *Ḥaḍrat Sayyidunā Ahmad al-Hadi al-Yashruti*. Do you want to pledge? (*Hal tubāya'a?*),' to which the *murīd* replies 'yes.' After this the *Shaykh* or *muqaddam* asks him/her to ask God for forgiveness and to repent from all his/her past sins and disobediences and to return to God with a sound immaculate heart, so s/he can start the journey on the path with a clean heart. The *murīd* repeats '*astaghfir Allāh al-aẓīm* (I ask for God's forgiveness)' three times, after which the *Shaykh* or *muqaddam* recites the *Āyat al-Mubāya'a*:

Those who have pledged allegiance to you, O Prophet, have pledged allegiance to God. God's hand is over their hands. So, the one who will break his pledge will break it at his own peril, and the one who will keep his pledge that he has made with God, shall soon be given a great reward by Him.²⁴

Then the *Shaykh* or *muqaddam* commands the *murīd* to fear (*yataqqi*) and obey God, and to adhere to the rules of the sharia and the *ṭarīqa*. He instructs the *murīd* on his or her duties. These duties are first of all to be a good Muslim by adhering to the five pillars of Islam²⁵ and practicing the *aḥkām al-sharī'a* (rules of

²² AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

²³ This description of the *mubāya'a* is based on several slightly different versions given by AM1-1 and AM1-3 during Interview AM1, by *Shaykh Ahmad* in an interview given in Beirut in 1999, in *Sawafta, al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 835–842: 836, and on the description given by the Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 20-22.

²⁴ The translation of *Sūrat al-Fath* 48:10 as given by the Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 21-22.

²⁵ Also known as *arkān al-islām* (pillars of Islam): *Shahāda* (declaring the creed: I believe there is no God but God, and that Muhammad is his prophet), *ṣalāa* (the Islamic prayer which is prayed

the sharia). Second there are the *aḥkām al-ṭarīqa* (rules of the *ṭarīqa*) – *maḥabba*, *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *taslīm*,²⁶ which include the practices which are specific for the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya: reading the *ṭarīqa*'s *awrād* twice a day (after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and *ṣalāat al-maghrib*), reading the *ṭarīqa*'s *wazīfa* twice a day (after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and *ṣalāat al-'ishā'*), to practice *dhikr* when s/he has time to do so, and to come to the *zāwiya* to practice the *ḥaḍra*. And finally one has to be a good person. Then the *Shaykh* or the *muqaddam* prays *du'ā'* that God will be good to the follower. One follower also mentioned that they pledge to obey the *Shaykh*.²⁷

Another *muqaddam* also stresses the importance of knowing the sharia:

He has to be polite, he has to pray, he has to fast. (...) All of the pillars of Islam, and read the *wazīfa*, commit to the *dīn*. A person who does not pray, we do not give the *mubāya'a*! I ask the question what are the pillars of Islam, what do you know about *ikhwānā*, what do you know about the *zāwiya*, [they are] questions so the *muqaddam* knows that the person is committed. We do not have something outside the sharia, this is not performed in the *ṭarīqa*, and the person who does not commit does not deserve the *mubāya'a*.²⁸

While one person tells me spontaneously how the *mubāya'a* was a life-changing experience for him, all participants emphasize that it is only one step on the Path, 'the first step of their journey to become close to God in the *Ṭarīqa*.'²⁹

AM2-2: I did the *mubāya'a* when I was one year old. [Laughter] Because personally I feel that my life began in this taking of the *mubāya'a*. Of course I was in my twenties. (...) Really, it was a divergence in my life, a different level (*marḥal*), but the *mubāya'a* is not everything in the *ṭarīqa*.

five times a day), *zakāa* (charity), *ṣawm* (fasting during the month Ramaḍān) and *ḥajj* (the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina during the month Dhū al-Ḥijja, the last month of the Islamic year. It is a duty for every Muslim to go on *ḥajj* at least once in his life, if s/he has the ability and opportunity).

²⁶ This was stressed to me by most respondents who discussed the *mubāya'a*, but the Review Panel requested I omit this sentence. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 21.

²⁷ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

²⁸ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

²⁹ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 22.

AM1-3: It is just the beginning.³⁰

It is important to note that the *mubāya'a* is the pledge to fully adhere to the *ṭarīqa*'s rules and rituals, but that the rules and rituals themselves do not change after the *mubāya'a*. There is no personalized aspect to the initiation, as is common in many Sufi movements.³¹ The *Shaykh* is considered to teach each follower according to his or her abilities, but this seems to relate more to issues of communication (see paragraph 6.4) than to the assignment of personal practices. Children who are too young to do *mubāya'a* and adults who chose for whatever reason not to commit themselves fully can still perform the same rituals. There is no personalized *wird*, and there are no ascending degrees of initiation in the *ṭarīqa* with corresponding levels of *dhikr*. Someone who is very advanced on the path (as judged by his behaviour) can ask permission to do a different *dhikr*, but this seems to be extremely rare (see paragraph 6.3.3). Most followers therefore perform the same devotional practices, both before and after *mubāya'a*.

While there is a clear idea of 'progress on the Path' and the development of the spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh* and deepening of spiritual understanding, hardly any mention was made to me of clearly defined stages on the path. This correlates to the absence of different levels of initiation and personalized *dhikr*, but there do seem to be better defined ideas on this issue than was communicated to me during the interviews. During a speech in Lebanon in 1998, *Shaykh* Ahmad mentioned the four *arkān* (*maḥabba*, *dhikr*, *fikr* and *taslīm*), after which he mentioned four *marātib*: *maḥabba*, *murāqaba*, *mushāhada*, and *fanā*.³² In an interview a year later, however, he stressed that there are not many *marātib* and *maqāmāt* and he discusses the importance of *'ibādāt* and *dhikr* until one burns the veils of the material senses and reaches

³⁰ AM2-2 and AM1-3 in Interview AM2.

³¹ Lewisohn, 'Sulūk'; Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465. See paragraph 1.2.

³² Speech given by *Shaykh* Ahmad at the opening of the *zāwiya* in Khalda, Beirut, on 13-07-1998, in *Sawafta, al-Madrassa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 829–831.

transparency (*shafāfa*),³³ and finally one enjoys the graces and lights of God directly.³⁴ During a televised interview in 2014, *Shaykh* Ahmad stated that the goal of the Path is ‘values’ (*qiyām*).³⁵

During an interview in Amman one of the followers mentioned this ‘transparency’, but was quickly interrupted by AM1-3 who stressed that they reach this through ‘*ibādāt*’.³⁶ This might point to a conscious silence on the topic as the *Shaykh* and the other ‘custodians of tradition’ want to stress their adherence to the sharia and the importance of the ‘*ibādāt*’. It is also possible that while all followers accept the possibility of these higher levels, it is not a concrete issue for most of them as they do not know who has reached these levels, and it is therefore not an actual part of their experience and their relationship with the *Shaykh* and each other. Whether there is an actual historical shift in the conceptual approach to the spiritual development and its goal needs to be subject of further research.

6.3 The Pillars of the *Ṭarīqa*

Shaykh Ahmad writes that the goal of the *ṭarīqa* is to reach knowledge of God (*al-wuṣūl ila ma’rifat Allah*) and to connect (*yarbuṭ*) people to God.³⁷ Everything on the path is undertaken with this aim. The first commitment is to follow the sharia like the other Muslims. Specific for the *ṭarīqa* are the four pillars: *maḥabba*, *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *taslīm*. All the pillars of the *ṭarīqa* are for the benefit of the followers – *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din insisted on them because he wanted to spread his grace (*ni’ma*) among all people.³⁸

³³ Transparency, the ability to see beyond the physical limits and into the hearts of people. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 221–222.

³⁴ Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, conducted in Beirut in 1999, in Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*, 835–842: 835–836.

³⁵ Interview by Akram Khuzam with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, ‘*al-Sūfiyya fi-l-Urdun, al-ṭarīqa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*’, *Hikāyāt ma’a Akram Khuzam*, al-Hurra Channel, published online on 07-10-2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vztFKBoM0jA>, accessed on 15-01-2015.

³⁶ Interview AM3.

³⁷ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.3

³⁸ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.1-2

6.3.1 Sharia

Shaykh Ahmad refers to a saying by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din: ‘Improve your exteriors (*ẓawāhirkum*) and leave the interiors (*bawāṭin*) to me.’ *Shaykh* Ahmad explains that the *murīd* has to improve his outer states (*aḥwāl al-ẓāhir*) before he can acquire the inner ranks (*marātib al-bāṭin*). He quotes *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din: ‘the *ṭarīqa* is the Qur’an and the Sunna’ and ‘every rule of the sharia has a treasure of the Truth beneath it and this treasure cannot be achieved except through the mastery of the rule of the sharia.’³⁹ Adherence to the rules of the sharia is thus presented as an essential part of the *ṭarīqa* and the first commitment the *murīd* submits to when doing *mubāya‘a*.

The importance of adhering to the sharia and to be a good Muslim is stressed explicitly, repeatedly, sometimes even heatedly, while others do not mention it as much because it is considered self-evident. Some continue to explain that they consider the sharia to include both *‘ibādāt* (practices of worship) and *mu‘āmalāt* (communal and social interactions): religion is not just something that is between you and God, but it has to direct all of your behaviour towards society. ‘The *‘ibādāt* for *taṣawwuf* is not just prayer and fasting and *ḥajj*.⁴⁰ If you go to school, if you raise your children, it is *‘ibāda*. If you help other people, if you do good things to the human beings.’⁴¹ ‘The pillars [of Islam] alone are not enough, you have to build on them, you need *mu‘āmalāt*, you need to deal with people (*ta‘āmalāt*), *ṣillat al-raḥm*, relation of a brother with his brother, your relations with your neighbour, all the Islamic *ta‘āmalāt*.’⁴²

But the sharia is not a static list of rules which one can simply follow. The sharia, God’s divine law, is revealed in the Qur’an, but the Qur’an is not a straightforward systematized book of law. It is up to the believers to interpret the Qur’an, with the help of additional information found in the Sunna, the example of

³⁹ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.1. References to Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq*, 4th ed. (Beirut, 1997), 57, 77.

⁴⁰ The *ḥajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a duty for every Muslim to go on *ḥajj* at least once in his life, if s/he has the opportunity.

⁴¹ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁴² ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

the Prophet. In Islamic history, the interpretation of the sacred sources has been done by scholars, and the resultant jurisprudence is called *fiqh*. Several schools of law (*madhāhib*, sg. *madhhab*) exist alongside each other with slightly differing interpretations. The result is a wide variety of theological and legal positions in a dynamic discursive tradition that is known as ‘orthodox’ and is now defended as Traditional Islam.⁴³ Nowadays there are many movements that question this centuries-old discursive tradition and the authority of the *madhāhib*, and seek to go back to the first sources and reinterpret them according to their ideologies. This competition over the interpretation of the sacred texts and law and the authority to prescribe correct behaviour is what Eickelman and Piscatori call the realm of ‘Muslim politics’, and is a very real struggle in Jordan.⁴⁴

Therefore, the remark that the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya follow the Qur’an and the Sunna and adheres to the sharia places them explicitly in the discursive Islamic tradition of religious practice and scholarship, but does not tell us much about their actual ideas and practices. In discussing the authority within the *ṭarīqa*, the relevant questions are: who decides what is the correct knowledge and behaviour, and how is it transferred?

When discussing beliefs and practices that characterize the Yashrutiyya – in other words, which differentiates them from other Muslims – the answer is clear: it is the *Shaykh* who knows the *‘aqīda* and who therefore has the knowledge and prescribes the practices, through his teachings and examples which are mediated by the community. But who sets the tone for those issues that relate to Muslims in general? Followers point to general Muslim authorities in Jordanian society:

We believe that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the *Shaykh* is *murshid* or *dalīl* – like a normal (*‘ādī*) Muslim wants to know what is *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām*, he looks at the *muftī*⁴⁵ or the *shaykh* on television, Qaradawi etc. Of course, for us the *murshid*, the *dalīl*, the

⁴³ See paragraphs 1.2 and 1.5.

⁴⁴ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5; Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 45–48. See paragraphs 1.4 and 4.2.

⁴⁵ The *muftī* is a scholar qualified to deliver fatwas, official legal opinions (in the text, I have used the anglicized plural *muftīs* rather than the Arabic *muftūn*).

marja', is the *Shaykh*. He directs us in the *dīn* and the sharia and *taṣawwuf*, with the simple difference that we do not ask him about issues of the sharia like *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, that can be found in books, we [are concerned with] internal issues (*umūr bāṭiniyya*), until he guides us to the *nūr muḥammadi*.⁴⁶

We are Muslims, and the principles of Islam are clear. (...) We are talking about knowledge. Where is our knowledge registered? (...) We learn from both sides, we take knowledge (*ma'rifa*) from recorded sources of information (...) and from the sayings of the knowledgeable people, *ashāb al-ma'rifa* in the school. (...) It is our culture as Muslims. We learn when we are children, from our parents.⁴⁷

These answers suggest they take their knowledge and behaviour on general Muslim issues from their surrounding society. This is connected with their wish to participate in society and be accepted by society. They see this as part of their spiritual development. Proper exterior behaviour in accordance with the sharia – in terms of *'ibādāt* and *mu'āmalāt* – is not just considered a first step after which one progresses to deeper meanings, it should develop together with your spiritual development. The constant interplay between the outer and inner is considered the proper way to develop spiritually. Your inner states have to show in your behaviour: 'I have a *ṭarīqa* inside me. (...) I have to show in all my behaviour with our *ikhwānnā*, with common people, and with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. Respect and love to everybody. If it doesn't show, there is no *ṭarīqa*.'⁴⁸ This is a common Sufi approach, as Pinto for example writes that *ādāb* are 'the expression of inner qualities of the self'.⁴⁹ This stance is also motivated by a desire to show the value of their *ṭarīqa* and to be an example for society, an attitude that is omnipresent among Sufi *ṭuruq* throughout history, and that has often led to their large socio-political roles in shaping their environment. We saw this for example in Ephrat's discussion of the role of Sufism in shaping medieval

⁴⁶ AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

⁴⁷ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁴⁸ AM4-1 in Interview AM4.

⁴⁹ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 125.

Palestinian society,⁵⁰ and in the contemporary Sufi milieu in Aleppo.⁵¹ Such an attitude can of course at the same time be seen as a defensive mechanism in a situation in which Sufism is often regarded with suspicion. Whatever the motivation for this desire to be accepted (most probably a mix of these elements) leads to an interplay between the *ṭarīqa* and society at large in defining the specific interpretation of sharia and proper behaviour.

In Jordanian society the interpretation of texts and law is highly contested, but the references made in these answers – to books, scholars (*ashāb al-maʿrifa*), schools, culture – seem to point towards the more traditional attitude controlled by the king and *ʿulamāʾ* and transmitted along these channels. As we have seen in chapter 4, this attitude is positive towards Sufism, and thus allows them to be accepted as both orthodox Muslims and explicit Sufis in the Islamic tradition. When asked, they say they follow the Hanafi *madhhab*. Typically, when *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din came to Palestine, he switched from the Maliki *madhhab*, which is predominant in North Africa, to the Hanafi *madhhab*, which was the *madhhab* supported by the Ottomans and is widespread in the Levant.⁵² This affiliation is not stressed, however – the fact that they stand within the orthodox Islamic tradition and follow the sharia is what is important for them, not which specific school they follow.

These rules from larger society are mediated by the community and are discussed by the *Shaykh* and among *ikhwānnā* to ensure they fit their *ʿaqīda*. For example, one of the monthly women’s meetings discussed *akhlāq* and *sulūk*, in which an important point was that behaviour reflects both your inner thoughts, and the group you belong to.⁵³ Thus they negotiate what they learn about their faith and the sharia from outside sources by discussing it in their community in the context of the Shadhili-Yashruti tradition and the teachings of *Shaykh* Ahmad.

⁵⁰ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 1–3. See paragraph 3.2.

⁵¹ Pinto, ‘Performing Baraka’; Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria.’ See paragraph 1.5.

⁵² Informal discussion with AK3 on 07-08-2015.

⁵³ Women’s meeting 30-03-2013 and its discussion. AM1-3 referred to this discussion in Interview AM2.

The 'aqīda can thus be seen as their final reference point, and the final authority of interpretation is returned to the community and the *Shaykh*.

In addition to adhering to the sharia as defined through the interplay between *ṭarīqa* and society, the followers rely on their *Shaykh* for their spiritual development. Returning once more to the *ḥadīth* of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din referred to by *Shaykh* Ahmad at the beginning of this paragraph ('improve your exteriors (*ẓawāhirkum*) and leave the interiors (*bawāṭin*) to me'), the second part relates to the relation with the *Shaykh*:

Regarding the *bāṭin* and its reconstruction (*ta'mīr*), its control is not entrusted to the *murīd* because it is outside his will (*irāda*). Meant by 'the reconstruction of the *bāṭin*' is knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*) through inspiration (*madad*) that fills the hearts with *īmān* (faith), and the *murīd* derives this from the *ṣāhib al-waqt* (master of time), the *Shaykh* of the *ṭarīqa*, who for his part is provided by the source of the 'aqīda, *Sayyidnā* Muhammad pbuh.⁵⁴

This shows that the followers have to work hard to improve their behaviour in this world, but at the same time rely on the *Shaykh* and on God to go further on the path to knowledge of God, *ma'rifat Allāh*.⁵⁵

6.3.2 *Maḥabba*

The first pillar and basis of the *ṭarīqa* is *maḥabba*, it is the axis (*quṭb*) around which the other pillars circle; 'the *ṭarīqa* is love, and truthfulness, and remembering the secrets of God (*al-ṭarīqa maḥabba, wa-sidq, wa-hifẓ asrār Allah*).' First of all it is spiritual love that should focus on God and strive towards the goal of reaching him.⁵⁶ The followers add that this is the basis because once one loves God one will see Him everywhere and will love everyone and

⁵⁴ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 15-03-2014, p.2.

⁵⁵ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.11

⁵⁶ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.2-3. References from al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq*, 58, 64.

everything as part of His creation. The love for all *ikhwānnā* and all people derives from this.⁵⁷ This is an old theme in Sufism (see paragraph 1.2) which is approached, interpreted, and expressed in a myriad of ways.⁵⁸ The love experienced and cultivated by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is a ‘sober’ love for God that extends to all of His creation and motivates one to live according to His will and adhere to the sharia and the rules of the *ṭarīqa*. It is not considered a manifestation of Universal Love.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, no matter how the followers see the *Shaykh*, the main thing is that they love him, which is what leads them to follow his teachings and example and practice their religion by adhering to the sharia, practice their rituals, and cultivate *ādāb*.⁵⁹ This love for God and the *Shaykh* extends to *ikhwānnā* and is a strong binding force in the community: ‘The love of the *Shaykh* brings everything. To love – this is ‘*aqīda*. If you love the head of the ‘*aqīda* (*ra’s al-‘aqīda*), you will love everything that follows the ‘*aqīda*.’⁶⁰ This love for the *Shaykh* unites the followers as *ikhwānnā*.⁶¹

Ikhwānnā form a very strong community. When they travel and go on *ḥajj* they always stay at each other’s house:

The relations between *abnā al-ṭarīqa* go beyond the place of Zarqa or Amman. The day that I visit Beirut or I go to Mecca for ‘*umra*,⁶² *ikhwānnā abnā al-ṭarīqa* receive us. (...) This is the relation and this characterizes us. (...) Because of (*min faḍl*) the *zāwiya* in Acre, the foundation (*asīs*). Because of the *ṭarīqa*, the *Shaykh* of the *ṭarīqa*.⁶³

⁵⁷ Informal discussion with AM2-2 and AM5 in the *zāwiya* on 24-10-2013, discussing the written answers *Shaykh Ahmad al-Yashruti* 14-10-2013.

⁵⁸ Lewisohn, ‘Sufism’s Religion of Love.’ See paragraph 1.2.

⁵⁹ E.g. AM4-6 in Interview AM4, AM1-2 in Interview AM1.

⁶⁰ AM4-3 in Interview AM4.

⁶¹ Informal discussion with AM1-1 in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥadra* on 10-10-2013.

⁶² ‘*Umra* is the pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time during the year.

⁶³ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1. This comment was made in a discussion about their connection to the *zāwiya* in Acre and their journeys to Acre and Mecca. The respondent seems to want to indicate that the community goes beyond specific locations, and that particular circumstances of these connections and journeys are shaped by the community that exists because of the founding moment and what came of this, the *ṭarīqa* and the *Shaykh*.

They have stuck together through severe upheavals. In 1948, and again in 1967, many followers fled to Jordan and united there again as *ikhwānnā*. 'The people of Gaza, the people of al-Walaja, the people of Aleppo, the people of Jerusalem, they all came here and knew each other, because our *ṭarīqa* united us.'⁶⁴ This pure love enables the equality with which they deal with each other – diverse ethnicities, men and women, old and young people – they all value each other as brothers and sisters in 'faith and 'aqīda'⁶⁵ and are proud of this diversity: 'The racial diversity (*tanāwa'a 'arqī*) is the reason for the continuation of the *ṭarīq*.'⁶⁶

These statements of gender equality should be understood in their social context, and in line with their desire to be an active and respected part of society – which as we have seen in the previous paragraph, includes an interaction with society's rules, negotiated within the community. Dominguez Diaz found a similar attitude in her translocal research of the Budshishiyya, as attitudes to are dependent on both the *ṭarīqa*'s doctrines and on local codes of morality.⁶⁷ As a sub-social group which is open to society at large, it is unavoidable that their attitude to gender is influenced by both the *ṭarīqa*'s teachings and society's attitudes as people participate and are socialized in both. The followers in Amman seem to adhere to similar values regarding sexuality and family as the rest of Jordanian society, but are more open for social interaction among the sexes and the value of education and employment for women. Most women I spoke to are in charge of household chores in addition to the studies they pursue or the job they have. During my group interviews, women tended to be quieter than men (see paragraph 2.3.3.2). This was not because their opinion is not valued, but because they were shy and not used the speaking in a large group, while the men tended to be more comfortable in voicing their opinions and making themselves heard. Some of the women were very outspoken, however, and play important roles in the community together with the men, such as the

⁶⁴ ZA1-2 in Interview ZA1. The inclusion of Aleppo is peculiar, as no refugees went from Aleppo to Amman in this period. It might be another symbolic use of the location to refer to the North, implicating that followers flocked to Amman from all directions.

⁶⁵ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 15.

⁶⁶ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

⁶⁷ Dominguez Diaz, 'Shifting Fieldsites', 70.

receiving of guests and the education of *ikhwānnā*, and throughout the interviews encouraged the women to speak.

We see quite distinct attitudes in different local communities. To take the example of the *hijāb*, the *Shaykh* has given his female followers the freedom to decide whether they want to wear it or not:

Shaykh Ahmad: From our point of view, the limit (*al-ḥadd*) is modesty (*ikhtishām*), and then she performs her role in life. (...) You forbade the women to go out. Why? You have to let her wear ...

Akram Khuzam: *niqāb*

Shaykh Ahmad: ... certain clothes. Why?

Akhram Khuzam: You are against it?

Shaykh Ahmad: I am not against it, but I do not encourage those things. She is free.⁶⁸

Most women in Amman seem to only wear *hijāb* when they go to the *zāwiya*, while women in Umm al-Fahm always wear *hijāb*, and it is a major issue of discussion in Jaffa (see paragraph 10.3). We therefore cannot classify the *ṭarīqa* as a whole, or even its local communities, as 'liberal' or 'conservative'. It should be noted that the issue of feminism, gender roles and sexuality within this *ṭarīqa* is not the subject of my research, so these remarks should be taken as initial observations, to be verified by further research.

Several women have important roles in the community – one of them for example is 'responsible for *khawātnā*' and seems to act like a *muqaddam* in his social – if not his ritual – role. There is no equivalent to the female *muqaddamāt* that Dominguez Diaz encountered during her research on the Budshishiyya. In their case, the female local leaders were appointed because the gender segregation among these groups was immensely strict - a woman who had been a member for several months did not yet know any of the male members. In order for the women to participate in the *ṭarīqa* at all, they needed their own

⁶⁸ Interview by Akram Khuzam with *Shaykh Ahmad al-Yashruti*.

leadership.⁶⁹ In the case of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the relations are so open that a male *muqaddam* can serve the female followers just as well as the men – only during devotional practices they are separated, but due to the setting of these rituals (described in chapter 7) they can still see or hear the men and thus do not need someone to separately guide their *ḥaḍra*.

Ceremonial meetings in the *zāwiya* are separated along gender lines – men and women pray, read *wazīfa* and perform *ḥaḍra* separately – but socially they sit together, visit each other and discuss as equals. Men and women shake each other's hands, because 'we are clean inside so it does not matter if you shake our hands.'⁷⁰ Similarly, worldly hierarchy does not play a role in the *ṭarīqa*. 'One of *ikhwānnā* was president of the Comoros Islands, but when he comes to the *zāwiya* you would not know that he is a president.'⁷¹ Old and young are equally respected. As we have seen in paragraph 5.4, this is why AM1-1 loved *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi when he saw him as a child: 'He took care of me, he treated me as mature, so I loved that *Shaykh* from that time.' He continues:

AM1-1: *Maḥabba* is the centre, everything turns around *maḥabba*. The *ṭarīqa* raises (*bṭrabbi*) to love, to love the people. I remember when I used to live in the West Bank of Jordan, when I came to Amman and met with *ikhwānnā*, how they welcomed me. Women and men. How they treated me. I was maybe 14 or 15 years old, and one time I remember that an old man from our *ikhwānnā* came to the house where I was at the time and he invited *me* to lunch. [All participants stress the surprise he felt] He was round 90 years old! I didn't know him. He took me, he said 'I will take you to my home, I want to take lunch with you' and I went to his small home and he said to me 'sit down' and he went to the kitchen and broke two eggs and sardines.

AM1-3: That means not a big lunch, anything from the kitchen because...

AM1-1: His wife had died. And he came and he treated me as...

AM1-3: He prepared the lunch for him, he was 90 and he was 15, it's nice!

⁶⁹ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity'; Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?'

⁷⁰ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁷¹ Informal discussion with AM2-6 on 21-11-2013.

AM1-1: And the treatment... When you looked at his face, a beautiful old man he was.

AM1-3: And this treatment, he remembers this now, because he feels it inside. And he taught it to his children and *ikhwānnā*. This is the *tarbiya* to the *ṭarīqa*. (...) This is the *Shaykh* who teaches us, how to love the people, how to deal with the people. (...) These are the *akhlāq* that *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* needs *ikhwānnā* to be [sic].⁷²

This equality is symbolized by their traditional manner of greeting. They kiss each other's hands, sometimes at the same time, or one after the other. *Shaykh* Ahmad explains that this is a traditional greeting from the Maghreb and shows mutual respect.⁷³ One follower explains the greeting in a different way: they do not really kiss each other's hands but smell them, as the *aṭr muḥammadī* (Muhammadan perfume) has been present in their hands since they held the hand of the *Shaykh* or the *muqaddam* during the *mubāya'a*.⁷⁴ These days this is not done any more as the *Shaykh* has stressed that it is not part of the *ṭarīqa's* teachings, and has abolished it for hygienic reasons. They are supposed to shake each other's hands.⁷⁵

This love extends to the whole world. Loving God makes them love each other and the whole universe in a pure way, and participate in society while maintaining their values.

Because we believe [that] everything [is] from God. He is One, as *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* said. Many things you'll see but God [is] one. (...) And I have to respect everything, because [of] the relationship between me and between God. I believe in God, and my belief lets me treat everyone with respect, polite, because this is from God.⁷⁶

⁷² AM1-1 and AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

⁷³ He noted that it is a shame that this traditional way of greeting and showing respect to the elderly is declining, and values King Hussayn for maintaining the custom by publicly showing respect to his mother in this way. 'And we should follow his example, because he is our king and our leader (*akbar*).' Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9.

⁷⁴ Informal discussion with AM2-2 on 18-06-2013.

⁷⁵ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 24; Informal communications with followers in Amman and Acre.

⁷⁶ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

From this point our *ṭarīqa* is moderate (*wasatīyya*). (...) [There is] no extremity in our 'aqīda, al-Shadhuliyya al-Yashrutiyya. We love all people, all the world, we look at the world as a unit, one unit, so we have to be integrated with this existence. (...) And all these things, who taught them to us? The *Shaykh. Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the *Shaykh* is the one who cultivates this 'aqīda and this *maḥabba* in our hearts. (...) We do not live in a shell (*mutqawqa'īn*), we are children of the society (*abnā al-mujtama'*), and children of the *ṭarīqa* (*abnā al-ṭarīqa*).⁷⁷

Even though they extend their love to all of creation, this does not mean that they thereby transcend the boundaries of religion in a universal 'Religion of Love'. Rather, this love inspires them to follow the *Shaykh*, adhere to the sharia, and practice *dhikr*, *fikr* and *taslīm*, and participate in society.

6.3.3 *Dhikr*

Dhikr (remembrance) as the second pillar of the *ṭarīqa* refers to all practices in which the followers remember God. As such it encompasses *ṣalāa*, *du'ā'*, recitation of the Qur'an, reciting the *awrād*, reading *wazīfa*, and several kinds of *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*.⁷⁸ They are all regularly practiced – for example during the weekly prayer meeting on Thursday night – and complement each other, and therefore are all considered an important part of the *ṭarīqa*. Several followers say that these principles are in harmony with and should be connected with the *aḥkām al-sharī'a* (rules of the sharia) – the *wazīfa* should be performed after the *ṣalāa* for example.⁷⁹ As in Sufism in general, an important aspect of the performance of these contemplative practices in Sufism is *ādāb*, the cultivation of the right behaviour and attitude during these rituals. Correct *ādāb* is both the prerequisite to undertake the journey on the spiritual path, and the goal. It

⁷⁷ AM1-1 in Interview AM1. The image of the shell can also be found in *Shaykh Ahmad's* introduction to the third edition of *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*: 'It is not right that all of *taṣawwuf* is *zuhd* (ascetism) and *qawqa'a* (shells), and flight from life.' al-Yashrutiyya, *Riḥla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 22.

⁷⁸ Informal discussion with AM2-2 and AM5 in the *zāwiya* on 24-10-2013.

⁷⁹ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

encompasses the embodiment of Sufi values and the performance of the spiritual states (see paragraph 1.2).⁸⁰

Dhikr is the most important and well-known contemplative Sufi practice, that is done in many forms, in which the believer remembers God and is remembered by God in return. It is a method of spiritual development through the remembrance of God and purification of the heart, at first performed by the tongue until it pervades the entire being of the believer, ‘an inward journey of unforgetting.’⁸¹ It can be a methodical and repeated invocation of a prescribed formula, alone or in a group, accompanied by gestures and symbols or sitting still, or it can be seen as a mental state of constant focus of God, all done with the correct *ādāb*.⁸²

The followers see *dhikr* as the main way to express and cultivate their love for God and for the *Shaykh*, to develop their spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh*, and to help them progress on the path. It is thus the first step to undertake when one wants to open oneself for the *Shaykh*’s teaching on the spiritual level to progress on the Path towards spiritual knowledge. While this practice brings the individual’s soul closer to the *Shaykh* and to God, the practice is preferably done in a communal setting until one reaches higher levels of *iḥṣān*.⁸³ This way both the physical and the spiritual connection between all participants is enhanced at the same time.

Guidance, in the form of authorization (*idhn*) and instruction (*talqīn*) provided by the spiritual master is an important aspect of many practices of *dhikr*.⁸⁴ In many *ṭuruq*, the disciple is taught a personalized *wird* by his/her *shaykh*. Through the advice based on their scriptural and/or spiritual knowledge, Sufi *shaykhs* provide ‘individualized mechanisms of moral discipline.’ Also, often with every spiritual level reached the *shaykh* will give the disciple a new *wird*.⁸⁵ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, this is not the case. People can participate in all

⁸⁰ Gabrieli, ‘Adab’; Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 503, 532–534.

⁸¹ See paragraph 1.2

⁸² Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism.’

⁸³ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1, AM1-2 in Interview AM1.

⁸⁴ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 526–529; Gardet, ‘*Dhikr*’; Denny, ‘*Wird*’; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 132–133; Lewisohn, ‘*Sulūk*.’

⁸⁵ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 116.

forms of *dhikr* without being initiated, and the *mubāya'a* changes the level of *commitment* to the disciplinary mechanisms, not the actual practices. All followers recite the same *wird*, before and after *mubāya'a*, and there are no different levels or forms of *dhikr* corresponding to different degrees of initiation. The only exception, which seems to be quite rare, is the practice of *dhikr bi-ism al-madd* (described below) for which authorization (*idhn*) is required from either the *Shaykh* or the *muqaddam*. Like the other forms of *dhikr*, it is not personalized or secret.

In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, a combination of silent and loud, collective and individual contemplative practices are engaged in (some of which, somewhat confusingly, are also referred to as *dhikr*).

* **Wazīfa**

The *wazīfa* is the greatest *wird* (*al-wird al-akbar*), the most important contemplative practice in the *ṭarīqa*. It is a combination of Qur'anic texts and prayers and is read twice a day, after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and after *ṣalāat al-'ishā'*, either individually or in a group. When in a group, the followers sit in a circle. The right posture is very important when 'reading *wazīfa*' (reciting the *wazīfa*) out of respect for the *wazīfa*: one has to sit upright, both feet on the floor; during some passages the hands are put on the knees with the palms facing upwards. Even when only observing, my posture was corrected.⁸⁶ In the family people often read the *wazīfa* together in the evening, but in the morning everyone fits it into his or her morning schedule.

* **Wird**

The *wird* is a litany, 'a unit of *dhikr* constructed to contain certain patterns of knowledge and self awakening'.⁸⁷ The *wird* is read after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and *ṣalāat*

⁸⁶ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad, 14-10-2013, p.6-11. The Review Panel adds that these prayers are a version of the *ṣalāa mashishiyya* (the prayer of of Ibn Mashish, a famous prayer on the Prophet in the Shadhili tradition), and prayers by Muhammad al-Arabi al-Darqawi. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 5.

⁸⁷ Review Panel, 'Arabic terms', 06-08-2014. See also Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 60.

al-maghreb, using a *masbaḥa* (string of prayer beads). Most followers use a black *masbaḥa* that was given to them by the *Shaykh*.

- 100 times ‘*Astagfir Allāh al-aẓīm alladhi lā illāha ila huwa al-ḥayy al-quyūm wa atūb ilayhi*’ (‘I ask forgiveness from the mighty God, there is no God but Him, the Living the Everlasting, and I repent towards him’);
- 100 times ‘*Allahuma ṣallī ‘alā sayyidinā Muhammad al-nabīyi al-ummī wa-‘alā ālihi wa-sāhibihi wa-sallim*’ (‘God, pray on *sayyidinā* Muhammad, the prophet of the nations⁸⁸ and on his family and his companions and greet him’);
- 100 times ‘*lā illāha ilā Allāh*’ (‘there is no God but God,’ the first part of the *shahāda*);
- Once ‘*Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*’ (‘Muhammad is the Prophet of God’, the second part of the *shahāda*. This is considered the seal of the *wird*, just as Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets).⁸⁹

* **Ḥaḍra**

Ḥaḍra literally means presence, and refers to the believer’s being in the presence of God during the ritual. It is a common Sufi term for a weekly collective *dhikr*. Also in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, *ḥaḍra* is a communal ritual in which different formulas are recited standing and holding hands in closed circles or lines, slightly bending back and forth, often combined with the chanting of *nashīd*. In the middle of the men’s circle is the person leading the *ḥaḍra*, the *Shaykh* or the *muqaddam*. During the first set, the name ‘*Allāh*’ is repeated in a certain rhythm while the followers bend forward and backward slightly. During the second and third set, the word ‘*hu*’ is repeated, creating a rhythm to which some of the participants chant *nashīd*. During the second set, the followers continue to bend forward and backward; during the third set, the followers bounce on their

⁸⁸ Most Muslims understand ‘*al-nabīyi al-ummī*’ as ‘the illiterate prophet’, but some scholars argue that the phrase means ‘the prophet of the nations’ and that the Prophet Muhammad was not illiterate. *Shaykh* Ahmad prefers the latter interpretation. Informal discussion with AK6 on 07-05-2013.

⁸⁹ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

toes along with the rhythm.⁹⁰ For a more thorough description of a *ḥaḍra* in the *zāwiya* in Amman, see paragraphs 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

*** Silent *Dhikr* with Short Vowels (*dhikr bi-ism al-qaṣr*)⁹¹**

The followers are encouraged to remember God by continuously performing *dhikr bi-ism al-qaṣr*, by repeating the name ‘*Allāh Allāh Allāh*’ (with short vowels) in their hearts, i.e. silently. This should be done particularly twice a day, after *ṣalāat al-fajr* and *ṣalāat al-‘ishā*’, and during meetings there is space for this *dhikr*, but followers are also encouraged to practice this throughout the day.

When I am working the *Shaykh Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* taught us to say everytime ‘Allah Allah’, in stead of [gossiping about other people]. Because *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* he needs us to be always with God, to say ‘*Allāh Allāh Allāh Allāh*...’⁹²

*** Loud *Dhikr* with Long Vowels (*dhikr bi-ism al-madd*)**

Followers who are very advanced on the path can ask for permission to perform *dhikr bi-ism al-madd*, in which the name of God is said more slowly and with the second syllable extended. The followers know about this practice but it is unclear how many people do it and how often. As it is considered very powerful, followers have to treat it with great care. The revelations that might be bestowed upon the person who does this type of *dhikr* might be too much for him or her to handle, therefore permission is needed before undertaking this *dhikr*. Permission has to be asked from the *muqaddam*, who either has the previous permission from the *Shaykh* to decide, or who has to ask the *Shaykh*’s permission for each individual case. The *muqaddam* bases his decision on the behaviour of the people and their truthfulness (*sidq*) – as we have seen, someone’s interior states and outer

⁹⁰ Van Ess, ‘Die Yaṣrutiya’, 60–65.

⁹¹ The distinction between *dhikr bi-ism al-qaṣr* and *dhikr bi-ism al-madd* calls into mind the common Sufi distinction between *dhikr* that is performed aloud (*jalī*) or silently (*khafī*), but these terms are not used in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. Gardet, ‘*Dhikr*.’ Van Ess actually does call it *dhikr al-khafī*. Van Ess, ‘Die Yaṣrutiya’, 65–67.

⁹² AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

behaviour are two sides of the same coin, and one can judge someone's spiritual progress by one's outer behaviour.⁹³

We thus see that the second pillar of *dhikr* encompasses an extensive combination of devotional and contemplative practices that followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya embark upon. Apart from the *dhikr bi-ism al-madd* they are all the same for all followers and available to all followers, whether they did *mubāya'a* or not. This way, the collective nature of *dhikr* is stressed, whether it is done communally or individually.

6.3.4 Fikr

In the Sufi tradition, *fikr* or *tafakkur*⁹⁴ is complementary⁹⁵ to *dhikr*. Al-Ghazali distinguished between meditative reflections and more intellectual types of thought,⁹⁶ and in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya we see a similar spectrum of approaches to *fikr*. The followers are encouraged to perform deep contemplative thinking, to educate themselves and discuss among themselves to improve their understanding, both on the spiritual and rational level. Their practice of *ta'ammul* is an example of the meditative approach to *fikr* as it is meditative contemplation of creation. On the other side of the spectrum, we can find the *Shaykh's* encouragement for followers to pursue a worldly education, which is also seen as *fikr*. The *Shaykh* encourages them to study all possible topics. During a women's meeting in which the topic of *'ilm* is discussed, one of the ladies tells the group that her father had left school early, but when he was older he discussed religion

⁹³ Interview ZA1.

⁹⁴ The two are used interchangeably. In this thesis I have chosen to use the word *fikr*, as this is the word that is used by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya.

⁹⁵ The term is *muqābal*. some translate this as 'opposite', but Waley points out it is rather complementary to *dhikr*, as reflection performed with the right attitude 'brings to the heart a knowledge which transforms it and heightens the consciousness and spiritualizes the action of the seeker'. Gardet, 'Dhikr'; Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 541–55. See paragraph 1.2.

⁹⁶ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 541–547.

with a university graduate who thought her father had also attended university. This was *min faḍl al-ṭarīqa*, and *min faḍl Sīdnā*, because her father had learnt through the *ṭarīqa*.⁹⁷ Later another lady adds: ‘When we learn *‘ilm al-bāṭin* (knowledge of the spiritual), we will also understand *‘ilm al-ẓāhir* (knowledge of the material), even if we don’t go to school.’⁹⁸

Each week after the *ḥaḍra* the *Shaykh* discusses an aspect of the *wazīfa*, often using references to the news or science to make his point. The *Shaykh* encourages the followers to discuss each week’s *mudhākara* – a practice which is also called *mudhākara* because they remember what the *Shaykh* said and discuss their understandings.⁹⁹

There is a *ḥadīth* for *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, that if you cannot meet with the *Shaykh*, meet with your brother and he gives you as if you take from the *Shaykh*.¹⁰⁰

There is another *ḥadīth*: ‘Gather together and discuss matters, he will give you that *madad*.’¹⁰¹

During one of the group interviews this matter is discussed extensively. The participants are mainly invited by the host, and from the way they interact and the stories they tell it is clear that they spend a lot of time talking together, doing *mudhākara*. They say that as a group they complete each other. ‘I am not perfect by myself. But as we are sitting now all together, we integrate with each other to become almost perfect.’¹⁰² They stress the importance to see the positive in each other:

Our *Shaykh* told us this: ‘See your brother, look at his positiveness (*ijābiyatuh*).’

⁹⁷ Women’s meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-11-2013.

⁹⁸ Women’s meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-11-2013.

⁹⁹ Informal discussion before Interview AM2.

¹⁰⁰ AM4-7 in Interview AM4.

¹⁰¹ AM4-4 in Interview AM4.

¹⁰² AM4-3 in Interview AM4.

He said about himself: 'I see *ikhwānnā*, I see the positive things; I do not look at the negativeness of our brother.'¹⁰³

In these study meetings and *mudhākarāt* the Qur'an and Hadith are used as references, as are the books of the *ṭarīqa*. 'The book – the words of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din and *Sīdī* Ahmad, they all tell us how we should look at the *Shaykh* in order to get something from him. It's dictated there.'¹⁰⁴ As an example, AM4-7 discussed how he used *Nafaḥāt al-Ḥaqq* in his own spiritual education: 'There is a *ḥadīth* for *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, which says that who wants to educate (*yurabbī*) himself on the Path, he has to read *Sūrat Yūsuf*.' After pondering this, he understood that it represents the *ṭarīqa* as Yaquub represents the *Shaykh* and his sons the *murīdīn*, and they should be like *Sīdnā* Yusuf or *Sīdnā* Binyamin and be both good outside and inside. He also describes how they used the book in a meeting for young men. In this particular meeting they discussed addiction, and he used a *ḥadīth* from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* to stress his points: 'the true believer next to God is the one who rules his *nafs* / himself' – when I can control my *nafs* I will not become addicted.' 'If you take *Nafaḥāt al-Ḥaqq*, it will explain exactly how the *Shaykh* is keen (*ḥarīs*) for *ikhwānnā* and keen to teach *akhlāq* to *ikhwānnā*.'¹⁰⁵

The followers believe that the *Shaykh* transfers the teachings and the orders of God (*ta'limāt wa-awāmir Allāh*) – therefore any quest for the truth, either through contemplative or rational means, will inevitably bring them to him. While contemplative practices such as *ta'ammul* easily fit in this religious framework, combining rational thinking and critical thought with the religious tradition might prove more of a challenge (as was illustrated by AM2-2 who struggled for years to combine his study of philosophy with his adherence to the *ṭarīqa*, see paragraph 5.4, Interview AM2). No matter how much they debate and discuss, the final word is always for the *Shaykh* – he is the ultimate source and reference.

¹⁰³ AM4-3 in Interview AM4.

¹⁰⁴ AM4-1 in Interview AM4.

¹⁰⁵ AM4-7 in Interview AM4.

6.3.5 *Taslīm*

The fourth pillar is *taslīm* (submission to God). *Shaykh* Ahmad explains that there are two aspects to *taslīm*: accepting that there is only one Creator and that He is the one who rules his creation and his creatures. The distinction between Creator and creature will always remain intact – as such you have to accept anything that befalls you. This acceptance does not mean people are humiliated before God, but rather that they should let go and be calm.

The master (*ṣāhib*) of this *ṭarīqa* did not want hardship (*ta'ab*) for his children, but he wanted to provide them with ease of heart (*rāḥat al-qalb*), and every issue or matter or problem that befalls any *murīd* in this *ṭarīqa* – it gives comfort to this *faqīr* to follow the principle of *taslīm* and to consider the issue (*'amr*) to come from God, the Glorified and Exalted. At first when a misfortune befalls him he will grieve and be hurt, but when he returns to the idea of *taslīm* he relaxes.¹⁰⁶

In his capacity of *wārith muḥammadī*, the *Shaykh* transfers the teachings and the orders of God (*ta'līmāt wa-awāmir Allāh*). Therefore '*taslīm* to the *Shaykh's* words means *taslīm* to God's will: commitment to the *ādāb* and *aḥkāṃ* (rules) of the honourable sharia and the *dhawqiyāt* of Sufism' that are reflected in the *Shaykh's* teachings.¹⁰⁷ In the words of a follower:

Taslīm is taken from the word *islām*: '*Sallim amrak ilā Allāh subḥān wa-ta'āla* (surrender your *amr* (sovereign command) to God, the Glorified and Exalted).'¹⁰⁸ And for us *taslīm* is the fourth pillar of the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliya-Yashrutiyya, to surrender your *amr* to your *Shaykh*. Whatever the *Shaykh* says you have to believe in it and accept (*tusallim*) it without discussion because he does not say anything but... There is nothing for you but benefit for you and for the others.

¹⁰⁶ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.5-6

¹⁰⁷ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 15-03-2014, p.3

¹⁰⁸ *Islām, sallim, and taslīm* all come from the root s-l-m, the basic meaning of which relates to wholeness, peace, safety, and submission. *Islām* hence means 'submission (to the will of God)'. *Sallim* is the imperative of the Form II verb *sallama*, which means to submit, surrender, resign, accept, and in this case: to commit one's cause to God, to resign to the will of God, to surrender to God in all your actions. *Taslīm* is the *maṣḍar* (verbal noun) of the same Form II verb *sallama*.

From here comes ‘surrender your *amr* to God, surrender your *amr* to your *Shaykh*,’ because your *Shaykh* knows your heart (*muṭṭali’ ‘ala qalbak*) and the hearts of the others better than any other person.¹⁰⁹

The point of *taslīm* to the *Shaykh* is not picked up further in this interview and the discussion continues on *taslīm* to God. They use an allegory comparing the believers to a house of which God is the owner (*ṣāhib al-bayt*) who does with his property as he wishes,¹¹⁰ which is a verse from the Qur’an that can also be found in the *wazīfa*, and that had been discussed in the *Shaykh*’s *mudhākara* the previous week.¹¹¹ This is an interesting example of how the followers transfer the ideas and concepts they have received in the *mudhākara* of the *Shaykh* by using them in discussions amongst themselves, and how tradition is continuously transmitted and rethought. The relevant point here, however, is that the followers in the *mubāya’a* pledge themselves to surrender themselves completely to God and to the *wārith muḥammadī*, their *Shaykh*. This is where we should place the classical Sufi notion of complete obedience to the *shaykh*, the conviction that ‘the *Shaykh* is always right’ (see paragraph 2.1). Because they believe that the *Shaykh* has access to the teachings and will of God, because they believe he loves them and takes care of them, and because they love him above all else, submission to him is the most logical thing in the world. As AM2-1 said above: ‘There is nothing for you but benefit for you and for the others’.

6.4 Modes of Communication

We have seen that the meanings of *fikr* in this *ṭarīqa* are quite diverse, ranging from contemplative meditation to rational study and critical thinking. In some of these forms, there might be a clash with *taslīm*. When *fikr* is understood as contemplative thinking and when knowledge is sought in the epistemological

¹⁰⁹ AM2-1 in Interview AM2. Later in this interview, when discussing the *mubāya’a*, this follower also says he pledged to obey and love the *Shaykh*. See paragraph 6.2.

¹¹⁰ AM2-3 in Interview AM2.

¹¹¹ *Rabb hādihā al-bayt* in *Sūrat al-Quraysh* 106:3, *wazīfa* p.16.

sphere of ineffable experience beyond reason, there is no problem. There is also no problem when rational critical thinking confirms the teachings and orders of the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa*. But when an individual exercises individual reasoning and disagrees with a certain teaching, practice, or order, this might create a paradox between *fikr* and *taslīm*. On the one hand the value of education and free discussion gives followers a lot of space – but on the other hand *taslīm* is interpreted as accepting what the *Shaykh* says and obeying him in everything. Some participants are hesitant to accept the idea that there might be different opinions among them,¹¹² but others do acknowledge this plurality and take or give freedom to speak. Either way, it is stressed to me extensively that these personal opinions are nothing more than personal opinions – the absolute truth can only be taken from the *Shaykh*.

Werbner notes that this submission is experienced as empowering because the saint is seen as a transcendent spiritual individual, negating his material individuality.¹¹³ This is not the case for the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, who do not negate the *Shaykh*'s materiality, but acknowledge the combination of transcendence and materiality. The process in which this image is constructed – the process of *tarbiya* – is illuminating in understanding the empowering aspect of submission more thoroughly. Asad also took this approach, as he argued in his study of Christian monasticism that disciplinary practices 'explicitly create (...) createm through a program of communal living, the will to obey', making obedience into a virtue, rather than simply a loss of will.¹¹⁴

This potential paradox does not seem to be realized often. This is due to the mode of communication of the *Shaykh*. He is considered to always give the right answer, and he defines the boundaries within which the followers can exercise *fikr*,¹¹⁵ but he hardly ever gives his answer in a direct way, leaving it to his followers to interpret what he meant. They believe that the more they practise

¹¹² Especially AM2-3 in Interview AM2.

¹¹³ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 134–136.

¹¹⁴ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 125–126.

¹¹⁵ Written answers of the *Shaykh* 15-03-2014, p.3.

and the higher their development on the spiritual path, the better they will be able to distinguish the signs the *Shaykh* gives them and understand his meaning.

First of all, the followers believe that they can ask their *Shaykh* anything related to material issues and he will give them advice.¹¹⁶ But in practice, there are too many followers for the *Shaykh* to be able to deal with all their questions, and for this reason in issues of direct communication the *muqaddam* plays a large role.¹¹⁷ The *muqaddam* is responsible for the people in his community and when there are problems he can either help them himself or ask the *Shaykh* for advice. The *Shaykh* sits with him frequently in order to give him instructions and guidance. When he has something to ask he will go to the *Shaykh* or his son, 'and put the issue between his hands and ask them to advise me how to behave, how to work on this issue.'¹¹⁸

In the times of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, the *muqaddam* and the older *ikhwānnā* visited the *Shaykh* in Beirut and listened to him and took the knowledge back to Amman, and sometimes *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi visited Jordan. He also communicated via letters. In addition to this the presence of *Sīdī* Ahmad from 1960 onwards gave *ikhwānnā* in Jordan the opportunity to learn from him. Nowadays, such connections are much easier due to faster travel and modern communication technology. *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali record the *mawlid*, the *ḥaḍra* and other meetings to send them to other followers through the internet or on a DVD.

Because *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* always will follow up *ikhwānnā*. Wherever he is, in Beirut, in Jordan. Now *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad is in Jordan, but he follows up all *ikhwānnā* in all the world. Maybe by letters, maybe through the *muqaddam*, maybe through *ikhwānnā*, because all *ikhwānnā* only take everything about the *ṭarīqa* from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ E.g. AM1-1 and AM2-6 in Interview AM3.

¹¹⁷ AM1-1 in Interview AM3.

¹¹⁸ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

¹¹⁹ AM1-3 in Interview AM1.

There are many followers who transfer information in this direct way in addition to the *muqaddam*. They spread the teachings of the *Shaykh* through meetings (*ijtimā'āt* or *mudhākarāt*) in the *zāwiya* or in people's homes, learning from the transferred teachings (*ta'limāt wa-irshādāt wa-tawjīhāt wa-ta'ālīm*) of the previous *Shaykhs* through the books and the stories of other *ikhwānnā* – in other words by engaging with the tradition.¹²⁰

In line with the basic Sufi distinction between the exterior (*ẓāhir*) and the interior (*bāṭin*), the *Shaykh* is considered to have two aspects (see chapter 5) and consequently two ways of interacting and communicating with him.¹²¹

There is a *ḥadīth* on *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din* the founder, it is that the *Shaykh* has two images (*ṣūratān*). The exterior image (*ṣūra ẓāhiriyya*), the physical, when we visit the *Shaykh* or sit in front of him, in the *zāwiya*, wherever – this is the exterior image for you, we learn the *akhlāq* and the best qualities from the *Shaykh*.

And there is an inner image (*ṣūra bāṭiniyya*), it remains with the *murīd* wherever he goes. If he is in Brazil, in Canada, or anywhere, there is a picture, an inner picture, with him. And when there is this picture in his heart the *faqīr*, or the *murīd*, is not able or does not dare to do any sin (*ma'ṣiya*) or transgression (*mukhālafa*) because he sees that God is watching him there.¹²² (...) There is a connection (*ittiṣāl*) through the *'ibādāt*, and especially the *dhikr* as our brother said, *dhikr Allah* and the *'ibāda* creates spiritual status for the *faqīr*. (...) And because of the intensity of the connection and the nearness (*qurb*) between the two there will be *ilhām* as our brother said between the *Shaykh* and the *murīd*, and *tawāṣul*. There is a physical connection because of the *tarbiy*, the education, because of love, the *akhlāq* and the treatment (*mu'āmala*) that you see with the

¹²⁰ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

¹²¹ AM3-4 and AM1-3 in Interview AM3.

¹²² In the words of the Review Panel: 'The *murīd* visualizes his Sheikh with him, and when that happens, then the *murīd* feels connected with God through his Sheikh, which makes him watch his behaviours closely and stay away from doing sins or transgressions because he feels that God is watching him all the time.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 27.

Shaykh; and there is the spiritual connection, and this is the image of the *Shaykh* that stays with the *faqīr* wherever he goes.¹²³

There are two ways of dealing (*ta'āmul*) with the *Shaykh*. Dealing with him by speech (*lisān*), for example if we have a problem or if I want to consult his opinion, for example my son wants to study abroad, or I want to set up a business, or something like that. These are exterior issues (*umūr zāhiriyya*). Maybe the *Shaykh* directs (*yuwajjih*) me in them.

But mainly, the relation between us is not this. It is deeper than this. He shows us (*yudillna*) how to walk / proceed (*kīf nimshī*), how to go our way / where to turn (*kīf nitwajjah*), how to do *dhikr*, how to worship, and things like this. And also he has two ways to connect with us. He directs us (*biwajjihnā*) in the weekly lesson (*dars*), or if you have a personal connection (*'alāqa shakhsiyya*) with him you can sit with him or you talk with him how to go on the right path regarding *'ibāda*, or behaviour (*taṣarruf*), *akhlāq*, *mu'āmalāt*, the way every *murīd* has to behave.¹²⁴

The material connection (*tawāṣul*) is through the visit (*ziyāra*), the *wazīfa*, the *ḥaḍra*, listening to the *mudhākara*. The spiritual connection (*ittiṣāl*) is through the *dhikr*. (...) Who is your teacher who teaches you? Your *Shaykh*. And whenever you remember him he is with you. He feels you that you do *dhikr* and there is *tawāṣul* between you.¹²⁵

Just as one's vision of the *Shaykh* is influenced by one's progress on the spiritual path, the mode of communication depends on the spiritual level of the follower: those followers who are on a lower spiritual level take information through speech (*kalām*). Those who have a higher level work with signs – *ishārāt* (sg. *ishāra*).¹²⁶

¹²³ AM1-1 in Interview AM3. In this quote, the Review Panel prefers to use the word *murīd* in stead of *faqīr* because the latter is on a higher level. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

¹²⁴ AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

¹²⁵ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹²⁶ AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

The term *ishāra* originally meant sign, gesture, indication, and was used as a non-verbal tool of communication.¹²⁷ Its Islamic usage is related to Qur'anic exegesis.¹²⁸ Ja'far al-Sadiq (d.765) distinguished four levels of meaning in the Qur'an:

- *ibāra*, the 'statement set down', which was the most explicit outer (*zāhir*) meaning for the benefit of the common people (*awāmm*)
- *ishāra*, the 'implied purport', which was the deeper inner (*bāṭin*) meaning for those with spiritual understanding (*khawāṣṣ*)
- *latā'if*, the 'hidden meanings', only accessible to the *awliyā'*
- *ḥaqā'iq*, the 'exalted spiritual doctrines', known only to the prophets.¹²⁹

The act of interpreting the signs found in the Qur'an on the level of *ishāra* is known as *ta'wīl*, which literally means 'returning to its origin or source' as the signs are restored to their true and original meanings. This is not simply an intellectual endeavour, but it is to be accompanied by a similar 'returning' of the soul: the soul cannot restore, return the text to its truth, unless it too returns to its truth.¹³⁰

The interpretation of signs is a process that engages the entire soul, a spiritual realization of the meanings in the Qur'an that can be achieved by traveling the Sufi Path,¹³¹ until the Sufi has reached the levels of *fanā'* and *baqā'*.¹³² As we have seen in paragraph 1.2, this is the annihilation from a specific mode of lower consciousness and the simultaneous subsistence through a specific mode of higher consciousness, in which the Real's self-disclosures in all things are unveiled (*kashf*).¹³³ For those who see with the inner eyes, *ta'wīl* goes beyond the Qur'an: the whole of the cosmos is pervaded by the Divine's self-disclosures, by signs that point to their Divine origin. Both the everyday reality and alternative realities (dreams, imaginations, etc.) are 'symbolic

¹²⁷ P. Nwyia, 'Ishāra', *EI2* IV 113-114.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*; Lutz Berger, 'Allusion (in Sūfism)', *EI3* (Brill Online, 2012).

¹²⁹ Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 6.

¹³⁰ Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 28–35.

¹³¹ I. Poonawala, 'Ta'wīl', *EI2* X 390-392.

¹³² Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 8.

¹³³ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 59–62; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 321–324.

representations of Reality'. Toshihiko Izutsu speaks of 'the symbolic structure of the world' as in this body of thought everything can assume a symbolic character, 'an event occurring in so-called "reality" is a symbol for an event corresponding to it in the higher plane of the Images'.¹³⁴

All these signs need to be perceived and interpreted; in order to do so, the believer needs to 'cultivate the ability for seeing things symbolically', to 'remove the material veil to reveal the realities that lie beyond' by practising the Path and achieving an inner transformation.¹³⁵ In order to then express the visions and experiences, ordinary language is not sufficient – the unveilings can only be referred to by signs of their own. These 'allusions' are more than symbolical use of language, they are a way to approximate the description of the ineffable experience, 'the language which effects the maximum reduction of the distance between the saying and what is said.' There is an unbreakable connection between symbol and symbolized:

The symbol is not an artificially constructed sign; it flowers in the soul spontaneously to announce something that cannot be expressed otherwise; it is the unique expression of the thing symbolized as of a reality that thus becomes transparent to the soul, but which in itself transcends all expression.¹³⁶

In this sense, *ishāra* is the opposite of '*ibāra*', 'knowledge acquired by natural means' which can adequately be expressed in words. As Paul Nwyia puts it, in such an experience '[t]he bonds of natural knowledge are burst, and man reaches a new world in which concepts and words cannot be applied' and it cannot be grasped or expressed discursively. The use of language to get as close to the experience as possible paradoxically draws up the veils between this world and the world of the experience, and makes the language incomprehensible to anyone who has not had a similar experience, enhancing its

¹³⁴ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 7–15.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 30–31.

esoteric character.¹³⁷ It takes on the character of a hidden jargon, only understandable by those who have been through a similar experience.¹³⁸

The only being that can truly see both aspects of the Divine at once, the transcendent and the immanent, is *al-insān al-kāmil*, the Perfect Man, who sees the flow of the Divine through all the planes. Izutsu notes that ‘Ibn Arabi’s philosophy is, in brief, a theoretic description of the entire world of Being as it is reflected in the eye of the Perfect Man.’¹³⁹ As fascinating as this is, this is not the question that concerns us here. Rather than seek insight into the religious experience of those highest on the Path who claim such exalted interpretations and visions in the states of *fanā’* and *baqā*, we are interested in the experience of those who have not (yet) reached those levels – how is it experienced among the followers in everyday life.

Signs to the Divine need to be perceived, attributed with meaning, and interpreted, using allusive language which acts as a sign of its own. This is most clear in the Qur’an: ‘Instead of seeking a secret in or under the text, we must regard the text itself as the secret.’¹⁴⁰ Events, actions and sayings in the everyday world thus become signs by using a different way of looking at the world, a religious vision that is the result of a long period of spiritual training to purify the inner senses and see self-disclosures of the Real everywhere with the eye of the heart. These signs might be spontaneous or evoked,¹⁴¹ as in the case of *istikhāra*. They might not be intended as signs by the actors involved in the actual creation of the event, action, or saying. Thus Ibn Arabi said: ‘an “allusion” only takes place through the intention of the one who alludes, not in respect of that to which the allusion is made.’ He explains this to exoteric scholars by giving the examples of ‘good omens’: they are not intended, but only interpreted as such.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Nwyia, ‘Ishāra’; Berger, ‘Allusion (in Sūfism).’

¹³⁸ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 249.

¹³⁹ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 33.

¹⁴¹ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 27.

¹⁴² Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi, *Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya* I 279.7, quoted in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 249–250.

For those who look at the world in this way, these signs point to a different reality, but they also have a role to play in this world – God has to be known both as transcendence and immanence.¹⁴³ Berger and Luckmann see language as a symbol system which can connect different spheres of reality – the everyday reality and meta-empirical or experiential dimensions – but is always rooted in everyday reality, thus ‘grounding’ the experience in the everyday reality, ‘bringing it back’, translating and transposing it, enclosing it and turning it into an ‘enclave’ within the paramount reality:

Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of ‘bringing back’ these symbols and presenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of the common-sense apprehension of this reality.¹⁴⁴

This way, language assists in integrating subjective experiences from different levels of reality and incorporating them in the believer’s symbolic universe, thus strengthening this universe. Berger and Luckmann argue that this re-establishes the paramount status of everyday reality, making it the primary reality.¹⁴⁵ The Sufi symbolic universe denies this paramountcy as God is considered the ultimate reality – but the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya (and many other *turuq*) acknowledge that life has to be lived in this world and therefore – while not explicitly granting everyday life paramount status – it does acknowledge the need to act within it. Through these signs, everyday reality is connected to the higher realms. Eliade notes that ‘for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany.’¹⁴⁶

True to their belief that God is visible in all of His creation, for *ikhwānnā* no everyday occurrence is too mundane to perceive a sign in it. In Fatima al-

¹⁴³ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 16; Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 69–72.

¹⁴⁴ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 39, 54–55.

¹⁴⁵ Berger and Luckmann 55, 115-116

¹⁴⁶ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 12–14.

Yashrutiyya's *Nafahāt al-Haqq*, we encounter *ishāra* in the sense of both allusive language and interpretation: she defines '*ilm al-ishāra* as 'knowledge of the unveilings (*mukāshafāt*) and the stages (*manāzilāt*), because the language of *ibāra* is inadequate for the visions (*mushāhadāt*) of the hearts and the unveilings of the secrets'.¹⁴⁷ In the same discussion, she includes the *ḥadīth* 'Every *āya* (Qur'anic verse) has an exterior (*ẓahr*) and an interior (*baṭn*)'.¹⁴⁸

What we see among *ikhwānnā* is that this concept in its interpretive mode is applied to the full range of human communication – not only mystical allusive language that is knowingly produced to express ineffable mystical experiences, but also everyday expressions and non-verbal signs (one of the original meanings of *ishāra*). At the highest level of knowledge – *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, acquired through *fanā'* in God,¹⁴⁹ the spiritual relationship has reached such a level that the Sufi can experience the deepest meaning of the *ishārāt*. But those who have not reached this level do not completely miss the meaning of the *ishāra* – they simply interpret it on a different level. Therefore, everyone's interpretation is theoretically justified – 'there is no wrong way to look at the *Shaykh*'.¹⁵⁰

Among the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, then, the term is used in all these ways. Due to their practicing of the Path they are trained to see signs in both the everyday world and in alternative realities (dreams, visions, etc.) that point to the Divine, and that are a communication of their *Shaykh*. Sometimes the sign is quite explicit – even for someone who is not initiated it is easy to understand that *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's words 'Ahmad speaks with my tongue', seen by *ikhwānnā* as an *ishāra*, mean that he represents him and should be his successor. In other cases, the meanings might be more hidden, and one needs to have a higher level on the Path to discern the sign and understand its meaning. On this higher level we see the allusive meaning of *ishāra*, as the

¹⁴⁷ al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt Al-Haqq*, 30–31.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 31. The *ḥadīth* is taken from al-Suyuti, *Ta'yīd al-Haqīqa al-'aliya*.

¹⁴⁹ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, in her introduction to *Nafahāt al-Haqq*, writes about the Sufis' three levels of knowledge. The first is '*ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of the certain), knowledge which requires proof. Then follows '*ayn al-yaqīn* (source or eye of the certain), based on vision (*mushāhada*) and unveiling (*mukāshafa*), followed by *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (truth of the certain), acquired through *fanā'* of the worshipper in God. al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt al-Haqq*, 31

¹⁵⁰ Informal discussion with JA5 on 13-05-2013.

Shaykh communicates spiritually by inspiring *abnā al-ṭarīqa* with knowledge that goes beyond reason and expression, ‘straight to the heart’. It is impossible for the followers to explain further and put this experience into words. These things are too deep.

There are things that cannot be transferred by speech (*lisān*). This is why *abnā al-ṭarīqa* learn two languages, the language of the tongue (*lisān*), and the language of the hearts (*qulūb*). By developing the language of the heart we can deal with the *Shaykh*.¹⁵¹

AM2-2: When we go deep into the *ṭarīqa*, the relation between us and the *Shaykh* is not by speech. There is something in *taṣawwuf* that is called ‘*ilm al-ishāra*. We are just watching the signs from the *Shaykh*. But this is a higher and very deep level. We cannot talk about it. It is not restricted to talk, but it’s difficult to talk about *ishāra*. When we see the *Shaykh* angry for example, it is a specific language of the sign, and when we see him laughing this is ‘*ilm al-ishāra*. And this directs us, by signs more than by speaking.

AM2-6: It is not like he will tell us do this and don’t do that. It’s not like this. It’s just trying to show us the correct way or the correct answer in a very smooth way.¹⁵²

By developing the spiritual relation with the *Shaykh*, the relation between their hearts, the followers understand the signs/allusions and the meaning of the signs/allusions, and they receive knowledge directly into their hearts. Several followers in Amman have written or are writing books about the *ṭarīqa*, and they relate to this notion of inspiration as a major factor in the process of writing. One follower says he suffered from a writer’s block but when the *Shaykh* gave him a ballpoint and said ‘write!’ he wrote several pages in one day. Another writer recognizes this experience. Once when he was working on a book he got ideas in the middle of the night and started writing in the dark, because he knew if he

¹⁵¹ AM3-3 in Interview AM3.

¹⁵² AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

turned on the light the inspiration would be gone. This inspiration came from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.¹⁵³

Guidance and knowledge can thus be transmitted in various ways that range from very clear unambiguous language to deep ineffable experiences that go 'straight to the heart', and the meaning of *ishāra* for the followers can therefore be found on a scale from very concrete signs that can be interpreted discursively to the allusive language that seeks to express the deeper knowledge, depending on the spiritual level of the followers.

The idea of *ishāra* (in the interpretive sense) is connected to the followers' idea that when one loves God, one sees Him in everything. For them, the transcendent can 'break through' in every time and every place and give them guidance in their life. A lower-level 'charismatic moment' is thus accessible to the followers through the relationship with their *Shaykh* – the 'routinization of charisma' in this *ṭarīqa* might bind the main charisma in all its shining glory in the figure of the *Shaykh*, but by practicing the Path and looking at everyday reality with a different eye, they can see sparks of it in everyday life.

The spiritual development that allows them to participate in his charisma and discern his signs is done by practising the path:

AM2-2: Some *ikhwānnā* for example come and understand *nashīd*, that's it. They love *nashīd*, they understand *nashīd*. Some *ikhwānnā* love philosophy or the *mudhākara*, they understand the *mudhākara*. Some *ikhwānnā* love to interact with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* as a human being. This is the differentiation between the students and the *murīdīn*. (...) the main difference, the most important thing that differentiates between the *murīdīn*, is *dhikr* and '*ibāda*. (...) '*ibāda*, *wazīfa*, *dhikr*, *ta'ammul* (contemplative thinking, intellectual meditation). Our *ṭarīqa* is based on *dhikr* and *fikr* and *maḥabba* and *taslīm*. (...) For example there are people, maybe they do not read *wazīfa* every day, maybe they do not pray, they are free, for example maybe they pray the *subḥ* and not the *zuhr*. All of this leads to the rank they have.

¹⁵³ Semi-informal discussion with the Welcome Committee in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥadra* on 28-03-2013.

AM2-6: Rank of knowledge of course, and understanding.¹⁵⁴

The increase of my meetings with the *Shaykh* makes me used to the signs that my *Shaykh* sends. As soon as I increase my frequenting the *zāwiya* and the vision of the *Shaykh* by listening to the *Shaykh* I understand that now I have to talk to him, now it is possible to talk with him, now he guides me, the expression of his face, maybe they inspire (*tūhī*) me like this, and every time, through the increase of your practice (*mumārastak*) or your visit to the *Shaykh* in the *zāwiya*, he gives you this understanding. (...) And second, (...) *dhikr* and *'ibāda* makes you develop your understanding (*mafhūmak*) or your vision (*ru'yatak*) of the *Shaykh*.¹⁵⁵

The follower does not necessarily actually have to ask a question – the *Shaykh's* ability to sense what is on someone's mind is considered one of his *karāmāt*. The *Shaykh's* answer can be direct but mostly it will not be direct and they have to search his speech and actions for signs that will provide them with answers, or the *Shaykh* might appear to them in a dream.¹⁵⁶ Regarding mundane issues, the question and the answer can be both direct and indirect. Regarding spiritual issues, the question and the answer will always be communicated indirectly and spiritually. Either the follower observes the *Shaykh* and distills the answer from his words and actions, or he communicates with the *Shaykh* in a dream.

Practically, it is considered similar to the Islamic *istikhāra* prayer, a religiously approved form of seeking guidance through dreams.¹⁵⁷ When a Muslim has a question (for example which mosque to attend), he or she prays the *istikhāra* prayer, keeps the question in mind, and God will provide him or her with the answer. It has been noted that while dreaming and *istikhāra* are part of the general Islamic tradition and Muslim imagination, the actual dreaming

¹⁵⁴ AM2-2 and AM2-6 in Interview AM2.

¹⁵⁵ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

¹⁵⁶ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹⁵⁷ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

practice and the process of interpretation are culturally informed.¹⁵⁸ The particular form in which *ikhwānā* embrace this Islamic practice is therefore revealing.

Istikhāra done by *abnā al-ṭarīqa* by turning towards God and their *Shaykh* for guidance:

AM3-5: It is the same between us and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. When there are things in the *‘aqīda* that are difficult to ask it is the same, we remember God / do *dhikr* (*budhkor Allah*), and our Lord will make happen that the answer to this question comes. And this answer will come through a dream or through a specific word, you will understand from it that this is the answer to your question. (...) Because this *‘ilm* is *‘ilm* through *ilhāmāt* that come to the heart. They come through *‘ibādāt*, they come through *dhikr*, as long as the question is fixed in your mind. Through the quantity (*kuthr*) of your love for the *Shaykh*, and his love for you, he will answer your question. There will be a spiritual connection between two people.

AM1-1: *Ilhām*, *‘ilm ladunnī*.

AM3-5: (...) Because [there is] so much of a bond or a relationship between us, he answers the questions which we are shy to ask. And maybe he will not say this is your question and ask it, he will talk about the subject...

AM2-6: He will inspire you with the answer.

AM3-5: He will inspire you and you will get the answer.

AM1-1: He inspires [*yulhim*]. (...) There is knowledge that we call *‘ilm khafī* (hidden knowledge) or *‘ilm ladunnī*. (...) And the *murīd* that has a strong spiritual connection (*ittiṣāl*) with the *Shaykh*, he inspires this *‘ilm rabbānī* (divine knowledge) in the heart of this *faqīr*. (...) This stage (*marḥala*) is like the stage of inspiration (*marḥalat al-waḥy*).¹⁵⁹

While we cannot access the actual experience, we can still learn a lot from this practice for our purposes of understanding authority in the *ṭarīqa* by analysing how the experience is induced, how it is narrated and interpreted, with whom it is discussed, and who are the actors involved. In other cases, believers

¹⁵⁸ Edgar and Henig, ‘Istikhara’, 251–252; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 288. See paragraph 1.2.

¹⁵⁹ AM3-5, AM2-6 and AM1-1 in Interview AM3.

often seek out a religious specialist who does the prayer, receives the answer and interprets this for them – as Pinto for example notes for the *Shaykh* of the Qadiri Hilali zawiya.¹⁶⁰ In such situations this role gives them a lot of authority over the community. In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, by contrast, the *Shaykh* is not directly involved. The followers pray and experience themselves, and often share their experience with *ikhwānā* to interpret the signs together and incorporate them in the tradition. The *Shaykh* is considered to give them the signs to be interpreted.

They believe that the *Shaykh* gives answers in dreams because it happened to all of them, and because it is backed by a *ḥadīth* on the Prophet which says ‘who saw me in his sleep truly saw me, because the devil does not impersonate me.’

The same thing, because for us *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is the extension (*imtidād*) of the same *nūr muḥammadī*. So our vision of him in our sleep, in our dreams – we believe that we saw him truly, he speaks to us in our sleep and the next day we go accordingly, we believe that this is the right (*saḥīḥ*) answer as if this was really reality, analogous with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet pbuh.¹⁶¹

During Interview AM3 some of the participants give examples of their spiritual communication with the *Shaykh*. One lady tells us that her son seemed sick, but for three weeks the doctors were not able to find any illness.

And all the night me and my husband prayed and did *du‘ā’*, we asked *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and God that there was nothing wrong with him. Every night every night every night until the morning. (...) we were very tired and sad and we continued to do *du‘ā’*, to ask from *Sīdnā* night and day, we never slept.

When they travelled to see a different doctor, the *Shaykh* appeared in her dream and told her he was not sick, and the next day the doctor’s analysis confirmed

¹⁶⁰ Iain R. Edgar, *The Dream in Islam: From Qur’anic Tradition to Jihadist Inspiration* (Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Pinto, ‘Knowledge and Miracles’, 68.

¹⁶¹ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

this. Another participant stressed to me that the *Shaykh* answered their prayers. Not only did he have knowledge of the boy's physical state before the doctors did, he also communicated with the parents to calm them. The fact that the boy was not ill is also attributed to the *Shaykh*. Because they prayed and did *dhikr* all the time, he came to their aid.¹⁶²

Another follower tells a similar story: She was very worried for her son who studied abroad. She cried when he asked her to pray so he would pass his exams, and she read *wazīfa* and said *du'ā'*. In her sleep the *Shaykh* told her that he would pass and she should not be afraid. She told her son and he was very happy and he relaxed (*uṭma'an*) – and indeed he passed, his teacher even told him he was her best student! 'I relaxed from the vision of the *Shaykh*.'¹⁶³ Again the *Shaykh* shares his knowledge with the follower, calming her and her son, and the student's success is attributed to the *Shaykh*.

Another follower tells that he had signed a contract to work in Saudi Arabia for four years. When two years had passed, he saw the *Shaykh* in his dreams.

We were sitting in a salon like this. I love guava. I saw *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* in my sleep at the other side of the salon and he carried four pieces of guava. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* walked towards me. When I saw him walking towards me I walked towards him because I wanted that I go to him, not he come to me. When I approached him I wanted to take the four pieces of guava from him. When he wanted to give them to me, they fell from the hand of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* to the floor. Two of them broke, and two of them stayed whole. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* took the two whole ones and gave them to me, and smiled at me, and went.¹⁶⁴

He did not understand the dream and discussed it with *ikhwānnā*, but he did not find a satisfying answer. A few days later it all became clear: his employer told him his contract was finished and he was asked to return to Jordan. 'And I understood straight away that I was bound to the contract for four years – two of

¹⁶² AM3-6 in Interview AM3.

¹⁶³ AM3-4 in Interview AM3.

¹⁶⁴ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

them had passed, the ones that stayed well, and two of them broke. I understood straight away that I had to return.¹⁶⁵ In this example the *Shaykh* knows the future but does not communicate it clearly and the follower has to search for the meaning himself. It is interesting to note that he includes his fellow followers in this, discussing the dream with them just like other speech acts of the *Shaykh*. A few days later he understood the meaning of the dream and he knew what to do in this situation. Interestingly enough while the *Shaykh* did predict this occurrence, he did not explicitly tell the follower how he should react to the news. Probably the follower did not have much choice in the matter as his contract had been ended by his superiors, but the way he narrates the event shows he understood it as a moment of choice in which he was guided by his *Shaykh* through his dream.

In another story, a follower remembers the *Shaykh* predicting the future for him in clear and explicit language, rather than symbols. He had an interview for a function which would require him to travel. When he stopped by the *zāwiya* on his way to the interview, the *Shaykh* told him ‘go with me in the car.’ When they reached the place of the interview, the *Shaykh* said ‘go and smell the air, that trip is for you, they will choose you from among a hundred people.’ And indeed they did choose him.¹⁶⁶

Finally, a follower recounts that he was sitting with the *Shaykh*, who was talking about a topic which he knew something about. He said to himself: ‘If the *Shaykh* loves me, he will ask me now,’ and immediately the *Shaykh* turned towards him and addressed him by his name. He saw this as ‘the result of *tawāṣul*. There is a language of the heart (*luḡha qalbiyya*) between you and the *Shaykh*.’¹⁶⁷

A similar experience is documented in *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, as another follower immediately points out. A Muslim scholar in Damascus who was not ‘*min aṣḥāb al-ḥaqqīqa*,’ who did not believe in Sufism and did not belong to a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, met some of *ikhwānā* and did not agree with them. He decided to visit

¹⁶⁵ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹⁶⁶ AM1-1 in Interview AM3.

¹⁶⁷ AM3-3 in Interview AM3.

Shaykh Ali Nur al-Din in Acre. When he met him, the *Shaykh* was sitting in his *majlis* pouring coffee. The scholar said to himself: 'If the *Shaykh* is strong and truly a true *Shaykh*, he will give me his cup of coffee.' And indeed, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* gave the cup to one of *ikhwānnā* and told him: 'Take my cup, give it to him.' The next day this incident was repeated with a glass of milk, and the scholar came to *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and kissed his hands, and said to him 'I was blind that you are a *Shaykh* and you are worthy of it (*anā 'amayt innak shaykh wa tastaḥaqq dhālik*).'¹⁶⁸ Here we see a hint of the influence of older stories from the tradition acting as narrative patterns used to put a personal experience into words and explicitly connect to these earlier times.

Another story from the time of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi serves to explain the same mode of communication:

Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā sat in the *majlis*, and there were *ikhwānnā*. (...) He asked one of them 'Take that jar, take the jar from here.' And *ikhwānnā* exclaimed '*Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* said "Take the jar from here!"' *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* left the *majlis* and *ikhwānnā* said to him: '*Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* tells you to take the jar, why didn't you take it?' He said to them: 'Me, the sign I took was that *Sīdnā* wants to take jar, he takes it, with his movement, not me. I am nothing.' This is the sign between him and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. But the ordinary *ikhwānnā* don't understand this, this message.¹⁶⁹

This same spiritual communication happens between *ikhwānnā*. Because they love each other and because of their spiritual development they can communicate without words, as illustrated by the following case: A lady from Cyprus saw the *Shaykh* in a dream and came to find him. She did not speak Arabic and never learnt. Followers say that when she comes to the *zāwiya* in

¹⁶⁸ AM3-5 in Interview AM3. The story can be found in al-Yashrutīyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 53–54. In the written version of the story the scholar Hajj Salim al-Aghar al-Bayrutī is from Beirut rather than Damascus, and ends with the him reciting a line of a *qaṣīda*: '*Ya sāqīyan zidnī 'Alī*' ('Oh you who pour drink, pour me more Alī').

¹⁶⁹ AM2-2 in Interview AM2. Note that while the previous stories were all from Interview AM3, this story comes from Interview AM2.

Amman and listens to the *mudhākara* she understands it through her heart, and the other followers also communicate with her through the heart.¹⁷⁰

For the followers, these modes of communication not only enable the transmission of ineffable truths, but also the integration of different levels of reality and the concretization of the *'aqīda* as it becomes relevant for individuals as they experience the guidance of the sacred in their everyday life. These moments are explained on the doctrinal level as communication of the *Shaykh*, and engaged with on the communal level and incorporated in the normative framework and in tradition. In this act of interpretation there is space for influence from the demands of wider society without diminishing adherence to the idea of *taslīm* and obedience to the *Shaykh*. The complementarity of *dhikr*, *fikr* and *taslīm* which exists for the followers in the inner realm beyond reason, is thus also achieved in everyday reality. In fact, the followers experience the act of interpretation as part of their religious practice and many of these interactions are afterwards described as miraculous instances of spiritual communication which enhance the *Shaykh's* charisma and his authority.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the practical aspects of the *Shaykh's* authority: how are the roles we have found in the previous chapter enacted by the *Shaykh*, or to turn the question around: how are they attributed to him? Bruce Lincoln argues that an authoritative speaker cannot speak in a vacuum but has to appeal to certain ideas and values that were pre-established by the audience.¹⁷¹ We have seen that the primary attributes needed to accept the *Shaykh's* authority are cultivated through *tarbiya* in the family and community, enabling the followers to see the *Shaykh* as a caring teacher and guide. In order to activate this role, the follower has to accept and develop his or her spiritual relationship with the

¹⁷⁰ Informal discussion with AM1-3 in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥaḍra* on 28-11-2013; informal discussion with AM2-6 after the women's meeting on 30-03-2013.

¹⁷¹ See Lincoln, *Authority*. See chapter 1.

Shaykh, in which he or she is aided by the community. Likewise, the act of interpreting the *Shaykh*'s signs is done in the community. Therefore in practice, the enactment of the *Shaykh*'s teaching role is fulfilled more by the community of the *ṭarīqa* than by the *Shaykh* himself as values are transmitted, signs are identified and interpreted in the community. The validity of understanding authority as a relationship is certainly strengthened by examining this case study, and the importance to understand the dynamics of the acts of communication between *Shaykh*, community and individual becomes clear.

As we have seen in chapter 5, the *ṭarīqa* is institutionalised on traditional kinship lines but maintains the charismatic connection to both earlier *Shaykhs* and the current *Shaykh*. The *shaykhdom* is passed from the *Shaykh* to his son. The *ṭarīqa* – while proselytizing during the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din – is now passed mainly within the family, and adherence is based on socialisation rather than conversion. In classical sociological terms, one could say that there was an organizational shift from sect to denomination as people are born and socialized into it rather than converted.¹⁷² It should be pointed out, however, that there are quite a few instances of outsiders joining – mainly through spouses and friends – who are introduced into the *ṭarīqa* through secondary socialisation by significant others.¹⁷³ O'Dea sees the substitution of conversion for socialisation as leading to lessening of adherence (what he calls the 'the dilemma of power').¹⁷⁴ Because of the absence of statistics it is impossible to know to what degree affiliation changed over time, but for those who are active followers, the shift to socialisation in no way made their adherence superficial. Many grew up without regular access to the *Shaykh*, and their first encounter with him was experienced in terms similar to a conversion experience and often talked about in such terms (see paragraph 5.4). O'Dea does acknowledge this option – socialisation can prepare people for a conversion-like moment.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Here we refer to the organisational mode, not their attitude to the world, which does not seem to have shifted.

¹⁷³ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42, 91–92, 157–166. See paragraph 1.3.

¹⁷⁴ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 84–86.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

The acceptance of the authority of the *Shaykh* and the internalisation of roles of *Shaykh* and follower happen within the community through the *tarbiya* – similar to the sociological process of socialisation. Attitudes towards the doctrines, practices, community and *Shaykh* are formed in the community. The acceptance of the *Shaykh*'s higher rank and superior knowledge based on the doctrine that he embodies the *nūr muḥammadī* happens through what Berger and Luckmann call the internalisation of the symbolic universe and the acceptance of social structure through the internalisation of specific roles. This happens in the community and continues throughout the individual's life as the socialisation process is never complete; the symbolic universe needs to be maintained and reaffirmed in the face of challenges, and the community plays an essential role in this. We see the same process in the case of most where the new follower's significant others (a wife, or a dear friend) play an essential role in mediating the individual's love for the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa*, supported by the larger community into which the individual enters.¹⁷⁶ This teaching role of *ikhwānā* is made explicit in both the answers of the followers and in the quote of the *Shaykh*:

Just as the *murīd* connects with his *Shaykh* through undertaking a *ziyāra*¹⁷⁷ to his *Shaykh* and stand in his presence to receive *tarbiya* through his good example and the taking over of the positive characteristics (*ṣiffāt*), this also happens through the *muqaddamīn* (...) or through his brothers who possess hearts full with the knowledge of God and his Prophet.¹⁷⁸

Pinto understands *tarbiya* as the process of spiritual education that follows initiation.¹⁷⁹ It is important to note that the word *tarbiya* generally refers to the

¹⁷⁶ See paragraph 5.4 Interview AM4

¹⁷⁷ *Ziyāra* (pl. *ziyārāt*) means 'visit', pilgrimage to a *shaykh*, holy place, tomb or shrine. This is based on the belief that the saint, or any object associated with him, confers his *baraka* (grace, blessings). By visiting, the believers profess their love for God and the saints, who intercede for them before God. In the case of a deceased *shaykh*, he is considered to be spiritually present. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 95–96.

¹⁷⁸ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 15-03-2014, p. 1-2.

¹⁷⁹ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 464–465.

broader concept of education and raising of children in general,¹⁸⁰ not just to the more narrow meaning of spiritual education following a voluntary initiation. Indeed in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya the term is used in its broader meaning. This also reflects a different approach to spiritual education and to initiation than Pinto noted in his fieldwork in Aleppo. As the *ṭarīqa* is institutionalized on kinship lines and the followers' children are born into the community and exposed to the teachings and practices of the *ṭarīqa* from a young age, and as there is no individualized instruction, the *mubāya'a* has a different role. The person doing *mubāya'a* pledges him/herself to a different level of commitment to the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa*'s devotional practices, but the practices themselves do not change. People start participating in the *ṭarīqa*'s devotional practices from an early age as part of their *tarbiya*. There is no personalized initiation and all followers practice the same rituals.

The importance of ritual in the institutionalisation process has been noted by both Berger and O'Dea. The latter stresses they are not only reactions to a religious experience, but when institutionalised act as re-presentations and re-creations of the charismatic moment which elicit emotions and attitudes, and reaffirms the relationship with the sacred and with the community.¹⁸¹ Berger points to the role of ritual in 'reminding' people of their tradition and the charismatic moment from which it derives.¹⁸² Sufi devotional practices certainly fit this description – *dhikr* literally means 'remembrance', in this case the remembrance of God.

Based on his fieldwork among Sufis in Aleppo, Pinto shows that different ways of transmission lead to different relationships between *shaykh* and follower, and to different relationships among the followers themselves. He sees a difference between a *ṭarīqa*'s collective rituals such as collective *dhikr*, which can be practiced by both initiates and by non-initiated followers and which allows them 'various degrees of socialization into the symbolic and experiential

¹⁸⁰ The basic meaning of the verbal root r-b-y is 'to increase; to grow; to grow up', and *tarbiya* means 'education, upbringing; teaching, instruction; pedagogy; breeding, raising (of animals)'. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed.; 'Tarbiya.'

¹⁸¹ O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 39–41.

¹⁸² Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 36–37.

universe' of the *ṭarīqa*, and the more individualized process of initiation which allows them to develop an individualized religious self through a personalized *wird* and subjective mystical experiences. Collective rituals produce shared experiences and thus promote an egalitarian social structure amongst the followers, while personalized initiation promotes a hierarchical structure as it creates more individual experiences and hierarchy. He does acknowledge, however, that collective rituals can also promote a subtle hierarchization as the mystical experiences expressed during collective rituals can be used to evaluate the spiritual level of the disciples and to create a hierarchy based on these levels. Collective rituals are not the only setting in which mystical states are evaluated, however, as such an evaluation can happen in a wide array of social settings.¹⁸³

The egalitarian attitudes professed when discussing *maḥabba* are thus reinforced by the particular devotional system, which is an intrinsic aspect of the process of *tarbiya* from a young age, both among initiates and non-initiates. There is also no clear conceptual system that arranges different stages on the path corresponding with different levels of initiation which could conceptually organise religious experiences on which an explicit hierarchy could be based. Even though it is not conceptually organised, the need to manifest one's spiritual progress through good behaviour is explicit, and an informal hierarchy can thus be established. In the one ritual for which explicit permission needs to be sought, the devotional and moral performance of the *muṭīd* are considered the main criterion, as this is considered closely connected to his/her spiritual state. The hierarchy thus established remains informal. The only explicit hierarchy is that between the *Shaykh* and *ikhwānā*.

Pinto further notes that different types of *dhikr* encourage different types of charismatic leaderships. While one group might value order and perform a well disciplined *dhikr*, other groups behave emotionally and ecstatically and perform miracles during their meetings. The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya certainly maintains a very disciplined *dhikr* (for an example, see the description in chapter 7). There

¹⁸³ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465–468; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 125–126; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.' See paragraph 1.2.

is no room for ecstasy, which is in line with the general teachings of the *Shaykh* that emphasize good behaviour and participation in society according to the religious and mundane law.

Complementary to *dhikr* is *fikr*. We have seen how it encompasses a wide range of meanings, from meditative contemplation to rational thought and critical thinking. As Pinto noted, study groups can both stress individuality (as they provide a platform of moral performance and of rational debate based on individual critical thinking) and encourage an egalitarian group cohesion as it homogenizes the vernacular knowledge, equalizes the distribution of knowledge and monitors the debate, encouraging consensus and adding to these egalitarian attitudes and both shared doctrinal understandings and reflections.¹⁸⁴ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, we see that study groups and moments of *mudhākara* both encourage individual autonomy and communal agreement. There is no personal instruction – the *Shaykh* speaks in general and the followers interpret his words according to their own needs, questions, and level of understanding. They then discuss this among themselves. Everyone understands the *Shaykh*'s words and actions differently based on his own level of intellectual and spiritual understanding, but the discussion among the followers brings these different understandings closer together. In the process, the words and actions of the *Shaykh*, and the followers' interpretations, are incorporated in the vernacular tradition. In the *mudhākara*, the followers negotiate meanings and codes of behaviour.

As Talal Asad argued (see chapter 1), we should analyse the kinds of reasoning and the underlying logic of education processes to understand the transmission and maintenance of traditions.¹⁸⁵ By taking into account the role of education in cultivating attitudes towards the *Shaykh*, and the role of interpretation in the communication with the *Shaykh*, we can go beyond the Weberian distinction between rational and irrational authority. In the previous chapter we have seen that in this *ḥarīqa* traditional and charismatic authority are

¹⁸⁴ Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 126–127.

¹⁸⁵ Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16.

inextricably linked as the traditional institutionalisation includes the maintenance of charisma, and in this chapter we see that there is considerable space for rational discussion and interpretation in both. Interpretations should remain within the boundaries of the *Shaykh*'s teaching (which is considered the same as the Prophet's teaching). The rational discussion should be rooted in the spiritual experience which is cultivated in the *ṭarīqa*, and one of the main criteria for evaluating the validity of an interpretation is the spiritual development of the interpreter. The rational and the spiritual are thus not adversaries, but partners, and there is space for the individual despite the importance of the community and the *Shaykh*. Similarly, those who say that there is no space for individual reasoning in Sufism because of the omniscience and omnipotence of the Sufi master, are proven wrong as both can co-exist.

The *Shaykh* is the ultimate 'custodian of tradition' who sets the boundaries within which the *ṭarīqa*'s teachings can be interpreted. Due to the indirect communication of the *Shaykh* however, the boundaries provided by his teachings can be blurred. These blurred boundaries enable the followers to manoeuvre in their concrete environments, which gives them space for local interpretations that maintain the cohesion of the local community. The explicit importance of interaction with society and the notion that schools and books are valid sources to learn about general Islamic issues support this process. The potential paradox between *taslīm* and *fikr*, between a centralised *ṭarīqa* in which the *Shaykh* is the ultimate authority (both in the sense of *an* authority and *the* authority), and the local interpretations of the followers, is thus solved by the particular mode of communication between *Shaykh* and follower.

Through the transmission in the community and the discussions of the *Shaykh*'s teachings, the followers negotiate 'official religion' and make it relevant for their community by stressing different elements, resulting in several parallel traditions (Bowman's 'folk religion', that which is generally accepted and transmitted belief and practice, regardless of the official view).¹⁸⁶ Due to the strong centralisation and the strong bonds among communities these parallel

¹⁸⁶ Bowman and Valk, 'Vernacular Religion.'

traditions do not differ significantly from the 'official religion' – they are points of different stress, rather than real differences in interpretation. In the case of the *mudhākara* in Amman, this knowledge is steered specifically by the *Shaykh* and those in the Welcome Committee in what Berger would call a certain degree of social control.¹⁸⁷ Even so, individuals, based on their different levels of intellectual and spiritual (emotional, affective) understanding, and their different characters, life experiences, and degree of exposure to the community and the *Shaykh*, relate to these parallel traditions in different ways. The degree to which these individual differences are accepted differ per follower, but in general there is space for discussion and differing views that sometimes even go beyond the 'official religion'.

The concept of *ishāra* has a similarly wide range of meanings in this *ṭarīqa*. Its classical Sufi meaning – allusive language – can be found and is considered to be an occurrence on the higher spiritual levels when the disciple has developed such a high degree of relationship with the *Shaykh* that words are no longer enough and necessary to communicate, especially when they have reached a state of *fanā'* – in sociological terms, when he has become integrated with the symbolic universe to such a degree to grasp its nuances instinctively. *Ishāra* is not just reserved for the higher levels, however. It is believed that every follower can distinguish and interpret *isharat* on his own level. These *ishārāt* can basically be anything, any word, gesture, action from the *Shaykh*, or even something that happens in everyday life that for an outsider would not seem to have any deeper significance whatsoever. In this sense, the meaning of the concept *ishāra* comes closer to the meaning of esoteric Qur'an exegesis, or even the pre-Islamic and early-Islamic meaning that simply meant gesture and was considered part of the cultural non-vocal symbolic system used to communicate. Sometimes these *isharat* are quite straightforward, for example in the case of the *ishārāt* mentioned when we were discussing the succession of the *Shaykh* (see paragraph 5.3), sometimes they are more so, in which case they can be subject

¹⁸⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 72.

of discussion among ikhwanna and as thus their interpretation will be a combination of the individual and the community, and become part of tradition.

The practice of *istikhāra* in this community is a very clear sign of the large role the followers have in managing their spiritual communications and interpretations. In most cases discussed by Edgar and Henig, *istikhāra* was done by spiritual specialists. Green also points out that the interpretation of dreams can be an important task for a Sufi *shaykh*.¹⁸⁸ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, the followers do all these things themselves: they ask, pray, dream and interpret – the latter typically in the community. This shows that an element which in many Sufi communities provided the leader with significant power, is here taken up by the followers themselves. They experience this as a miracle from their *Shaykh*, and thus incorporate it into the symbolic system in which the *Shaykh* is the ultimate reference and the one connecting them to the sacred, but it cannot be denied that they take on this role.

For the followers, these indirect and implicit communications are manifestations of the ultimate truth and due to their spiritual relation with the *Shaykh* and helped by the community they are steered in their interpretations towards the only possible conclusion. From a sociological point of view however, such a dynamic gives the followers a lot of space to distinguish and interpret the signs within the context of their personal circumstances. Either way, it is a mechanism to concretize the *'aqīda* and make the symbolic system relevant in the people's lives. In Bergerian terms, it strengthens the *ṭarīqa*'s symbolic universe and social relationships by incorporating 'marginal situations', moments in which meta-empirical realms break through into everyday reality in dreams and visions.¹⁸⁹ These moments are explained on the doctrinal level as communication of the *Shaykh*, and engaged with on the communal level and incorporated in the normative framework and in tradition. In addition to this – and this is something Berger did not discuss – it also transforms everyday moments into sacred encounters, as followers see signs in the most mundane moments and sayings.

¹⁸⁸ Edgar and Henig, 'Istikhara'; Green, 'Dreams and Visions in Islam.'

¹⁸⁹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 28–55. See paragraph 1.3

This is part of their belief that through *maḥabba* they can see God everywhere – they can also see the *Shaykh*'s signs everywhere. This further increases their opportunities to concretize the message and make it relevant for their everyday reality. Through these experiences, the everyday reality and the reality in which spiritual communication happens are integrated to a high degree: Not only are incursions from another realm integrated into the everyday reality through the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* (dreams, visions, etc.), but also aspects of everyday reality are transformed to be seen as part of another reality as messages from the *Shaykh* are seen in the most mundane of matters.

This practice of interpretation does not happen in a social vacuum. As we have seen, these signs and interpretations are discussed in a communal setting and their interpretation is thus influenced by earlier experiences and discussions. At the same time these signs and interpretations are incorporated into the larger body of communal lore and – in the words of Shils – become part of the tradition. Once the sign is perceived, the community takes over its interpretation and transforms it into an element of the tradition of the community. In this process the *Shaykh* does not have a lot of direct influence over the development of the tradition – although through the space of the *zāwiya* and the presence of close followers he does have indirect influence (see chapter 7).

In this act of interpretation there is space for influence from the demands of wider society. We have seen a similar dynamic in the approach to the sharia, where outside influences are negotiated and mediated in the community to ensure that both the Shadhuli-Yashruti *'aḳīda* and the sharia, as interpreted by society, are adhered to. Through both these processes, the *ṭarīqa* gives the followers space to adapt to their time and place and participate in society, while at the same time their *tarbiya* and the practice of *mudhākara* among the followers and meetings in the *zāwiya* offers a controlling mechanism that ensures that followers do not stray from the communal values.

In this way there is a lot of space for the individual to interpret words and actions of the *Shaykh* and the community, without diminishing his or her adherence to the idea of *taslīm* and obedience to the *Shaykh*. The

complementarity of *dhikr*, *fikr* and *taslīm* which exists for the followers in the inner realm beyond reason, is thus also achieved in everyday reality. In fact, the followers experience the act of interpretation as part of their religious practice and many of these interactions are afterwards described as miraculous instances of spiritual communication which enhance the *Shaykh*'s charisma and his authority. This gives us the interesting case of a religious and social group which is led by a figure of absolute spiritual authority, while at the same time giving great scope to individual followers to interpret the texts and law within their own lives and social context, mediated by the community – and we come to understand the internal dynamic of a strongly centralized *ṭarīqa* in which the *Shaykh* is the ultimate authority (both in the sense of *an* authority and *the* authority) which places great value on social participation and adaptation to time and place.

This points to the large role of the community in the construction and maintenance of the tradition, the symbolic universe and the social structure. It begs the question addressed by Stjernholm: how much influence they have on the definition of the symbolic and social universe as a whole? It seems that they have more autonomy than their adherence to the explicit doctrine that the *Shaykh* is always right as embodiment of divine light and knowledge would at first sight imply, while maintaining their adherence to *taslīm*.

There is more to *taslīm* than simple obedience to the *Shaykh*'s words, however. It's primary meaning is to surrender one's will to God and accept His plan, which in the words of the *Shaykh* will provide the follower with comfort in the face of affliction.¹⁹⁰ From a Bergerian perspective, such surrender to God and to the *Shaykh*, and the goal of reaching *fanā'* in the *Shaykh*, Prophet, and finally, God, can be seen as an example of the mystical 'religious attitude in which man seeks union with the sacred forces or beings' which aims to solve the theodicy as a strategy for 'world-maintenance'.¹⁹¹ Berger points out that the attitude of self-transcendence 'brought about by complete identification with the collectivity' is

¹⁹⁰ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.5-6.

¹⁹¹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 46–56.

extra strong in societies that are tied together through kinship bonds and the belief in the 'ontological continuity between the generations'.¹⁹² In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the bond between the current and previous followers is experienced as a strong familial bond and does implicitly encourage this transcendence into the collectivity. Explicitly, however, the focus is on the *Shaykh* and on transcendence into him and through him into God. Even if followers have not yet reached this union, by cultivating *maḥabba* and *taslīm* they are taught and trained to see and love God in everything, which Berger points out is part of the process of solving the theodicy.¹⁹³ Not only does this attitude of *taslīm* therefore strengthen the position of the *Shaykh*, it strengthens the position of the entire community and the beliefs and practices they share.

Through the process of *tarbiya*, in which ideas and practices are transmitted and *ādāb* are cultivated, social actors are created that function both within the *ṭarīqa* and in wider society. The desire to participate in and be accepted by society at large is especially clear in the *ṭarīqa*'s attitude to the sharia – they stress their adherence to it, but the concrete interpretation of the sharia depends on society at large and actual codes of behaviour are negotiated in the community by referring both to social understandings of sharia and 'aqīda.

The central pillar of the *ṭarīqa*, *maḥabba*, leads them to become a strong community, to see God in everything, see the *Shaykh*'s signs in everything, and to adhere to the rules of the sharia. It thus strengthens their community and positions it securely in the historical narrative of the Islamic Sufi tradition, and does not take them into the realm of love as a universal mystical force that transcends particular religions and their law systems. They do not adhere to any 'new spiritual' narratives with their focus on perennial truths and universal mysticism. While they love everyone as God's creatures, they define themselves as explicitly Muslim.

While I have gained a good theoretical understanding of the underlying logic and dynamics of education and discussion among the followers in Amman

¹⁹² Ibid., 51–55.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 46–56.

mainly due to the conditions in which I was allowed to conduct my fieldwork, these same conditions have prevented me from gaining a more thorough understanding of the actual dynamic in the daily life of the followers in Amman.

A discussion of the relationship between the *Shaykh* and his followers would not be complete without referring to the space where this relationship takes place, and its location in society. As Lincoln puts it, authority is enacted on a stage (see chapter 1).¹⁹⁴ Therefore, we need to discuss the stage on which the communication between *Shaykh* and follower and the education of the followers takes place. It is to the stage in Amman that we will now turn.

¹⁹⁴ Lincoln, *Authority*, 143–144.

Chapter 7

The *Zāwiya* in Amman

This chapter discusses the question on which stage the *Shaykh*'s authority is enacted, in other words: where does the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower take place? This relationship can be seen as a communication, both spiritual and physical, which happens through practice in the community. This brings us to question how the stage where it happens affects this communication.

7.1 The Meaning of the *Zāwiya*

The exercise of authority is an act of communication. When seeking to locate the 'stage of authority', we should therefore keep in mind that the communication between the *Shaykh* and his followers happens in two realms, the material and the spiritual, the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*. The main space in which the followers meet the *Shaykh* is the *zāwiya*. The followers envisage the spiritual inner realm – the *bāṭin* – in which the spiritual communication with their *Shaykh* takes place as *zāwiyat al-qalb*, the *zāwiya* of the heart.¹ This is where the true relation with their *Shaykh* occurs, this is where the *Shaykh* fulfils his function as *murabbī* and *murshid*, and this is where his authority is enacted. This is why they feel that their main concern is not with the outer world but with the inner hidden realm.

But as we have seen, this relationship has to be developed through *tarbiya*, spiritual practice and ethical behaviour (*ādāb*) in the material realm. This happens in the social context within the family, the community – and also the *zāwiya* near the Eighth Circle in Amman. It is a central place for the *tarbiya* of the community and the main worldly stage of authority for the followers in Amman and Zarqa. From 1960 to 1980 the meetings and rituals of the *ṭarīqa* were held in

¹ AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

the residence of *Sīdī* Ahmad in al-Weibdeh and in the houses of two followers. Between 1980 and 2005 the *zāwiya* was near the Fourth Circle, and in 2005 the new *zāwiya* near the Eighth Circle was inaugurated – the old *zāwiya* is now *Shaykh* Ahmad's house.

The children are raised by giving the good example, and the *zāwiya* is seen as a place which brings together many role models, both the *Shaykh* and other followers. This is also where they hear the teachings of the *Shaykh* in the form of the weekly *mudhākara*, where they go to meet and discuss during monthly study meetings, and where they practice the collective rituals. The *zāwiya* strengthens their attitudes towards the *Shaykh*, their beliefs and their community feeling:

Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā is the *muwajjih* and the *murshid* and the *mu'allim* and the *ustādh* and the *murabbī*, both in religion and in my normal life. This opinion is not because someone told me, no – because for thirty years I am educated in the *zāwiya*. I always go to the *zāwiya*, and I see, I see *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and I see the *zāwiya*, I see what he says and I feel *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, he is the one who gives me, he leads you directly to the good, in everything. Whether in approaching (*iqbāl*) God, or in dealing with people, or even when dealing with yourself. This is why I do not see it in any different way. (...) Everything he says to me is right. This is why I am holding on to *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, and the *ṭarīqa*, and my brothers and sisters, they who are *ikhwānnā*.²

For many the importance of the *zāwiya* is that it brings them all together. 'After a hard work day, we go to the *zāwiya*, to clarify our mind, to get rest. When I pray, when I see my *Shaykh*, when I see my brothers and sisters, I get relaxation after a hard working day.'³ Visiting the *zāwiya* adds to the community feeling and by meeting each other in the flesh and by talking and practicing together both the worldly and the spiritual connections are strengthened.⁴

² AM1-3 in Interview AM2.

³ AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

⁴ AM2-1 in Interview AM2, AM3-4 in Interview AM3, ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

For the followers in Zarqa the opportunity to meet other *ikhwānā* is even more important. They have a *muqaddam* and they have their own meetings on Sunday during which they read *wazīfa*, but on Thursday evening and for important celebrations they go to the *zāwiya* in Amman when they have the opportunity and the economic means. For important occasions they often rent a bus to enable as many people as possible to attend.⁵

The *zāwiya* in Amman is the geographical centre of the *ṭarīqa*. Followers from all over the world visit and can be hosted there. One of the activities of the *ṭarīqa* is the establishment of *zawāya* in places where this is needed by *ikhwānā*. The *Shaykh* visits the *zawāya* in Lebanon regularly (and used to visit the *zawāya* in Syria as well before the civil war). *Shaykh* Ahmad also mentions an exchange of delegations with the African countries in which his followers live 'to learn about the spiritual conditions and provide them with advice and guidance.' This happened in 1960, 1980 and 2007.⁶ It is also the place where the *ṭarīqa* reaches out to society as a *ṭarīqa*. Active followers (both men and women) are recruited into a Welcome Committee who help out in the *zāwiya*, host visitors, show people around, etc.⁷ All these functions are summarized by a follower:

The *zāwiya* is a place of *ibāda* in which the believers come together, *ikhwānā*, Muslims. (...) In this assembly we get to know each other. (...) Sometimes visitors will come from abroad. (...) Sometimes *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* invites some of the men of the state or for dinner, or for *iftār* (meal to break the fast) during Ramadan. We get to know these people who come to this event. We hear a new speech (*kalām*), sometimes we hear a speech on *taṣawwuf* and we benefit from

⁵ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

⁶ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.16.

⁷ After my first meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad and Dr. Ali, I met most of the Welcome Committee during my second visit to the *zāwiya* when they officially welcomed me and we all sat together in the *diwān* before the *ḥaḍra* on 28-03-2013. I received more information during an informal discussion with AM2-6 after the *ḥaḍra* on 10-10-13, and observed the Welcome Committee at work again during the *ḥaḍra* on 31-10-2013.

these issues. The *zāwiya* is the cause (*sabab*) for all of this. It is a meeting (*liqā*), meaning gathering (*ijtimā*), coming closer (*ta'āluf*), intimacy (*ulfa*), *maḥabba*.⁸

Some followers are attached to the *zāwiya* because they saw it being built, they were present for the opening, they worked in it – in other words, they are part of it.⁹ But most followers stress that ‘the stones are not important;’ the presence of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* makes the *zāwiya* important.¹⁰ That which connects you to the *Shaykh*, practice, ‘*ibāda*, *dhikr*, *ṣalāa* etc., can be done anywhere and any place can receive its share of holiness in this way. ‘That which connects us is the *Shaykh*, not the stones or the place.’¹¹ To stress this point a follower stresses that the *zāwiya* near the Fourth Circle in itself meant nothing: ‘As a building its holiness [came] from the existence of the *Shaykh*.’ ‘When *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* built the new *zāwiya* in Amman we deserted that one. (...) The important thing is that we build the *zāwiya* in our hearts.’¹²

‘The earth and the heaven cannot contain me but the heart of my believing worshipper contains me.’¹³ The true *zāwiya* is inside us. Not in a place. We are all tied to the light and the faith. But we are like other people, the places and the histories, they have something, not like the other places. It is the only connection (*hadha rābiṭ al-waḥīd*). But the basic tie is the ‘*aqīda*... and the *Shaykh*.’¹⁴

We *ikhwānnā* love the centre of the ‘*aqīda*, wherever *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is or goes and wherever *ikhwānnā* are, we love this centre. The centre of the ‘*aqīda* was in Acre and that is for us now something spiritual, we love it in spirit. But the *zāwiya* in Amman, because *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is the centre of the ‘*aqīda* and he is in this *zāwiya*

⁸ AM2-1 in Interview AM2.

⁹ AM3-7 in Interview AM3.

¹⁰ AM1-1 in Interview AM1 and AM3.

¹¹ AM3-3 in Interview AM3.

¹² AM1-1 in Interview AM1 and in Interview AM3.

¹³ This is a *ḥadīth qudsī*, mentioned by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in *Iḥyā Ulūm al-Dīn*. Vincent Cornell, *Voices of Islam* (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 27, 47 note 33.

¹⁴ AM3-1 in Interview AM3.

– we love the *zāwiya*, but we love it and we hold on to it because the the centre of the 'aqīda is *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*.¹⁵

It is clear that the official line of the community is that 'the stones are not important,' the *Shaykh* is the centre of the *ṭarīqa* and one develops the relationship with the *Shaykh* in the heart, and is therefore not tied to any one place. The communal functions that the *zāwiya* performs can be done anywhere, and while the memories of past events and spaces are treasured, they are not as important as the living relationships between the *Shaykh* and the community. This line of thought prioritizes the relationships in the spiritual realm and makes the material world of secondary importance, including the spatial manifestations of these spiritual relationships.

The attitude towards the *zawāya* was subject of heavy debate, however. The answers of other people showed that they valued the actual geographical spaces just as much as the spiritual places. Their answers were centred on the communal role of the *zāwiya* and on the memories that are attached to these places, suggesting that they are not abandoned emotionally as easily as other speakers might suggest.¹⁶ Regarding the *zāwiya* in Acre, they continue to feel attached to it because of its historical role, and due to the continued presence of the previous three *Shaykhs* there.¹⁷ While in theory one can connect to the *Shaykh* anywhere and be part of *ikhwānnā* anywhere through spiritual and social ties and practices, in effect the *zāwiya* in Amman plays a large role in connecting people. While any place could potentially be a holy place where the connection with the *Shaykh* is sought, in reality there is only one place in Amman where this happens with such a high level of intensity.

The *zāwiya*'s designation as 'sacred space'¹⁸ is therefore mainly due to the presence of the *Shaykh* as the *personal* symbolic centre, rather than a

¹⁵ AM1-3 in Interview AM4.

¹⁶ These answers were in general given by those who did not speak extensively during the interviews and their answers were contested by those who had spoken more – often people higher in the 'interview hierarchy' who were concerned to give the official line of thought.

¹⁷ For an extensive discussion of the role of the *zāwiya* in Acre, see chapter 11.

¹⁸ See Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–65; Brereton, 'Sacred Space.'

geographical connection to the sacred or to history, and also due to its communal function.

7.2 Activities in the Zāwiya

After entering the entrance hall of the *zāwiya* one crosses the hall to enter the prayer room for the men. It is a high spacious circular hall with a glass roof, decorated with carpets and a beautiful chandelier. There are some plastic chairs against the walls for those who cannot sit on the floor. At the front of the hall there are two larger seats for *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali. Half of the prayer hall has a lower ceiling – this is the semi-circular balcony of the women which is accessible from the first floor. This prayer balcony is flanked by an additional gallery on the second floor overlooking the women’s balcony. The women can watch what happens downstairs in the men’s hall on television screens.

On the ground floor are the offices of the *Shaykh* and the *dīwān*, a large room where guests are received. On the first floor are the library and a nursery for the youngest children. On the second floor is the ‘control room’ from which the technological support for the meetings is coordinated and where the broadcasting of these meetings over the internet is done.

7.2.1 Daily and Weekly Meetings – Ḥaḍra

Each day one can join the daily rituals – the five prayers and the reading of *wazīfa* twice a day. On Friday afternoon followers can go to the Friday prayer in the *zāwiya*. The *khuṭba* is done by one of the followers according to a schedule. But the most important weekly meeting is the meeting on Thursday evening during which the followers perform the *ḥaḍra* and listen to the *mudhākara* of the *Shaykh*.

Men meet in the large circular hall downstairs and women on the semi-circular hall above where they can see what happens downstairs on television screens. The men wait for the *Shaykh* in the prayer hall, forming lines on both sides of the doors. The meeting starts with the call to prayer and the *ṣalāat al-‘ishā*. The muezzin and the imam are followers who perform these functions according to a schedule. Young boys are also given the opportunity to be muezzin and sometimes even imam – this is considered part of their *tarbiya*.¹⁹ The *Shaykh* and his son sit on their chairs amongst the followers, on the first row in the centre.

After the *ṣalāa*, *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali move their chairs to the back of the room to face the followers. They read Qur’an and recite *wazīfa*, which moves smoothly into *ḥaḍra* at the end of the *wazīfa*. During the *ḥaḍra* the male followers stand in several circles holding hands with the *Shaykh* in the middle. He directs the *ḥaḍra* through hand gestures and slight body movements while slowly turning to look around the circle. After some amount of time he sits down and *Sīdī* Ali takes over. After a while he also sits down and someone else takes over – his son *Sīdī* Hadi (if he is present) and the *muqaddamīn*. The women do *ḥaḍra* in lines holding hands, facing the television screens. This way they make best use of the available space, they can see the *dhikr* downstairs, and they prevent themselves from turning their back on the *Shaykh*.²⁰ After the *ḥaḍra* a verse of Qur’an is recited followed by *du‘ā* and silent *dhikr*.

Next is the *mudhākara*, during which *Shaykh* Ahmad explains a part of the *wazīfa* in minute detail. This part is shown on a large board in the men’s hall (and is shown on the television screens during the silent *dhikr* which precedes the *mudhākara*). *Shaykh* Ahmad started to explain the *wazīfa* in this way when he came to Amman in 1960 and is reaching the end of the third cycle of explanations. Sometimes he spends weeks speaking about one word.²¹

¹⁹ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

²⁰ Informal discussion with AM1-3 and AM2-6 in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 06-04-2013.

²¹ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013. During my fieldwork in October and November 2013, he spent several weeks speaking about the word ‘*qul* (speak)’ in Surat al-Ikhlās 112:1, *wazīfa* p.17.

The *mudhākara* goes very deep and does not shy away from difficult theological issues, often using contemporary scientific news to enlighten these complex issues. The first *mudhākara* I witnessed focussed on the phrase ‘*rabb hādihā al-bayt*’²² and on the link of the *Shaykh* with God. Because it is a Qur’anic verse which is part of the *wazīfa*, the followers are already deeply acquainted with the phrase, and through the *mudhākara* their understanding of the phrase is deepened. A follower explains that *Shaykh* Ahmad said there is one Lord and one house – which is often explained as the *ka’ba*, but for them it also refers to the *ka’ba* in your heart. A second theme was how the *Shaykh* is tied to the Prophet and the Prophet to God: Muhammad received the ‘*aqīda*’ from God during the *mi’rāj*, and as the *Shaykh* is tied to Muhammad he is the only one who has the entire ‘*aqīda*’ inside him. She commented that the idea that their ‘*aqīda*’ comes from God made her feel comfortable and happy.²³

Because the *Shaykh*’s authority is so closely connected to the concept of the ‘*aqīda*’, it is not surprising that elements on which his authority is based are discussed during this *mudhākara*: his tie to the Prophet, his knowledge of the ‘*aqīda*’, and the idea of the spiritual and material realm where one connects to God (symbolized by the *ka’ba*). The follower’s emotional reaction to this shows that for her it serves as a confirmation of her beliefs and experiences. This confirmation is strengthened by sharing the experience with others in the *zāwiya* and discussing the *Shaykh*’s words with others throughout the week, as they are encouraged to do. These concepts are part of the tools with which followers can discuss their experiences; an example of this is given by another follower in an interview a few weeks later, when she explains the concept *taslīm* by referring to God as ‘*rabb al-bayt*’ (see paragraph 6.3.5).²⁴

²² *Sūrat Quraysh* 106:3, *wazīfa* p.16.

²³ Informal discussion with AM1-3 in the *zāwiya* in Amman after the *ḥaḍra* on 28-03-2013.

²⁴ AM2-3 in Interview AM2.

The meeting is concluded with *nashīd*, *ḥaḍra mugharbiyya*²⁵ and communal announcements, for example of births, engagements, weddings, graduations, for which the *Shaykh* says *du'ā'*.²⁶

7.2.2. Special Occasions – Mawlid al-Nabī

Also on special occasions such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr²⁷ the *zāwiya* functions as a mosque, as people perform the special prayers and meetings that are done throughout the Muslim world. But the main event in the year of the *ḥarīqa* – the event for which many followers from all over the world travel to Amman – is the *mawlid al-nabī*.²⁸

As with a normal meeting, the men wait in the prayer hall forming lines on both sides of the doors. When *Shaykh* Ahmad, *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Hadi come in they all take their places in lines for prayer. *Shaykh* Ahmad, *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Hadi sit down on chairs in front of them, facing the same direction. To their right stands the choir of ca. 18 men and boys wearing white garments who perform the call to prayer. One of the *muqaddamīn* of Amman walks forward, kisses the hands of *Shaykh* Ahmad, *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Hadi and takes his place next to the choir where he performs his function as imam to lead the *ṣalaā*.

When the *ṣalaā* is finished the choir moves back to its position and *Shaykh* Ahmad, *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Hadi move to the opposite wall of the hall and

²⁵ *Ḥaḍra mugharbiyya* is a *ḥaḍra* from the *maghrib* (North Africa), a ritual in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya which is usually performed at the end of a meeting. While most people continue to sit on the ground and sing *nashīd*, a few men move in a circle.

²⁶ Informal discussion with AM2-6 in the *zāwiya* in Amman after the *ḥaḍra* on 11-04-2013.

²⁷ During Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, the followers come together for *ṣalāat al-fajr*, followed by reading the *wazīfa*. Later in the morning there is the special *ṣalāat al-īd* with a *khuṭba* done by one of the followers, followed by *wazīfa* and *ḥaḍra*, after which they meet to drink coffee and tea and eat sweets. In addition to the standard Islamic meaning of Eid al-Adha, for them the occasion is also about the togetherness of the followers around the *Shaykh*, their 'spiritual *ka'ba*.' By performing *dhikr* one can be together with those in Mecca and participate in the *ḥajj* even if one is not there. This does not mean they do not value the *ḥajj* – on the contrary, they were careful to stress how important all pillars of Islam are for them, including the *ḥajj* if they are able. Informal discussion with *Shaykh* Ahmad, AM1-1, AM1-3 and AM2-2 in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥaḍra* on 17-10-2013.

²⁸ The following description of the *mawlid al-nabī* is based on the DVD of the *mawlid* in the *zāwiya* in Amman in 2013, which *Shaykh* Ahmad has been kind enough to give me.

the men form a circle including them. *Sīdī* Ali starts the reciting of the *wazīfa*. They finish with a few repetitions of '*lā illāha illā Allāh,*' until *Sīdī* Ali claps. There is a short silence after which the lead chanter recites Qur'an. They finish by all reciting the *fātiḥa*²⁹ silently.

The *mawlid* is recited by the lead chanter (parts 1-3 and 6), interspersed with *nashīd* by the choir and the community. Sweets are handed around. At the final sentence they get up while one can hear the women ululate from the balcony. They chant *nashīd* while moving into the circle to do *ḥaḍra*. The *ḥaḍra* is mainly directed by *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali, but *Sīdī* Hadi also directs the final minutes. After the *ḥaḍra*, everyone sits back down while chanting *nashīd*. After reciting Qur'an and praying *du'ā'*, the *Shaykh* gives his *mudhākara*. After the *mudhākara* two people come forwards and address *Shaykh* Ahmad, *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Hadi with *qaṣīdas*, and the younger members of the choir chant one of the more well-known *anashīd*.

7.2.3 Study Groups – *Ijtīmā' al-Nisā'* (Women's Meeting)

There are many activities in the *zāwiya* which aim to provide the means to take the *muṣīd* by the hand on their spiritual path.³⁰ The importance of education (*tathqīf wa-ta'lim*) for the followers is institutionalized through the spiritual and financial support they can find in the *zāwiya*.³¹ Examples of this are given by a follower who benefited from the library of the *zāwiya* and who also received financial support to study and travel for his research, and said other people benefited from this as well.³² The *zāwiya* also publishes books related to the *ḥarīqa*. First of all of course the old books of the *ḥarīqa*, especially those of *Sittī*

²⁹ First *sūra* (chapter) of the Qur'an, which is recited regularly as praise to God and a prayer for guidance and mercy.

³⁰ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.13-15.

³¹ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.16.

³² AM2-2 in Interview AM2.

Fatima, but also the Master's and Doctoral theses written by followers.³³ The *Shaykh* takes great care in editing these books.

There are study groups where young people read Qur'an and learn *nashīd*.³⁴ Once a month there is a meeting for the women in which they read *wazīfa* and Qur'an, practice *nashīd*, and discuss a topic relevant to the *ṭarīqa* and their daily lives. The meeting takes place in the semi-circular women's prayer hall on the first floor. I visited these meetings twice, and at both I would give a rough estimation of 80 participants. The ladies sit in a circle on chairs and on the floor. The teenage girls sit together as they in particular are the ones who are considered to be learning, but it is also acknowledged that all of them learn from each other all the time. Many brought their children who are surprisingly well-behaved. The smaller children are brought to the children's room where they are cared for and where the television screens expose them to what is happening. The mothers are encouraged to bring their children to these meetings.

The meeting is recorded and broadcast via the internet to other women of the *ṭarīqa*, together with the text of the meeting. *Shaykh* Ahmad and his son sometimes sit in the control room to see part of the meeting.

Before the meeting starts they practice *nashīd*. Often one person starts a *nashīd* and the rest joins in. The teenage girls have papers in front of them with the lyrics, the older ladies know them by heart. The meeting starts with the reading of the *wazīfa*, led by one of the ladies. After this they listen to verses of the Qur'an and chant *nashīd*. One of the ladies says *du'ā'*. This is followed by a few minutes of silent dhikr, after which the discussion of the topic starts.

The meeting is led by one of the ladies who is 'responsible for *khawātnā*.' She works closely together with the *Shaykh* in the preparation of the topic for discussion. The choice of topic can be influenced by many factors; sometimes she chooses it based on suggestions from the ladies and from the *Shaykh*, or she is inspired by a verse from the Qur'an. The preparation takes a lot of time,

³³ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.16

³⁴ Informal discussion with AM1-3 in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 06-04-2013.

often the whole month. After writing a first draft the *Shaykh* edits it and sends it back – this continues until the text is considered perfect.

The topic is known in advance by the women so they can prepare. AM2-2 calls this ‘interactive learning’: they share, they are involved, sometimes in groups, sometimes using games.³⁵ The text is handed out during the meeting where it is read aloud. After the reading of the text *khawātnā* can comment or ask questions. A microphone is handed round for those who want to talk. Throughout the meeting there are numerous references to the Qur’an and to the *Shaykh*, either the writings about *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, or to *Shaykh* Ahmad. For example, when discussing the seating arrangements, it is pointed out that it is *min faḍl Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* that they have this space to meet.

For several months the women explored topics related to the *tarbiya* of their children and of each other, something which is of direct relevance to their tasks of raising their children.³⁶ The meeting in March 2013 is about *sulūk* during the meetings of the *ṭarīqa*, because ‘behaviour is a practical interpretation and active application of that which we reached of *dhawqiyyāt*, and understanding (*fahm*), and ‘*aqīda*.’ The *murīda* has to ‘adapt her appearance to the appropriate attitude to undertake the ‘*ibāda*’, i.e. dress appropriately and behave politely, as is written in *Sūrat al-A’rāf* 7:31. In the words of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din in *Nafaḥāt al-Ḥaqq*: ‘*al-ṭarīqa kullhā ādāb*’ as the *ṭarīqa* is in accordance with the Muhammadan *ādāb*.’ This means cleanliness, modesty and ‘balance in speaking and moving.’³⁷ The *murīda* has to wear ‘modest’ (wide and non-revealing) clothing that covers chest, arms and legs, and cover her hair (for which a loose scarf suffices). The *murīda* has to be on time, turn off her phone, sit down in a calm manner without disturbing others, and make sure her children do not disturb others. She has to listen properly, participate, and respect the opinions of others and let them finish their thoughts before interrupting.³⁸

³⁵ Informal discussion with AM1-3 in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 06-04-2013.

³⁶ Informal discussion with AM1-3 before Interview ZA1.

³⁷ Study text discussed at the women’s meeting on 30-03-2013, p.1. Reference to al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafaḥāt al-Ḥaqq*, 57.

³⁸ Study text discussed at the women’s meeting on 30-03-2013, p.2

It is stressed several times that the ladies should maintain the same behaviour outside the *zāwiya*. 'The arrival of the *murīdāt* at the noble *zāwiya* is a social appearance (*mazhar ijtimā'ī*) well known with the *zāwiya*'s surroundings, and it reflects the outward image (*sūra zahiriyya*) of the *murīdāt*.³⁹ After the meeting they should practice the *ādāb* they discussed, starting when they leave the *zāwiya*: 'take care of our external appearance while leaving the *zāwiya*, so that we stay modest as we entered' and take care not to disturb the neighbours. 'And it is known that these behaviours which the *murīdāt* of the *ṭarīqa* take on develop their positive image, and they are suited to maintain this.'⁴⁰

The understanding of the followers is that the good values that are in the heart should show, and the good behaviour shown in the *zāwiya* and among *ikhwānā* should also be shown outside because exterior behaviour reflects your inner thoughts, and it also reflects on the group to which you belong. In addition to this the current climate in which Sufis are increasingly under scrutiny for their behaviour makes it extra important from a social perspective to show their proper behaviour – especially around the *zāwiya* where every individual will be identified as a member of the *ṭarīqa* and where their attitude to their holy place and place of gathering will be scrutinized even more.

This idea of educating each other also comes back in the discussion: 'We are a group, we complete each other.' The importance to respect your elders and take their advice is stressed. One of the teenage girls says: 'It is not just your father and mother who raise you, we raise ourselves, and then we raise each other.' Both before and after the meeting the ladies should endeavour to spread the benefit of the meeting to as many followers as possible. *Murīdāt* should remind each other of the meeting and encourage each other to go. They are encouraged to take the lesson home with them to think about it and discuss with other family members, combining what they have learnt with their daily life. It is

³⁹ Study text discussed at the women's meeting on 30-03-2013, p.1

⁴⁰ Study text discussed at the women's meeting on 30-03-2013, p.3

pointed out that the *ṭarīqa* encourages mothers to bring their children to the meeting, provided that they do not disturb others.⁴¹

The meeting in November 2013 focussed on the importance of *‘ilm* in the *ṭarīqa* and for the first time is prepared by another lady. She quotes from the Qur’an and Hadith to show the importance of *‘ilm* in Islam in general, and continues to show that the *Shaykhs* in the *ṭarīqa* have given it great importance as well, as the *ṭarīqa* is based on the Qur’an and Sunna. She quotes from *Shaykh* Ahmad’s introduction to the third edition of *Rihla ilā Al-Ḥaqq* (1990): ‘*Taṣawwuf* is *‘ilm* and *fikr* and philosophy, and opinion (*ra’y*) and *ijtihād*, within the boundaries of what God decided for his worshippers, of life and organisation and happiness.’⁴² She also quotes a story in *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq* in which *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din convinces a scholar to stay in his profession until his death. Finally, she stresses that *fikr* is one of the pillars of the *ṭarīqa*.⁴³

The *Shaykh*’s focus on *fikr* and education can be seen in the monthly women’s meetings, both in the preparation and organisation of the meetings and in the topics that are discussed. As many followers who are involved in these meetings work in the field of education, they have an excellent background to organise the meetings using modern education techniques which call for active involvement of the participants of these meetings and to encourage them to actively participate. They say that the women are encouraged to decide the topics, to do their own research in advance and to prepare assignments. The lady who is in charge of these meetings is very proud of the advance the women are making, especially when one of *khawātnā* had prepared a topic of discussion. *Shaykh* Ahmad encourages this as he wants them to study, be part of society and focus on *fikr*, while remaining *ibnat al-‘aqīda*.⁴⁴

While the followers are encouraged to study and explore and are free to question and discuss their ideas, it is clear that for those in the *ṭarīqa* the *Shaykh*

⁴¹ Study text discussed at the women’s meeting on 30-03-2013, p.2-3

⁴² Study text discussed at the women’s meeting on 30-11-13., p.2. She leaves out the words *ma’rifā* and *nizām* which can be found in the original quote. She mistakenly refers to *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq*, p.19; the quote can be found in *Shaykh* Ahmad’s introduction to the third edition (1990) of *al-Yashrutīyya*, *Rihla ilā al-Ḥaqq*, 21.

⁴³ Study text discussed at the women’s meeting on 30-11-13.

⁴⁴ Informal discussion with AM1-3 in the *zāwiya* before the *ḥaḍra* on 28-11-2013.

is and remains the ultimate reference. In the case of these women's meetings, the *Shaykh* is intimately engaged in the preparation of the meeting. He gives suggestions for topics, and helps to prepare the topic of discussion. He might also watch part of the meeting on the computer screens of the control room. While encouraging them to learn and think for themselves, the *Shaykh* is firmly in control over what is being taught to the women in the *zāwiya* – and in their opinion rightly so as they consider him the ultimate reference who wants to ensure that they get the right knowledge. His preoccupation with their education is seen as another sign of how much he cares for them. His encouragement for them to learn and explore for themselves is seen as a mark of his respect for their individuality – a mark of modernity. His concern that they will get it right in the end is seen as a sign of his love for them.

Shaykh Ahmad takes an interest in everything that happens in the *zāwiya*. The lady who is responsible for the women's meeting invited me and several other followers (also from the Welcome Committee) to discuss some of my questions based on the meeting I had attended. I had sent her my questions in advance and she was well prepared – she had written the answers down and started to read them to me. Half way through *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali walked in, and *Shaykh* Ahmad announced: 'I have invited myself.' He asked what we were discussing – which happened to be the '*aqīda*' – and he started to answer my question and explain the nature of the '*aqīda*' of the *Yashrutiyya*. Some of those present started to take notes. After finishing his explanation he took the sheet of questions, went through them one by one and told those present what the correct answers were, to make sure I got the right information. After this he also offered to go through my thesis when it was done to make sure I wrote everything down correctly.⁴⁵

Shaykh Ahmad takes great care in editing the texts of the women's meeting, research done by followers on the *ḥarīqa* and the books that are published by the *ḥarīqa*. He is known for his meticulous editing. This is valued by

⁴⁵ Semi-informal meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad, Dr. Ali, and five followers in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 06-04-2013

the followers as they are convinced he is the ultimate source and reference. This care to ensure the right information gets out extends to the work done by external writers. For example Hassan Abu Hanieh – who wrote his short description of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya without consulting *Shaykh* Ahmad – was invited by the *Shaykh* and told his work did not reflect the *ṭarīqa* properly. A similar story was told to me by the followers about Josef van Ess.⁴⁶

The combination of the particular code of guesthood in the community in Amman and the concern to get the right message across has most probably influenced their attitude towards me during my fieldwork. As I discussed in chapter 2, I think it is the anthropological researcher's duty to respect these codes of guesthood, even if this means that one gains less information. In this sense, the control over knowledge that the *Shaykh* has within the *ṭarīqa* extends to outsiders, as it limits and steers the access to knowledge the researcher has. In the case of the editing of publications written by outsiders, the *Shaykh's* control of course does not extend to outsiders. Ethical academic practice does require the scholar to respect his/her respondents' wishes to see what is written about them, and to enter into a dialogue with them, without giving them the final say over the produced work. As I discussed in chapter 2, where I felt their comments provided an addition or a clarification I referred to them, but where I felt limited by their comments in my representation of the diversity within the *ṭarīqa* and in my analysis I have noted their concerns without changing my approach, adhering to Chryssides' idea that believers are the experts in representing themselves, whereas scholars are the experts in the subsequent contextualisation and analysis of these representations.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Informal discussion in the *zāwiya* on 28-03-2013, AM2-2 in Interview AM2. In the words of the Review Panel: 'Generally speaking, external independent writers do not usually consult Sheikh Ahmad regarding what they write about the *Ṭarīqa*, such as Hassan Abu Hanieh and Josef Van Ess. But if what they write is not coherent with the reality of the *Ṭarīqa*, then Sheikh Ahmad calls the writer and draws his/her attention to where he went wrong and what is the truth. Usually these writers show good understanding of the views of the Sheikh.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 31.

⁴⁷ Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 92–94. For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see paragraph 2.4.

While the encouragement of followers to study and think and the particular mode of communication between *Shaykh* and follower both lead to a lot of space for personal interpretation mediated by the community to keep them within the boundaries of the tradition, we have seen that these boundaries can become blurred. In the *zāwiya* in Amman, the *Shaykh* is very present and in control of the information that is disseminated and discussed and presented to outsiders, strengthening the boundaries. Those followers who are close to him and are entrusted with the education of other followers and with the welcoming of guests, assist him in this. Therefore, through the *zāwiya* the potential space for personal interpretation in a particular social context is more limited than our exploration of the dynamic of communication in the previous chapter would suggest as the boundaries of the *Shaykh's* teaching are continuously affirmed. This does not cause a clash, however, as the *zāwiya* is not an isolated space, but located in that same social context – or at least, one aspect of it – and has to engage in the local rules of the game.

While we have seen in the previous chapter that there is a lot of space for individual and communal interpretation due to the (from an outsider's point of view) indirect mode of communication, in this chapter we see how the central role occupied by the *zāwiya* in Amman gives the *Shaykh* more influence over this act of interpretation than might be concluded from the previous chapter.

7.3 The Zāwiya in Society

Shaykh Ahmad writes that the external activities are aimed to connect *abnā al-ṭarīqa* to their societies and thus help them on their path. The *ṭarīqa* encourages the followers to participate in society and in economic pursuits, provided that they do so in accordance with the sharia, that the spiritual aspect takes precedence over the material aspect and that the followers maintain the *'aqīda* in their hearts.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.15.

To link to society as a *ṭarīqa* they participate in public events in the King Abdullah Mosque during Ramadan and for Ra's al-Sana. During Ramadan they invite people of different backgrounds to the *zāwiya* for *iftār* (breaking the fast) to share food and opinions, strengthening the bonds of relations between different components of society. They regularly invite outsiders to the *zāwiya* to give a lecture: religious scholars, university professors, researchers, etc.⁴⁹

The key to their social stance is the ideal to participate in society while remaining politically independent. In Amman specifically, independence is maintained by registering the *zāwiya* as private property (*mulk khāṣṣ*) in the name of the *Shaykh*. The property will be passed on to the next *Shaykh*. This way it will remain for *abnā al-ṭarīqa* and the *ṭarīqa* can remain independent.⁵⁰ More generally, they stress they do not receive any outside funding but are self-sufficient. This is a rule that should be followed by all *ikhwānnā* and *zawāya* all over the world.

We are like a beehive. Every member helps, offers something. Every individual helps each other, gives each other advice. (...) The rich help the poor, or the rich help to build the *zāwiya*, we do not follow any other organisation. We refuse to accept help from any other side. (...) Because if you want to accept from any other side you will become slaves for them. (...) We concentrate on the spiritual life, we do not enter politics. But it is asked from all *abnā al-ṭarīqa* to be good (*ṣāliḥ*) citizens of the country in which they are. A good citizen, a good person, but we do not go into politics, we do not accept any help from any state or any other side, we are self-sufficient.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti 14-10-2013, p.15. Among the guests were 'Dr. Abu Wafa Taftazani, *shaykh al-mashāyikh* of the Sufi *ṭuruq* in Egypt at the time, the former president of Sudan Muhammad Suwar al-Dhahab, the Sudanese leader Imam Ahmad Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Ghazali, the Arab writer Fahmi Huwaydi, and many others.' Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad, *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p.8-9.

⁵⁰ Informal discussion with AM1-1 in the *zāwiya* before the *ḥaḍra* on 21-11-2013. There are two other options to register a religious building in Jordan: as *waqf*, which means it is managed and controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs who can appoint preachers etc., or as an organisation (*jama'a*), which means it is managed and controlled by the Ministry of Interior who can always require the presence of one of their people to keep an eye on what is happening.

⁵¹ AM1-1 in Interview AM1. This opinion is also expressed by NA1 in Interview NA1 with one follower in Nablus (and ca.20 followers present) on 23-05-2013 at the house of a follower after the *wazīfa*, hereafter referred to as Interview NA1.

AM1-2's idea that the *Shaykh* possesses holiness is turned into a social direction by AM1-1, who says that the *Shaykh* makes all his followers into good human beings and good citizens, and that this is why he is seen as holy (see paragraph 5.4 Interview AM1). In this view good ethics relate not only to *ikhwānnā* but to the whole of society. Also, the teaching of being a good Muslim on the one hand happens in the family, among *ikhwānnā* and in the *zāwiya*, and on the other hand in society – implied is that to behave well with non-*ikhwānnā* members in society also means to adapt to the ethics of society while maintaining their essential values,⁵² a point we discussed extensively in the context of their attitude to the sharia (see paragraph 6.3.1): they base their adherence on the sharia on the hegemonic interpretation of the society in which they find themselves.

While they do not participate in what is commonly understood to be politics (state policy and party politics) as a social organisation and a community within a certain country they participate in politics in a wider sense. We have seen how 'Muslim politics' should be understood as the struggle over the right to interpret sacred scripture and define ethical behaviour, and how this is particularly relevant in contemporary Jordanian politics. As we have seen, to understand these politics fully we would do well to go beyond the rivalries of religious leaders and include an analysis of the followers and of the relationship between leader and follower. This is why Abu Hanieh's discussion of the political role of Sufism in Jordan, which is based mainly on interviews with *Shaykhs*, does not give us a real insight into the role of contemporary Sufism in Jordan.

While *abnā al-ṭarīqa* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya accept and love everybody as children of God, the continual stress that they are moderate does put them in line with those who oppose 'radical' strands of Islam – the *ulamā'* and the king. The fact that they accept traditional Islamic books and Jordanian schools as places to find ethical knowledge is an even stronger indication that they accept the official traditional Islam in Jordan as championed by the king.

⁵² AM1-1 in Interview AM1.

The remark that the *Shaykh* teaches the people to be ‘a good person, a good citizen’ fits with this interpretation of their particular place on the spectrum of Jordanian Islam. This is also underlined by the participation of the *ṭarīqa* in public religious events. It should be stressed that they do not participate in any of the king’s efforts to define Islam such as the Amman Message and the establishment of a Sufi Council. Be that as it may, no matter how hard they try to maintain their independence – by registering the *zāwiya* as private property for example, to avoid outside interference – for a community living in a certain society – and who explicitly want to be a part of this age and society – it is unavoidable to participate in politics in a wider sense.

7.4 Conclusion

Shaykh Ahmad’s main stage of authority is the *zāwiya* in Amman. This is where he receives his visitors, acts as teacher (*murabbī*) and role model (*quḍwa*), leads the *ḥaḍra*, and teaches through his *mudhākara*. While *tarbiya* happens in the community, the *zāwiya* centralizes this by providing the focus of the community in Amman. The building gives them a tangible centre for their communal life, providing stability and thus adding greatly to the *ṭarīqa*’s institutionalisation, while at the same time creating the need for institutionalisation to maintain the building and everything that is going on there, leading to a level of bureaucratic organisation that is not visible in other communities. While this might lead to lessening of this authority, he stays firmly in control of everything that is happening in the *zāwiya*, and everyone refers to him. Similarly, the *zāwiya* adds to the *Shaykh*’s ability to connect to his disciples through visits and lectures, and to perform some of the functions on which his charisma rests, such as providing them with educational opportunities – through *mudhākara* and study groups, through the library, and through the funds that are available for those who wish to study.

The *Shaykh* is perceived to be the ultimate reference by all followers, but in the *zāwiya* he especially acts as ‘custodian of tradition’, assisted by several involved followers. We have seen that while all follower believe the *Shaykh* is always right, the boundaries of the limits within which the tradition could be constructed and interpreted can be blurred through the process of *tarbiya*. He supervises the process of *tarbiya* that happens in the *zāwiya* by guiding the study groups and editing the *ṭarīqa*’s publications. Through the supervision of the *Shaykh* over this process in the *zāwiya*, they are reaffirmed and strengthened. The *zāwiya* thus greatly enhances the *Shaykh*’s authority over the local community and over *ikhwānnā* visiting from abroad.

The meaning of the *zāwiya* for the followers is disputed. The original doctrine is that ‘the stones are not important’ but that all the importance of the *zāwiya* comes from the *Shaykh*. Indeed, the main focus of *ikhwānnā* is on the living *Shaykh* and their charismatic relationship with him, and the previous *Shaykhs* and the geographical places in which the charismatic moment was experienced come second. This is not to say that they therefore hold no importance at all, and just as people profess their love, respect and devotion to the previous *Shaykhs*, they value the places in which these relationships were enacted. The *zāwiya* therefore classifies as a ‘sacred space’ primarily because of its communal function, bringing the community together to perform devotional practices and *tarbiya*, but secondly due to the charismatic moments experienced there due to the presence of the *Shaykh*, and the memories of these moments that have become part of the vernacular tradition.

The *zāwiya* is also the place where the relationship to the wider society and to its political system is most pronounced. The independence of the *ṭarīqa* is ensured by registering the *zāwiya* as private property, ensuring the absence of outside interference, but as a religious group that explicitly aims to be part of society and have good relations with everybody, there is more to their socio-political attitude than that. By encouraging attitudes that value participation in society and by defining particular codes of behaviour in interaction with understandings of Islam and sharia held onto in wider society and presenting

these as normative codes, the *ḥarīqa* produces authority and discipline and social actors – ‘good people and good citizens’. Their stress that they are ‘moderate’ and their acceptance of traditional sources of Islamic law and education shows that they participate in the historical narrative of traditional orthodox Islam as promoted by the king. This is further illustrated by their participation in public religious events, also sponsored by the king. It should be stressed that they do not participate in any of the king’s efforts to define Islam such as the Amman Message and the establishment of a Sufi Council and thus do not participate in politics in its narrow sense, but when we take the wider sense as suggested by Lincoln, Eickelman and Piscatori, and Mahmood and Mandaville, we can say that by creating social actors they do participate in politics in a wider sense, and can be classified as a ‘religion of the status quo’.⁵³

Shaykh Ahmad’s locational authority – his place in the wider arena of Jordanian Muslim Politics – therefore places him in the discourse of the traditional Islam of the ‘*ulamā*’ as promoted by the king. While his followers see this is yet another sign of his importance, his influence over Jordanian Muslim Politics does not seem to exceed his influence over his own followers and their behaviour. He acts as a role model for their own role in society. Both his prestige and his encouragement of their participation – to be ‘good people and good citizens’ – are seen as a mark of this sanctity.

This socio-political attitude correlates with the fact that the people I spoke to were all from the middle- and higher classes and most of them worked in education or were business-owners, and none of them lived in the refugee camps. Among those groups of Jordanian Palestinians, Palestinian nationalism is often less acute and less channelled into ideas and activities opposing the government, which is nowadays mainly done by Islamist and Salafi groups (see chapter 4). There is a clear correlation between their social class, their occupations, and the values of the *ḥarīqa*, which encourage the followers to be active participants in society and pursue their education. In fact, many of them

⁵³ Lincoln, ‘Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution’; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 1–4. Mahmood and Mandaville, quoted in Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement’, 84.

work in education and use their knowledge in the study meetings of the *ṭarīqa*. Without a stronger historical analysis, it is impossible to say whether the *Shaykh* and the values of the *ṭarīqa* have led people out of the refugee camps and into those higher social classes, or whether the followers' social classes and occupations have influenced the values of the *ṭarīqa* and the roles attributed to the *Shaykh*. This would be an interesting avenue of further research to further our understanding of the relation between the *Shaykh* and his followers.

The attempts to make the 'aqīda relevant in society and to make it speak to people's everyday life in society does not lead to O'Dea's 'dilemma of delimitation',⁵⁴ but the result is a strengthening rather than a lessening of charisma. The followers' attitude to see the *Shaykh's* signs in all aspects of life relates to this – for them, it brings the sacred into everyday reality and thus integrates the different levels of experience.

⁵⁴ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 82–84.

Conclusion to Part II

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman

As discussed in chapter 1, Sufism can be understood as a discursive framework which is built up of different elements that are in a continuous process of being transmitted and reinterpreted, which is (usually) part of the Islamic tradition, and which evolves around the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower. Therefore the question may be asked what the relationship is between *Shaykh* Ahmad and his followers. On which elements is his authority based and what does he mean to his followers in Amman? Which roles are attributed to him?

Shaykh Ahmad is the fourth *Shaykh* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. The founder of the *ṭarīqa*, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, came from the Shadhuli tradition and established the *ṭarīqa* in Palestine. The *ṭarīqa*'s *silsila* traces his spiritual authority all the way back to the Prophet, but he is also seen as a charismatic figure who embodied the *nūr muḥammadī* and the *'aqīda* and renewed the *ṭarīqa*, and he is thus seen as the founder. He passed the *ṭarīqa* to his son and the *shaykhdom* has passed to the 'most able son' since.

Weber saw the routinization of charisma as a move from the raw disruptive power of primary charisma to weak secondary charisma that maintains the status quo.¹ This approach has been questioned by several scholars,² and in chapter 5 we have seen that there was no clear distinction between charisma and traditional institutionalisation in the charismatic moment of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, as he continued to act in the Sufi tradition, and as he himself already started the institutionalisation process by proselytizing and building *zawāya*. As our analysis of the bases of authority of *Shaykh* Ahmad shows, the routinization of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's charisma and the institutionalisation of the position of the

¹ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, quoted in Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 1.

² Geaves, 'Charismatic Authority in Islam', 42, 58; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 77–79; O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas'; Klinkhammer, 'Traditionalizing Spirituality'; Pinto, 'Performing Baraka.'

Shaykh on traditional kinship lines, does not mean that the charisma is lessened at all.

The elements of authority on which *Shaykh* Ahmad's legitimacy is based are doctrinal, functional, communal, and emotional. On a doctrinal level he is seen as the embodiment of the '*aqīda*' and the *nūr muḥammadī*, on a functional level he is seen as a caring guide and teacher, and the followers experience their relationship as highly spiritual and emotional, 'a relationship between hearts', on which they base their engagement with the *Shaykh's* teachings.

The *Shaykh's* legitimacy therefore rests on both traditional and charismatic elements as he is seen as the person who transmits the '*aqīda*' and at the same time *is* the '*aqīda*'. The *Shaykh* has received the '*aqīda*', the inheritance of Muhammad, through his predecessors who go all the way back to the Prophet Muhammad. This *silsila* is mentioned in the *wazīfa* and the books of Fatima al-Yashrutiyya and is respected, but all the attention goes to the four *Shaykhs* of the Yashruti family. The Muhammadan inheritance is transmitted through *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, *Shaykh* Ibrahim, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, and *Shaykh* Ahmad, and because of this connection to the *nūr muḥammadī* they are considered one and the same. *Shaykh* Ahmad embodies the '*aqīda*' and the *nūr muḥammadī* and walks the Muhammadan Path, behaving as Muhammad would have done had he been alive in this time. He is therefore a manifestation of the light and of the essence of Islam – God and the Prophet – in the contemporary world. The followers believe they can participate in this light to a lesser degree by connecting to the *Shaykh* through their hearts. In this sense the *Shaykh's* authority is charismatic.

Comparing these findings with the elements of authority Arthur Buehler identified, we see that his authority is primarily based on his link to the Prophet, both in a traditional and a charismatic sense of transmission via lineage and a direct connection. This is where he gets his knowledge from. He is also the embodiment of the Sunna and functions as Prophetic exemplar (*qudwa*). By following his example and teachings in everyday life one can be part of his spiritual state, the 'transformative spiritual experience.' His authority is therefore

rooted very strongly in the larger Islamic tradition, the ‘Sufi template for sainthood’.³

During my interviews and observations the predominant image I got was that the followers in Amman see the *Shaykh* as a teacher and a guide. Due to the nature of my interactions with the followers in Amman – group interviews and informal discussions in the *zāwiya* and in their homes, also mostly in a group setting – it is difficult to conclude whether this is indeed the predominant attitude. The people of the Welcoming Committee articulated this image very strongly, and sometimes steered other peoples’ answers in this direction. Most of them actually worked in the field of education, which might have influenced their imagery. This also meant they were articulate and used to public speaking, which gave them a distinct advantage in a group interview to make their views heard.

Other voices which were less articulate and expressed strong emotional statements such as ‘the *Shaykh* is everything in my life’ were accepted but often ‘explained’ in terms that the more eloquent speakers had set earlier in the interview. In informal discussions the idea and feeling that the *Shaykh* is like a father to them was sometimes expressed, but never articulated during an interview. This leads me to assume that there might be more to say about the attitudes that the followers have towards the *Shaykh* than I was able to identify in this particular research setting.

On the other hand, as we have seen, these strongly regulated interactions seem to be common practice in the community in Amman, particularly in the *zāwiya*. Several times a follower told me that our meeting was like a *mudhākara*. While I do not think these meetings truly reflect a *mudhākara* as they were built around the questions that I posed as an outsider and the concern for me to ‘get it right’, I do think they reflect a general mechanism of communal meetings in which the information that is spread and interpreted among the followers is moderated. Without access to more intimate spheres of social interaction such as family life it is impossible to gauge to what extent these interactions are

³ Lindholm, ‘Introduction’, 24.

moderated and how deeply this influences the spread and interpretation of knowledge and elements of tradition.

During meetings in the *zāwiya* this was even more the case, as the *Shaykh* was there in person to monitor meetings if he so wished. During the women's meeting the *Shaykh* often sits in the 'control room' to oversee the meeting. The ladies in the hall do not see him but know he might be there and feel his presence in the building. As the followers believe that the *Shaykh* has all the knowledge and is the ultimate reference, this is not experienced as limiting but as an expression of the *Shaykh's* care for them and for their development. It is part of his role as a teacher and guide (and to a lesser extent father) and is based on the fact that he embodies the *'aqīda* and the *nūr muḥammadī*, the Muhammadan light.

The strong regulation of interpretation and behaviour seems to be linked to the challenges of the changing religious climate in Jordan and the Middle East in general, as intolerance is being fuelled by socio-economic hardship and political struggles. The followers respect the centuries of Islamic learning institutionalised by the *ulamā'* as the *ṭarīqa* directs its followers to books, schools, and teachers for education on more general Islamic principles. It values the family and society and 'culture' as channels of transmission of general Islamic values. In Jordan the king claims to be the champion of this traditional Islam based on his lineage and position as 'protector of the holy sites' and the *ṭarīqa* silently accepts this by joining public religious ceremonies held by the king and by inviting men of the state to the *zāwiya* during Ramadan. The value of being a good citizen that is cultivated by the *ṭarīqa* adds to this support of the status quo.

The *Shaykh* is clearly very aware of the image of the *ṭarīqa* in the outside world. All publications mentioning the *ṭarīqa* are read and challenged if necessary. The stress on the followers' proper Muslim behaviour and on their participation in society – but not in politics – was the main message that was communicated to me. This has probably influenced my access to the *ṭarīqa*. The values of hospitality and the existent mechanisms of mediating the spread and interpretation of knowledge and the formation of elements of tradition were useful

tools to moderate the message that reached me, while at the same time allowing me a glimpse into the communal interactions within the *ṭarīqa*.

Understanding authority as a relationship, the next sub-questions are how these roles are attributed to the *Shaykh* and how does he exercise them? Following Bruce Lincoln who understands authority as a speech act, we focus on the communication between *Shaykh* and follower in which authoritative statements are given by the *Shaykh* to the follower. The followers' questions and the *Shaykh's* teachings are given in a concrete speech act – a concrete question or answer, or the *Shaykh's mudhākara* – or in a spiritual communication from heart to heart. The followers explicitly state that they need to develop their spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh* in order to receive these teachings and take part in his light. The etic approach to authority as a relationship and speech act corresponds to the emic understanding. The general approach in Sufi studies that focuses on the relationship between *Shaykh* and disciple as the central element of a Sufi movement is clearly relevant in this case.⁴

The followers develop this relationship with the *Shaykh* in the community, by teaching each other and by practising together. Their concept of *tarbiya* can be explained by referring to Berger and Luckmann's discussion of 'socialisation' as followers internalize the symbolic universe of the *ṭarīqa* and thus maintain its social structure. An essential aspect of this is the internalization of 'roles' through which society is experienced as objectively real, and the internalization of relationships between different roles as the only possible ones.⁵ The followers are raised in the family and the community to develop the right attitudes to love the *Shaykh* and *ikhwānā*, to accept the teachings of the *ṭarīqa*, and to accept the *Shaykh's* authority. When they have internalized the doctrine that the next *Shaykh* is always the son of the *Shaykh*, neither *Shaykh* nor followers can think of any alternative situation as 'the *murīd* has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his

⁴ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 16–17; Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order?'; Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?'; Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization'; Green, *Sufism*, 9.

⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 33–34.

sulūk.⁶ Most of the followers who join the *ṭarīqa* later in life develop these attitudes through their association with other followers in a secondary socialisation process in which significant others introduce them and mediate the new world for them. Berger points to the importance of the community in the continuing socialisation process and the followers themselves point to the importance of discussing and interpreting together and encouraging each other to practice and study: 'the individual appropriates the world in conversation with others and, furthermore, (...) both identity and world remain real to him only as long as he can continue the conversation.'⁷ Therefore, while the *Shaykh* is seen as a caring guide and teacher, in practice it is mainly the community who enacts these roles.

The importance of ritual has been discussed by Berger and Luckmann as it reminds people of the charismatic moment and their tradition⁸ – O'Dea points out that it in fact not only represents the original religious experience but re-enacts it, and elicits emotions and attitudes.⁹ Collective *dhikr* specifically recalls such moments and strengthens the relationship between the follower and his/her *Shaykh*, who continues to embody the divine message, and between the followers themselves as they share these experiences. Through the followers' *mudhākara* they transmit the discursive aspects of the tradition and interpret old and new elements of this tradition. Pinto has pointed out that collective rituals and study groups encourage egalitarian communities and heterogeneous spread of knowledge,¹⁰ and this seems to be confirmed by this case study as there is indeed a heterogeneous spread of knowledge that focuses on the official narrative and the *'aqīda*. The *ṭarīqa*'s explicit teaching of *maḥabba* for all and the egalitarian structure based on this is thus maintained through ritual and discussion, *dhikr* and *fikr*.

⁶ ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

⁷ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

⁹ O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 39–41.

¹⁰ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465–468; Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 125–127; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.'

This egalitarian structure is further maintained due to the absence of individualised initiation – after the *mubāya‘a* the followers’ commitment deepens but their devotional practices and interaction in the community remains the same. *Tarbiya* is thus a process that starts from the earliest moments and does not start at the moment of initiation (as Pinto found in his case studies in Aleppo¹¹). There does not seem to be a clear conceptual framework of *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt* that could encourage hierarchization, but there is a general idea of progress on the path and the need to show this spiritual progress through correct behaviour, adherence to sharia and the pillars of the *ṭarīqa*, and the performance of good *ādāb*. Through this an informal hierarchy can be established, but the only explicit hierarchy in the *ṭarīqa* is the distinction between *Shaykh* and follower, as it is believed that the follower can never reach the level of the *Shaykh*.

This analysis of *tarbiya* and the role of the community in world maintenance leads to the question what the role is of the community in world maintenance and construction,¹² or as Lincoln would put it, the role of the audience in the production of authoritative speech and the management of its content.¹³ Sedgwick, for example, noted that this was the only constant he found in his analysis.¹⁴ This is a question that has been asked in the context of contemporary Sufi studies as well, as in many Sufi movements a shift towards greater autonomy of the members is taking place.¹⁵ Stjernholm, for example, has argued that the followers of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya play an important role in the preparing of publications etc, and even describes an occasion where they showed explicit disagreement with and silenced one of their leaders at a public event¹⁶ – a literal example of Lincoln’s argument that the audience has to provide a stage for the leader to engage in authoritative speech acts.¹⁷ This level

¹¹ Pinto, ‘The Anthropologist and the Initiated’, 464–465.

¹² Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

¹³ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–4, 11, 168.

¹⁴ Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 1–4.

¹⁵ Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 5, 10–11; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 358–359, 422.

¹⁶ Stjernholm, ‘A Translocal Sufi Movement’, 91–93; Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?’, 210.

¹⁷ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–4, 11, 168.

of autonomy can certainly not be found among the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, where the *Shaykh* is involved in the editing of all the publications and in all the transmission processes. The concept of *taslīm* is pretty straightforward and when one adheres to the basic doctrine that the *Shaykh* is the embodiment of the 'aqīda and the *nūr muḥammadi*, there is no way around it, but through the subtle process of *mudhākara* and the interpretation of signs from the *Shaykh*, there is more autonomy than would appear at first sight. *Fikr* is a concept with a wide range of meanings and associated practices, some of which are more in line with *taslīm* than others. *Ta'ammul*, meditative contemplation, for example, need not clash with *taslīm* at all. Rational study and critical thinking might have a more challenging effect, as can be seen from the example of AM2-2 who was plagued by doubts because of his philosophy studies. He was greatly helped by his peers in the *ṭarīqa* to overcome this, which can be explained in sociological terms by referring to this as a successful socialisation process in which doubts have been incorporated in the system and in which the disciple is strongly connected intellectually and emotionally to the symbolic universe and its main representative, the *Shaykh*. At this level of commitment to the symbolic universe, disagreement becomes increasingly unlikely – in Sufi terms, this would be called *fanā'*. Here, *taslīm* in the sense of absolute submission to and acceptance of the will of God acts as a theodicy that incorporates all marginal situations in the overarching symbolic universe.¹⁸

There is another way in which such a realization of the potential paradox between *fikr* – in the sense of critical thinking - and *taslīm* can be resolved. The *Shaykh* hardly ever communicates directly, but usually communicates in signs – *ishārāt*. The concept *ishāra* has a wide range of meaning in the *ṭarīqa*. It can refer to the classical Sufi meaning of the allusive language which attempts to express the ineffable which can only be interpreted when the hearer can access the same experiences,¹⁹ but it can also refer to signs in the everyday reality that similarly need to be interpreted. The distinction of these signs, the attribution of

¹⁸ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 46–56.

¹⁹ Nwyia, 'Ishāra'; Poonawala, 'Ta'wīl'; Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 28–35; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 249; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 7–15. See paragraph 6.4.

meaning, and the subsequent interpretation are first done by the individual and then in the community, where they are incorporated in the tradition and interpreted based on the interaction between community and society, '*aqīda* and social understandings of Islam and sharia. This is especially clear in the practice of *istikhāra*, which in many other contexts is practiced by spiritual specialists and thus is an important base of authority for Sufi *shaykhs* and other Islamic leaders,²⁰ but in this *ṭarīqa* is practised entirely by the followers. Through this process there is quite a large space for the community to interpret the *Shaykh's* teachings and traditional elements within their social situations, and quite a large measure of autonomy, that is managed however through the process of *tarbiya* to not stray too far from the *ṭarīqa*'s values. As such the followers do engage in world construction as much as they participate in world maintenance, in Bergerian terms.

Our final concern – again following Lincoln – is the 'stage of authority.' Where does the relationship take place, where is authority enacted? While the official doctrine seems to be that 'the stones are not important' and that the relationship mainly occurs in the '*zāwiya* of the heart', there are also clear voices that the *zāwiya* is important for them as a place of gathering and a place of memories and continuing 'states'. The *zāwiya* in Amman is a place where they can have direct physical interactions with the *Shaykh*, listen to his words and see his behaviour, and where they experience how much care he has for their education. It is a sacred space²¹ as it allows them to connect to the personal symbolic centre of the *ṭarīqa* and because of its communal function.

When understanding the *ṭarīqa* as a discursive tradition, we see the *zāwiya* is the place where the transmission of tradition is regulated most strongly as the *Shaykh* oversees everything that happens there, welcoming people, joining meetings, and meticulously editing books and study material. Several followers who are close to him participate in this regulating function – together with the *Shaykh* they regulate the dissemination of the teachings and could be

²⁰ Edgar and Henig, 'Istikhara.'

²¹ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–65; Brereton, 'Sacred Space.'

seen as the ‘custodians of tradition’ (see chapter 1). Because of the followers’ understanding of doctrine – especially the tenet that ‘the *Shaykh* is always right’ – and the feeling that the *Shaykh* cares for them, this regulation is not experienced as confining, but as enlightening.

Where does the *ṭarīqa* fit in the Jordanian arena of Muslim Politics with its fragmented authority?²² Based on our analysis of the role of the sharia in the *ṭarīqa*, and the activities that happen in the *zāwiya* to reach out to wider society, we can say that while the *ṭarīqa* does not participate in explicit political actions, its relations to the realm of traditional Islam as promoted by the king shows it should be classified as a religious movement of the status quo through the practice of ‘engaged distance’.²³ The focus on guidance and character formation leads to the inculcation of normative frameworks which support the traditional orthodoxy and the religious and political hegemony of the king. The *Shaykh*’s socio-political position enhances his charisma in the eyes of his followers’ as he participates in society and is respected by other figures of authority, without getting caught up in the messy business of politics. Here he acts as a role model for their own role in society. Both his prestige and his encouragement of their participation – to be ‘good people and good citizens’ – are seen as a mark of this sanctity.

The *ṭarīqa* is connected to the discourse of Traditional Islam though its connections to the king, and the combination of intellectual engagement, practical devotion and ethics and the downplaying of spiritual states also points in this direction. Even so, it is predominantly a traditionally organized *ṭarīqa* centred on the *Shaykh*, and we see little organisational rationalisation. The degree of autonomy the followers possess in the development of the vernacular tradition does seem high, but remains within limits which are strongly enforced in the *zāwiya* and through the *ṭarīqa*’s ‘custodians of tradition’ in Amman. The adaptation to society and its participation in the general discourse of traditional Islam that is done through this process of transmission has probably had some influence on the *ṭarīqa*, but it does not seem to have radically altered its course.

²² Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5; Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 45–48.

²³ Heck, ‘Introduction’, 3–4. See paragraph 1.5.2.

All this points to a clear continuation of the original charisma of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din in his successor *Shaykh* Ahmad, despite the clear institutionalisation on kinship lines. None of O’Dea’s dilemmas²⁴ have materialized in the central community in Amman. Due to the absence of statistics it is impossible to say anything regarding numbers of followers that have remained in the movement or that have left, but for those who remain, the *ṭarīqa* remains very relevant to their lives. I have found no indication of mixed motivation (although this of course is extremely hard to see and prove by an outsider). Our discussion of the role of the *ṭarīqa*’s ritual and symbolic representations has shown that it supports the process of *tarbiya* in creating emotions and attitudes that bolster the symbolic universe and the social structure, including the egalitarian community and the authority of the *Shaykh*. In chapter 3 we concluded that the simple organisation in which everything goes back to the *Shaykh* works efficiently and again strengthens the role of the *Shaykh*. The development of the *zāwiya* as an active religious centre has led to the development of bureaucratic organisation, but due to its rootedness in what is already a very tight community and due to the absolute control the *Shaykh* also has over this, it continues to work efficiently. Socialisation maintains primary zeal as we have discussed above. Finally, the ongoing concretization of the message has not only avoided losing the extraordinary element, it has in fact enhanced it as the charismatic can be seen to break through in the most mundane moments of everyday reality.

The theme of spiritual renewal and of keeping the religious message alive underlies much of this discussion. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din came to Palestine as a spiritual renewer and his successors have kept this going. It is stressed repeatedly that they value the past *Shaykhs* and the places in which the charismatic happened, but the ultimate focus is on the *Shaykh who is alive*. The followers stress that the *Shaykh* adapts Sufism to this day and age to keep the message alive – not only in the sense of ‘surviving’, but mainly in the sense of growing and renewing. A thorough historical research will be needed to understand exactly how the *ṭarīqa* developed and which elements were renewed,

²⁴ O’Dea, ‘Sociological Dilemmas.’

but even without that the important point is that the explicit adherence of the followers to the notion of renewal is extremely relevant in our understanding of the *Shaykh's* appeal for them.

As Berger and Luckmann point out, an institution is only successful if it can deal with challenges to its plausibility structure and symbolic universe and either isolate or incorporate marginal situations and challenging elements.²⁵ As an institution that does not cover the whole of society, and in a religious framework that is extremely polarised, such challenges to the *ṭarīqa's* symbolic universe are manifold, and have to be engaged with in order to continue to speak to people. The explicit validation of renewal, and the mode of transmission and communication in the *ṭarīqa*, provide space for this, ensuring that the *ṭarīqa* remains relevant for the followers in negotiating their Sufi identity in wider society, and thus strengthen the symbolic universe on which the *Shaykh's* role depends. This is acknowledged by the *Shaykh* and followers themselves in so far as they say that the *ṭarīqa* adapts its outer realities to society while staying true to its essence.

Ahmed and Von Oppen also argue for the importance of innovation for the maintenance of charisma their study of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the Comoros Islands and in Tanzania.²⁶ It would be interesting to examine the relations between these localities to understand better whether this is a characteristic that is typical of this *ṭarīqa*, or can be regarded as a more general observation. Werbner's work in fact points in the same direction, even though she draws the opposite conclusion: she notes that waxing of a *ṭarīqa* can only happen when there is a charismatic leader, but it seems equally likely that the success of a *ṭarīqa* bestows charisma on the leader. In fact she herself notes that travel and sacralisation of space is an element based on which charisma is attributed.²⁷ This sheds severe doubts on Weber's idea of 'routinization of charisma' and on theories based on this, like Werbner's.

²⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 28–55. See paragraph 1.3

²⁶ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirin'

²⁷ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 43–47, 73–81; Werbner and Basu, 'The Embodiment of Charisma', , 13.

The interplay of what Green calls discursive, miraculous and economic power²⁸ leads to the continuity of charisma as it enables adherence to both tradition and innovation. As the main ‘custodian of tradition’ the *Shaykh* exercises great influence over the transmission of the tradition, the community’s actions are attributed to him as expressions of his spiritual power, and his economic power enables him to exercise those functions expected of him – the caring teacher who connects them to each other and society and who takes care of their spiritual and worldly education.

²⁸ Green, *Sufism*, 6–7.

Part III

THE SHADHULIYYA-YASHRUTIYYA IN ACRE AND JAFFA

Chapter 8

Palestinians and Islam in Israel

In the previous chapters, we have seen how the relationship between the *Shaykh* and the followers is constituted in Amman, the centre of the *ṭarīqa*. We will now turn to those communities that remained in what became the state of Israel in 1948, isolated at first but increasingly able to reconnect to their *Shaykh* in Amman and to other followers in the Arab world. In this chapter, the context will be sketched in which their relationship with the *Shaykh* and with each other should be understood, first by discussing the situation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, then by looking at the place different Islamic trends have taken in society, and then by zooming in to have a closer look at the history of Acre and Jaffa since 1948. The chapter will finish with an overview of the development of the communities in Acre and Jaffa, which will serve as a framework to understand discussions in later chapters.

8.1 Palestinians in Israel

After 1948, 150,000 Palestinians remained in what had become the new state of Israel, many of them internally displaced.¹ The government continued to expel people and expropriate their lands for several years after 1948. The Palestinians were put under Military Rule based on the mandatory Emergency Regulations, which severely limited their movement. The Palestinians staying in the towns (both the original townspeople and refugees from the surrounding villages) were forced to live in ghettos until 1950. These measures affected their job opportunities, social relations and limited their space for political organisation.²

¹ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 39; Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 171.

² Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 18–19, 46–53.

The property of those classified as ‘absentees’ was confiscated.³ The Custodian of Absentee Property (hereafter: Custodian) had the power to decide who classified as ‘absentee’ and this decision was irrevocable. The Custodian transferred many of the properties it managed to the Development Authority, which had been established specifically for this purpose and was only allowed to sell to the state, local authorities or the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which had first choice. As the JNF exclusively serves the Jewish community, this meant that most properties were transferred irrevocably from the Palestinian to the Jewish population.⁴ As the Custodian was not the owner but the manager of these properties, it was questionable whether these transfers were legal. They were legalized retro-actively by the 1953 Land Acquisition (Validation of Act and Compensation) Law, which called for compensation at the rate of the value in 1950.⁵

Most of the Palestinian elite, including most religious officials, had fled, and the traditional institutions on which they had built their position – such as the Islamic institutions – were either dismantled or reorganized under strict government control, giving them little legitimacy within the Muslim community. In this context the family became an important unit of social organisation and identity and – as local party politics became tied to families – a political unit as well. Heads of villages (*mukhtars*) and tribes (*shaykhs*) and other ‘moderates’ or ‘good Arabs’ were co-opted to function as intermediaries, in return for which they were given jobs and leased land. ‘Moderate’ Arab politicians were incorporated into satellite lists to Zionist parties. Some operated as informers. This

³ Definition of ‘absentee’ in the Absentee Property Law of 1950:

‘Any person who was a citizen of the Land of Israel, and left his ordinary place of residence in the Land of Israel at any time between 29 November 1948 and the day on which it is announced that the State of Emergency declared by the Provisional Council of State is abrogated, shall be regarded as an ‘absentee’ if he left the country (during the above period) to:

a) a place outside the Land of Israel before 1 September 1948, or

b) a place inside the Land of Israel at that time occupied by forces that wished to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel or fought against it after its establishment.’ Quoted in Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel, 1948-1966*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969), 59.

⁴ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 32–33.

⁵ Reiter, ‘The Waqf in Israel’, 108.

cooperation came either because of threats or from opportunism or conviction as some saw Israel as a democracy and choose to work within the political system.⁶

The discussion of the nature of the state is at the heart of the discussion of the positions of its minorities. Israeli social scientists analysed the Palestinians' position as a backward minority that would 'develop' by living in a democratic Western society, in their eyes comparable to the position of migrants in Europe. Since the 1990s this approach has been challenged by scholars who understand the state to be an ethnocracy, such as As'ad Ghanem:

Israel relies on two policy elements in its dealings with its Arab citizens – a maximum ethnic component and a limited democratic one. The ethnic policy emphasizes the superiority of the Jews in all spheres. The democratic policy incorporates the Arabs to a limited extent and produces an erroneous sense of normal development, even among members of the minority group, when in fact it exacerbates the distressing situation in which they find themselves.⁷

According to Ghanem the Israeli government was driven by three often conflicting impulses: Jewish-Zionist considerations, security considerations, and democratic-liberal considerations. During Military Rule the first two impulses reigned supreme and Palestinians and their institutions (municipal, educational, social and religious) were held under close supervision and control to prevent subversive activities and cross-border connections. They were subjected to restrictions on movement and expression and made economically dependent on the government and the Jewish majority. School curricula gave no attention to Arab language, culture and history, and the Palestinians could not relate to the 'dominant symbols and values of the state and its institutions'. In addition to this the government adopted a divide-and-rule policy based on ethnic, religious and kinship lines to prevent Arab or Palestinian nationalist feelings. Because of the ensuing economic and social hardship, people were less inclined to participate in

⁶ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 34, 41–42, 60–67, 124–125; As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 20–21.

⁷ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 9.

political activity.⁸ Even so, the Communist Party – the only non-Zionist party in the Knesset with both Jewish and Palestinian members – was popular amongst the Palestinian community as its Marxist discourse enabled them to call for self-determination and civic equality without directly referring to Palestinian nationalism, but the movement remained elitist and male-dominated.⁹ There were also a few attempts to organize on nationalist lines, such as in the Arab Popular Front and the al-Ard Movement.¹⁰

After the abolition of Military Rule in 1966 the Palestinians continued to be controlled through a system of discriminatory policies, in addition to which the Emergency Regulations could still be called upon to deal with Palestinian dissent or to enforce Judaization policies. As Ilan Pappé puts it: ‘In general the legislation had the appearance of guarding the rights of the Palestinians in Israel, but it formed a matrix of power that contained the Palestinians within glass walls.’¹¹ The Palestinians were economically marginalized and exploited as cheap labour, excluded from economic power which was in the hands of cartels and monopolies managed by state institutions, the Jewish Agency or Histadrut, leading to ‘a bisected economy on ethnic or national grounds.’¹² Individuals could sometimes carve out a space to advance themselves economically and socially and to participate in wider Israeli society, as long as they did not do this as a collective, but limited improvements in their situation still lagged behind the Jewish standard of living. Representation in the Knesset did not achieve much and local councils were very weak. The clan (*hamūla*) still played an important role in the life of the rural Palestinians as ‘a source of solidarity and stability’, and patriarchal values continued as political ideologies were subordinated to the interests of the *hamūla*.¹³

Due to the increased connections with Palestinians outside the Green Line and the Arab world at large after 1967, the Palestinians in Israel developed a

⁸ Ibid., 19–25.

⁹ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 41, 45, 68–69, 75, 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., 82–87; Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 96–100.

¹¹ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 97.

¹² Ibid., 94.

¹³ Ibid., 105–110, 122–123, 136–137, 156, 246–247.

stronger Palestinian identity, albeit a very particular one due to their unique circumstances. They had been isolated for twenty years and in addition to differences in dialect, cultural exposure and standards of living, they were confused when it came to their identity. They began to identify more with the rest of the Palestinian people and increasingly called for civic equality (on individual and communal levels) and a two-state solution.¹⁴ Increasing organization in political parties, NGOs, the Islamic Movement and other bodies led to an increase in communal self-confidence. Because of this, and because the PLO became more powerful, tensions in Israel rose as Palestinians in Israel came to be seen as a fifth column, especially during the Intifada. While they showed their solidarity with the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) through aid and demonstrations, the Intifada did not cross over into Israel.¹⁵

When the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established based on the Oslo framework the Jewish Israelis increasingly saw the Palestinian citizens of Israel as outsiders. In this climate racism became increasingly visible, and more critical academics came to see Israel as an 'ethnocracy'.¹⁶ While the state renewed its Judaization policies and increased its efforts to fragment the Palestinian population geographically and socially,¹⁷ some Palestinians challenged these efforts by moving into 'Jewish' neighbourhoods and towns. As Pappé argues, 'the bi-national reality that unfolded in Israel during the 1980s was stronger than the ideology of the state.'¹⁸

While some scholars speak of a 'Palestinian consensus' amongst the Palestinians in Israel, others show that differences in opinion do exist. As'ad Ghanem argues that it is reductionist to classify Palestinian political opinions

¹⁴ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 21.

¹⁵ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 121, 174–175.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–145, 155–158.

¹⁷ The government confiscated land and demolished houses of Palestinians if they did not have the right permits – which were impossible to get. On this land roads were built further bisecting Palestinian lands, new neighbourhoods for Jews, and industrial plants which were often toxic. The clearest example is that of the Bedouin communities in the Negev who were forced to live in reservations and new towns, but other examples abound in the Galilee and urban areas (e.g. the expansion of Nazareth Illit and town planning in Jaffa and Ramleh). *Ibid.*, 162–164, 211, 245–246, 256–259.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 160–163.

solely according to their relationship to the state, and he includes a broader set of criteria such as their key ideological values and how they relate to these broader ideologies, their organizational basis, the degree to which they wish to challenge the status quo and the methods they choose, and their 'tone' (their rhetorical style and types of arguments, and the extent to which they use alienating and threatening terms). He distinguishes the Israeli-Arab stream, the Communist stream, the Nationalist stream and the Islamist stream.¹⁹

The 'Israeli-Arab' stream is characterized by their call for civic equality within a Zionist framework and organization within the Zionist establishment, pragmatism and a conciliatory tone. At first Arab politicians joined Zionist parties on satellite lists, but they established their own parties in the 1980s, especially Mada/Democratic Arab Party (DAP).²⁰ The Communists are represented by an umbrella organization of many Palestinian committees, organisations, local authorities and clan heads, the Jabha/Hadash/Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). They were active on issues such as land confiscation and the Judaization of the Galilee, but the Communist stream declined in the mid-1980s.²¹ Representing the Nationalist stream were Abna al-Balad in the 1970s, the Progressive Movement in the 1980s, and Tajamu'/Balad/National Democratic Alliance (NDA) since the 1990s. Initially they were linked to the PLO but they became dissatisfied with Arafat after the Oslo Accords as they felt themselves excluded, while they saw a clear analogy between the treatment of the Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²² We shall discuss the Islamists at length in paragraph 8.2.

While Palestinian political activity on the national level had little impact, it was much more effective on the municipal level. On this level, political party

¹⁹ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 32–37; Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 10.

²⁰ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 39–64.

²¹ This happened due to the decline of the Communist bloc, their conservatism, the rise of rival parties, and their reliance on the people whose main loyalty was to more parochial units such as the clan or village. *Ibid.*, 65–94; Alisa Rubin Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State: The Development of Policy Toward Islamic Institutions in Israel* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 129.

²² Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 95–122.

activity was strongly intertwined with family- and clan activity. While under military rule the village leaders had played mediating roles, from the 1970s onwards they became associated with local political parties.²³ The Arab local government became the 'most important channel of socio-political development' as it was 'the only political nexus in which the Arabs have direct influence.' In 1974 the representatives of local councils joined in a committee, and they increasingly took a stance on national issues such as land expropriation, especially after Land Day, March 30 1976.²⁴ In 1982 this committee developed into the Follow-up Committee for Arabs in Israel. Ghanem notes this Follow-Up Committee was unelected, riven by political squabbles and dependent on clan-based and clientalist networks, 'an assemblage of local leaders and not (...) a national leadership'.²⁵ In the 1990s the old clan and religious structures and the countrywide political parties and movements were increasingly criticized, and young people sought to organize themselves through civil society.²⁶

Increasingly the Palestinians in Israel came to see themselves as 'victims of Zionism and an integral part of the Palestinian movement',²⁷ awakening 'to the wider historical and ideological context and explanation for their predicament',²⁸ stressing that their situation was just as much a result of Zionist colonialism and the *nakba* as that of Palestinians elsewhere. Academics and activists played key roles in this.²⁹ During the First Intifada and after the Oslo Agreements in which they became sidelined politically, the Palestinians in Israel felt the need to define their stance more clearly. They stressed the collective experience they shared with the Palestinians in the OPT: 'cantonization, fragmentation of social

²³ Ibid., 26.

²⁴ Demonstrations against the expropriation of 20,000 dunams near Carmiel as part of a program 'Developing the Galilee' during which six Palestinians were killed by the army. Ibid., 152; Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 129–134.

²⁵ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 150; Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 10.

²⁶ Civil society is 'the organization of citizens in political parties, movements, voluntary associations, clubs, and every other sort of voluntary organization that falls between the institutionalized organization known as state and government, and the primordial organization known as family and clan.' Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 171.

²⁷ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 11.

²⁸ Ibid., 173.

²⁹ Ibid., 195–196, 208, 249–254.

networks, and separation of communities as a result of Israeli policies.³⁰ During the 1990s the *nakba* began to play a larger role in the Palestinian consciousness³¹ and the continuing land confiscations came to be seen as an ‘ongoing *nakba*.’ The internally displaced became more active in the struggle for their villages.³² At the same time, the Palestinians in Israel recognized their different situation which called for a different strategy, challenging the ethnocentric nature of the state and demanding their rights as Israeli citizens. While the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip focussed on liberation, the Palestinians in Israel focussed on achieving equality.³³

Pappé points out that the Palestinians in Jordan face similar issues regarding their identity as they also ‘had to navigate between a declarative and a behavioural mode of identity depending on context.’ The PA’s focus on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and their sidelining of the ‘right of return’ are problematic for Palestinians in Israel and in Jordan, whose relation with the Palestinian representatives has now become a relation to a foreign country, leading to an acute question of identity and belonging as the host states ask them to identify with one or the other.³⁴

8.2 Islam in Israel

In 1948, the Islamic religious establishment was in shreds and the Palestinians in Israel had become culturally, socially and religiously isolated from the other Palestinians. Most of the Muslim establishment had fled and the sharia courts were closed; mosques and other buildings were damaged, abandoned or occupied by refugees.³⁵ The Ministries of Minority Affairs and Religious Affairs managed the Muslim affairs on an ad hoc basis by re-establishing the sharia

³⁰ Taraki and Giacaman, ‘Modernity Aborted and Reborn’, xviii–xix.

³¹ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 213. In 1998 the first Nakba Day was commemorated.

³² Issam Aburaiya and Efrat Ben-Ze’ev, ‘“Middle-Ground” Politics and the Re-Palestinization of Places in Israel’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 4 (2004): 647.

³³ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 113.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 116–117.

³⁵ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 26.

courts, paying stipends to mosque personnel, and surveying the Muslim holy places. These should have been temporary measures but they remained in place and gradually the ministries developed laws to regulate and control the Muslim institutions.³⁶

Michael Dumper argues that these measures aimed to continue expropriation of Muslim properties and co-optation of the Muslim leadership.³⁷ Alisa Rubin Peled discusses the debates and struggles between those politicians favouring security and control, and politicians with ‘a benevolent approach emphasizing cultural autonomy towards the Arab minority,’ and argues that there was little interest in developing a clear policy towards the Muslim community at the highest level of government, which led to an *ad hoc* formulation of policies in which security concerns were the overriding preoccupations.³⁸ As Charles D. Smith points out however, both approaches were part of ‘a divide-and-rule approach granting local communal autonomy but denying a sense of broader communal identity,’ preventing ‘a collective Muslim identity from emerging by controlling its leadership,’ which ultimately satisfied the obsession with security shown by the state.³⁹

8.2.1 Religious Officials and Islamic Education

All Muslim functionaries, from the *qāḍīs* (Islamic judges⁴⁰) to the cleaners in the mosques, were appointed by the government. While some Israeli officials wanted to give the Muslims a certain level of communal autonomy in their religious affairs, most were determined to prevent the rise of an Islamic institution such as

³⁶ Ibid., 35–36.

³⁷ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*.

³⁸ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 2, 12–13; Alisa Rubin Peled, ‘The Other Side of 1948: The Forgotten Benevolence of Bechor Shalom Shitrit and the Ministry of Minority Affairs’, *Israel Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2002): 85.

³⁹ Charles D. Smith, ‘Debating Islam in the Jewish State: The Development of Policy toward Islamic Institutions in Israel (review)’, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 21, no. 3 (2003): 201–3.

⁴⁰ In the text, I have used the anglicized plural *qāḍīs* rather than the Arabic *quḍāa*.

the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC). Already in 1948 the sharia courts in Nazareth and Acre were re-opened, headed by two government-appointed *qāḍīs*.⁴¹ The main Muslim leader in this period was Taher al-Tabari, who had been *qāḍī* in Tiberias since 1924 and a member of the SMC, and had become a refugee in Nazareth where he was appointed *qāḍī* in 1950. In several meetings with the government, he stressed the need for the Muslim community to have a voice in the appointments of *qāḍīs* in order to increase their legitimacy.⁴² Security concerns won the day however; in 1953 the Sharia Court Law gave the government the final say in the appointment.⁴³

There was no proper Islamic education to prepare Muslim officials for their jobs. Minority education was divided into Muslim, Christian, Druze, Bedouin and Circassian schools in order to prevent the rise of Arab nationalism. The goals were to modernize the Arabs and create loyal citizens, and Arab pupils received much more education in Hebrew language and Jewish culture than in their own religion and heritage.⁴⁴ While the state lost no time in producing books in Hebrew to teach Arabic and history of the Middle East for security reasons, there were no schoolbooks to teach religion to the Muslim community and the state did not want to import them from other Arab countries. Israeli Arabists produced new books at a very slow pace and with very low priority, and more than half of the books focussed on 'the spirit of the noble historical traditions of Jewish-Arab friendship' in topics such as the Golden Age in Spain and co-existence in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵

When the first *qāḍīs* died in the 1960s this became an even more pressing problem. In 1961 the *Qāḍī* Law stipulated that only five out of nine members of the appointment committee had to be Muslim and that *qāḍīs* had to swear an

⁴¹ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 53–54.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60–64. An appointment committee of fifteen members was to be appointed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs after consultation with the community; they would submit *qāḍī* candidates which had to be approved by the president or prime minister. There would be an appeals court of two members (with a third on call in case of disagreements). The *qāḍīs* were state servants receiving state salary. There would be local advisory committees of eleven to thirteen members.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97–108.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 106–113.

oath of allegiance to the state. Political considerations and connections became increasingly important in appointments and the legitimacy of the Muslim leadership sunk even lower. For example Muhammad Hubayshi, *qāḍī* of Acre in the 1980s, had had a local political career on a list associated with the ruling Mapai party.⁴⁶

8.2.2. Attitudes towards Awqāf and Holy Places

Military rule severely disrupted the Muslims' access to their holy sites. Places that had been shared sacred sites among Muslims, Christians, Druze and/or Jews, or that were otherwise considered Jewish, were Judaized in a process of spatial sacralisation and nationalisation similar to the one discussed by Werbner (see chapter 1).⁴⁷ Doron Bar distinguishes between bottom-up local efforts, often by Mizrahi immigrants who tried to recreate the sacred geography they had left behind,⁴⁸ and semi-official policies to this effect as the government aimed 'to expand and deepen the State of Israel's map of sacredness by focusing on areas and places not necessarily associated with any long-standing Jewish tradition of sanctity. This amounted to an effort to appropriate the space and make it Jewish – and Israeli (...) nurturing a national cult,' accentuating the Jewish traditions of the sites while ignoring the Muslim and Christian ones. Zionism thus created its

⁴⁶ Ibid., 121–123, 136–137.

⁴⁷ Werbner explicitly refers to the example of North African Jewish immigrants in Israel in the 1950s. Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 58. She bases her account on Alex Weingrod, *The Saint of Beersheba* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Yoram Bilu and Eyal Ben-Ari, 'The Making of Modern Saints: Manufactured Charisma and the Abu-Hatseiras of Israel', *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 672–87. Jewish immigrants who settled in empty Palestinian villages connected to the graveyards and restored them using Jewish symbols, and developed the tombs of the *kivrei tzadikim*. Examples are Elijah's Cave, the tombs of the sons of Jacob and the tomb of Abu Hurayra/Rabban Gamliel on the coastal plain, the tomb of *Shaykh al-Shu'la*/Shimon bar Yochai on Jabal al-Jarmaq/Mount Meron, and Nabi Ruben. Doron Bar, 'Wars and Sacred Space. The Influence of the 1948 War on Sacred Space in the State of Israel', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 67–91; Mahmoud Yazbak, 'Holy Shrines (maqamat) in Modern Palestine/Israel and the Politics of Memory', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 231–48; Yazbak, 'Nabi Rubin', 195.

⁴⁸ Bar, 'Wars and Sacred Space', 72. Yazbak sees this as a form of Mizrahi resistance to the dominant Ashkenazi religious culture. Yazbak, 'Holy Shrines in Palestine/Israel', 234.

own sacred spaces which were related to Hebrew sovereignty over the land, ancient and present.⁴⁹

In 1948 the Department of Muslim and Druze Affairs at the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA) had established a Committee on the Preservation of Muslim Religious Buildings which had conducted a survey of the religious buildings in the new state. While giving suggestions on which mosques to renovate, J.W. Hirschberg (head of the Muslim Department of the MRA) had been mainly interested in listing *awqāf* properties.⁵⁰ The findings were published in a report in 1950⁵¹ in which recommendations and prioritization was given for the renovation of the holy places. As Alisa Rubin Peled points out:

Here, the Orientalist and antiquities-oriented approach of the authors came to the fore: the actual worshippers in the venerable mosques were not consulted, leaving it to the Israelis to determine the relative value of the Muslim sacred sites in Israel. (...) In its approach to preservation policy, the Muslim Affairs Department appeared to share the goals of an archaeologist or antiquities specialist: to return the mosques to their original, pristine form by removing as many 'adulterations' as possible. This approach strongly contrasted with the traditional view of the synagogue as a living place of worship constantly modified to meet the needs of the congregation rather than a historical monument. The attitude towards Muslim places of worship seemed more appropriate for creating a museum than for meeting the needs of an active Muslim community.⁵²

The MRA spent as little money as possible on the preservation and security of Muslim sites, including cemeteries, and sometimes even used them for Jewish activities. There were controversies over several holy places, including several cemeteries, the Haram Sayidna Ali, the Nabi Da'ud Mosque / Tomb of

⁴⁹ Bar, 'Wars and Sacred Space', 72; Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵⁰ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 26.

⁵¹ L. A. Mayer et al., *Some Principal Muslim Religious Buildings in Israel: Ba'ḍ al-Bināyāt al-Islāmīyah al-Dīnīyah fī Isrā'īl: Benyīnim Rothiyim shel Ha-Muslimim be-Medīnat Yisra'el* (Jerusalem: Committee for the Preservation of Muslim Religious Buildings, Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1950).

⁵² Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 83–84.

David in West Jerusalem,⁵³ the Hassan Bek Mosque in Jaffa,⁵⁴ and the Al-Jazzar Mosque in Acre. The latter was renovated after pressure from the Foreign Office because it was a popular tourist destination, and this renovation was used as international PR for years.⁵⁵

The control over the *waqf* administration became an extremely controversial issue because of the vast amount of land and resources it controlled. The Palestinian *waqf* system had become an influential institution controlling a lot of land and properties and supporting religious functionaries, scholars and notables, providing them with considerable wealth and political power.⁵⁶ During the late-Ottoman Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) most *awqāf* for public benefit had been centralized under Ottoman government administration. The British Mandate had given the task of managing the public *awqāf* to the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), headed by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, which came to act as a representative and mediating institution between the Muslim community and the Mandate government.⁵⁷ The SMC increasingly articulated the nationalist struggle in religious terms and used the *waqf* system as a weapon against land sales to Zionist settlers by preaching against the practice, issuing fatwas against selling land to Jews, and punishing sellers and brokers. The SMC bought land themselves (but had limited resources so did not manage to buy a significant amount) and tried to convince landowners to transfer their private property into *waqf*.⁵⁸ For these reasons the SMC was suspended during the Great Revolt in 1937 and the *awqāf* came under the jurisdiction of a three-member member supervisory committee. In 1948 all three members fled and the

⁵³ Bar, 'Wars and Sacred Space', 72–76.

⁵⁴ Nimrod Luz, 'Self-Empowerment through the Sacred Culture and Representation in the Urban Landscape. The Mosque of Hassan Bey and the Arab Community of Jaffa', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 249–63.

⁵⁵ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 87–92. Similar issues occurred in other holy places, but not all of them became controversies like these high profile places.

⁵⁶ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21; Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows. Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism, 1917-1948* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2008), 47–50.

awqāf under their jurisdiction came to be classified as 'absentee property', and in 1950 these absentee *awqāf* fell to the Custodian of Absentee Property.⁵⁹

The new Zionist state could not afford to return all this land and property to the Muslim community as this would mean a Muslim institution would have jurisdiction over 10-20% of the cultivated land of the new state, which would have undermined the territorial integrity of the state and given the Muslim elite a measure of independence that was undesirable.⁶⁰ Measures were taken to co-opt the religious leadership, integrate the administration of the *awqāf* in the system of the state, and control the *awqāf*'s resources.

The Israeli government distinguished between religious and secular *awqāf* – a distinction which has no base in the sharia. In 1951 the 'religious' *awqāf* became the responsibility of the MRA and in 1952 advisory committees of local notables were appointed in Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, Lydda and Ramla to administer small portions of these *awqāf* and to make recommendations regarding the use of the *waqf* funds. They merely executed decisions made by the Custodian and the MRA, they could make no appointments and were not allowed to coordinate among themselves, which isolated and fragmented the boards. They were civil servants and most probably screened by the security services. Because of their corruption and the taint of collaboration they enjoyed little respectability in their communities.⁶¹

In 1953, most 'secular' *awqāf* (and some 'religious' *awqāf* that were no longer in use) were sold to the Development Authority. Compensation was given to the MRA – it is unclear whether it was actually spent for the benefit of the Muslim community.⁶² Privately administered *awqāf* whose *mutawallī* was classified as absentee shared the same fate. Privately administered *awqāf* whose *mutawallī* was still present continued to operate under supervision of the sharia court.⁶³

⁵⁹ Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 105.

⁶⁰ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 29–30.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 34–36.

⁶³ Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 112.

Palestinians in Israel opposed the fact that the *awqāf*'s sacred inalienability had been violated and that the *awqāf*'s resources were now mainly used for the benefit of the Jewish community. They also opposed what they saw as the secular Jewish government's meddling in their communal affairs, and they felt discriminated against as they saw that the Christians, Druze and Baha'i had more communal autonomy.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Custodian had released many Christian lands and properties based on the excuse that the organized church structure within the recognized Christian communities had remained more or less intact after 1948, even though the leaders in whose names property was registered might be classified as absentee. They were also allowed to run their own schools, appoint their own judges, and receive political and financial support from Western Christian organisations.⁶⁵

In 1965 the Custodian's sales of *awqāf* were retroactively legalized in the Third Amendment of the Absentee Properties Law and the government appointed boards of trustees in Acre, Haifa, Ramla, Lod and Tel Aviv-Jaffa to which *waqf* property could be released by the Custodian. These boards were corporate bodies that were established with the aim to 'institute policies of modern business management'. The board members were appointed and supervised by the government rather than the sharia courts; they consisted of civil servants or local politicians who worked as volunteers and had been screened by the security services, and were not always respected by the people. They could only spend the income of the *awqāf* on limited non-political events, and only in their own locality. In the case of privately administered *awqāf* that benefited families who were absentees, they were released to these families. The release of the *awqāf* from the Custodian to the boards was a slow process – and by no means all of them were released. The release was done 'without any restriction, qualification or any similar limitation prescribed by or under any law or

⁶⁴ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 40; Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 7.

any document related to the endowment,' in effect abolishing its *waqf* character and enabling the boards to sell them like any other property.⁶⁶

Scholars have debated what the goals were of the 1965 Third Amendment and whether these goals were attained. Aharon Layish, who was involved in the drafting of the Amendment, compared it to similar moves throughout the region and claimed it was done because the *waqf* was considered an economically stagnant institution that should be replaced by a modern system. Yitzhak Reiter argues that this assumption was wrong as the *waqf* has always been transferable as long as the new property served the original purpose. According to him the second objective of the amendment was to appease the Muslim community, but because the execution was flawed (especially due to the appointment of corrupt individuals) the policy only worsened the Muslim's opposition to the *waqf* policy.⁶⁷ Peled understood the process as a negotiation between government bodies with conflicting preoccupations: 'a genuine desire to grant a degree of cultural and religious autonomy, a security-minded quest for control, and a desire to mobilize the economic resources of the Muslim community for state purposes.'⁶⁸ Dumper sees the Third Amendment as a way to further expropriate the *waqf* system with a 'veneer of Muslim legitimacy'.⁶⁹ Dumper writes that the boards sold large quantities of the *awqāf* to Jewish entrepreneurs, often in secret deals in which the board members also pocketed money. According to Reiter, only the board in Jaffa made any transactions and mainly for personal benefit.⁷⁰ The discussion of this issue goes beyond the scope of this research, but it is clear that the reforms and the boards they established are quite controversial.

These policies and activities were opposed by local groups, community leaders, local council leaders, and Palestinian Members of Knesset (MK),

⁶⁶ Many had already been sold or leased or were managed by the MRA. Other *awqāf* did not fall within the jurisdiction of the boards, as they were limited to their municipal borders. Large *awqāf* with agricultural land were not released, and the boards were left with old buildings that did not give much revenue and were expensive to maintain, making it attractive to sell them. It was the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Arab Affairs who decided which properties would be released. Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 44–46; Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 109–115.

⁶⁷ Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel.'

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁹ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 44–51; Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 115–118.

supported by some Christians and Jews. They resorted to written protests and demonstrations, undertook several legal efforts and organised conferences in Acre and Nazareth in 1954, 1961 and 1984, attempting to establish a national committee that would coordinate efforts to retrieve the *waqf* property. While in principle all *awqāf* are sacred, in practice this activism centred on the ‘holy places’ – buildings that were used for worship, tombs, and cemeteries.⁷¹

Recently the issue of the holy places has become even more politicized as secular and Islamist activists have made the Muslim holy places and *awqāf* part of their campaigns as they are part of their religious and national heritage, and as the holy places play a central role in the ‘peace process’.⁷² Issam Aburaiya and Efrat Ben-Zeev see this as part of the development of ‘middle-ground politics’ which seeks to combine the abstract Palestinian nationalist narrative which focuses on the *nakba* as an abstract, monumental hegemonic discourse on the one hand with individual refugee narratives on the other. For those who were able to return temporarily, their short visits took on the character of pilgrimages – often modelled on the prototype Islamic pilgrimage, the *ḥajj*. Under influence of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s – which sidelined the refugees’ right of return – these individual pilgrimages became part of the larger nationalist narrative, and the restoration of parts of these villages (often the holy places, as they were the only buildings left standing) provided an even more tangible way to reconnect to these places. For the Islamist movement, with its grassroots approach and focus

⁷¹ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 39–41; Reiter, ‘The Waqf in Israel’, 108. These legal efforts were based on the idea that the *qāḍī* could dismiss a *mutawallī* and could therefore either replace an absentee *mutawallī* or the Custodian. One of these cases led to the ruling from the Supreme Court that indeed this was allowed in the case of a privately administered *waqf* whose *mutawallī* was absentee.

⁷² Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 12. For example, Abna al-Balad and the Progressive Movement organized events to clean up cemeteries, Adalah filed a petition to the Supreme Court in 2004 to request that the Minister of Interior draft regulations regarding the Muslim holy places, and a Citizens’ Accord Forum between Jews and Arabs in Israel and a few MKs urged for regulations. The renovation of mosques and cemeteries has also become an important part of the Islamic Movement’s activities. Marshall J. Breger and Leonard Hammer, ‘The Legal Regulation of Holy Sites’, in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 26, 31–32.

on local as opposed to national issues, this provided an ideal activist programme.⁷³ As Aburaiya and Ben-Zeev pointed out:

The abuse of their holy shrines proved especially painful as it robbed them of the solace and comfort the large majority of them would seek in the embrace of religion and tradition. After being pushed into marginality, Palestinians under Israeli occupation have sought recourse to their old traditions to help them develop new forms of community and identity and so confront the outside enemy. Holy shrines in contemporary Palestinian society are being revived or re-invented to help build or re-imagine a new identity that can help people cope with the daily aggression that threatens their existence.⁷⁴

Since no research exists on Palestinian Sufism in Israel during Military Rule, we cannot say how this affected Sufi communities in particular. The remaining followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya lost contact with their *Shaykh* and most of the community, who had all become refugees, and except for those who lived in the *zāwiya* in Acre, access to it was extremely difficult for those living under military rule. The fact that the loss of the *Shaykh* and most of their *zawāya* did not rob them completely of their tradition and the solace it could provide, testifies to the strong community that had been built around the *Shaykh* and was able to act independently. For those who had lost their *zāwiya*, its communal function was continued in people's houses. As we shall see, those followers who remained sought solace in their local communities, maintaining their traditions until ties with the *Shaykh* and the *zawāya* in Acre and Amman were re-established. The renovations of their shrines should primarily be seen as the reaffirmation of those continuing ties. There is however, also a strong sense of hope that the social role of the *zāwiya* and the community can be renewed, and in this sense the role of the *zāwiya* and the community is re-invented as a sixty year hiatus needs to be bridged and today's circumstances are very different from the Mandate period. For more on this, see chapter 11.

⁷³ Aburaiya and Ben-Ze'ev, "Middle-Ground" Politics'.

⁷⁴ Yazbak, 'Holy Shrines in Palestine/Israel', 240.

8.2.3 Rise of the Islamic Movement

In 1967 when the Israeli Palestinians reconnected with friends and family in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, they also came in touch with the well-established religious life there. In an attempt to counter the growing popularity of Fatah and the PLO, the Israeli government supported Islamic institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and encouraged Israeli Palestinians to study there.⁷⁵ The Palestinians in Israel had renewed access to religious sites in Hebron and Jerusalem, they obtained copies of religious literature, and many Palestinians in Israel went to study at universities and seminaries in the West Bank, Gaza and further abroad. They were exposed to Islamist ideologies such as that of Hassan al-Banna and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which had stressed the religious roots of Palestinian nationalism as part of their anticolonial struggle. In a global context in which secular nationalism and Communism were discredited and Islamism was on the rise as a movement opposing political and cultural Westernization, and in a local context where Jewish fundamentalism and settler-colonial ideology and activities were flourishing, Islamism became a viable alternative for Israeli Palestinians.⁷⁶

Writing in 2002, Aburaiya distinguished four phases in the rise of the Islamist Movement in Israel. The first phase, in the 1970s, was one of *da'wa* led by *Shaykh* Abdallah Nimr Darwish from Kafr Qasim who had graduated from the Islamic Institute in Nablus in 1972.⁷⁷ Darwish was the spiritual leader of Usrat al-Jihad, a paramilitary unit established in 1979 which engaged in acts of sabotage and arson against Jewish and 'collaborating' or secular Muslim targets. Two years later all members were arrested and when the leaders were released in the early 1980s they adopted a grassroots approach rather than returning to

⁷⁵ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 128–132; Elie Rekhess, *Islamism Across the Green Line: Relations Among Islamist Movements in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1997), 1–2.

⁷⁶ Issam Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel: Between the Holy Text and Israeli-Palestinian Context', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (2004): 442; Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 122–129.

⁷⁷ Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel', 443; Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 124. *Ibid.*, 124.

violence, establishing a communal-social network, mobilizing people and material resources. They organised themselves in a loose network of non-profit organisations undertaking public works which the government had neglected. Using volunteer labour and financed by *zakāa* and funding from the Gulf they established over a hundred mosques that competed with government mosques in the villages and which functioned as community centres. They established schools and an Islamic University in Umm al-Fahm to train religious leaders.⁷⁸

The state reacted by supporting a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, the *ṭarīqa Khalwatiyya Jāmi'a Raḥmāniyya*, when they established a seminary in Baqa al-Gharbiyya in 1989.⁷⁹ According to Peled, the university is accredited and funded by the Ministry of Education and guarantees all graduates a job as teacher of religion, but the students are prohibited from participating in political activity. This is an interesting point which shows the lenient attitude the government displays to 'non-political' Sufi groups as a counterweight to political groups (a tendency we see world-wide, see also chapter 4 for the situation in Jordan), but her reference to the *ṭarīqa* as 'the Khilwayiyya Sufi sect' shows that she has not delved deeply into the matter. Had she visited the *zāwiya*, spoken to one of its adherents, or read one of its publications, she would have realised that its name is 'Khalwatiyya' and that 'Khilwayiyya' is either a typo or misreading – the difference between the Arabic *yā'* and *tā'* being only two dots above or below the same letter.⁸⁰

Between the mid-80s and the early 90s the Islamic Movement expanded their power to the level of local government. In the local elections they cooperated with the local family-based political parties, 'emphasizing their shared concern with family values.' Their ideology remained vague and they

⁷⁸ Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel', 443; Rekhess, *Islamism Across the Green Line*, 2–3; Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 130–132, 139–140.

⁷⁹ On this *ṭarīqa* in Israel, see al-Qasemi, *Aḍwā' 'alā al-Ṭarīqa al-Khalwatiyya al-Jāmi'a al-Raḥmāniyya*; De Jong, "The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine," 175; De Jong, "Les Confréries Mystiques," 220; Weismann, "Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel," 316–317. Website of the al-Qasemi Academic College of Education <http://www.qsm.ac.il/pr/>

⁸⁰ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 140.

pragmatically disengaged national and local issues which enabled them to cooperate with the government to improve the situation for their constituents.⁸¹

The 1990s saw increased disagreements within the Islamic Movement along religious and political lines as they competed for status and political legitimacy. They became more involved in national issues such as land expropriation, national planning, and economic development. They became involved in issues in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, mainly by sending humanitarian aid, but also by attempting to mediate between Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the PA in the early 90s. This led to increased internal debates as they disagreed on these activities, their attitudes towards violence, towards the Oslo Agreements, and whether to provide aid to the Occupied Territories or only to Palestinians living in Israel.⁸²

The climax of these discussions was the debate whether or not to participate in the 1996 Knesset elections. Theologically, the discussion centred on the issue of participation in a secular, non-Muslim legislative body, particularly one belonging to a state regarded as hostile by Arabs and Muslims, and on the question who is authorized to decide upon this issue. This discussion took place in a clear socio-political context and considerations of political strategy also played a role in the theological interpretations. Darwish argued they should use their civil rights and participate in the political process offered by the state, whereas Ra'ed Salah and Kamal al-Khatib opposed participation in Israel's political framework as they believed this harmed the Muslim Palestinians' interests, would mean the recognition of Israel as a Zionist Jewish state, and was not in accordance with Islam. The Islamic Movement split into the Southern Faction, headed by Darwish, and the Northern Faction headed by Salah and Khatib.⁸³

⁸¹ Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel', 444; Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 132–135.

⁸² Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel', 444–448; Rekhess, *Islamism Across the Green Line*, 13.

⁸³ Rekhess, *Islamism Across the Green Line*, 18–19; Aburaiya, 'The 1996 Split of the Islamic Movement in Israel.'

The restoration of holy places such as mosques and graveyards continues to occupy an important part of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement's programme. In 1990 they established the al-Aqsa Association, an umbrella non-profit organization that coordinates activities related to holy places and *awqāf*. They charged the government with 'negligent care of Muslim holy sites, to the point of intentionally changing these places to designations that are incompatible with their sanctity,'⁸⁴ while emphasizing the Muslim's own duty to improve their situation through volunteering and fund-raising. They gathered information on pre-1948 holy places, organized trips to sites of sacred significance in the Western Galilee, and renovated mosques and cemeteries. In 1996 they restored Solomon's Stables on the Haram al-Sharif, as a reaction to the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel.⁸⁵ When in 1997 plans were announced to build a plaza opposite the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth to celebrate the Christian millennium and the visit of Pope John Paul II, the Islamic Movement claimed that this land belonged to the Shihab al-Din *waqf*. The situation escalated between 1997 and 2003,⁸⁶ and the deteriorating communal relations in Nazareth are increasingly becoming a divisive issue between Muslim and Christian Palestinians in a global climate of Islamophobia.

8.2.4 Sufism in Israel

It has been noted in paragraph 1.5.3 that the categories of 'East' and 'West' – while problematic from the start – have lost their value in the face of globalization as people and ideas and practices travel across the globe. As Geaves, Dressler

⁸⁴ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 127.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 140–141; Alisa Rubin Peled, 'Towards Autonomy? The Islamist Movement's Quest for Control of Islamic Institutions in Israel', *Middle East Journal* 3 (2001): 396–397.

⁸⁶ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 157; Daphne Tsimhoni, 'The Shihab al-Din Mosque Affair in Nazareth: A Case Study of Muslim-Christian Relations in the State of Israel', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 192–230; Rassem Khamaisi, 'Holy Places in Urban Spaces. Foci of Confrontation or Catalyst for Development?', in *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. Breger, Hammer, and Reiter, 138–142.

and Klinkhammer point out, the process of globalization and migration diminishes the value of traditional centre-periphery models, to the point that ‘the meaning of East and West starts to lose its geographical significance’.⁸⁷ This is especially true of the situation in Israel. Geographically located in the Middle East, and with a large amount of its citizens (both Palestinians and Mizrahim) originating in the area and maintaining ties with their relatives and acquaintances abroad, a large part of the culture in the country can be classified as ‘Middle Eastern’. The influx of Jews from across the globe and their continued ties to their countries of origin have given Israeli society cultural and spiritual input from all over the world, even though the social, economic and political dominance of the Ashkenazi Jews has imposed ‘Western’ culture and socio-political organisation on all those living in Israel.

Dominguez Diaz and Stjernholm’s criticism of Hermansen’s classification of contemporary Sufi movements in the West rings even more true in the case of Sufism in Israel. Apart from the generally valid criticism that the categories of ‘East’ and ‘West’ are problematic and that different attitudes can exist within one *ṭarīqa* or community,⁸⁸ the categories themselves are not very useful. Concepts such as ‘perennial’ and ‘hybrid’ Sufi movements are useful in discussing the Jewish Israeli ‘new spirituality’ and its relations to traditional and global Sufism. However, Hermansen’s third category of ‘transplants’ is less useful, as the traditional Sufi *ṭuruq* in the Jewish state are not reproductions of *ṭuruq* and shrine cults in the homeland by migrant populations, but are the products of the indigenous and internally displaced people who are attempting to maintain their traditions while having become a marginalized minority in their own land. In many cases their shrines and *zawāya* have been taken (see paragraph 8.2.1) and their connections to their genealogical and spiritual kin in diaspora are disrupted.

⁸⁷ Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, ‘Introduction’, 4.

⁸⁸ Hermansen, ‘In the Garden of American Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Global Sufism.’; Dominguez Diaz, ‘Performance, Belonging and Identity’, 230; Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?’

Stjernholm's suggestion to focus on a group's relation to a historical tradition and narrative and cultural milieu is indeed more useful here.⁸⁹

While it has been discussed occasionally, it is only in the past few years that Sufism in Israel has been approached by scholars, and the literature on the subject only sheds light on small aspects of the field. Weismann's 2004 overview article of 'Sufi brotherhoods in Syria and Israel' has become the starting point for mapping Sufi activity, but the focus on *ṭuruq* as units of analysis he employs has been problematized by scholars such as Pinto, who points out that in the Syrian context there is a co-existence of centralized *ṭuruq*, decentralized 'practical' Sufi networks, and autonomous *zawāya*, all of which have the personal and devotional relationship between *shaykh* and disciple as their main structuring principle and can be connected through networks of personal relations.⁹⁰ The *shaykhs* in Aleppo, for example, all participate in a 'religious circuit' in which disciples of one *shaykh* often go to others to obtain *baraka* and participate in their devotional practices.⁹¹ In addition to these institutions and their explicit affiliations, there is the wider cultural milieu of 'individual piety or pragmatic religiosity' that is connected to the *shaykhs*: the use of amulets (*hijāb*), the cult of saints, and the reading of mystical texts.⁹² In the contemporary context many alternative modes of Sufi organisation have sprung up, some of them not even including a *shaykh*. The Israeli Sufi milieu is also more diverse and interconnected than Weismann's *ṭarīqa*-focused gaze presents. Based on the sparse secondary literature, a first hypothetical distinction can be made between traditional *ṭuruq*, Traditional Islam, and Jewish Sufi circles as part of Jewish Israeli 'new spirituality'.

Another problematic feature of Weismann's approach is his distinction between urban-elitist *ṭuruq*, rural-populist *ṭuruq* (associated with 'retrograde traditionalism'), and reformist *ṭuruq* that transcend the urban-rural divide and

⁸⁹ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

⁹⁰ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 111–112.

⁹¹ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 473.

⁹² Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition'; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 106–112.

adapt to the modern situation⁹³ – even though the descriptions he then gives of the Syrian *ṭuruq* show that they have adherents in all sectors of society. Pinto's research into some of the *ṭuruq* Weismann mentions shows how misrepresenting this distinction is. For example, Weismann speaks of the decline of the 'urban elitist' Qadiriyya and Khalwatiyya, noting that the 'Hilaliyya' combines the two and is still performing *dhikr* in Aleppo, but not initiating disciples.⁹⁴ Pinto shows that the Aleppine Zawiya Hilaliyya is not so much a sub-branch but a single *zāwiya* of the Qadiriyya ruled by the Hilali family, who are the leading Qadiris in Aleppo (an office which is a remnant of the Ottoman period) and who are also initiated into the Khalwatiya. While the Hilalis focus on education and do not give out initiation any more, another Aleppine Qadiri *zāwiya* (the Zawiya Badinjkiyya) is still initiating disciples and has a *baraka*-focused spirituality.⁹⁵ Pinto also writes about a Qadiri *zāwiya* which is led by the Kurdish *Shaykh* Muhiy al-Din, who helps Kurdish rural migrants to Aleppo negotiate their identities and socio-economic place in Arab Aleppo, and connects semi-Arabized Aleppine Kurds to their rural and Kurdish roots by maintaining relations with a Naqhbandi *shaykh* in Afrin.⁹⁶ These examples show that the distinction between urban, rural and reformist obscures more than that it illuminates, and an exclusive focus on *ṭuruq* as units of study does not do justice to the diversity of Sufi groups in the Levant.

Weismann seeks 'to analyze the various ways by which different Sufi brotherhoods in Syria and Israel have responded to the challenges of modernity in general, and to the peculiar political circumstances in which they live in particular' by 'accommodating an agent of modernity' ('Western rationalism, Islamic fundamentalism or, most important, the all-powerful state').⁹⁷ He does not give explicit criteria of what he considers successful adaptation, although one can deduct that he means the level of coherence, activities and membership, and cooperation with the government. His classification of the Israeli *ṭuruq* in terms of successful adaptation to 'Israeli realities' by tapping into their reformist roots

⁹³ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 318.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 304–305.

⁹⁵ Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition.'

⁹⁶ Pinto, 'Kurdish Sufi Spaces of Rural-Urban Connection in Northern Syria.'

⁹⁷ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 314.

therefore does not tell us much of contemporary Sufism in Israel. His examples do show that in Syria and Israel, similar dynamics are at play as in the rest of the world as Sufi *ṭuruq* and individuals are negotiating their place with regards to the nation-state, universalizing reformist movements, Traditional Islam, and 'new spirituality', and the related shifts in authority and organisation.

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is only mentioned sporadically in the secondary literature,⁹⁸ and in this study the question arises where the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya fits in the Israeli Sufi landscape – as we shall see, the restoration of the *zāwiya* is of the utmost importance in answering this question.

8.2.4.1 Traditional Sufi Groups

The process of decline that Sufi *ṭuruq* in the Levant went through in the early twentieth century continued under the different Mandate governments of the region, and Palestinian Sufism was no different. The unrest and war of 1948 that led to the expulsion and displacement of most Palestinians eliminated most of the Palestinian *ṭuruq*. As De Jong points out, the Palestinian *ṭuruq* had been less strongly organized than for example those in Egypt and Syria (see paragraph 3.2). The Mawlawiyya had disappeared by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Rifa'iyya disappeared in 1948.⁹⁹ The Naqshbandiyya in Ottoman Palestine was restricted to the Uzbek *zāwiya* in the old city of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰ Only the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya and the Qadiriyya were left, and they were in a sorry state. When contacts were renewed with the wider Arab and Muslim world, these *ṭuruq* went through a process of revival, and *shaykhs* of new lineages came to Israel.¹⁰¹

Weismann considers the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya to be the most successful in its adaptation to 'Israeli realities', focusing on its lodge in Baqa al-

⁹⁸ Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 40–41; Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 131.

⁹⁹ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 314–315.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Gharbiyya which since 1967 has been developed into 'an impressive religious-educational complex' including a large mosque and *zāwiya*, a library and the al-Qasemi Academy (established in 1989, officially recognised by the Ministry of Education) which also hosts conferences.¹⁰² The *ṭarīqa* has excellent relations with the Israeli government.¹⁰³

Weismann judges the Shadhuliyya to be less successful in its adaptation to 'Israeli realities', but does not give any criteria for this qualification.¹⁰⁴ The Yashrutiyya suffered severely from 1948 as *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi fled to Beirut and most of the *ṭarīqa*'s *awqāf* were lost. Only the *zāwiya* of Acre somehow remained in the hands of the *ṭarīqa*, but the *awqāf* supporting it were confiscated, leaving the few remaining followers with no economic means for the maintenance of the buildings and the community. When contacts were re-established with the rest of the *ṭarīqa* in 1967, the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was regained and money came flowing in from followers outside of Israel, the community managed to start renovating the *zāwiya* in Acre. By this time Umm al-Fahm had developed from a village into Israel's largest Arab town and the Shadhuli community had likewise become the largest Shadhuli community in the country, and Umm al-Fahm's *muqaddam* Ibrahim Abu al-Hashish was considered the *de facto* leader of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel. *Shaykh* Ahmad visited the *zāwiya* in 1981 to rebury his father who had died in Beirut, and in 1996 to commemorate the centenary of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's death.

On Jerusalem's Mount of Olives we find another Shadhili *ṭarīqa*, led by *Shaykh* Sidi Muhammad Jamal, an '*ālim* at the Azhar Mosque complex who performs the Friday sermon.¹⁰⁵ He has a wide appeal in the West and spends much of this time travelling abroad to spread his *ṭarīqa*. In 1974 a small group of members of Hazrat Inayat Khan's Sufi Order in the West came to Jerusalem to

¹⁰² For example, the conference 'Confrontation and Co-existence in Holy Places: Religious Political and Legal Aspects in the Israeli-Palestinian Context', held January 3-4, 2006, at the Jewish-Arab Center of the University of Haifa and the Al-Qasemi Academy, led to the publication of the book *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2010), edited by Breger, Hammer, and Reiter.

¹⁰³ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 316–317.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁰⁵ Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 42.

study with him, and he started to visit the US in 1992, where he has followers in Santa Fe, Philadelphia and the Bay Area. In 2000, Hermansen pointed out that while around 300 people were initiated by him, only a small group follow ‘a specifically Sufi path under his teachings.’¹⁰⁶

Weismann argues that the Qadiriyya has been least successful in its adaptation ‘to Israeli realities’. Before 1948 it consisted of local groups which disintegrated after 1948, but recently new local groups have appeared under leaders who were initiated by Qadiri leaders in the Occupied Territories, and sometimes combine their Qadiri affiliation with affiliations to the Rifa’iyya and Alawiyya. He mentions Sa’id Abu Laban (a descendant from the leading Qadiri family of Ramla, who were responsible for the annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to Nabi Salih’s tomb), Abu Filastin from Sakhnin, and Abd al-Salam Manasra, an ex-Communist from Jerusalem who recently moved to Nazareth after he and his family were attacked by Salafis for their Sufi practices and their collaboration with Israelis (see next paragraph).¹⁰⁷ The remarks made above criticizing Weismann’s *ṭarīqa*-focused approach are especially relevant here. While he draws conclusions about ‘the Qadiriyya’ as a whole, they seem to consist of largely unconnected local groups with little continuity before and after 1948.

Throughout Jerusalem’s Islamic history, there have been autonomous *zawāya* to cater for the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem, led by Sufi *shaykhs* from Palestine and elsewhere. Until recently the most well-known of these was the Naqshbandi *zāwiya*, which for generations was operated by the Uzbek Bukhari family to host Central Asian pilgrims. The last *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* Aziz al-Bukhari (d.2010) was a very prominent figure in many interfaith initiatives. After his death the property fell empty.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Marcia Hermansen, ‘Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America: The Case of American Sufi Movements’, *The Muslim World* 90 (2000): 171.

¹⁰⁷ Weismann, ‘Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel’, 316; Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel’, 128.

¹⁰⁸ Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel’, 129; Navtej Sama, *Indians at Herod’s Gate. A Jerusalem Tale* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2014), 104.

The history of the Indian *zāwiya* (the *Zawiya Faridiyya*)¹⁰⁹ and the Ansari family heading it since the 1920s has been researched by Indian diplomat Navtej Sarna and can be found in his non-academic book *Indians at Herod's Gate* (2014). Sarna mainly focused on the *zāwiya* as a hospice for Indian pilgrims and its place in Jerusalem society, and not so much on the religious aspect of life in the *zāwiya*. He mentions that before 1948, between ten and fifteen 'dervishes' used to live in the *zāwiya* for a longer period of time, 'sleeping, praying, going to the mosque, cleaning the place'.¹¹⁰ He does not discuss the religious position of the *Shaykh*; there is no mention of him belonging to a specific *ṭarīqa* or having specific spiritual powers, although he describes the succession of *Shaykh* Munir Ansari to his father's position as being decided by a gathering of *shaykhs* led by *Shaykh* al-Bukhari, before being registered at the sharia court.¹¹¹

Geaves describes the Afghan *zāwiya*, led by *Shaykh* Abdul Karim Afghani of the Alawiyya *ṭarīqa*, as a neighbourhood *zāwiya* which teaches 'Traditional Sufism re-branded as street ethics (*adab*) with an emphasis on shaykh/murid instruction, dhikr attendance and other traditional practices'. In the eyes of his followers in the neighbourhood, the *Shaykh* preaches the return to traditional religion and practice, 'that which has been forgotten'.¹¹²

Among '*ulamā*' of the al-Aqsa complex, Geaves also found representatives of Traditional Islam with an implicit allegiance to *taṣawwuf*. They told him that several senior '*ulamā*' at al-Aqsa (especially the Shadhili Sidi Jamal), and several Sufi-oriented professors at al-Quds University, cooperated to establish several institutions associated with the Qadiriyya.¹¹³

Despite the low opinion most Palestinians have of Sufism as 'charlatans, illiterate, unlearned and irrelevant in the struggle to liberate Palestine from Israeli

¹⁰⁹ Named for Baba Farid (1173-1266), the twelfth-century Punjabi Chishti who had come to Jerusalem and had meditated for forty days in an underground chamber in this *zāwiya*, which at that time belonged to the Rifa'iyya. It has been directed by the Indian Ansari family since 1924, when *Shaykh* Nazir Ansari (1880-1951), a member of the Indian Khilafat Movement, came to Jerusalem at the invitation of the Grand Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni. Sarna, *Indians at Herod's Gate*.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132–134.

¹¹² Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 42.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 41–42.

occupation',¹¹⁴ several types of indigenous Sufism seem on the rise in Israel and Jerusalem, as centrally organised *ṭuruq*, as local Sufi groups around a *shaykh*, or 'rebranded' as 'Islamic ethics and religious education framed within tradition', renamed *'ilm al-tawḥīd*. Geaves argues that Werbner's model of 'waxing and waning' related to charismatic leaders is not adequate to explain these trends, and explores possible explanations of this phenomenon, which he suggests might be seen as a 'third option' between Fatah's secularism and Hamas's Islamism in order to reconnect with the cultural and religious heritage. As modernisation and liberalisation provided Palestinians with more options, one option was to return to spirituality rooted in Islam, potentially combining 'academia, culture and Islamic knowledge, presenting an indigenous option for intellectual endeavour with an historic heritage in the Middle East.' This trend is opposed to the Israeli alternative 'new spirituality', which is criticized by Palestinian Muslims for both spiritual and political reasons, as it sees Sufism through a perennial lens as Universal Sufism, and is often connected to problematic initiatives of interfaith dialogue.¹¹⁵

8.2.4.2 Jewish Sufi Circles

A final development to be discussed on the scene of Sufism in Israel is that of the 'Jewish Sufis', Israeli Jews who are interested in Sufi philosophy and practices, either from an intellectual or from a spiritual perspective. Chen Bram argues that they should be seen as 'part of the wider Israeli field of current spirituality' in the context of Israeli counter-culture which has been influenced by Western 'new spirituality' in general.¹¹⁶ As such this phenomenon has also been heavily influenced by the trajectories of Sufism in the West (in its 'hybrid' and 'perennial' forms), particularly by North American Sufism.¹¹⁷ As we have seen in paragraph

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 119.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

1.5, an important component of this Western interest in Sufism is its perceived universal and apolitical character and its presentation as ‘moderate Islam’ as an alternative to ‘radical Islam’ in what Ernst calls ‘Sufism and the politics of peace’. Serving a similar purpose in Israel, this trend has developed since the 1990s in the context of disappointment with Oslo, the consequent radicalisation on all sides, and general Islamophobia since 9/11, which led to the search for an ‘alternative’ Islam and for ‘a new basis from which Jews and Muslims might relate to one another’.¹¹⁸

Like in Europe and the United States, this trend encompasses the translation of Sufi literature (especially the poetry of Rumi), the performance of music and dancing, the practice of spiritual tourism, and the organisation of events such as the annual Sufi Festival in the desert near Eilat. Organized groups engaging in study and spiritual practice have come up among Israeli Jews since the 2000s,¹¹⁹ such as Ya’qub ibn Yusuf’s study groups,¹²⁰ mainly focussing on Kebzeh,¹²¹ and several local Mevlevi study circles around students of *Shaykha* Khadija (formerly Marcia Radin) from the US.¹²²

The most notable Jewish Sufi group is Derekh Avraham/Tariq Ibrahim, which was founded as a Jewish-Muslim *ṭarīqa* including both Jewish ‘seekers’ and Arab Muslim Sufis in order to create ‘an alternative shared space for interpersonal encounters and spiritual activities’. Bram writes that the main founders were Professor Avraham Elqayyam (professor of Jewish Mysticism at Bar Ilan University), *Shaykh* Ghassan Manasra (son of *Shaykh* Abd al-Salam

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 123.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹²⁰ Bram describes Ya’qub ibn Yusuf (originally Joshua Heckelman) as ‘one of the pioneers of Sufism among Jewish Israelis’ who defines himself as a Jewish Sufi and ‘represents the interaction between global Sufism, local Arab Sufis, and Jewish mysticism’. He migrated to Israel from the United States to find a teacher, and studied with *Shaykh* Sidi Muhammad Jamal and Murad Yagan (1915-2013). He owns the spiritual bookstore Olam Katan in the German Colony in Jerusalem and is involved in the publishing of translations of Sufi poetry to Hebrew. Ibid., 135 note 2.

¹²¹ Murad Yagan’s *Ahmsta Kebzeh* is a combination of Sufism, Christianity, Abkhaz-Circassian traditions and New Age developed by Yagan in Canada’s multicultural milieu. For a discussion of *Ahmsta Kebzeh* and ibn Yusuf’s reinterpretation of it, see Chem Bram and Meir Hatina, ‘From Sufism to Universal Vision: Murat Yagan and the Teaching of Kebzeh’, *Journal of Sufi Studies* 3 (2014): 67–92. It is also mentioned in Hermansen, ‘Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America’, 177.

¹²² Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel’, 132–133. See *Shaykha* Khadija, <http://www.whirling-dervish.org/>

Manasra and director of Anwar al-Salam), and Rabbi Roberto Arviv (of the Conservative Schechter Institute Neve Tzedek Center in Tel Aviv),¹²³ but media reports relate that the group was founded during the First Intifada when Rabbi Menachem Froman from Tekoa, a settlement in the Gush Etzion bloc, approached *Shaykh* Abd al-Salam al-Manasra to initiate a dialogue.¹²⁴ Nowadays it consists of a small 'inner circle' of active members, but there is a wide circle of a few hundred people who occasionally attend meetings. Most meetings take place in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, but sometimes they visit more 'Arab' settings, such as the Qadiriyya in Nazareth or the Shadhuli-Yashruti *zāwiya* in Acre. While they aim to bring Jews and Muslims together, most members nowadays are Jews who are either intellectually or spiritually interested in Sufism and its connection to Judaism.¹²⁵

Academic interest for Jewish-Muslim relations plays an important role in this milieu, as both academics and Jewish Sufis believe that historical periods of Muslim-Jewish interaction can serve to inspire contemporary interfaith dialogue and the solution of the conflict.¹²⁶ One topic of interest is the interpretation of Ibn Arabi from a kabbalistic viewpoint as is done by Avraham Elqayyam, one of the most prominent members of Derekh Avraham and the teacher of many participants in its meetings. Another popular academic is Paul Fenton, who lectured at a meeting of Derekh Avraham in Acre in 2012.¹²⁷

Paul Fenton specializes in the interaction of Jewish and Islamic cultures, especially in the areas of mysticism, philosophy and music. He argues that Judaism profoundly influenced the formation of Sufism in its formative period in Baghdad,¹²⁸ discusses Spain's 'golden age', the kabbalists, the Shabbatians, and

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 130–131.

¹²⁴ Ze'ev Ben Arie, 'The Way of Abraham – Jewish Sufi Movement', *Mysteries of Israel*, accessed 30 October 2013, <http://israelmystery.co.il/pws/page!9279>; Hadani Ditmars, 'Across Enemy Lines, Into the Mystic', *Canadian Globe and Mail*, 13 October 2007, <http://israelmystery.co.il/pws/page!9272>.

¹²⁵ Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 317; Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 130–132.

¹²⁶ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 122.

¹²⁷ Personal observation.

¹²⁸ He expresses his surprise at the fact that while Orientalists studied the influence of Neoplatonism and Christianity on Sufism, they failed to see the Jewish influence even though Baghdad had been the heart of Jewish learning for centuries: 'Among the great personalities

the Hasidic movement, but most importantly has written extensively on the *ḥasidūt* (Jewish pietists) of thirteenth-century Cairo. There was a general interest in Sufism in this place and time, as can be seen from the findings at the Cairo Geniza which included many Sufi writings and Jewish writings inspired by Sufism.¹²⁹ The most famous of these is Rabbi Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237, son of the famous Moses Maimonides), who was the spiritual and political leader of Egyptian Jewry in 1205. Rabbi Abraham saw the Sufis as the true heirs to the biblical prophets as he believed they had preserved practices which the Jews themselves had forgotten. He introduced many Islamic practices into Jewish worship (such as ablution, praying in rows facing Jerusalem and adopting different poses during prayer, nightly vigils, daily fasts, spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), and the necessity of spiritual development under the supervision of a *shaykh*). This restoration of 'original Jewish practice' was meant to 'accelerate the prophetic process'. Fenton points out that the pietist circle around Maimonides was elitist and faced much opposition, and therefore gradually disappeared.¹³⁰ Others seek the influence of Sufism in contemporary Judaism in the Kabbalah and the movement of the Hasidim. Famous kabbalists, such as the Spanish Rabbi Abraham Abu-l-Afiyya (d. after 1291), Isaac of Akko (ca.1270-1340) and Rabbi Isaac Lurya (1534-1572), had direct knowledge of Sufi practices, and the Kabbalah developed in Safed in an Islamic environment. Among the Hasidic practices which might have their origin in Sufism, Fenton notes the veneration of the *tsaddiq* (Hasidic saint) and the visiting of saints' tombs, the importance of music and dance as forms of worship, the phenomenon of *hitbōdedūt* [solitary

attached to the Talmudic academies of Baghdad were to be found certain charismatic figures who embodied the ancient rabbinic pietistic ideals of simplicity and saintliness, virtues cherished by nascent Sufism. Moreover, Sufi hagiography has preserved a number of edifying tales of 'the pious men from among the Children of Israel', known as *isrā'īliyyāt*.' Paul Fenton, 'Judaism and Sufism', in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), 755–756. This oversight on the part of the Orientalists could be explained by the fact that, as discussed in paragraph 1.1, the early Orientalists wanted to stress the Aryan roots of Sufism as opposed to its Semitic roots.

¹²⁹ Fenton points to the severe social upheavals the Egyptian Jewish community underwent in this period as many had fled the Almohads and Crusaders, combined with the messianic expectations due to the approaching Jewish millennium in 1239, as explanations for this surge in 'mystical sensitivity'. *Ibid.*, 758–759.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 760–764.

meditation, *khalwa* in Arabic], and the visualization of letters composing the Divine name.¹³¹

Many of Derekh Avraham's members and regular visitors are part of a loose network of activists who focus on interfaith dialogue and take part in initiatives such as the Jerusalem Peacemakers,¹³² Solha, Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam,¹³³ and Abrahamic Reunion.¹³⁴

8.2.4.3 Interaction between Sufi Groups and the Field of Interfaith Dialogue

The development of the Sufi *ṭuruq* and groups described in this paragraph is connected to the occupation and the relations between Jews and Muslims in Israel, and so is the interaction between these groups. They developed as part of the search for an alternative Islam and a partner for dialogue and are thus intrinsically linked to the history of the conflict. This interaction takes place within the wider field of the 'co-existence industry'¹³⁵ and can take the form of either 'an overt discourse which sees Sufi philosophy and historical ties between Jews and Sufis as a model on which to build future relations between Jews and Muslims' as discussed above, or it can use Sufi leaders as representatives of Islam.¹³⁶

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 766–767. 765-767

¹³² Jerusalem Peacemakers, <http://jerusalempeacemakers.org/>, accessed 07-05-2014.

¹³³ Wahat Salam / Neve Shalom, <http://wasns.org/>, accessed 07-05-2014.

¹³⁴ Abrahamic Reunion was established in Nazareth in 2001 by Eliyahu McLean and Ghassan Manasra in response to the violence between Muslims and Christians surrounding the Church of the Annunciation and the Shihab al-Din *waqf* (see paragraph 8.2.3). Their goal is to organize monthly interfaith meetings all over Israel. They are part of Rising Tide International, which is connected to the Sufi Order International. <http://risingtideinternational.org/abrahamic-reunion/>, accessed 28-05-2015.

¹³⁵ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 118–120, 125. For a discussion of the 'co-existence field' in Israel focusing on educational projects in the 1980s and 90s bringing Jews and Palestinians together, see Dan Rabinowitz, 'Natives with Jackets and Degrees. Othering, Objectification and the Role of Palestinians in the Co-Existence Field in Israel', *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 1 (2001): 65–80. Rabinowitz argues that these projects should be understood as part of the effort of the ruling Ashkenazi elite associated with the Labour party to stifle rising support for Likud and Kach among Mizrahim, and 'civilize' the Oriental Mizrahim. The Palestinians that were chosen to be part of these dialogue projects were well-educated males, perceived as the product of the magnanimous Israeli modernizing progress, rather than *fallahin* symbolizing Palestinian rootedness in the land.

¹³⁶ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 122.

This understanding of Sufism as an alternative, moderate and apolitical Islam is not unique for Israel, but has deep roots in Western Orientalist scholarship, and is connected to the global trend of ‘Sufism and the politics of peace’ that has for example been championed by King Abdullah of Jordan (see paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3). Needless to say, this politicizes those groups that are chosen for their ‘apolitical’ stance. Furthermore, this perceived dichotomy between moderate and radical Islam is problematic because it simplifies a wide spectrum of religious and political attitudes held by Muslims. In the Israeli context, perpetuating intra-Islamic dichotomies obscures understanding and perpetuates stereotypes of the wide spectrum of religious attitudes held by Palestinians of all backgrounds. It obscures the fact that there are many Palestinian Muslims who are neither Sufis nor ‘radicals’.¹³⁷

Most importantly, this focus on interfaith dialogue obscures the fact that for many Muslim Palestinian citizens of Israel, ‘the conflict’ is not understood as a religious conflict. As Bram points out: ‘the general Muslim reaction to Israel is related to their understanding of the continuous occupation of the territories’ – to which one might add the Israeli government’s attitude to the Palestinian citizens of Israel and to the Middle East as a whole – ‘and it is shared by many Sufis and revivalist Islamists alike.’¹³⁸ Without addressing the grievances continuously inflicted on the Palestinians by the Israeli government in the frame of the Zionist colonial project, dialogue is pointless.¹³⁹ In the words of Dr. Dov Maimon, an Orthodox Jew who studied thirteenth-century Islamic and Jewish mysticism and was a founding member of Interfaith Encounters Association:

If you are not handling the basic problems of unequal power relations, you are actually strengthening them (...) political redemption will not come through

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 124. For a critique of co-existence and dialogue projects, especially of the projects based on the ‘contact hypothesis’ which assumes that apolitical interpersonal contact leads to large-scale solutions to political conflicts, see Dan Rabinowitz, ‘Trust and the Attribution of Rationality: Inverted Roles Amongst Palestinian Arabs and Jews in Israel’, *Man* 27, no. 3 (1992): 517–37; Rabinowitz, ‘Natives with Jackets and Degrees.’

spiritual encounters – there is a need for social change. With all the respect, and with all the beauty of these encounters, how many times it can be repeated?¹⁴⁰

In addition to this, because most dialogue initiatives are instigated by Jews, they closely resemble the state's stress on the historical periods of co-existence in the Israeli schoolbooks for Muslims, and its aim to support particular religious and ethnic identities to undermine the shared Palestinian identity, for example by dividing the non-Jewish population into Muslims, Christians, Druze, Bedouin, and Circassians (see paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2.1).¹⁴¹

Bram analyses several Jewish Sufi groups with this criticism in mind. Regarding the meetings of *Shaykha* Khadija and the Mevlevi study groups, he notes that her first visit was organized with the hope to 'facilitate an encounter with a teacher external to the Israeli reality capable of bringing together students and friends from different religions, Israelis and Palestinians.' The continued meetings have taken on an apolitical character however, and while they show the possibility of an alternative relationship between Jews and Muslims, most people involved in these meetings are Jewish.¹⁴² Even so, Bram sees 'a potential for creating an interesting Jewish-Arab dialogue.'¹⁴³

Regarding *Derekh Avraham*, Bram notes that it is 'characterized by the basic structural inequalities that exist between Jews and Arabs in Israeli society' as the Jewish participants tend to come from the higher classes in the centre of the country, while the Muslims come from the peripheries, although he points out that this is in a way counterbalanced by 'choosing a Sufi framework and making interreligious dialogue secondary', which stresses the local Sufis' 'cultural capital'. While according to Bram they have managed to create a field of spiritual exchange, it is also unrelated to political issues.¹⁴⁴

Bram concludes:

¹⁴⁰ Based on a telephone interview with Maimon, quoted in Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 127.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 132–133.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

Indeed, providing hope and gathering together people from different religious backgrounds has its own value, but its influence on promoting peace or bridging Palestinian-Jewish relations is questionable. As for relations between Jewish and Arab citizens inside Israel, the focus on religious encounters can be criticized for sidelining discussion of more concrete political issues such as inequality in state resources and services to citizens. (...) it is also questionable if such initiatives can actually empower the Palestinian population and not reinforce existing power structures.¹⁴⁵

Bram notes that there is 'a tension between serious engagement in coexistence activities that values the Sufi contribution, and the temptation to use Sufi *shaykhs* and Sufi ideas as 'decoration' for such initiatives.'¹⁴⁶ Therefore, apart from the abstract discussion on the use of interfaith dialogue in general and in the Israeli situation in particular, we should address the question of who participates in such dialogue initiatives, why, what role they are given in the dialogue, and who do these participants represent? As discussed extensively in paragraphs 1.4 and 4.2, authority in contemporary Islam is heavily contested and there is no consensus as to who can act as 'spokesperson for Islam', and any claim that a participant in dialogue represents either 'true Islam' or all Muslims is nothing more than wishful thinking. If not by popular consent, why are they there? While acknowledging that people often are sincere and participate for the project's own sake, Bram also points out that these (often marginalized) Sufi *shaykhs* benefit from participation in the 'co-existence industry' as it might provide them with material and social power. In the case of East Jerusalem for example, most Palestinians boycott the Israeli authorities, and the only religious leaders who are willing to participate in municipal events seem to be Sufi *shaykhs*. The story of *Shaykh* al-Bukhari, one of the main figures in the Jerusalem Peacemakers network, is a case in point. As a Naqshbandi Sufi and an Uzbeki he was 'not quite Palestinian',¹⁴⁷ and his participation in the

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴⁷ This sentiment was also expressed by Munir al-Ansari, the *shaykh* of the Indian *zāwiya* in Jerusalem. Even though the first *Shaykh* came in the 1920s, married a local woman and was

problematic fields of the tourist and co-existence industry and his connections with *Shaykh* Nazim al-Haqqani of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya placed him 'on the front line of a global struggle between different representations of Islam, in addition to his problematic position regarding the national struggle of Palestinians in Jerusalem.'¹⁴⁸ While his personal contribution to these interreligious encounters was no doubt formidable, the question remains how representative he was of the Muslim community in general.

These encounters do not only include 'hybrid' Sufi groups or 'foreign' Sufis, but also traditional Palestinian *ṭuruq*. Considering that in the European context, Klinkhammer pointed out that most immigrant Muslims do not approve of the type of universalized 'new spirituality' of the Sufi movements that are involved in these projects (see paragraph 1.5.2),¹⁴⁹ we should ask ourselves what is the attitude of followers or fellow *ṭarīqa*-members towards those who participate in such dialogue. *Shaykh* Abd al-Salam not only participates in *Derekh Avraham*, but is also a Qadiri *shaykh* (although nothing is known about his more traditional followers). The state-sponsored al-Qasemi College run by the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya regularly hosts conferences of an interfaith nature. And most importantly for this study, the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya occasionally hosts study meetings of *Derekh Avraham* or the Mevlevi groups in its renovated *zāwiya*. These meetings are hosted by AKR, the head of the board of *mutawallīs*, who is responsible for the renovation and sees his outreach as part of this project. In the following chapters, we shall address the questions why he participates in these

accepted in the religious establishment of Mandate Palestine, nowadays his descendants feel less accepted as part of Jerusalem society. He is still referred to as 'the Indian'. As can be seen from the recent history of the *zāwiya*, both local Muslims backed by Yasser Arafat and Jewish settlers have tried to take over their properties. He expresses admiration for *Shaykh* Bukhari, which could be due to the fact that both are semi-outsiders. Sama, *Indians at Herod's Gate*, 171–175.

¹⁴⁸ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 128–130. See also *Shaykh* Bukhari's profile on the website of Jerusalem Peacemakers. <http://jerusalempeacemakers.org/> For the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya's participation in what Ernst calls 'the politics of peace', see Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization'; Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement'; Simon Stjernholm, 'Sufi Politics in Britain: The Sufi Muslim Council and the "Silent Majority" of Muslims', *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 12, no. 3 (2010): 215–26. See paragraph 1.5.2.

¹⁴⁹ Klinkhammer, 'Sufism Contextualised', 209–210.

dialogues, who he represents, and how this places the *ṭarīqa* in the Sufi milieu in Israel and its 'Muslim politics'.

8.3 Acre

After the fall of Acre on 17 May 1948¹⁵⁰ most inhabitants of Acre fled, to be replaced by Palestinian refugees from Haifa and the villages in the Galilee, and by Jewish immigrants who moved into the new city. About 3,000 Palestinians remained in Acre, including the internally displaced, out of 13,400 before 1948. The religious and political leaders had left.¹⁵¹ Most of the properties in the old city fell to the Custodian and were transferred first to the Development Authority and from there to the state-owned housing company Amidar, who leases the buildings to the Palestinian residents and for years has let them fall into disrepair.¹⁵² Acre has been marginalized and neglected by the Israeli government. Poverty rates are high, living conditions are bad, and crime has soared, especially in the old city where almost all residents are Palestinians. This has led many residents in the old city to move to the new town or to the surrounding villages – particularly Makr and Judayda which have been 'developed' specifically for this purpose.¹⁵³

In 1948 the sharia court had been re-established in Acre under *qāḍī* Musa al-Tabari,¹⁵⁴ and in 1958 a local advisory committee was established. As elsewhere, the religious officials were often appointed as much for their political stance as for their religious credentials, and they were not above criticism of co-

¹⁵⁰ Abbasi, 'The Fall of Acre in the 1948 War'; Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 100.

¹⁵¹ Abbasi, 'The Fall of Acre in the 1948 War', 24.

¹⁵² Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 53. Tarabut/Hithabrut estimates that that '[i]n the old city the Custodian of Absentee Property holds approximately 85% of the houses; 10% are in the hands of Muslim and Christian religious institutions, and only 5% are in the hands of private property owners.' Hithabrut - Tarabut, 'Acre Facing the New and Old Colonizers', *Hithabrut - Tarabut*, 25 January 2012, <http://www.tarabut.info/en/articles/article/Colonizing-Acre/>.

¹⁵³ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 53.

¹⁵⁴ Born in 1891 in Tiberias, Musa al-Tabari studied at the Ahmadiyya *madrassa* in Acre, then continued his education at al-Azhar in Cairo. He was a clerk in Acre's sharia court and taught at a government high school. He was appointed acting *qāḍī* in 1948 and *qāḍī* in 1951, a position which he filled until he died in 1962. Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 159–160.

optation. Muhammad Hubayshi, *qāḍī* of Acre in the 1980s, had had a local political career on a list associated with the ruling Mapai, and according to Peled he had been criticized by nationalists for his alleged collaboration by selling *waqf* properties.¹⁵⁵ Dumper gives an example from the 1970s in which the *qāḍī* ruled in the government's favour, enabling the sale of the Istiqlal cemetery in Haifa.¹⁵⁶

Many properties in the old town were *awqāf*,¹⁵⁷ the largest being the al-Jazzar *waqf* which was established in 1786 by the governor Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar.¹⁵⁸ During the late Ottoman period the *waqf* fell to the Ottoman Ministry of Awqāf, which meant that during the Mandate period it was administered by the SMC and taken by the Custodian of Absentee Property in 1950. Most of its properties were transferred to the Development Authority, which transferred many properties to the government-owned housing company Amidar. The controversial Acre Board of Trustees was established in 1966, the same year in which the Development Authority established the Old Acre Development Company (OADC) 'to refurbish sites of historical interest to develop the Old City's tourist potential', planning to turn old Acre into a museum-town as had been done in Jaffa. This move was seen with great distrust as Palestinian residents feared they would be displaced.¹⁵⁹ The Board's legitimacy was further undermined when locals found out in the 1970s that it had agreed in 1966 to lease *waqf* properties for 99 years to the OADC for low rent, allowing the OADC to develop them with no benefit for the local residents. The Board resigned in 1978 but the lease was

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 121–123, 136–137, 143.

¹⁵⁶ He gave a fatwa that the remains of the Istiqlal cemetery in Haifa could be removed so the Istiqlal committee could sell it and the municipality could develop the area. In 1981 the Istiqlal cemetery was destroyed, and by 1984 it was clear that rather than the promised communal services, it became commercial property. Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 60–61.

¹⁵⁷ Dumper estimates that 80–90% of the old city was endowed, based on J.B. Barron, *Mohammedan Wakfs in Palestine* (Jerusalem: Greek Convent Press 1922). Reiter estimates it was 20–25% of the town. Ibid., 52; Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 110.

¹⁵⁸ Ahmad Pasha aimed to stimulate commercial and economic expansion of the town by encouraging faith, trade, industry and hygiene through the establishment of the al-Jazzar mosque, the Ahmadiyya school (which was recognized by al-Azhar in Cairo), khans, markets and shops, baths, and an aqueduct. Later the offices of the sharia court of Acre were housed in the courtyard of the mosque. Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 11.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 53.

not revoked until the mid-1980s.¹⁶⁰ The first three boards of trustees were composed of members of local notable families and local politicians and involved in personal rivalries and controversies. According to Reiter the fourth Board of Trustees, established in 1982, was more able and more accepted and still functioning in the 1990s, administering the *awqāf* according to traditional sharia rules, even though they are not obliged to do so according to Israeli law.¹⁶¹

According to Yitzhak Reiter, the other *awqāf* in Acre, including the Yashruti *waqf*, were privately administered and remained under the jurisdiction of the sharia court, who appointed the *mutawallīs* as they were 'never classified as absentee property because their administrator prior to 1948 did not leave the territory that in 1948 became Israel.'¹⁶² We shall return to this issue in paragraph 8.5.

The Islamic Movement are also active in Acre. They took over three of the six mosques¹⁶³ and put up many signs in the Old City to remind people of their Islamic duties, and to dominate the public space, but Reiter notes their relations with the Board of Trustees and the other Islamic officials in the town are good.¹⁶⁴

Recently, plans to exploit Acre's rich history and its tourist potential have been gaining momentum. Between 1993 and 2000 a steering committee for urban planning drew up 'a heritage-focused Master Plan'. This development gained speed when UNESCO declared the old town a World Heritage Site in 2001 after the Israeli government had applied for this recognition.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 53–54. Reiter says this transfer had already been arranged by the Custodian before they released the properties to the board of trustees. According to Reiter, the Acre board did not engage in any property transaction because they knew it would be unacceptable to the Muslim community: 'Israeli Muslims who suffered from the obliteration of their past by the Jewish state are striving to preserve their cultural and architectural landmarks.' Reiter, "The Waqf in Israel," 115–118.

¹⁶¹ Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 116.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 112–114. The other *awqāf* are al-Sha'bi, al-Sadiqi, Ali Pasha.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 126 note 48. The Northern Islamic Movement is in control of the al-Raml mosque, the Southern Islamic Movement of the Zahir al-Umar mosque and the Majadla Mosque, the Board of Trustees of the al-Jazzar Mosque and the Sinan Pasha Mosque, and the government of the Zaytun Mosque.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶⁵ World Heritage List – Old City of Acre. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1042>, accessed 22-10-2013. Several actors are involved in this conservation program: the Acre municipality, the Israeli Antiquities Authority, and the Old Acre Development Company are all participating in the 'Saving the Stones Program' by the International Conservation Centre Old Acre.

This 'development' leads to gentrification as external entrepreneurs – both Jews and Arabs – purchase property to turn it into expensive hotels and restaurants, driving up the house prices.¹⁶⁶ Renovations of residential parts of the old town have also met with mixed responses. In various cases, residents were presented with the bills for the renovations and evicted if they could not meet them. In 2011 Amidar announced its intention to sell real estate under its control. Residents were given the first opportunity to buy, but if they could not afford to (which was very likely considering the extreme level of poverty in this part of town and the inflated real estate prices), Amidar would sell to another buyer and the tenants would likely be evicted. This resulted in several reactions from civil society, such as the *Akka mish li-l-bī* (Acre not for sale) campaign, which in 2014 achieved a success in stopping the lease of Acre's main monument and tourist attraction, the Khan al-Omdan.¹⁶⁷

This neoliberal gentrification and 'development' is also linked to the movement to Judaize the town. The Judaization of the Galilee and the Negev has been a project of the Israeli government for a long time, including policies of economic marginalisation, land expropriation and Jewish settlement.¹⁶⁸ Jewish neighbourhood committees and rabbis in the region have opposed the move of Palestinians to Jewish neighbourhoods. As many Jewish inhabitants of Acre moved to nearby towns such as Nahariyya and Karmiel concern grew over the Jewish character of the city. Since the 1990s right-wing religious settlers have begun to move into Acre with the express aim to 'protect the Jewish character' of the town, supported by the municipality and the government.¹⁶⁹

Another Judaizing initiative in Acre is Ayalim, founded in 2002 to increase Jewish settler activity in the Galilee and the Negev.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Ranit Nahum-Halevy, 'Acre Is the Place to Be', *Haaretz*, 7 November 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/business/acre-is-the-place-to-be-1.372588>.

¹⁶⁷ Sarah Irving, 'Campaigners Claim Legal Victory in Akka Heritage Battle', *Electronic Intifada*, 30 January 2014, <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/sarah-irving/campaigners-claim-legal-victory-akka-heritage-battle>.

¹⁶⁸ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 25–28, 48, 126–134.

¹⁶⁹ Eyad Barghouti, 'Akka: A Palestinian Priority', *Al-Majdal* 39/40 (2008-9): 18–26; Gershon Gorenberg, 'Israel's Other Occupation', *New York Times*, 25 November 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/27/opinion/sunday/israels-other-occupation.html>.

¹⁷⁰ Barghouti, 'Akka: A Palestinian Priority.'

The Ayalim Association believes that bringing students to settle in the Negev and the Galilee is a national undertaking of supreme importance. The association provides incentives such as scholarships and subsidized housing to encourage students to settle in such areas. After a period of living in the periphery, the association believes that students will become attached to the area and its people and that once they complete their studies a large share of them will choose to make their lives in the periphery. The association also works together with the Prime Minister's Office and the Office of the Vice Prime Minister to promote incentives for graduates of the project that wish to remain in the Negev and the Galilee.¹⁷¹

In 2007, the Israel Land Authority (ILA) handed three renovated buildings in the old town to Ayalim without any legal auction.¹⁷² Anno 2013 they were around 25 people, including a Christian and a Druze, organising activities for the local children every day and organizing activities to bring people together, for example by organizing an East-West music evening with students and their friends at the Acco Theater.¹⁷³

This Judaization not only takes place on the material real-estate level, but is also observable on the level of the narrative that is presented to tourists in which the Arab-Palestinian component of Acre's history and society is ignored. The focus is on Acre as a Mediterranean or Crusader town, and in recent years an increasing number of plaques throughout the old town draw exclusive attention to the Jewish presence in Acre throughout the centuries. Dhaher al-Omar and Ahmad Basha al-Jazzar are presented as uncivilized brutal leaders, and the Ottomans are presented as foreign rulers. No mention is made of the continuous local population.¹⁷⁴

Despite all this, Acre is presented as a showcase for peaceful coexistence. Since 1979 Acre's annual Fringe Festival, or Israeli Festival of

¹⁷¹ Ayalim Website, <http://ayalim.org/settle-the-land/>. Accessed 27-02-2012.

¹⁷² Barghouti, 'Akka: A Palestinian Priority.'

¹⁷³ Meeting with Acre's local coordinator of Ayalim on 06-05-2013. Ayalim Akko Village: <https://ayalim.org/akko/> Accessed 21-07-2014.

¹⁷⁴ Personal observations when visiting Acre in 2012 and 2013.

Alternative Theatre, has played a big role in this image. In 2000 its organisation passed to the municipality and since then it has been organised in collaboration with the OADC.¹⁷⁵ The goal of the festival is to support this coexistence and dialogue:

The Acre Festival also hopes to improve the historically tense relationship between Arabs and Jews in Acre. 'The festival supports Arabic plays and Jewish and Arab co-productions. These collaborations contribute to the artistic dialogue and cooperation between Arab and Jewish creators and audiences,' [artistic director Daniella] Michaeli says. In this spirit, every evening during the event, a parade of Arab and Jewish teenagers from around the Galilee will careen through the streets of Acre on stilts. The producer of the performance, Sigalit Gelfand says, 'The festival sees theatrical language as fostering the coming-together of hearts and minds, and creating a basis for cooperation.'¹⁷⁶

As described in *Haaretz* on the occasion of the Festival in 2011:

Acre the festival and Acre the place are deeply intertwined, the city a stage and the stage a reflection of the city's rich culture and history. Artists perform under cavernous stone-vaulted ceilings in Acre's historic citadel, creating an ambiance both haunting and warm. 'Acre is like a condensed model of Israel, with people from a wide variety of religions and ethnic backgrounds,' says Smadar Yaaron, co-artistic director of this year's festival. 'Jews and Arabs really live together here and have a kind of coexistence. Here they have more communication, and things are merging more from one into another.'¹⁷⁷

The image of co-existence fostered by the town's officials and its presentation as 'a condensed model of Israel' was shown to be superficial as

¹⁷⁵ Acco Fringe Festival of Alternative Theatre, General Background, <http://www.accofestival.co.il/english/content.php?id=19>. Accessed 22-02-2012.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Tobin, 'A Long Way of Broadway: The 29th Acre Festival of Alternative Israeli Theatre', *All About Jewish Theatre*, accessed 4 July 2014, http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=3020.

¹⁷⁷ Ben Kaplan, 'Acre Fringe: A Theater Festival Unlike Any Other in the World', *Haaretz*, 27 October 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/travel-in-israel/music-theater/acre-fringe-a-theater-festival-unlike-any-other-in-the-world-1.392294>.

violence between the communities increased, reaching a climax on Yom Kippur 2008. A Palestinian resident of the old city drove through a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood after which riots broke out that lasted for five days. Palestinian residents of the neighbourhood fled – most of them did not manage to return to their homes.¹⁷⁸ Afterwards, calls were heard to boycott Arab businesses in the town, and in particular to boycott the Fringe Festival which was to take place that same month. The Fringe Festival was at first cancelled,¹⁷⁹ but later postponed to December.¹⁸⁰

8.4 Jaffa

When Jaffa fell on 14 May 1948, 95% of the inhabitants fled. Those who remained or were internal refugees from surrounding villages were ghettoized in al-Ajami for two years, after which Jaffa was administratively incorporated into Tel Aviv-Yafo and the city was rapidly Judaized. The large homes were divided into apartments to house both Palestinians and Jewish immigrant families, forcing them to share bathrooms and kitchens throughout the 1950s and 60s. Arab neighbourhoods and surrounding villages were transferred to the Custodian (except for some church property), much old Arab architecture was demolished, and the Old City - including its *awqāf*¹⁸¹ - was turned into an artists' colony and tourist attraction. State Judaization policies mainly focused on the Galilee, but

¹⁷⁸ Isabel Kershner, 'Israeli City Divided by Sectarian Violence', *New York Times*, 13 October 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/13/world/middleeast/13mideast.html>; Jack Khoury and Haaretz Correspondent, 'Peres in Acre: We Have Many Religions, but One Set of Laws', *Haaretz*, 13 October 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/peres-in-acre-we-have-many-religions-but-one-set-of-laws-1.255401>; Hithabrut - Tarabut, 'Acre Facing the New and Old Colonizers.'

¹⁷⁹ 'Curtain Not to Be Raised on the 29th Acco Festival of Alternative Israeli Theatre', *All About Jewish Theatre*, accessed 22 February 2012, http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=3024.

¹⁸⁰ Joshua Mitnick, 'Israeli Palestinians and Jews: Acre Rioting Sparks New Debate On Shaky Coexistence', *New York Jewish Week*, 10 December 2008, <https://theshalomcenter.org/node/1460>.

¹⁸¹ Al-Wihda Mosque became a synagogue, al-Siksik mosque became a Bulgarian restaurant and nightclub, al-Nuzha was abandoned and used for prostitution. Part of the Abu Nabi cemetery became a park and the site of the Tel Aviv Hilton, part of the Taso cemetery became an urban expressway. Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 55.

there was also pressure on the Palestinians in Jaffa in the form of disinvestment in Ajami and Jabaliyya, which led to poor education,¹⁸² crime, and widespread abuse of alcohol and drugs. Combining this with the shock of the *nakba* and a lack of social leadership, the social system broke down. Since the 1980s a planned neo-liberal development continues to lead to Judaization and gentrification.¹⁸³

As in Acre, the appropriation and renovation of religious buildings caused controversy, in Jaffa most notoriously surrounding the Hassan Bey Mosque, built in 1916 and the only pre-1948 building still standing in the Manshiyya neighbourhood. The Board of Trustees established in 1967 caused even more controversies.¹⁸⁴ By 1978 complaints against the Board had reached such high levels that the government had to replace them. The new Board found out that the old Board had leased the Hassan Bey Mosque to a Jewish company directly after it was released by the Custodian for 'development' into a tourist and shopping centre. The new Board started a public campaign to put pressure on the municipality to annul the lease, culminating in a mass prayer in the mosque in 1981 which attracted international media attention and substantial funds, after which the municipality declared the lease void.¹⁸⁵

The Judaization and gentrification we discussed in the context of Acre can also be seen in Jaffa. Amidar has issued hundreds of eviction orders to

¹⁸² Many Palestinian children were sent to Jewish schools because Arab schools were of very poor quality due to neglect in allocation of resources and quality of education, which amplified identity crises and problems with the Arab language. Sami Abu Shehadeh and Fadi Shbaytah, 'Jaffa: Eminence to Ethnic Cleansing', *Al-Majdal* 39/40 (2008-9): 15–16.

¹⁸³ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 55; Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, 162–163; Abu Shehadeh and Shbaytah, 'Jaffa', 9–11; Daniel Monterescu, 'Stranger Masculinities: Gender and Politics in a Palestinian-Israeli "Third Space"', in *Islamic Masculinities*, ed. Lahouchine Ouzgane (London: Zed Press, 2006), 123–43; Daniel Monterescu, 'Heteronomy: The Cultural Logic of Urban Space and Sociality in Jaffa', in *Mixed Towns, Trapped Communities. Historical Narratives, Spatial Dynamics, Gender Relations and Cultural Encounters in Palestinian-Israeli Towns*, ed. Dan Rabinowitz and Daniel Monterescu (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 157–78.

¹⁸⁴ Luz calls the board members 'people who were, at best inept, at worst self-serving, criminal personalities (...) These committees were nothing more than another mechanism (in effect, a state agency) that was devised to facilitate the easy appropriation of Muslim property into Jewish hands.' Dumper writes that chairman Nazmi Jabali, a known alcoholic, was accused of demanding bribes from Jewish entrepreneurs in exchange for selling the remainder of the Abu Nabi cemetery in 1973. Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 55–56; Luz, 'Self-Empowerment'; Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 113.

¹⁸⁵ Peled, *Debating Islam in the Jewish State*, 89–92; Luz, 'Self-Empowerment.'

Palestinians in Ajami and Jabaliyya. There is also a rise of settlers who aim to 'defend Jaffa's Jewish character' with support of the government and private organisations, especially since the settlements in Gaza were evacuated by force in 2005. In 2009 a Hesder Yeshiva was established in Ajami, which combines studying Torah with military service.¹⁸⁶ Also in 2009, the ILA awarded one of Ajami's few remaining building plots to B'Emuna, a construction company whose policy is to build only for Jews, and caters specifically to religious families, many of whom come from settlements in the West Bank.¹⁸⁷

Social and political movements that aim to fight discrimination and protect the Palestinian heritage started to form in the 1970s, focusing on housing and education and on the renovation of mosques, churches, and public buildings. The Palestinian political and cultural revival during the 1990s was also felt in Jaffa, and during the Second Intifada activists showed their support for the Palestinians in the OPT.¹⁸⁸ Many NGOs and activist groups are now based in Jaffa, most prominent among them the Jaffa Popular Committee for the Defense of Land and Housing Rights (also known as the Popular Committee against House Demolition in Jaffa) which was established in 2007 as a direct response to Amidar's eviction orders.¹⁸⁹ Several leaders of the Islamic Movement are popular in Jaffa and active in the public sphere.¹⁹⁰

Because of the close interaction between Palestinians and Jews people are both close and distanced, giving a veneer of co-existence which covers the inequality between both communities, driving up the tension. Because Jaffa lies

¹⁸⁶ Abu Shehadeh and Shbaytah, 'Jaffa', 14; Daniel Monterescu, 'Radical Gentrifiers: The Changing Landscape of Social Action in Jaffa', *Jadal*, no. 18 (2013), <http://mada-research.org/en/files/2013/12/Radical-gentrifiers-Daniel-Final1.pdf>.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Cook, 'Palestinians Fight Jewish-Only Housing in Jaffa', *Electronic Intifada*, 16 February 2010, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinians-fight-jewish-only-housing-jaffa/8682>. Accessed 20-10-2014.

¹⁸⁸ Monterescu, 'Heteronomy'; Abu Shehadeh and Shbaytah, 'Jaffa', 11–13.

¹⁸⁹ In the words of Daniel Monterescu: 'A mirror image of the settlers' new interest in mixed towns, left-leaning Jews have become involved in anti-gentrification activism while at the same time being part of the city's gentrification. In the process they are rebranding Jaffa as an alternative cultural space.' Monterescu, 'Radical Gentrifiers', 4; Abu Shehadeh and Shbaytah, 'Jaffa', 16–17.

¹⁹⁰ Monterescu, 'Stranger Masculinities', 133–135; Jonathan Cook, 'Israel's Secret Police Surveilling Islamic Leaders', *Electronic Intifada*, 4 May 2010, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-secret-police-surveilling-islamic-leaders/8812>. Accessed 20-10-2014.

within the densely populated centre of the Jewish state with no Palestinian villages or towns close by, the Palestinians in Jaffa feel both isolated from their Jewish neighbours and from the other Palestinians in Israel, often holding ambivalent attitudes to all communities living in Jaffa. Polarization on religious lines is increasing with the arrival of religious settlers and the growing popularity of the Islamic movement.¹⁹¹

8.5 The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel

The absence of a thorough historical research of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel and Palestine makes it hard to put the contemporary communities into their historical context. This paragraph aims to provide an introduction, but is forced to leave many questions unanswered, including the exact numbers of followers (a problem that pervades the entire order, see the remarks on statistics in paragraph 3.5.4), the issue of the maintenance of the *zāwiya* and the *awqāf*, and the issues related to the decline and rise of certain local communities and the relations between them. Further research is needed to place these contemporary translocal relations in their historical context.

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel has suffered since 1948, as all Palestinian institutions have. A few months before the siege of Acre in April 1948, the *Shaykh* and his family had moved to Beirut. Most followers became refugees – it is unknown how many remained. All *zawāya* and properties were lost, apart from the *zāwiya* in Acre. Under Military Rule it was hard for the followers to connect to each other, and it was impossible to maintain relations with people outside of Israel. In the confusion following 1948 there were no meetings, but after a few months these slowly started again. Without access to a *zāwiya* or the *Shaykh*, *ikhwānnā* were completely dependent on the local communities.

¹⁹¹ Monterescu, 'Stranger Masculinities'; Monterescu, 'Heteronomy', 167–170; Abu Shehadeh and Shbaytah, 'Jaffa', 14.

It seems that only two families remained in Acre, and no followers remained in Tarshiha and the other Galilean towns and villages. Refugees from other towns and villages in the Galilee moved into the *zāwiya* in Acre, both Shadhulis and non-Shadhulis, and it was a residential complex for more than thirty years. In Jaffa most followers fled to Gaza and only one family from *ikhwānnā* remained; the *zāwiya* was lost. The inhabitants in the region of Wadi Ara, including the villages of Umm al-Fahm and Mu'awiya remained.¹⁹²

When Military Rule was lifted in 1966 and the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied in 1967, relations between followers were restored. The *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was regained, but it is unclear how exactly.¹⁹³ The community in Acre was diminishing and when *muqaddam* Nadim Antakli of Acre died,¹⁹⁴ no other *muqaddam* was appointed. The community in Umm al-Fahm was thriving, and their *muqaddam* of Umm al-Fahm, Ibrahim Abu Hashish, also became responsible for the followers in Acre. In the 1970s they built a *zāwiya* in Umm al-Fahm. In the 1980s, De Jong considered the *muqaddam* of Umm al-Fahm to be the *de facto* leader of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel. Van Ess considered the *muqaddam*'s son Mahmoud Abbasi the main spokesperson.¹⁹⁵ As relations with the rest of the *ṭarīqa* outside of Israel were restored, it became possible to support the *zāwiya* and the community of *ikhwānnā* financially from abroad and funds started to come in that made renovations possible.

It is unclear how the *zawāya* in Acre and Tarshiha remained in the hands of the *ṭarīqa*. On the ground the *zāwiya* in Acre was inhabited by followers and non-followers since 1948.¹⁹⁶ From a legal perspective, as *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi had been the *mutawallī* of the Yashrutiyya's *awqāf*, all *awqāf* should have been classified as absentee property, including the Yashruti *waqf* in Acre which was considered *waqf ahli*.¹⁹⁷ Reiter however says that the *waqf* had never been classified as absentee and that the board of *mutawallīs* had been appointed and

¹⁹² See paragraph 3.5.1.

¹⁹³ Interview TA1.

¹⁹⁴ One of the followers said he died in the 1960s, but De Jong says it was in 1973. De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques', 221.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.; Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 72.

¹⁹⁶ Interview TA1.

¹⁹⁷ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179 note 4.

supervised by the sharia court since 1948.¹⁹⁸ Possible explanations could be that the Yashrutiyya community in Acre got its *awqāf* back just as the Christians had, even though their *mutawallīs* had been classified as ‘absentee’. Another possibility is that in 1965 when the Third Amendment to the Absentee Property Law gave space for *awqāf* to be released to the beneficiaries, the remaining urban *awqāf* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya were released to the *ṭarīqa*, represented by a board of *mutawallīs*, rather than to the Yashruti family. Also relevant could be the 1955 ruling by the Supreme Court that the sharia courts had the authority to appoint a new *mutawallī* in the case of a privately administered *waqf* whose *mutawallī* was an absentee.¹⁹⁹ Despite these questions, all sources agree that in 1952 all the other *awqāf* were confiscated, but the two *zawāya* in Acre and Tarshiha remained in the hands of the *ṭarīqa*.²⁰⁰

Also unclear is the exact development of the administration of the *zāwiya* and its properties. By the 1980s De Jong mentioned a seven-member Committee appointed by the sharia court.²⁰¹ According to Reiter the board of *mutawallīs* reorganised the management of the *waqf* with the support of the *qāḍī*, ‘to adapt the administration to the conditions of the modern economy, in which successful financial administration demands influential contacts and knowledge of the modern business world,’ organizing it ‘on a commercial basis integrating modern planning methods.’²⁰² The previous main *mutawallī* Ibrahim Abu Hashish – who was a *fallāḥ* (farmer) – was replaced by his son Mahmoud Abbasi, a ‘public figure and prominent businessman’ who was then active in the Labour party and a candidate for Knesset as a leader of an Arab party.²⁰³

After 1967, it became possible to support the *zāwiya* and the community of *ikhwānnā* financially from abroad and funds started to come in that made renovations possible. The first partial renovations were undertaken by *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in the late 1970s and early 1980s – De Jong wrote in 1983

¹⁹⁸ Reiter, ‘The Waqf in Israel’, 112.

¹⁹⁹ Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 40–41.

²⁰⁰ Weismann, ‘Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel’, 316; De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 179.

²⁰¹ Reiter, ‘The Waqf in Israel’, 116–117; De Jong, ‘Les Confréries Mystiques’, 219.

²⁰² Reiter, ‘The Waqf in Israel’, 116–117.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 114.

that the renovation of the *takiya* had been finished in 1979 and that the *mashhad* was nearing completion.²⁰⁴ After the agreement between Israel and Jordan in 1994, the followers in Israel could visit Amman. In the meantime the *Shaykh* had visited Acre twice (to bury his father in 1980 and to commemorate the centennial of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's passing in 1996). When Ibrahim Abu Hashish died in 1999, *Shaykh* Ahmad appointed two new *muqaddamīn*, one in Umm al-Fahm and one in Acre, a sign that Acre was rising in importance again.²⁰⁵

Large-scale renovations started in 2006. The new leader of the board, AKR, has begun to undertake social projects, host tourists and participate in interfaith initiatives. All of this activity raises many questions regarding the social and political role of the *ṭarīqa* and the *zāwiya* in Israeli society, which shall be discussed in the next chapters.

8.6 Conclusion

We have seen that the Palestinians in Israel were isolated under Military Rule, and since this was lifted in 1966 they continue to experience marginalisation, discrimination, land confiscation and Judaization. The religious establishment has been poorly educated and co-opted and declined in authority and many Muslim and Christian holy places were Judaized or fell into disrepair. Some choose to work within the system, seeing Israel as a democracy, and those who choose to remain as aloof from the state as possible as they see Israel as an ethnocracy. In general, trust in national politics has collapsed among the Palestinian population and they turn to local politics or civil society instead, and the family continues to play a large role in their identity and their social and political organisation. We see the same issues in Acre and Jaffa, where rhetoric of co-existence and dialogue aims to cover up the socio-economic issues and the policies of Judaization that are happening there as in the rest of Israel.

²⁰⁴ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 180, note 3.

²⁰⁵ Interview UF1, Interview AK3.

Their renewed contact with the rest of the Palestinians and the Arab world in 1967 led to the redefinition of their identity and their political agendas. This led to an Islamic revival as they reconnected to global trends in Islam and religious institutions in the Arab world, and to a rise of political Islamism in the form of Hamas in the Occupied Territories and the Islamic Movement in its different forms in Israel. Related to the Islamic revival is the issue of the Islamic holy places that are now being renovated by Palestinian activists of different ideological persuasions, but most notably by the Islamist Movement.

At the same time, we see a limited Sufi revival as several types of indigenous Sufism seem on the rise in Israel and Jerusalem – as centrally organised *ṭuruq*, as local Sufi groups around a *shaykh*, or ‘rebranded’ as ‘Islamic ethics and religious education framed within tradition’, renamed *‘ilm al-tawḥīd*. These trends are similar to global trends among reformist Sufi movements and the rebranding of Sufism as Traditional Islam,²⁰⁶ and the renewed focus on Sufi spirituality as a reaction to materialist Modernism,²⁰⁷ but have their local motivations as well, as they provide a ‘third option’ for Palestinian Muslims between secularism and Islamism – a way to reconnect to their religious heritage which is not deemed political. Geaves argues that as modernisation and liberalisation provided Palestinians with more options, one option was this return to spirituality rooted in Islam. It is an option that is more authentic than the Israeli ‘new spirituality’, which is criticized by Palestinian Muslims for both spiritual and political reasons, as it sees Sufism through a perennial lens as Universal Sufism, and is often connected to problematic initiatives of interfaith dialogue.²⁰⁸

The Israeli Sufi milieu shows that an analytical approach which focuses solely on Sufi *ṭuruq* – like Weismann’s and Hermansen’s²⁰⁹ – is inadequate to explore all aspects of Sufism. Hermansen’s categorisation of ‘transplants’,

²⁰⁶ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’; Hamid, ‘The Rise of the “Traditional Islam” Network(s)’. See paragraph 1.5.2.

²⁰⁷ Voll, ‘Contemporary Sufism and Current Social Theory’, 296–298; Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks.’ See paragraph 1.5.2.

²⁰⁸ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 41.

²⁰⁹ Hermansen, ‘In the Garden of American Sufi Movements’; Weismann, ‘Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel.’

'hybrids' and 'perennials', and of 'theirs' and 'ours',²¹⁰ can be used with a lot of sidenotes as the categories of 'East' and 'West', and 'centre' and 'periphery' are confused and shifting, and it is therefore more useful to turn to Stjernholm's approach of focusing on the relationship between *shaykh* and disciple, and of analysing in which historical tradition a group, sub-group, or individual places him/herself.²¹¹ In the next few chapters, we shall examine where the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya fits in this milieu, and what this means for the relationship between the *Shaykh* and his followers. As the *zāwiya* in Acre is the original sacred centre of the *ṭarīqa* and contains the tombs of the first three *Shaykhs*, we will give extensive attention to its role in the *ṭarīqa* and how this affects the current *Shaykh's* position.

We are therefore left with the question in what way the current developments undergone by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, particularly the renovation of the *zāwiya* in Acre, relate to this limited Sufi revival in Israel, both amongst Palestinians and Jews, and to the renewed interest in sacred space. Is the *ṭarīqa* participating in a global Islamic revival, as De Jong wondered? Or should it be seen as a continuation of its own tradition? Why does AKR participate in dialogue initiatives, what role does he take on, who does he represent, and what are the attitudes of his fellow *ṭarīqa*-members?

The next chapters shall examine how the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya fared in these circumstances, how this influenced their relationship with the *Shaykh* and with each other, and where to place the *ṭarīqa* in this context.

²¹⁰ Hermansen, 'In the Garden of American Sufi Movements'; Hermansen, 'Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements'; Hermansen, 'Global Sufism.'

²¹¹ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218; Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity', 230.

Chapter 9

The *Shaykh* in Acre and Jaffa

This chapter will first discuss how followers in Israel experienced the changing circumstances of access to the *Shaykh* and each other since 1948. Then we shall discuss how they see the *Shaykh* and which roles they attribute to him, and which view of the *Shaykh* is communicated to outsiders by AKR, the *mutawallī* who acts as the representative to outsiders.

9.1 Access to the *Shaykh*

Most followers in Israel grew up without access to the *Shaykh*. A few who were children in 1948 remember *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, but had no physical contact with him after 1948. They could not travel to Beirut to visit *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, or to Amman to visit his son *Shaykh* Ahmad who has been based there since 1960. The only option followers from Israel had to visit the *Shaykh* in Amman was to go on *ḥajj*, which had been allowed via Jordan in 1978,¹ and to take the opportunity to meet him in Amman on the way.

Sīdī Ahmad himself went on *ḥajj* in 1978, accompanied by many followers. When he became *shaykh* in 1980 he went on *ḥajj* a second time, again accompanied by many followers, this time including around 40-50 people from Israel. A follower from Jaffa recollects that they met the *Shaykh* in Medina and stayed there for a whole week, reading *wazīfa* and doing *ḥaḍra* every day in the house of one of the followers who lived there, and inside the *ḥarām*.² A follower

¹ Rekhess, *Islamism Across the Green Line*, 1–2.

² A follower in Jaffa who was there estimates there were 400 followers in total. Informal discussion with JA3 on 11-05-13.

from Acre saw *Shaykh* Ahmad for the first time on this occasion. He loved him instantly and did *mubāya'a* with the *Shaykh*.³

A year later, *Shaykh* Ahmad got approval from the Israeli authorities to rebury his father's body in the *zāwiya* in Acre. He and many followers were allowed to remain in Israel for one day and he visited Acre, Tarshiha and Jaffa. For many followers in Israel, this was the first time they saw their *Shaykh*. A follower from Acre remembers this event in fractured language that underlines the emotional content of her words:

When they brought the immaculate body (*al-jusmān al-ṭāher*⁴) of *Sīdnā* [Muhammad] al-Hadi from Beirut to Acre, I saw the *Shaykh* in Acre. And Umm Ali [his wife]. (...) They were feelings, we could not believe ourselves, we saw the *Shaykh*! We heard heard heard... we see. Truly when we were blessed (*tbaraknā*) and we saw *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad, we felt very much that it is good to see him.⁵

The visit to Jaffa was not planned and is remembered as a miraculous occurrence for the followers in Jaffa. The *muqaddam* at the time was too old to travel and had refused to go to Acre to meet the *Shaykh*. 'I don't want to go, I want him to come to me' he said. The *Shaykh* and those who accompanied him were in Tarshiha when someone told the *muqaddam*'s son: 'Take your brothers and go home, *Sīdnā* wants to go to your father.'

It is 104 kilometres from Tarshiha to Jaffa, how I went home! 'Yaba yaba yaba! *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* wants to come visit you!' (...) *ikhwānnā* and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* came. The whole street of my father's house was full of cars. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* and all of *ikhwānnā* wore suits. One of our neighbours from upstairs, a Christian, said: 'That is the *Shaykh*!' I asked her 'how did you know?' – there were so many

³ Interview AK3.

⁴ Expression also used by a follower in Jaffa in Interview JA1 with three followers in Jaffa on 10-05-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

⁵ Interview with a follower in Acre on 04-05-2013, referred to hereafter as Interview AK1.

people wearing suits. She said ‘the light comes from his face, he is different from all those present.’ And she was a Christian! She said ‘I saw the light.’⁶

It was the first time he honoured (*sharrafat*) [Jaffa]. He saw *ikhwānnā*, how happy we were because of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, we chanted *nashīd*, we kissed hands, we were happy because of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. He said ‘I am proud of you. Despite all temptations that are in the world around you, you continued to hold on to your ‘*aqīda*, to the ‘*aqīda*. You continued to hold on. I am proud of you.’⁷

In 1996 the *Shaykh* visited again. Many followers from Jaffa also went to Acre and were very happy to see their *Shaykh*. ‘It was like eid, it was like a wedding.’⁸ The *Shaykh* gave everyone a Qur’an with his or her name written in it, and a *maṣbaḥa*.⁹

Since the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in 1994 and the subsequent opening of the borders in 1996 it has been easier for the followers in Israel to visit the *Shaykh* in Amman. The frequency of the visits naturally differs per individual – some visit every month while others visit once every few years. A follower in Acre saw the *Shaykh* for the first time in Amman, and recalls ‘it was very emotional. It was awe-inspiring (*fī raḥba*), he is very great (‘*aẓīm*).’ For her, meeting the *Shaykh* face-to-face changed her understanding of the *Shaykh* and the practices of the *ḥarīqa*:

The *Shaykh* is not present but they talked about him and we saw videos of the *mawlid*. It was a bit difficult to grasp (*ishi mish malmūs*), but when I went and visited the *Shaykh* and greeted him it became clearer. It was face-to-face, different. Of course it changes, it is more beautiful and there is more *maḥabba*. It had been *talqīn* (learning, memorizing) before meeting the *Shaykh*. We have to pray and read *wazīfa* because the *Shaykh* loves us. (...) A human being remains

⁶ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁷ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

⁸ JA2 in Interview JA2 with six followers in Jaffa on 10-05-2013 (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview JA2.

⁹ JA4 in Interview JA2.

a human being, flesh and blood, something you can grasp, who sees influences more, and of course you feel more secure (*bi-l-'amān*).¹⁰

A follower from Jaffa said she could never look at his face, not on a picture and not in real life – the same goes for his family because they are different. She first saw him in Acre when she was a teenager in 1996, but she still cannot look at him. She gets nervous, she cannot speak, it's like her heart jumps out of her chest, she cannot express her emotions. Others from *ikhwānnā* told her this is right, there is no wrong way to see him as he is so great (*kabīr*).¹¹

Other followers say that while their first meeting with the *Shaykh* was a very happy occasion, they had already developed a strong spiritual connection with him.¹² One follower from Acre remarks that when he saw *Shaykh* Ahmad in real life, he was not a stranger to him. He was very happy that he could finally tell the *Shaykh* how much he loved him and kiss his hand, but had never considered him to be far away because he had met him in his dreams.¹³ Another follower in Acre has a similar story: He never saw the *Shaykh*, but through his *tarbiya*, through reading *wazīfa* and performing *dhikr* etc. he had developed a spiritual connection with him which is stronger than the physical connection. He saw him in real life after the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, but he stresses this was not the first time.¹⁴

Followers in Jaffa also say this. 'It doesn't matter where we go, the *Shaykh* is with us wherever we are, he is *'ṣāhib al-waqt*, he is wherever you go.'¹⁵

The borders were closed, we heard *Sīdnā*, we did what he said. *Sīdnā* said this, we did not change. Whatever he says is sacred (*muqaddas*) for us. (...) And we feel that he loves us... without borders.¹⁶

¹⁰ Interview with a follower in Acre on 05-05-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview AK2.

¹¹ Informal discussion with JA5 on 13-05-2013.

¹² Interview with a follower in Acre on 16-05-2013 (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview AK5.

¹³ Interview with a follower in Acre on 04-05-2013 at the *zāwiya* in Acre (unrecorded), hereafter referred to as Interview AK4.

¹⁴ Interview AK5.

¹⁵ Informal discussion with JA7 on 13-05-2013.

Several followers say that the borders do not make a difference, that they do not stop the love and relationship between them and the *Shaykh*. They all believe that the *Shaykh* knows all of them, even if he has never met them in person. Some followers meet the *Shaykh* in their dreams and therefore do not feel estranged from him. Even when the borders are closed, the *Shaykh* knows all the *fuqarā'*.¹⁷ Even so, it is special for them to meet him in person and they treasure these memories.

Due to the *nakba* and the relations between Israel and Jordan most followers met *Shaykh* Ahmad for the first time when he came to Israel in 1981 and 1996, and even now they can travel freely do not meet him often. Their answers show, however, that they had been instructed through the community and that meeting him was not the beginning of their engagement with the *ṭarīqa*, even though it was a very emotional moment. This shows a similar attitude as that of the older followers in Jordan who in their youth only saw *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi sporadically when he visited Jordan from Beirut, and points to the attitude that while the outer manifestation is important, it is the spiritual relation that counts, and which can be cultivated regardless of actual physical encounters.

9.2 Views of the Followers in Acre and Jaffa

As in Amman, the followers in Acre and Jaffa agree that 'all the *Shaykhs* are one,' meaning the four *Shaykhs* of the Yashruti family.¹⁸ For them, the succession is also based on the genealogical and spiritual inheritance. The focus on the Yashruti family seems to be even stronger than in Amman, and they refer to the *Shaykh's* family as *ahl al-bayt*, 'people of the house', a term which among

¹⁶ JA1 during Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

¹⁷ Interview AK3.

¹⁸ See paragraph 5.1.

Muslims in general is used to refer to the family of the Prophet.¹⁹ Like in Amman, their main focus is on the living *Shaykh*, even if they have less access to him. The development of the spiritual relationship is even more relevant here. While they do have access to the tombs and visit them and value them as connections to the 'charismatic moment', they have not taken the main focus away from the current *Shaykh*.²⁰ One follower says that *Shaykh Ahmad* continues (*bikammel*) what the previous *Shaykhs* have started; there is continuation, it never stops, and when a *Shaykh* passes away, the next will take over.²¹ A follower in Jaffa explains that Sheikh Ahmad follows the footsteps of *Shaykh Muhammad al-Hadi*, and this is how it will continue: 'In other *ṭuruq* the *Shaykh* is dead, but our *Shaykh* is present (*mawjūd*).'²²

The main view of the *Shaykh's* role in Acre and Jaffa is the intertwined image of the *Shaykh* as a father figure who is concerned with their well-being, education and behaviour, and with the *Shaykh* as a teacher and guide. A follower in Acre says that the *Shaykh* teaches the *ta'lim* and *akhlāq muḥammadiya*, and that his teaching is exactly the same as Muhammad's teaching, although *Shaykh Ali Nur al-Din* renewed the faith (*tajdīd la-l-dīn*). This follower left school to work at a young age but he learnt from God directly through his spiritual practice – this is one of the *Shaykh's* miracles.²³ Another follower states that 'the *ṭarīqa* is a good school (*madrasa*).' The *Shaykh* brings them closer to God by showing the direct road, not the longer route; for example, 'he made the distance of a hundred kilometers into a hundred meters.' This follower connects this guidance function to the responsibility the *Shaykh* takes for his followers and the image of the *Shaykh* as a father: he is 'my father in spirit (*rūḥ*), he is responsible for me in spirit.'²⁴

¹⁹ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013. The veneration shown by Sufis for the Prophet often extends to his family. For an extensive discussion of this in the Egyptian context, see Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 68–87.

²⁰ For an extensive analysis of the role of the *zāwiya* in Acre for the followers in Amman and in Acre and Jaffa, see paragraphs 11.1 and 11.2

²¹ Interview AK5.

²² Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

²³ Interview AK3.

²⁴ Interview AK5.

Another follower in Acre also says that the *Shaykh* is the all-knowing and infallible teacher whose teachings come from his predecessors; he teaches them the Islamic practices and a community feeling:

The *Shaykh* is very great (*kabīr*), I didn't see like him. First the Lord of the Worlds (*rabb al-‘ālimīn*), then *Sayyidnā* Muhammad, then the *Shaykh*. (...) [He is] great (*kabīr*) because he is the *ṣāhib al-ṭarīqa*, *ṣāhib al-ḥaqq* (master of truth) and he is right and we walk on the path because it is right, this is why we believe in him and respect him and we consider him holy (*menqadsuh*). (...) And *alḥamdulillah* we are proud to be from *abnā al-ṭarīqa al-Shādhuliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*. Many times people ask what the *ṭarīqa* is, who are you? It is known that we are Muslims, Sunnis, we pray, we fast during Ramadan, we don't stop our duties, we visit each other, we love each other, that is what is necessary. That is what the *Shaykh* teaches us. (...) [He teaches] from inheritance (*min warātha*), from the inheritance of his grandfather, his father, from one to one he took it. (...) *Inshallah* God will lengthen the age of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad, after him *Sīdnā* Ali, and they work one after the other, from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* al-Hadi the grandfather, *Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din was before him, *Sīdnā* Ibrahim, one after the other they follow each other through the *warātha*.²⁵

All followers profess a deep attachment to the *Shaykh*, regardless of the frequency of their visits. The image of the *Shaykh* as a father is communicated to me much more strongly in Israel than in Jordan. They see the *Shaykh* as a father who knows and loves all his children.²⁶ A commonly heard phrase is 'we love the *Shaykh*, but he loves us more.'²⁷ One follower who grew up in the *zāwiya* in Acre got very emotional while exclaiming that '[the *Shaykh* is] everything in my life,' that the *Shaykh* is his father and he cannot do without him, like when a child needs his mother. All the previous *Shaykhs* are all *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, there is no difference; as the *Shaykh* is his father, they are his grandfathers.²⁸

²⁵ Interview AK1.

²⁶ Informal discussion with AK2 and AK4 on 08-04-2012, Interview AK2.

²⁷ Interview AK2, informal discussion between two followers from Acre 10-04-12.

²⁸ Interview AK4.

A follower in Jaffa also says that the *Shaykh* is like his spiritual father who will always look after them:²⁹ ‘When he calls us he says “my son.” There are so many *murīdīn* who go to him in Amman, but he knows everyone, he calls them by their [given] name. (...) We feel that we are like his children. He is like our spiritual father.’³⁰ It is told that when someone asked him how he could remember all the names he answered: ‘how can a father forget his son’s name?’³¹

In Jaffa there is also a very strong focus on the *Shaykh* as a spiritual and moral educator:

We take the rules (*awāmir*) and the *‘ilm* from him, we take *madad* from him. (...) [He is] the guide who guides you on the right path. (...) We love him, we love him a lot a lot a lot a lot.³²

The *Shaykh* teaches them to love each other and look after each other. Their hospitality towards each other and towards me is explained as one of *Shaykh Ahmad*’s continuing *karāmāt*. ‘*Shaykh Ahmad* teaches us, protects us, he makes sure everyone has a place to stay everywhere.’³³ The *Shaykh* wants his followers to be good people and to give *zakāa* in the form of love and patience.³⁴ For example, a follower in Jaffa works with Jewish Israelis who were prejudiced towards Muslims, but changed their minds when they met her – she says this is because of the *Shaykh*, because ‘God and the *Shaykh* make us strong (*yuqaddimā*) and we carry the responsibility and the strength.’³⁵

The roles of the *Shaykh* as teacher and father are inextricably intertwined. A follower in Jaffa puts it the following way: You do what your father says

²⁹ Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

³⁰ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

³¹ JA4 in Interview JA2 10-05-2013.

³² JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

³³ Informal discussion with JA3 on 11-05-2013.

³⁴ JA4 in Interview JA2. A similar observation is made by Pnina Werbner in her discussion of the lodge and the *langar* of Zindapir at Ghamkol Sharif where his generosity is seen as a miracle ‘of deeply enshrined custom’ which is created by his followers but is still seen as a miracle – and as she points out, in a sense it is: ‘The fact that this selflessness is inspired by the love of a Sufi saint inspires his divine grace.’ Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 100.

³⁵ Informal discussion with JA5 on 13-05-2013.

because you love him, when you do what he says he will be happy and he will love you more. You go, kiss his hand, receive *baraka*, listen to a few words, and you will remain happy inside for years. ‘When *Sīdnā* said a word maybe twenty, thirty years ago, we say it is a *ḥadīth* from *Sīdnā*. He says to you “my son go like this, do this, say this,” he gives you advice on spiritual and physical matters.’³⁶

They see the *Shaykh* as their protector, who protects them from bad habits³⁷ and who protects them towards the outside world. When there is a war they are not afraid – the *Shaykh* is their shelter, the *‘ibādāt* continue and the *ḥaḍra* makes them calm.³⁸

According to one of the followers in Jaffa the *Shaykh* had a lot of influence on the Bedouin followers in Gaza, *ikhwānnā al-‘arab*: according to her, they were very closed and conservative (*mutsakkirīn*) but thanks to the *infitāḥ* of the *Shaykh* they became more liberal like the other *ikhwānnā*, and nowadays you do not notice their Bedouin background any more. The *muqaddam* of *ikhwānnā al-‘arab* wore traditional *badawī* clothes – a large heavy cloak and weapons – but when he visited the *Shaykh*, he wore a simple white cloth and left everything else at home. This is an example of the positive value that is attributed to his innovative and ‘modernizing’ approach, as he taught this – in her view – traditional closed community to become more open and to go along with the times and with society.³⁹

The strong attachment to the *Shaykh* and his family, the *ahl al-bayt*, is often expressed in a material way: in living rooms in Israel there are portraits of all shapes and sizes, from official framed photos in the living room to smaller photos amongst the family pictures that an outsider would mistake for the picture of a beloved father or grandfather. Of course I only visited the rooms of the house to which I was invited, but the difference between the single portrait found

³⁶ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

³⁷ JA2 in Interview JA2.

³⁸ Informal discussion with JA2 and JA9 on 13-05-2013.

³⁹ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013. It would be interesting to further explore how the different communities of followers see each other. While they love and respect each other, they do classify each other in terms of *madanī*, *badawī* and *fallahī*, including the relevant stereotypes: the followers in Umm al-Fahm are considered *fallahīn*, the followers in al-Qarara Bedouin, and the followers in Acre, Jaffa and Gaza City are proud to be urban.

in the guest rooms in Amman – which I was not pointed to explicitly – and the multitude of portraits, pictures, newspaper clippings etc. adorning the walls in living rooms in Israel was striking. When visiting a home in Israel, I was almost always given a tour of the pictures in those rooms I was welcome to visit, and often more pictures were taken from their rooms and shown to me with a lot of enthusiasm and reverence.

In Jaffa a follower showed me a coin that was made for the occasion of *Shaykh* Ahmad's younger son *Sīdī* Essam's wedding. They celebrated the wedding with *ikhwānnā* in the *zāwiya* and elsewhere with other guests. She says that people took the coins without knowing their meaning, but she attributed great importance to it and wears it as a necklace. She says that *Shaykh* Ahmad has the Muhammadan attributes (*ṣiffāt muḥammadiya*), and passed this on to his sons *Sīdī* Ali and *Sīdī* Essam. *Sīdī* Essam is *ṣāleh*, he has *ma'rifa* and *ma'lūmāt*, but he will not be the next *Shaykh*. God has told *Shaykh* Ahmad that Ali will be the next *Shaykh*, it was *ilhām* from God. They can feel that this is true, from his attributes (*ṣiffāt*).⁴⁰

It is common for the followers to ask the *Shaykh* for advice regarding personal issues and they take his advice seriously. One follower told me that the *Shaykh* had given him advice whom to wed, and he did indeed marry the lady. The *Shaykh* sometimes also gives advice on how to name a child. I do not know how common these practices are, but they were discussed and told to me as normal parts of life.⁴¹

Many stories told in Israel today refer to the clairvoyance of the *Shaykh* and the possibility of a spiritual connection between the *Shaykh* and his followers. For example, during the Mandate period, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi was sitting on an old capitol stone near the gate of the *zāwiya* (which is still lying on the ground there today) and was watching towards the south, sending signs (*ishārāt*) to a Bedouin tribe because he wanted them to come to Acre and follow

⁴⁰ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2012.

⁴¹ Informal discussion with two followers in Acre on 12-04-2012, and with followers in Bayt Hanina (East Jerusalem) on 02-05-2013.

him, but he was very worried for their journey. Some of them came and joined the *ṭarīqa* and are now known as *ikhwānā al-‘arab*.⁴²

Another story refers to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din’s powers and connects them to the possibility of spiritual travel: a follower in Acre did not understand how the *mi‘rāj* happened. He wanted to ask *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, and met him on the street when he went to visit him in his horse and carriage. The *Shaykh* was holding a little box, which he tapped twice, and the man was in Mecca with his horse and carriage. He tapped it twice again, and he was back in Acre. For this follower, it means that you cannot explain how these feelings and spiritual journeys happen, you have to experience them. His wife explains that not only the Prophet Muhammad can do *mi‘rāj* – everyone can. In her words, their feelings go towards God, he accepts them and sends them back down. By following the *Shaykh*, everyone can experience the *mi‘rāj*. Implicitly this story conveys the message that if one simply trusts the *Shaykh* without trying to understand his powers rationally, one can be part of these secrets.⁴³

The *karāmāt* attributed to *Shaykh* Ahmad also refer mainly to his mental powers – he is said to know everything about all his followers. When followers are visiting the *zāwiya* they always ask for the *Shaykh*’s permission to return home. Once a couple was visiting and the husband wanted to return to go back to work, but his wife wanted to stay. The *Shaykh* told them to stay a few days longer, and this follower lovingly blamed his wife that this was because the *Shaykh* knew she did not want to leave.⁴⁴ When an old lady came from Cyprus to Amman to greet him, he had just left to the airport to visit his followers in Lebanon. She was very upset, but he came back saying he had forgotten his passport – but the followers know that it was because he knew she wanted to greet him.⁴⁵ It is also said that he can influence what people are thinking. When

⁴² Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁴³ Informal discussion JA2, JA8 and JA6 on 13-05-2013.

⁴⁴ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁴⁵ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

a poor person came to the *zāwiya* to give the *Shaykh* money, the *Shaykh* made him forget because he knew that he was poor and could not afford it.⁴⁶

One follower delighted in telling me such stories – when asked which *Shaykh* she was referring to exactly she was not always sure. This is an interesting illustration that the professed truth that all the *Shaykhs* are one is deeply ingrained in their consciousness – it is not always important which *Shaykh* we are discussing as it is the *Shaykh's* essence and the essential truth the story refers to that matters.⁴⁷

There are different levels of understanding of the doctrine among the followers. Interesting to note is that while the idea of the *'aqīda* is there and is sometimes referred to, it plays a much smaller role in the discourse of the followers in Acre and Jaffa than we have seen in Amman. A follower in Jaffa, when asked how she sees the *Shaykh*, explains that God loves us and gave us the *nūr muḥammadiya* that never goes out and from which all the *anbiyā'* came. The *Shaykh* is present wherever you go because he is the *ṣāḥib al-waqt*. She concludes:

The light is one, Muhammad is one, *Sīdnā* is one. They are the sun and the moon; they are always present because they come from the divine light (*nūr illāhī*). They are the *nūr muḥammadī* that never goes out, which shines for the people because God loves them.⁴⁸

While most people did not discuss doctrinal issues with me at great length, AKR did spend a lot of time explaining his ideas to me. It is to his views that we shall now turn.

⁴⁶ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁴⁷ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁴⁸ Informal discussion with JA7 on 13-05-2013.

9.3 The View of AKR⁴⁹

All followers in Acre and most in Jaffa grew up within the *ṭarīqa*. AKR however is a recent convert – he comes from a Palestinian Muslim family in Acre but was not brought up religious. It is not quite clear what his professional background is – he himself told me that he has been a politician and has done neuroscientific research on the effect of meditation on the brain,⁵⁰ but most people seem to agree that he worked for the Old Acre Development Company before he met the *Shaykh* and took on the position of *mutawallī* in 1996.⁵¹

Even though he only converted in the 1990s, there are already several versions of his conversion story, all involving him traveling to Amman as part of a political delegation and being introduced to *Shaykh* Ahmad by King Hussayn or – more likely – by Mahmoud Abbasi, whom Van Ess considered the main representative of the *ṭarīqa* at the time.⁵² He described his first meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad as a spark, an attraction, which cannot be explained.⁵³ According to him, this meeting with the *Shaykh* brings enlightenment (*ināra*), awareness, it is the moment when you change your life, change your direction, you turn the corner (*zāwiya*) of your life, which can also be seen metaphorically as a representation of the *mi'rāj*. In this moment, the *Shaykh* inspires you: 'the *Shaykh* gives me, he makes me drunk, he takes everything that I know, my knowledge,

⁴⁹ AKR is the *mutawallī* of the *ṭarīqa*'s *awqāf* and as such responsible for the renovations of the *zāwiya*. In addition to this, he hosts tourists and students and engages in social projects and interfaith dialogue initiatives, which he sees as part of the same project but which according to the Review Panel are not part of his job description. In the first draft of my thesis which I sent to the Review Panel I referred to him as 'the representative of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel', because this is how he referred to himself. This was heavily contested by the Review Panel, who stressed that he is not the representative but simply one of the followers. As a compromise, I have chosen to refer to him as AKR – a different code than used for other followers to show his different position, but not referring to him as 'the representative'. His actual position is discussed in the appropriate places in the thesis (...). For more on this issue and on the comments of the Review Panel, see chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Unrecorded interview AKR 23-02-2012.

⁵¹ Informal discussions with followers in Acre and Jaffa.

⁵² Interview AKR 27-02-2012, informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013, Ben Arie, *Zawiya*, 42. JA2 says the reason for the trip was to offer condolences on the death of King Hussayn's mother, which would place the conversion in 1994, two years before he became the *mutawallī* of the *zāwiya* in Acre.

⁵³ Interview with AKR 27-02-2012 and 13-04-2012.

and gives me his knowledge.⁵⁴ In his words, the *Shaykh* gives the knowledge to the follower as Israfil gives the soul to the body.⁵⁵ The *Shaykh* gives you the tools to follow the path, which is enacted through the rituals in the community.

Therefore, after his conversion he practiced in the community – and he studied. He read the books of Fatima al-Yashrutiyya and through them he became interested in the works of Ibn Arabi. He also met many other Muslim and Jewish Sufis in Israel and the West and discussed with them.⁵⁶

AKR's stress on the inspiration given by the *Shaykh* is quite large when compared to the views of other followers in Acre. According to him *Shaykh Ahmad* said: 'Go back to your heart.' According to him the *Shaykh* gives you the tools to develop yourself on the path – and make your own interpretations of sacred texts and law:

Shaykh Ali [Nur al-Din] said: 'You and your God.' *Shaykh Ahmad* says: 'You alone decide. You must decide.' It is new you see, *Shaykh Ahmad* became more individual. He strengthened the individuality, more than *Shaykh Ali* [Nur al-Din]. And he made it clear that you have your God inside you. Go back to your God which sits inside you. This is the difference between the two *Shaykhs*.⁵⁷

An important part of his view of the *Shaykh* is his omniscience – one does not have to ask the *Shaykh* for anything, because he will know. Even more so, one *should* not ask the *Shaykh* anything directly. He says that the followers asked him to invite the *Shaykh* and he refused, because according to him when the *Shaykh* would come a calamity would happen: There was a man in Syria who had invited *Shaykh Ahmad*, and the *Shaykh* had said that he would come on such-and-such a day. The man had an accident the day before the arrival of the *Shaykh*, and indeed the *Shaykh* was there to attend his funeral. The message is that one has to be careful when dealing with the *Shaykh* and not express one's

⁵⁴ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁵⁵ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁵⁶ For an overview of the Israeli Sufi milieu, the Jewish Sufi circles in Israel and the Palestinian and foreign Sufi leaders they engage with, see paragraph 8.2.4.

⁵⁷ Interview AKR 27-02-2012. The Review Panel says this is not a true story. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

will. 'When he wants to come let him come, don't interfere. Ask him nothing, let it go.'⁵⁸

He explains that the *Shaykh* has a direct and ceaseless connection to the *ḥaḍra muḥammadiya*, 'the Muhammadan presence', the first of God's creations, the spirit of Muhammad which emanated in all the Prophets. The *Shaykh* therefore has duality, a human character and a light character. As such he is the *barzakh*,⁵⁹ the medium between the realms of the physical and the spiritual, holding everything together – he is *al-insān al-kāmil*. He is the only one who can know God completely, he is the '*ʿarīf bi-llah*, the *ṣāḥib al-waqt* who controls time and can be at several places at once.⁶⁰ AKR also explained Ibn Arabi's chapter on Shu'ayb in *Fusus al-Ḥikām* in these terms, saying that on the one hand *al-insān al-kāmil* is part of the *ḥaḍra muḥammadiya* and in connection with God, his heart encompassing the whole universe, all-knowing, in constant *fanā'* with God, while on the other hand he is in connection with the world as a human being who approaches God through His Names, His manifestations in the material world. In this status he is embraced by God's Mercy (*Raḥma*) and he is in *baqā'*.⁶¹ According to him the main difference between Ibn Arabi and *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti was that while Ibn Arabi focused on this state of *baqā'* and on approaching God through the Names, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din focussed on the state of *fanā'* and how he as *al-insān al-kāmil* and the *quṭb al-zamān* embraces all and is omniscient.⁶²

According to him *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din was chosen before time to be *al-insān al-kāmil* and *quṭb al-zamān* and to come to Acre:

He came, he appeared and his family became *Shaykhs*. (...) *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din was] one of the poles of the Shadhuli order. (...) *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din] was

⁵⁸ Interview AKR 29-03-2012 and 16-05-2013.

⁵⁹ The *barzakh* is the connection between the Creator and His creation, envisioned either as an ontological realm, or as embodied in *al-insān al-kāmil*, the Perfect Man. Chittick, 'Ibn Arabi and His School', 65–66.

⁶⁰ Interview AKR 12-04-2012

⁶¹ Interview AKR 13-04-2012. He suggested this particular translation to me: Ibn al-'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, transl. R.W.J. Austin (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980), 145–155.

⁶² Interview AKR 13-04-2012.

something very very very special. He was appointed to be *Shaykh* before he was born. And he had a duty to come to Acre to have this order, this path. (...) He knew a lot; whatever you want he knows. Whatever you hide in your mind he knew that. He was powerful.⁶³

His successors share in this rank as they are reflections of this *quṭb* – as a column would throw shadows on the ground, so the later *Shaykhs* are related to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din.⁶⁴

The *Shaykh* thus has a constant connection to the *ḥaḍra muḥammadiya*, and through him the followers can experience flashes of this connection. AKR stresses that Ali Nur al-Din taught them to reach for this state of *fanā'*, cancel their ego in order for them to contain their opposite. According to AKR, the followers love the *Shaykh* because by being part of him, in *fanā'* with him, they are part of everything. According to him, one of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's sayings refers to this: 'You are not a small star, but you have the whole universe inside you.'⁶⁵

AKR stresses the importance of the prophet Isa for the Yashrutiyya, and tells the story that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din was identified as Isa by an Armenian doctor after he brought someone back to life by saying '*Allāh Allāh Allāh*.'⁶⁶ AKR explains this story in terms of the symbolism of breath which gives life and spirit. He also points to architectural features in the *zāwiya* that for him represent this symbolism and the importance of Isa, such as the entrance to the *takiya*, three

⁶³ Interview AKR 29-03-2012.

⁶⁴ Interview AKR 08-03-2012.

⁶⁵ Interview AKR 29-03-2012. The Review Panel points out that this is a saying of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and is not a saying of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 60; Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁶⁶ Interview AKR 30-04-2012 – tour of the *zāwiya*. This story can be found in al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 78–79. In the written version there is no mention of a connection with Isa. According to this version, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din spoke in the ear of the deceased calling his name three times, after which the deceased came back to life saying 'Allah' and chanting a *nashīd* by Ali Wafa, a *shaykh* from their *silsila*, while *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din chanted '*Allāh Allāh*' and the other followers who were present participated in the *dhikr* standing in a semi-circle around the bed. He lived for a few more weeks and then passed away. *Shaykh* Ahmad also mentions this particular miracle in his introduction to the third edition of *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, as an example of the greatness of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din.

pointed arches united by one larger arch, which he sees as representing the Trinity (see figure 2).⁶⁷



Figure 2. The entrance to the *takiya* in the *zāwiya* in Acre. Photo taken by author on 30-04-2012.

Finally, he referred to the historical social function of the *zāwiya* as an element of the *Shaykh's* holiness: 'Holiness (*muqaddas*) is how much you serve and become a benefit for others.'⁶⁸ In this sense, the previous *Shaykhs* are a role model for him as he sees them as influential figures in the north of Palestine, who dealt with the people and minorities in their area based on the concept of a shared humanity and tolerance. Especially *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, who according to him was courageous because 'he looked at various spectrum of the

⁶⁷ Interview AKR 30-04-2012 – tour of the *zāwiya*. The Review Panel says that this is AKR's own interpretation, it was not designed intentionally for this purpose.' Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁶⁸ Interview AKR 23-02-2012.

groups in society as one (*sic*),’ because he spoke out against the nationalist anti-Sufi form of Islam propagated by the Grand Mufti Hajj Amin al-Hussayni and the SMC, and protected the Jews and Christians. According to AKR, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi prevented massacres of Jews in the Galilee in 1929, and because of this the Mufti tried to assassinate the *Shaykh*, his brother Abd al-Latif al-Yashruti, and one of the *Shaykh*’s followers, Dr. Anwar al-Shuqayri. Only the latter was killed. He stresses that until this day there is a gap between the Yashruti and Husayni family.⁶⁹

The Husaynis lead the nationalist way and concept, and the Yashrutis are more compromising in their way and how the solution must be between Israel and the Palestinians. There is no cooperation since the 30s. There is a big distance.⁷⁰

If historically correct, his portrayal of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi as a moderate leader against the nationalist extremism of the Mufti would be in accordance with the general mood in Acre at the time. During the Mandate period, the notables in Acre were indeed strongly opposed to the Mufti, the Shuqayri family prominent amongst them. Similarly, in 1948 the town’s leaders were more open to dialogue with the Jews than the Arab Higher Committee or the Arab Liberation Army.⁷¹ After 1948 the Shuqayris remained allied with the Arab regimes, culminating in Dr. Anwar’s brother Ahmad Shuqayri’s post of first chairman of the PLO from 1964-1967 when it was still subject to the Arab League.⁷²

⁶⁹ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁷⁰ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁷¹ Abbasi, ‘The Fall of Acre in the 1948 War’, 8–9. Abbasi notes the dependency both Arabs and Jews in Acre and surroundings had on Haifa and its industry; the need to keep the roads open played a large part in this conciliatory approach. *Ibid.*, 10. For a discussion of Palestinian factionalism during the Mandate period that includes both elite politics and attitudes of the population at large, see Cohen, *Army of Shadows*.

⁷² Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 358–359; Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 166–167; Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 248–249.

The details of this particular story are doubtful though. First of all because in 1929 a massacre did happen in Safed,⁷³ one of the towns in which there was a presence of followers of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi. This suggests that if he had indeed spoken out against the massacres his influence did not reach as far as AKR suggests, as it clearly did not reach those sections of society that executed the massacre in Safed. It is also not certain to what extent the Shuqayris were indeed associated with the Yashrutiyya in the Mandate period. Fatima al-Yashrutiyya mentions As'ad Shuqayri in *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, but makes it very clear that he was a *muḥibb*, not a follower of the *Shaykh*.⁷⁴ As'ad's son Dr. Anwar's murder in 1939 remains shrouded in mystery, but no historians have mentioned the Yashrutiyya in their discussions of the incident.⁷⁵ The fact that the murder happened ten years after the massacres of 1929 further undermines the idea that he was killed because of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi's attitude towards these massacres.

Regardless of the historical veracity of this account, this story illustrates the contemporary adaptive, apolitical values of the Yashrutiyya, teaching love and tolerance for all human beings as God's creatures regardless of religion.

⁷³ On these massacres, see Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 256–257; Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 91; Kimmerling and Migdal, *The Palestinian People*, 91–92. Especially the massacres in Hebron were a 'traumatic event in Arab-Jewish relations that exacerbated suspicions, mutual anxieties, and stereotypes.' *Ibid.*, 92. For the development of the narrative of the massacre in Hebron as a turning-point in Jewish-Arab relations as part of the Zionist focus on violence as opposed to co-existence, construing 'an important link in the nationalist construction of Jewish victimization in Palestine as in Europe', see Michelle Campos, 'Remembering Jewish-Arab Contact and Conflict', in *Reapproaching Borders: New Perspectives on the Study of Israel-Palestine*, ed. Sandra Marlene Sufian and Mark LeVine (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 41–66.

⁷⁴ al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 42–44.

⁷⁵ Many people believed (and still believe) he was killed by the Mufti's rebels, but the exact motives are unclear. Ihsan Nimr portrayed this murder as one in a series of murders in which Hajj Amin al-Hussayni's rebels killed a major opposition leader in every region to silence the opposition. Hillel Cohen notes that it is unclear whether the principal suspect acted on behalf of someone else or of his own accord; he had been involved in land sales to Jews and might have wanted to divert suspicions from himself. Ted Swedenburg notes that by this time As'ad Shuqayri had broken with the Nashishibi faction as he opposed the Peel Partition Plan, and that he and his sons had aided the rebellion. As'ad's son Ahmad was affiliated with Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, even if he did not always agree with him. His other son Dr. Anwar had treated wounded rebels (a point also made by Cohen). One of the rebel leaders Swedenburg interviewed said that Dr. Anwar had forced him to participate in the rebellion and had protected him. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 133–134, 142; Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt. The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 157–164.

AKR uses these values to portray the contemporary Yashrutiyya as moderate Arabs who are not interested in Palestinian nationalism. It is interesting to contrast this with the *ṭarīqa*'s attitude in Amman, who note that there is no gap between the Yashrutis and the Husaynis, and that *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and *Sīdī* Ahmad even paid condolences when he passed away.⁷⁶

Israeli tourguide Ze'ev Ben Arie takes this portrayal of the Yashrutiyya as 'good Arabs' a step further in his book. It is a personal reflection on the author's spiritual journey and his encounter with Sufism, in particular the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Acre, aiming to serve as a physical and spiritual guide book to the *zāwiya* and to Acre for pilgrims and tourists.⁷⁷ He focuses on *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's message of love and tolerance for other religions, which according to him led *Shaykh* Ibrahim to maintain a Western orientation and good relations with the British,⁷⁸ and led *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi to accept the return of the Jews to Palestine as a divine order. Ben Arie puts a well-known story among the Shadhulis in this framework: *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi dreamt that an arch in the *zāwiya* fell down, which he saw as an omen that Palestine would fall. He left for Beirut and – according to Ben Arie – told his followers that the Palestinians should accept the return and rule of the Jews – that if God did not want the Jews to return He would not allow it, and if God forgave them who are the Muslims to be upset with them? The land is not important, and one should give it up to prevent bloodshed. By telling this story this way, Ben Arie portrays the problems between Israel and the Palestinians as a struggle between two parties in which

⁷⁶ The Review Panel stress that AKR's version is an individual opinion that does not necessarily reflect the Yashrutiyya at large. Their reaction to this story is quite different: 'That was a long time ago, and stories change from one person to another. What AKR mentioned was a hear-say story. There is absolutely no gap, Sheikh [Muhammad] al-Hadi al-Yashruti and his son the present Sheikh Ahmad al-Yashruti paid condolences to the Husayni family, when Hajj Amin al-Hussayni died.' This different attitude to the Hussaynis reflects the fact that they are a lot less controversial in Jordan than they are in Israel. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁷⁷ Ze'ev Ben Arie, *Zāwiya*, 6. While it is unclear to what extent Ben Arie got his information from AKR as he did not use any references, his understanding can be understood as part of the same narrative. In the preface (p.6), Ben Arie thanks 'the representative (*nazig*) of the Yashrutiyya' and claims the book has been published with his 'spiritual "approval" (*ha-*ishur*" ha-rohani*)'. Furthermore, AKR handed out copies of the book when hosting a study meeting for students of the Hebrew University.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, 64.

love and understanding – and acceptance of the Jews as the new masters of the land – is the divinely sanctioned solution.⁷⁹

The social role *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi played according to AKR, serving as a benefit for all factions in society, serves as an example to him:

Shaykh [Muhammad] al-Hadi was a leader. He was also a Sufi, but he translated the Sufi concept to reality. The Sufi concept reflects on reality, actions, the real world. The spiritual world affects and influences the real world. And this is the real Sufi. He lives in the two worlds. (...) And this is the courageous in *Shaykh* [Muhammad] al-Hadi.⁸⁰

He sees the same characteristics in *Shaykh* Ahmad, but adapted to these times. Whereas in the times before 1948 the *zāwiya*'s kitchens fed many people from the agricultural produce of the *ṭarīqa*'s *awqāf*, nowadays the most pressing problem in society is violence which according to AKR should be treated through education.

All the world around him changed and he must fit. Take the path according to the new era. (...) You have to think, you have to develop with the era. And this is the point of *Shaykh* Ahmad. And this is a Sufi point. '*Bisīr zamanak sīr*' (...) How your era goes, go! Don't make confrontation with the era.⁸¹

He gives modernization values to the path. He encourages education, he helps people, he lets his followers learn and women participate, gives rights to the women. It's not a must to cover your head, if you like, it's according to you. We did a lot to strengthen the position of the women in the path. And also he gives an explanation – a realistic explanation to the spiritual concept, in order to

⁷⁹ Ibid., 21–22, 31–33, 64. The Review Panel stress that this is the view of one individual which does not necessarily represent the Yashruti community and that there is no proof that this is true. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁸⁰ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁸¹ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

implement it. Not to think about it or not to believe it, also to use it for the benefit of the mankind, of the community.⁸²

Because of this, AKR says the *Shaykh* has expanded the concept of *fanā'* from becoming one with the followers, *Shaykh* and God; AKR says the *Shaykh* also interprets it as becoming one with the community through communal action (see paragraph 11.5).

We take the spiritual principle, spiritual concept, and try to make it more realistic. It is the basis of an education value. I'm not going to tell the new generation 'go and make meditation or observation in order to be part of an entity.' No, I'm talking [about] the ground level (...) You have to behave and act collectively. And if you are aware to the collective principle, you will be aware and responsible for a lot of things inside the society. You restore your society.⁸³

In AKR's view, the Shadhuli-Yashruti *Shaykhs* always 'lived in two worlds' and were always involved in society as their mystical views and experiences motivated them to behave ethically, to feed and educate people, and *Shaykh Ahmad* is to be seen in this line. For him, the difference seems to be that while in those early days society accepted the *Shaykh's* authority as a *Shaykh* and holy person, nowadays people in society at large do not believe in these things any more, and in order to reach out to society one has to take an approach that suits them – not foregoing the *ṭarīqa's* mystical core, but connecting to others on levels of social activism based on the ethics derived from this core. In his view, this is one of *Shaykh Ahmad's* profound innovations which adapts the tradition significantly to its time, and in the Israeli context revives the *ṭarīqa's* social role after a sixty year hiatus, but maintaining the connections between mystical experiences and social engagement that have characterized the *ṭarīqa* from the start. While there does seem to be a strong emphasis on the ethical in both the official religion taught by the *Shaykh*, and in AKR's thought, the mystical is seen

⁸² Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁸³ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

as its essential complementary component. Also, whether there is a shift of emphasis or whether this has always been the case in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya calls for further research.

The divergence of AKR's view of the *Shaykh* with that of the other followers is striking, and underlined by the Review Panel's comments on most of this paragraph that these views do not represent the *ṭarīqa* but are his own personal opinions. This might be explained by his ties to the community. The account of his conversion confirms the importance of *tarbiya* within the community, as he practiced and discussed with other followers after his first meeting with the *Shaykh*. As we shall see in chapter 10, the socialisation of converts and reaffiliated Muslims in the *ṭarīqa* is done through secondary socialisation or resocialisation in the community, like in Amman. Berger pointed out that socialisation is an ongoing process that continues to reaffirm the symbolic universe and the social structure: 'A religious experience in itself is nothing, 'it is only within the religious community (...) that the conversion can be effectively maintained as plausible.'⁸⁴ While AKR's connection to the community might have been stronger when he joined, nowadays the connection is not strong. He does meet frequently with other Muslim and Jewish Sufis in Israel and the West, who as we have seen in paragraph 8.2.4 have a strong 'new spirituality' approach manifested in perennial and hybrid forms of Sufism, coupled with a strong validation of the individual. His lessening connection to *ikhwānā* and his continuing orientation on this perennial tradition might explain why his ideas are showing such a divergence from the general vernacular ideas of the community and the 'official religion' in Amman.

⁸⁴ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42.

9.4 Conclusion

Like the followers in Amman, the followers in Israel adhere to the basic doctrine that ‘all the *Shaykhs* are one’, meaning the four Yashruti *Shaykhs*. Also like their brethren in Amman, they value the previous *Shaykhs* and can easily visit their tombs in the *zāwiya* in Acre (see chapter 11), but their focus is on the current *Shaykh* Ahmad. As *ikhwānnā* in Israel lived in isolation from the rest of the *ṭarīqa* for almost 30 years, and they still cannot interact with the *Shaykh* regularly, they developed their image of him predominantly through the community, which is considered to be a large family (and to a large degree actually is). Their general image is part of the same overarching paradigm of authority, but stressing different elements: it consists of the *Shaykh* as a teacher, whose teaching capacities are inextricably intertwined with his role as a spiritual father. He cares for the followers, gives them advice, and due to his omniscience knows them without interacting with them regularly – they develop their spiritual relationship with him even at a distance. This understanding of the *Shaykh* as a spiritual father, and the strong focus on the *ahl al-bayt*, is much more pronounced than in Amman, which could well be due to the development of this image within the community-as-a-family. This idea will be explored further in Chapter 10.

As Lindholm and Pinto argued, even when charisma depends on a strong doctrine and hereditary succession, the Sufi *shaykh's baraka* still needs to be performed in order for him to be accepted. The *karāmāt* told of the *Shaykh* focus on his mental powers, such as his clairvoyance, his ability to know people he never met. As we shall see in the next chapter, strong community ties are also considered to be manifestations of the *Shaykh's karāmāt*.

A telling difference between the two communities is that while in Amman the word ‘*aqīda*’ was used throughout every discussion, it was only seldomly referred to in Acre. The practice of love for God, the *Shaykh*, and the community, is the centre of the belief system of the followers in Acre and Jaffa (which can also be seen in the stronger focus on the *Shaykh* as a father next to his role as a teacher). This might be explained by the fact that the discursive transmission of

the tradition is more fragmented in Acre and Jaffa, while the practical transmission through devotional practices and community relations continues without interruption, and the emotional aspects of the message are thus more developed and commented on than the intellectual ones. The *'aqīda* is something that exists in the heart of the follower, but is not commented on as much. We shall explore this issue further in the next chapter.

In addition to this, the *Shaykh* is seen as the teacher who takes them on the Path to God and who gives them the opportunity to participate in the Prophet's spiritual journey (*mi'rāj*). One follower said she sees him as the light of God that continues to shine through the *Shaykh*. While these charismatic images that are essential in the Sufi tradition and according to Buehler the defining base of authority for Sufi *shaykhs* were not articulated by many, they were certainly there and part of the local paradigm of authority.

The *ṭarīqa*'s 'routinization of charisma' in Acre and Jaffa shows a similar combination of tradition and charisma as in Amman, with a more explicit focus on *maḥabba* as opposed to *'aqīda* that can be explained from the community's distance from the *Shaykh*. This distance has not led to the decentring of authority of the *Shaykh* as happened in many Sufi *ṭuruq* and groups that became disconnected from their *shaykh* and/or shrine in the diaspora.⁸⁵ Interestingly, the followers in Acre and Jaffa did not turn to the tombs of the first *Shaykhs* as a substitute. Their territorialisation might be more pronounced than that of the followers in Amman due to their access to the *zāwiya* and the tombs of the previous *Shaykhs*, but the centre of the *ṭarīqa* is still *Shaykh Ahmad* in Amman. The maintenance of charisma is thus very clear in Acre and Jaffa, despite an even stronger institutionalisation on kinship lines. For an extensive discussion of the role of the *zāwiya* and the tombs of the first three *Shaykhs*, see Chapter 11.

AKR presents quite a different picture. While most followers see the *Shaykh* as father and teacher of the community, AKR stresses individuality and individual autonomy. He presents the universe as present in everyone, attributing

⁸⁵ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 5, 10; Geaves, 'Cultural Binary Fission'; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism.'

a quote from Ali ibn Abu Talib to illustrate this idea ('You are not a small star, but you have the whole universe inside you').⁸⁶ Like the followers he talks extensively about the *Shaykh's* omniscience, but more than the other followers he stresses the *Shaykh's* role as a renewer and a teacher who inspires the individual and gives him or her the space to adapt to his or her environment and interpret laws and texts for him or herself, stressing the inspiration the *Shaykh* gives him in this regard. He refers extensively to Ibn Arabi, which no other follower has done, and gives more weight to the Prophet Isa (and gives quite a Christian turn to his references to him). Considering his self-appointed role as spokesperson for the *.ṭarīqa* towards outsiders, stressing these elements make sense as they might speak to tourists and people with an interest in Sufism.

AKR also stresses the historical role of the *Shaykh* as the leader of a community and even the whole of Galilean society which he is working to restore. According to him, the *Shaykhs* provided food and shelter for the community and larger society, and nowadays *Shaykh* Ahmad stresses the need to provide opportunities for education. His interpretation of the *Shaykhs'* social and political attitude aims to place the *ṭarīqa* in the category of 'good Arabs', which is a politicization of an apolitical message in the Israeli context. Ben Arie's presentation of *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi as having given the Zionists divine sanction to rule the land, found in a book handed out by AKR, takes this to the next level in that it explicitly adheres to the Zionist historical narrative.⁸⁷ The Review Panel found this approach problematic and asked me to delete most of it⁸⁸ as they say this represents the views of individuals and not of the Yashruti community. Indeed I have not come across these understandings elsewhere, and Ben Arie provides no footnotes. Most revealing is the diverging account of the Yashruti's relationship with the Hussaynis. AKR, committed to present the *ṭarīqa* as moderate Arabs with no ties to Palestinian nationalism, and especially not to such a controversial figure as the Mufti, stresses the breach between the two

⁸⁶ Interview AKR 29-03-2012.

⁸⁷ Ben Arie, *Zawiya*, 21–22, 31–33, 64. The Review Panel stress that this is the view of one individual which does not necessarily represent the Yashruti community and that there is no proof that this is true. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁸⁸ For more on my relation with the Review Panel, see chapter 2.

families. The Yashrutis in Beirut and Amman, who show their regard for the political and religious leaders within a political milieu where there is no negative image of the Mufti, maintained those ties and showed the Mufti and the family respect by paying condolences when he died.⁸⁹

These differences can be explained by his particular entrance into the community and the setting in which he developed his attachment. He underwent socialisation in the *ṭarīqa* through his contacts with the local community in Acre, praying and discussing together with them, but these contacts diminished while he maintained his interactions with Muslim and Jewish Sufis.⁹⁰ Berger points out that socialisation is an ongoing process of world construction and world maintenance, and that when connections with the community diminish, so will adherence to the symbolic universe⁹¹ – in this case, AKR's interpretation developed in quite a different way than that of the local community. Here we see the use of Stjernholm's suggestion to classify a Sufi group or sub-group according to the relation it maintains with a historical tradition or narrative.⁹²

In AKR's narrative we see a development towards a more individual, autonomous approach to spirituality, combined with a commitment to social activism organised along rational lines but based on a spiritual motivation. He considers inspiration to come from the *Shaykh*, but the concrete actions to come from himself, giving more space for individual autonomy than we saw among the other followers. These trends have been common in the development of Sufi movements during the past two centuries,⁹³ but are here connected to the trend of Universal Sufism and Western 'new spirituality', as will become more clear in

⁸⁹ The Review Panel stress that this is an individual opinion that does not necessarily reflect the Yashrutiyya at large. In Amman, the reaction to this story is quite different: 'That was a long time ago, and stories change from one person to another. What AKR mentioned was a hear-say story. There is absolutely no gap, Sheikh [Muhammad] al-Hadi al-Yashruti and his son the present Sheikh Ahmad al-Yashruti paid condolences to the Husayni family, when Hajj Amin al-Hussayni died.' This different attitude to the Hussaynis reflects the fact that they are a lot less controversial in Jordan than they are in Israel. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁹⁰ For an overview of the current Jewish Sufi milieu in Israel, see paragraph 8.2.4.

⁹¹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 176–178; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 41–42.

⁹² Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

⁹³ Howell and Van Bruinessen, 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam', 5, 10–11; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 358–359, 422.

our discussion of his approach to sharia, religious practice, and the form his social activism takes in practice, discussed in the next chapters. His presentation of the *ṭarīqa*'s history shows an adaptation to the hegemonic Zionist narrative, which is reflected in some of the social projects he engages with.

The followers, on the other hand, maintain their focus on their community and on their *Shaykh*, see themselves as standing in the authentic Islamic Sufi tradition with its roots in Palestine, and as a community are not interested in engaging with any political narrative, Palestinian nationalist or Zionist. As will become clear in the next chapters, their approach to religious practice underlines this attitude.

We thus see two very different approaches within the same local community. This community in Acre can be seen as both the original centre and the periphery of the translocal *ṭarīqa* as its current centre is now in Amman, and while most resembling a 'transplant' – an ethnically homogeneous *ṭarīqa* in a Western environment but with its roots elsewhere – its adherents are indigenous. Stjernholm's suggestion to look at the tradition in which people place themselves in order to understand contemporary Sufi movements is therefore much more illuminating than Hermansen's classification based on 'transplants', 'hybrids' or 'perennials'.⁹⁴

Let us now turn to examining how the followers understand the exercise of the roles attributed to the *Shaykh*, the roles of the father and the teacher, and which role the community plays in *tarbiya*, the transmission and enactment of knowledge and communal (family) values. The issue of the attitude towards religious practice, spiritual development, communication and interpretation is very relevant as it is in Amman, and acquires a more political aura in AKR's interpretations, as we will continue to explore when discussing the place of the *zāwiya* in Acre's society.

⁹⁴ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

Chapter 10

Tarbiya in Acre and Jaffa

This chapter examines the practical aspects of the *Shaykh's* authority: how are the roles we have found in the previous chapter enacted by the *Shaykh*, or to turn the question around: how are they attributed to him? The *Shaykh* is seen as a father – what does this mean in practice, and through which dynamic is this role attributed to the *Shaykh* and maintained? He is also seen as a teacher – how does he teach his followers and how do they teach each other? How does the community perceive itself in their relation to the *Shaykh*? How is the relationship between the *Shaykh* and the followers developed, and what is the role of the community and the individual in this process? In other words, which processes and dynamics of education and communication are at play here?

10.1 *Ikhwānnā in Acre and Jaffa*

The practical roles of the *Shaykh* that were expressed by the followers in Acre and Jaffa, the teacher and the father, are enacted in practice by the community. We have already seen in Amman that the community is envisaged as a family, and to a certain degree indeed is a family. We have seen that the followers in Amman often express their devotion to the current *Shaykh* in terms of their family tradition – the *'aqīda* is transferred from father to son in the Yashruti family, and the followers' adherence to the *Shaykhs* is also passed from one generation to the next. Their adherence to the tariqa in this time not only transforms the current moment into a possible 'charismatic moment', it also connects them translocally and transhistorically to the original 'charismatic moment' and to the participation of the ancestors in this moment. This is even more the case in Acre and in Jaffa, and in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a whole. Many members of

ikhwānnā choose to marry someone from among them and the communities in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip are all linked in this way. There are also family ties with the community in Amman and other places, but they are less strong.

The community in Acre is small (ca.25 people), and half of the followers there belong to one family. After 1948 the *zāwiya* became a residential complex where ca. 200 people lived, Shadhulis and non-Shadhulis, some of them originally from Acre and some of them internal refugees.¹ Therefore most followers either grew up in the *zāwiya* or moved there after their marriage, and the memories and bonds of this period in the *zāwiya* are still strong. For them, the *zāwiya* literally was their home, an idea we shall explore further in paragraph 11.2.

In Jaffa the ca. 200 followers² are actually all members of the same family. They marry amongst each other, but it is not a closed system as people join and leave – often because of marriages to outsiders, and children who do not relate to the *ṭarīqa* anymore. The people are very proud of the fact that they all belong to one family and that the family has such a good name – all *min faḍl Sīdnā* and the *ṭarīqa*.

This is expressed by one of the followers through stories that show her pride in the family and its connection to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and the founding moment of the *ṭarīqa*. She says that all the followers in Jaffa nowadays descend from two brothers who joined the *ṭarīqa* in *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's time. One of them, Mahmoud, was educated and heard about *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din at the *kuttāb* (Qur'an school). He wanted to visit the *Shaykh* in Acre and took his brother Mustafa. They travelled to Acre by sea – but their boat was small and the sea was wild. The first time they arrived in Acre the *Shaykh* was not there and they had to go back. The second time was similar. The third time he was waiting for them at Acre's Sea Gate and said '*Shaykh* Mustafa, did the sails bring the

¹ For an historical overview of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel after 1948, see paragraphs 3.5.1 and 8.6.

² There are around 20-30 heads of family. Adding wives and children, this number will approximately reach 200 followers in Jaffa. JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

spirits? Or did the spirits bring the sails?’ – which meant that the *Shaykh* is the one who brought them to Acre, not the sea.³ This story shows their determination to meet the *Shaykh* and the *Shaykh*’s care for their physical and spiritual wellbeing – their spirits yearning to meet the *Shaykh* kept them going with the power of the *Shaykh* who steered them safely into the harbour, which is also a metaphor for their spiritual journey guided by the *Shaykh* who led them safely into their harbour – most likely symbolizing *fana* in the *Shaykh* and in God. Through this story she aims to show her family’s connection to the founding *Shaykh* through their ancestors, connecting the family history to the *ṭarīqa*’s history (as the followers in Amman also do, see chapter 5). This way, she stresses that she not only has a personal connection to the current *Shaykh* Ahmad, but also a genealogical connection to the previous *Shaykhs* as her ancestors cultivated their personal links with them, and all of them were connected to the founding *Shaykh* through their ancestor, *Shaykh* Mahmud.

Another story she tells is an example of the spiritual communication that *ikhwānā* with high spiritual levels are capable of. Just as the *Shaykh* lets them participate in the Prophet’s spiritual journey, they can partake of his *karāmāt*, such as his ability for spiritual communication (see also the example of the Cypriot lady who never learnt Arabic and communicated with the followers in the Amman ‘through the heart’, paragraph 6.4) and his ability of *ṭayy al-‘arḍ*, the ability to travel across the earth in a single moment.⁴ *Shaykh* Mahmud, who travelled to meet the *Shaykh* in the previous story, advanced far on the spiritual path. One day he decided to go on *ḥajj* and he told his sister Maryam he would bring her a gift. The pilgrims had left long before and she did not believe him. He travelled to Mecca in a single day, and met other *murīdīn* from Jaffa there. He went back to his sister – again in a single day – and brought her palm dates from Mecca. But she did not believe him, until the other *murīdīn* came back and told

³ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁴ *Ṭayy al-‘arḍ* means ‘traveling distances over the earth [with supernatural speed]’, timeless travel over the earth, shortening of space and time, ‘folding up of spatial distances’. Bernd Radtke, ‘Walī. 1. General Survey’, *EI2* XI 109-112; Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works*, (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996), 125. Schimmel calls this phenomenon *ṭayy al-makān*. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 205.

her they had really met him there.⁵ Mahmoud had thus participated in his *Shaykh's* ability of *ṭayy al-ʿarḍ*.

These stories serve to stress the individual's connection to the founding moment and to further strengthen the institutionalisation of the community on kinship lines. These stories are told to me by one of Mustafa's descendants, and she has to stop talking several times because it gives her goosebumps. For her, this story is clearly more than a miracle story about the *Shaykh's* powers – it is a direct connection between her family and *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, and of the way they participated in his high spiritual levels to which she connects emotionally: 'It is the truth, we live it.'⁶ By telling these stories they are recreated and made relevant for her own situation. The transmission of the *ṭarīqa* through the family is thus given extra meaning as it brings them in a transhistorical connection with the founding *Shaykh* and the 'charismatic moment', in addition to the contemporary connection they develop with the current *Shaykh*.

All followers I visited place great value on hospitality. Hospitality is a very important part of Middle Eastern society and the Islamic *umma* in general, which goes back to pre-Islamic Arabian values and has made its way into Islam through the Hadith. Sufis value it especially as 'a method of purification and a way of life', and it is seen to convey *baraka*.⁷ *Ikhwānā* see hospitality as a *karāma* of their *Shaykh*: 'When you love the *Shaykh*, you look after each other from your heart. So you do it for the *Shaykh* rather than for *ikhwānā*.'⁸ Hospitality is seen as the part of the *ʿaqīda*. The guest is the direct reason but the *Shaykh* is the origin, the reference (*aṣl, marjaʿ*). This hospitality is seen as one of the *Shaykh's* *karāmāt*, 'and one of the fruits of his *ṭarīqa*'.⁹ People often visit each other and rather than treating each other as guests on such occasions they treat each other as members of the same family. They are proud of this – when accompanying a lady from Acre on her visit to *ikhwānā* in Jaffa she went to the kitchen and

⁵ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁶ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁷ Valerie J. Hoffman, 'Hospitality and Courtesy', *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Brill Online, 2015); Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 230.

⁸ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

⁹ JA1, JA10 and JA11 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013, Interview JA2, Informal discussion with JA2 and JA4 on 12-05-2013. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 46.

served herself, talking me through the whole process to show me how at home they are at each other's houses.

There is a strong correlation between the importance of the family as a unit of social and political organisation among the Palestinians in Israel (see chapter 8), and the strong family values shown by *abnā al-ṭarīqa* in Israel. As the Palestinians in Israel feel alienated from the state and those institutions and people related to it, the family remains an important institution for communal organisation. These circumstances may have strengthened the link between family and religion as both are understood in terms of the other, and may have strengthened the interpretation of the *Shaykh* as a spiritual father.

As we have already touched upon in chapter 9, the role of the father and the teacher are inextricably intertwined, and the followers accept the teaching of the *Shaykh* because they love him as a father. A follower in Jaffa put it in the following way: he loves you and wants the best for you. You do what your father says because you love him and want to make him happy, and when you do what he says he will be happy and he will love you more.¹⁰

While the *Shaykh* is considered their teacher, the actual education in the *ṭarīqa* is done by the community. The following extensive quote illustrates how this follower from Acre sees the religious and social practices of *abnā al-ṭarīqa* as the result of the teaching of the *Shaykh*, but how closely it is linked to the community:

AK1: The *Shaykh* is very great (*kabīr*), I didn't see like him. First the Lord of the Worlds (*rabb al-'ālimīn*), then *Sayyidnā* Muhammad, then the *Shaykh*.

LS: Why is he great?

AK1: [He is] great because he is the *sāhib al-ṭarīqa*, *sāhib al-ḥaqq* and he is right and we walk on the path because it is right, this is why we believe in him and respect him and we consider him holy (*menqadsuh*).

When we were small, we were a Shadhuli house. This is why when we grew up and became aware of the path (*masār*) of my father, how my father and mother were, a Shadhuli house, we walked on the same path (*ṭarīqa*). We love each

¹⁰ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

other – brothers and sisters, we kiss each other's hand, we are the same, no one is better than the other. If someone is sick we have to visit him, we do not cut the bond. We have to visit, we have to feel that we are entering the house of our brother or sister. Also, we pray (...), we read *wazīfa*, we go to the *ḥaḍra*, and after that we visit each other, we always have to visit each other. (...) And *alḥamdulillah* we are proud to be from *abnā al-ṭarīqa al-Shādhuliyya al-Yashruṭiyya*. Many times people ask what the *ṭarīqa* is, who are you? It is known that we are Muslims, Sunnis, we pray, we fast during Ramadan, we don't stop our duties, we visit each other, we love each other, that is what is necessary. That is what the *Shaykh* teaches us.

LS: How does the *Shaykh* teach these things?

AK1: From inheritance (*warātha*), from the inheritance of his grandfather, his father, from one to one he took it [the inheritance]. (...) *Insha'allah* God will lengthen the age of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ahmad, after him *Sīdnā* Ali, and they work one after the other, from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* al-Hadi the grandfather, *Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din was before him, *Sīdnā* Ibrahim, one after the other they follow each other through the heritage / dynasty.¹¹

LS: How do you see the previous *Shaykhs*?

AK1: I was not in their time, but they told me how they were (...) those that walked along their path. This is why these things continue among the children. For example my father [lived] in the time of *Sīdnā* [Muhammad al-) Hadi. His father, my grandfather, *Sīdnā* Ali, *Sīdnā* Ibrahim. My grandfather and grandmother were also Shadhuli, and all of us [will be] from a house that will continue to be (*min bayt mutasalsil*) Shadhuliyya, *insha'allah*.¹²

We see how this follower inserts a discussion of her upbringing in the community, spontaneously, without any prompts from the side of the interviewer. It is flanked by her mentioning the *Shaykhs*'s holiness, greatness, and his teaching, which shows that in her understanding the life and practices of the community and the holiness of the *Shaykh* are closely linked; she further articulates this by calling him the teacher. When asked how he teaches concretely, she refers to the

¹¹ Interview AK1.

¹² Interview AK1.

transmission of teachings from one *Shaykh* to another, equating it with the parallel transmission from one follower to another, stressing the traditional aspect of the succession of the *Shaykhs* and how it is connected to the education within the family, the knowledge and attitudes transferred from parents to children.

Without access to the *Shaykh* and with limited access to a *zāwiya* for most, the followers in Israel were completely dependent on the local communities. One follower's story of her education in the *ṭarīqa* shows the extent to which *ikhwānnā* in Israel lived in isolation and how this changed in 1967. She remembers how after 1967 the *muqaddam* from Tubas used to visit them in Jaffa. When she was a teenager, the *muqaddam* from Tubas asked her to sit in front of him, he took her small hands in his big hands, and she did the *mubāya'a*. She did not understand at first as she had never seen it done before, and had never heard about the *dhikr*. As she had lived away from home for a large part of her childhood she had not had much exposure to the Shadhuliyya yet, and her *tarbiya* was in the hands of the *muqaddam* of Tubas. Her father used to take her to the different *zawāya*, which is how she came to love the *ṭarīqa*. For her 1967 was the opening of her Shadhuli world: 'the war helped the *ikhwānnā* to meet.'¹³

Nowadays this situation is better as they can travel to Amman freely and the *zāwiya* in Acre is accessible to all *ikhwānnā* in Israel, but of course their main practice remains in the community. *Maḥabba* is the basis. The first education is done in the home. As children they saw the picture of the *Shaykh* and asked who he was, they saw the *ḥaḍra*, they saw *ikhwānnā* and how they greeted each other. They listened to the *muqaddam*. They have their books and learn from them.¹⁴

Of course among us are the elderly for whom many years have passed in the *ṭarīqa*, they teach the younger, and they guide the younger. The *Shaykh* cannot sit with all of them, not all of them are present with him, we are in two countries.

¹³ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

¹⁴ Interview JA2, informal discussion with JA7 on 13-05-2013.

(...) First of all everyone is responsible for his family (...) we read *wazīfa* in the house every day, we pray with them, or we read the *wird* with our children.¹⁵

The role of the *muqaddam* as an intermediary is important in this situation: 'How do they hear *Sīdnā*'s words (*kalām*), those who believe in him? A *faqīr* from *ikhwānnā* hears the word of the *muqaddam*. Because who put the *muqaddam*? *Sīdnā*.¹⁶

Generally speaking, the *Shaykh* appoints a *muqaddam* after communicating with the community. For example, the current *muqaddam* in Jaffa has taken over from his father in 1990. After his father passed away the people from Jaffa sent a few names to the *Shaykh* and he chose from among them. He asked 'What is the name of his son? (...) Yes, he fits.' He sent *ikhwānnā* from Tubas to Jaffa to tell them the decision in a meeting (because they were free to travel both to Jordan and to Israel, while the Palestinians from Jaffa could not travel to Amman). The new *muqaddam* wanted to meet the *Shaykh* to seek advice on his duties and he went on *ḥajj* (which Palestinians in Israel have to do via Jordan, and which was their only opportunity to visit Jordan at the time). On his return from *ḥajj* he stayed in Amman for three days.

When I saw *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* he said 'Come here my son.' I had not been in Amman ever before. He said 'Come here my son.' I stood between his hands, I spoke with him, I greeted him and told him how the *ḥajj* was, and I went with *ikhwānnā* to sleep. (...) The next morning at 10 o'clock I went to the *zāwiya* to *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* (the old *zāwiya*). I went and took the greeting from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. I said to him 'what does *Sīdnā* order me (*bi'umurnī*). He said to me: 'Sit down my son.' I sat down. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* spoke for about two hours about things, how the *muqaddam*'s relations should be with *ikhwānnā* (...) It was difficult because we are not experienced, we are not always beside *Sīdnā*. (...) He told me a lesson (*mathal*) about the *muqaddam* and I remember, I always tell it to *ikhwānnā*. He told me a story about the *muqaddam* in Brazil. 'There is a *muqaddam* in Brazil, my son. He has been *muqaddam* (*yumāris al-muqaddamiya*) for 30 or 35 years.'

¹⁵ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

¹⁶ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

He became old and could not come and go. He sent a letter to *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*, from Brazil to Amman: 'I cannot be *muqaddam* any more, take another *muqaddam*.' *Ikhwānnā* in the town found out. All *ikhwānnā* sent a letter to *Sīdnā*: 'No, I want *akhīnā* (our brother), let him stay *muqaddam*.' *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* sent a letter, he said 'stay *muqaddam*, and take someone to help you, as a deputy, and you stay everything.' Why? Because *ikhwānnā* loved him. When someone loves someone he loves to follow him, to sit with him and learn his words. And finally he told me 'My son, there are *muqaddamīn* and *muqaddamīn*.' I passed this to *ikhwānnā*, *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* said this, that the *muqaddam* should not act as God for *ikhwānnā*. Don't behave like your highest God (*rabbakum al-a'lā*) or rule... the *muqaddam* has to serve *ikhwānnā*. (...) He has to be soft (*ṭarīf*), see what they want and what hurts them. (...) [As with a small child], if there is something bothering him, when you go and understand everything, you will win him (*tiksabuh*).¹⁷

When the *muqaddam* of Acre died,¹⁸ no other *muqaddam* was appointed as the community was deemed too small. The *muqaddam* in Umm al-Fahm also became responsible for the followers in Acre until his death in 1999, when *Shaykh Ahmad* appointed two *muqaddamīn*, one in Umm al-Fahm and one in Acre.

In both communities we therefore see a strong community feeling as the main functions of the *Shaykh*, raising his followers as a father, a teacher and a guide, are in practice undertaken by the community itself.

Because the *Shaykh* is not always [physically] with you. The *Shaykh* is in Acre, in Amman, in Beirut, in Brazil... but present with you are *ikhwānnā*. You want there to be mercy (*rahma*) between me and my brother and my brother.¹⁹

Many stories told amongst each other illustrate how the community conceives of itself: these stories stress the strong physical and spiritual bond of

¹⁷ Meeting with the *muqaddam* of Jaffa on 10-05-2013.

¹⁸ One of the followers said he died in the 1960s, but De Jong says it was in 1973. De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques', 221.

¹⁹ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

the community, the fact that they consider themselves chosen and the spiritual levels they can reach. The many references to how well society thinks of them show how important it is for them to be accepted by society. For example, they stress that the whole town knows their family and knows that they are good people. They stress that they are ‘in the middle,’ moderate in all aspects of life, and go according to their times: ‘We do not wear a beard and *jalabiya*, and we don’t go to the sea every day.’²⁰ They are not involved in politics, and say explicitly that this is why the *Shaykh* was allowed to come to Acre in 1980, even when there was no peace yet between Israel and Jordan. For these reasons they have good relations with everybody.²¹

This strong community feeling is narrated through miracle narratives of the *Shaykh’s baraka* and *karāmāt*. B. Flusin suggests that in order to analyse miracle narratives anthropologically, one should classify them according to functionality in the social world. This is followed by Denise Aigle for the study of Islamic *karāmāt*, who distinguishes between a miracle’s social function in responding to believers’ demands, and its educational function.²² While the miracle narratives of the *firāsa*-type we discussed in the previous chapter serve the stress the spiritual power of the *Shaykh* and his role of a father who knows and cares for all his children, these ‘community *karāmāt*’ communicate their values and strengthen their beliefs, especially the conviction that they can see and participate in the charismatic in everyday life.²³ In Jaffa, it is pointed out to me that everything I see is a *karāma*: It is a miracle that we are here, that I choose to study the Yashrutiyya, that they all welcome me – this is all because of *Ḥaḍrat*

²⁰ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

²¹ JA1 in Interview JA1 on 10-05-2013.

²² Aigle, ‘Miracle et Karāma’, 29. For an emic typology based on the works of Sufi scholars and hagiographies, see Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*. Aigle notes that there are many classifications, ranging from a list of ten types in the work of Abdallah al-Yafī’i (d.1366) to some hundred in the work of Yusuf Nabhani (d.1931). Aigle, ‘Miracle et Karāma’, 27–28. On the latter, see Michel Chodkiewicz, ‘La “Somme des Miracles des Saints” de Yūsuf Nabhānī’, in *Miracle et Karāma*, ed. Aigle, 607–22.

²³ The first category corresponds with Gramlich’s category of ‘spiritual powers of the friends of God (*die geistigen Kräfte des Gottesfreundes*)’, in which he incorporates clairvoyance (to know someone’s thoughts, to recognize strangers, to see someone’s religious state, to answer questions before they are asked, and to see and influence what happens far away), knowledge of God, the universe, the future, etc.. Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, 148–241. There is no mention of ‘community miracles’ in Gramlich’s classification.

Sīdnā: ‘you are merely a secondary cause, but the *Shaykh* is the primary cause, the general foundation, the underlying principle (*anti al-sabab wa al-shaykh al-aṣl*).’ For them, the manifestation of the *Shaykh*’s *baraka* does not have to happen through miraculous supernatural occurrences, but can be seen and experienced in everyday life. In such instances, the barrier between the sacred and the mundane world is brought down in a much more profound way than in what is commonly seen as miraculous. This is part of the same teachings that enable the discernment of *ishārāt* in everyday life – God can be seen in everything, the *Shaykh*’s signs can be seen everywhere, and the *Shaykh*’s *karāmāt* can be found everywhere.

The *Shaykh*’s *baraka* is thus manifested in the everyday world, and especially in the community. The strong community relations they have are attributed to the *Shaykh* and the loving, caring actions they perform towards each other are seen as *karāmāt* of the *Shaykh*.²⁴ They illustrate this bond through stories. These also strengthen their feeling of belonging to the community (as do the stories of their ancestors that connect them to the charismatic moment and strengthen the institutionalisation on kinship lines, discussed above). These stories are part of the vernacular tradition, and by sharing them they recreate the moment and the attitudes performed in them, and provide each other with role models.

In Jaffa it is told that one of *ikhwānnā* went to see someone who happened not to be at home. He was hungry and took some of their food, but he had no money to leave behind so he washed his second shirt and left it. They sold it and bought food.²⁵ For those involved in the telling, the fact that someone entered the house and ate what was there without the residents being at home, illustrated the degree to which they are like a very close family, as you would not do this with anyone else. The fact that the guest gave the only thing he had – his worn shirt – for them shows how he wanted to show his appreciation and care for them in return. This exchange has the character of sharing the little they have,

²⁴ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

²⁵ Told by JA2 during Informal discussion with JA1, JA2 and two other followers on 11-05-2013.

‘they give each other the shirts off their backs’, and looking after each other no matter what. This attitude of love and care and responsibility is also attributed to the *Shaykh*, so by acting this way they emulate his example. In telling this story, those involved in the telling of the story recreate the moment and are reminded to act in similar ways.

They see *ikhwānnā al-‘arab* as the most hospitable amongst them – even when there is no space in their home they will invite people and sleep somewhere else. An old story tells how a couple had guests and one of the guests stepped on the baby who was sleeping on the floor without noticing. When the parents found out their baby was dead they did not say anything until the next day after breakfast to spare the feelings of their guests, because for them the guests were more important than their own sorrows, again showing the strong bond as they put the other before themselves. J2 sees this hospitality as a sign of *fanā*’ – which she sees as ‘living in’, truly belonging to something – because *ikhwānnā al-‘arab* ‘live in’ *ikhwānnā* by following the code of love and hospitality and putting their brothers and sisters first.²⁶ Such a story illustrates and confirms their strong bond, and inspires those involved in the telling to live the same way.

Their strong bond is also expressed in the ability to communicate spiritually with each other. They have a spiritual connection to all *ikhwānnā*, even those they have never met before. For example, during the war between Israel and Lebanon, Israeli hospitals treated Lebanese patients. A non-Shadhuli inhabitant of Jaffa went to one of these hospitals and found out that one of the patients was from *ikhwānnā* by mentioning the name of the Shadhuli family in Jaffa. Some Shadhulis from Jaffa and Umm al-Fahm went to the hospital to meet him. They saw someone sitting underneath a tree and without talking they knew this was him, and he knew they were from *ikhwānnā*, and they greeted each other without saying anything.²⁷ We have seen that by developing their spiritual levels they communicate with the *Shaykh*, and they can participate in this ability

²⁶ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

²⁷ JA2 in Interview JA2.

amongst each other. It is related to the general Sufi idea that someone on the Sufi path can discern other people's spiritual levels, as the following story illustrates.

They know when people are only pretending to be from *ikhwānnā*. Once people came to the house of one of *ikhwānnā* pretending to be one of them. They were received well, given food and a place to sleep. The next morning their hosts said: 'We know you are not from *ikhwānnā*, but you are welcome all the same.'²⁸ This story aims to show their love and hospitality for everyone in God's creation, including those who are not from their community, and to inspire the listeners to cultivate the same love. It also shows that they can distinguish *abnā al-ṭarīqa* from outsiders based on their general manner as an expression of their inner state, which is connected to Sufi ideas that those on the Path can tell someone's spiritual level or state of purity. As another follower explained: 'If someone comes and greets us like we greet each other, if he is not from *ikhwānnā* I feel it. (...) There is no gentleness (*ṭarāwa*); that is not the heart of a *faqīr*. Because God [said]: "If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together, but God brought them together [*Sūrat al-Anfāl* 8:63]." And he chooses for whom to open, and the *faqīr* listens.'²⁹

There are many stories of spiritual communication between *ikhwānnā*. A famous story, known in Israel and Amman, tells how a very advanced follower in Tubas spoke to other *ikhwānnā* through his belt.³⁰ This is an illustration of their belief in the spiritual communication at the basis of the maintenance of a translocal community across borders, just as the relationship with the *Shaykh* is maintained through the development of a spiritual relationship, encouraging them to practice in order to achieve this level of relationship.

Some of *ikhwānnā* are told to have supernatural powers due to their high spiritual status. A couple from Acre went to visit a follower in Irbid and his son told them that they should not leave, as they would not be able to travel. They did not heed his advice and decided to travel back, but found the border closed. This

²⁸ JA2 in Interview JA2.

²⁹ JA1 in Interview JA1.

³⁰ Informal discussion with JA5 on 13-05-2013.

follower participated in the omniscience of the *Shaykh* through his high spiritual development. On another occasion the couple visited someone in al-Walaja and when they wanted to leave he tried to persuade them to stay for the night. They did not want to because they had their infant son with them, but when they tried to depart their car would not start. The next morning the car was absolutely fine. The follower who related these stories ascribed this to the level of *maḥabba* and belief: 'He who has *maḥabba* and is *mu'min* (believer), he can do everything.'³¹ The message is that through *maḥabba* for God, the *Shaykh*, and *ikhwānnā* one can participate in the spiritual powers of the *Shaykh*.

There are indications that they consider themselves to be chosen to be the followers of the *Shaykh*. In Jaffa I am told that there was a Bosnian lady who had seen a vision of the *Shaykh* when she still lived in Bosnia. Later she married a Palestinian soldier from Jerusalem who had fought for the British in the Balkans (presumably during World War II). He took her to Palestine, where they lived in Jaffa. In 1948 they fled to Jordan and from there went to Saudi Arabia, where she met people from *ikhwānnā*. The follower who told me this story met her in the *zāwiya* in Amman.³² It is one of two stories I heard of a conversion without previous introduction to the *Shaykh* and/or the *ṭarīqa* by loved ones (the other one being the Cypriot woman, see paragraph 6.1), and as such is not typical for the way people relate to the *ṭarīqa*, but it does give an explicit example of an attitude I encountered with several people, that is that the *Shaykh* came to find them – in a way, chose them to be his followers, in order to spread his grace and let them participate in his message. While thus not being a story to which many followers can relate in its externals, the underlying emotion will be recognized and strengthened by recounting this particular moment of election.

Several stories reflect the esteem attributed to the *Shaykh* by outsiders. We have already seen how the *Shaykh* was recognized by a Christian neighbour in Jaffa. People in Jaffa also like to recall the favourable words spoken by the Christian and Jewish dignitaries who attended the festivities in 1996. Another

³¹ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

³² JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

story deals with a Jewish woman in Acre who dreamt about the *Shaykh*. She did not know who he was, but when she saw one of the followers in the old city she felt this was someone she could ask about her dream. He took her to the *zāwiya* and when she saw a picture of the *Shaykh* she recognized him and donated money to the *zāwiya*.³³ Not only did she recognize the *Shaykh* as a spiritually powerful man, she also confirmed the presence of the community in Acre very concretely by donating money to the *zāwiya*, just as the dignitaries did in 1996 when they visited the *zāwiya* – and renamed the street leading to it Nur al-Din al-Yashruti Street.

The recounting of these examples of Christians and Jews recognizing the spirituality of the *Shaykh* and the community shows that they value their acceptance in society. It shows them that they are on the right path spiritually and ethically – and in the Israeli context, ensures the concrete continuation of their presence as a *ṭarīqa* in the public sphere. As we saw in Amman, this acceptance by society is seen as part of the *Shaykh*'s holiness: someone who inspires them and teaches them to be good human beings and good members of society must be a holy man. In Israel, the interfaith dimension is extremely relevant – especially in Acre and Jaffa, both mixed cities. The charisma of the *Shaykh* and the spiritual and ethical level of the followers are recognized by members of all faiths, and the community is accepted by all members of Israeli society. The follower in Jaffa who says that the *Shaykh* had given her responsibility and strength to change the prejudices of Jewish Israelis she encountered in her work (see paragraph 9.2) alluded to the same notion.³⁴ The spread of *maḥabba* in the relationships among *ikhwānnā* and from there reaching out to society is attributed to the *Shaykh* – it is considered to be because of his teaching, his inspiration, and the strength that he gives them.

It is important to note that while I discuss these stories as separate from the stories told about the *Shaykh*'s miraculous powers (see chapter 9), the followers consider them to be of the same genre. These stories are considered to

³³ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

³⁴ Informal discussion with JA5 on 13-05-2013.

be stories of the *Shaykh's karāmāt* just as much as the other ones that we would more commonly term 'miracle stories'. The spiritual levels reached and the strong community bond, their love and hospitality towards each other and towards outsiders, are in fact considered the most important *karāmāt* of the *Shaykh*. They do not include supernatural rifts in the material world or explicit moments of 'breaking through of the transcendent', but they are signs of the presence of the *Shaykh* in their community, and 'charismatic moments' in the sense that they partake of his spiritual powers, themselves becoming the tools through which he manifests his *baraka*. They thus underline the teaching that God is visible in all of His creation, and through these stories they position themselves in relation to these manifestations.

These stories re-affirm the followers' belief in the *Shaykh's* spiritual authority and their dedication to *ikhwānnā*. By incorporating experiences from their communal life into their symbolic universe, this community is rooted strongly in the sacred and its social structure and the *Shaykh's* authority is strongly affirmed. By retelling these stories, the followers re-create these moments and participate in them anew. They are not only stories that convey how the *Shaykh* manifests his *baraka* leading to his recognition of his spiritual authority, but also tales aimed to instruct *ikhwānnā* in *ādāb*. Through these stories, they are inspired to go above and beyond their care for each other and their good participation in society. These stories thus teach and inspire them to practice the community's main value *maḥabba* – within the local community, the translocal *ṭarīqa*, and wider society. They transmit knowledge about the tradition and ideas on correct behaviour, presenting their brothers and sisters as role models. Followers are encouraged to heed these stories so they can live according to the *Shaykh's* teaching and example, and partake of his attributes and spiritual powers. The stories sometimes refer to the distant past, but more often speak to their circumstances – referring to historical experiences of Israeli 'co-existence', separation, and war. By presenting these stories as *karāmāt*, the experience of the charismatic nature of the *Shaykh* and the community is perpetuated and the concretization of the message which O'Dea thought would lead to the lessening

of the charismatic nature of the message is avoided.³⁵ Their acceptance in society is not only seen as a sign of their spiritual and moral status, but also provides them with a more secure place in this society, and the ability to continue their *ṭarīqa* in the public sphere. This becomes very tangible in the case of the *zāwiya* in Acre, which is currently being renovated, and which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

We have seen how *ikhwānā* in Acre and Jaffa see the *Shaykh* predominantly as a father and a teacher. These roles are mainly enacted by the community as they act as a caring family (which they actually are) and take care of each other's *tarbiya*, but are attributed to the *Shaykh* as they are considered *min faḍl Sīdnā*. The role of the community is larger than in Amman, where access to the *Shaykh* is more frequent. While in Amman there is more opportunity for *mudhākara* and study groups, the *tarbiya* of the communities in Acre and Jaffa seem to revolve more around stories such as those discussed above, which might explain why adherence to the *ṭarīqa* and the cultivation of values and codes of normative behaviour is put more in terms related to the community than in terms related to the *'aqīda*. The maintenance of charisma in this traditional kinship organisation is evident as the community itself is the medium through which the *Shaykh*'s spiritual power is experienced.

10.2 Practising the Path

As we have seen in Amman, the first step on the Path is the *mubāya'a*. It is administered in the same way as in Amman (see paragraph 6.2), but the place it takes in the life of an individual and of the community is somewhat different. For some this is a big moment ('I felt that I had become a man'³⁶), but others say it is something normal that everyone does and that is part of growing up in the

³⁵ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 82–84.

³⁶ Interview AK4.

Shadhuliya.³⁷ Some do *mubāya'a* when they are still children and do not really understand what it means, others do it much later in life even when they have felt attached to the *ṭarīqa* for years.³⁸ We have already seen how a follower from Jaffa did *mubāya'a* at the hands of the *muqaddam* from Tubas when she was young and did not fully understand.³⁹ In a group discussion in Jaffa however the current *muqaddam* in Jaffa and several followers stress that someone who asks to do *mubāya'a* should be a good Muslim and a good person.

First of all you have to be a straight human being in your normal life. Don't cheat, don't steal, don't drink alcohol, go straight. (...) After that you have to adhere to the pillars of Islam. (...) There are people who say we are not Muslims. What do you mean, not Muslims? We do everything that Muslims do. But we do something extra. (...)

Because our *ṭarīqa* is very valuable (*ghālī*) to us (...) we fear that someone will damage this. This is why we only take good people. Because if someone does something, (...) leaves the sharia, does something not good, they will say 'he is Shadhuli, what does he do?'⁴⁰

The followers continuously stress that they are good Muslims as '[t]here is no *ṭarīqa* without sharia.' If a non-Muslim would want to join he first has to become a Muslim and learn Arabic, because one needs to fully understand the Qur'an and the Sufi literature.⁴¹ As in Amman, they pledge to adhere to the sharia, to read *wazīfa* and *wird* twice a day followed by *dhikr bi-ism al-qasr*, and

³⁷ Interview AK1 and AK2.

³⁸ Interview AK1, Informal discussion with a former follower in Acre. In the case of those who do *mubāya'a* when they are children, the Review Panel says: 'it seems this is done only to encourage them, as they have to do *mubāya'a* again when they become eligible and mature to do so.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 48. None of my respondents mentioned this second *mubāya'a*.

³⁹ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁴⁰ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁴¹ JA3 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012. An exception is made for those people who grew up in the *ṭarīqa* without learning Arabic (for example followers in the Comoros Islands and in North America).

to do *ḥaḍra* when they can.⁴² They have to be good people, good Muslims, and adhere to the pillars of *maḥabba*, *fikr*, *dhikr* and *taslīm*.

In Acre when they all still lived in the *zāwiya*, they read *wazīfa* together in the evening, but the community was too small to do *ḥaḍra*. Practices like *mudhākara*, *ta'ammul* and the chanting of *nashīd* were done in informal meetings, whenever *ikhwānnā* met and felt like it.⁴³ Nowadays there is a meeting on Thursday evening once a week in which they pray, read *wazīfa* and do silent *dhikr* together, after which they talk for a short while and go home. There are no official study groups (though the women talk about setting up a women's meeting). Because of the renovations there is less going on than usual and there are less visitors, but people still visit each other due to family and friendship ties.

Once a month followers come from all over Israel (and sometimes from the West Bank and Gaza if they have received the right permits) to attend the *ḥaḍra* in the *zāwiya* in Acre. The followers from Umm al-Fahm rent a touring car and the followers from Jaffa sometimes stay overnight in the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha. The men form a circle in the hall next to the *takiya*, and the women sit somewhere else – in the back of the hall, in the opposite room, or outside if the weather is good. The followers pray, read *wazīfa* and do *ḥaḍra*, and sometimes listen to the *muqaddam*. After this they chant *nashīd* and do *ḥaḍra mugharbiyya*.⁴⁴ It is also an important social gathering as people might arrive up to two hours in advance and stay afterwards to socialise while sweets are being handed around.

In Jaffa there has been no *zāwiya* since 1948, so the meetings take place at someone's house. On Thursday evening they meet for the reading of *wazīfa* and the *ḥaḍra* in the *muqaddam*'s house. The men sit in the spacious living room, and the women in a smaller adjacent room. After the rituals they sit together in the living room to chat. On Monday evening they have another

⁴² JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁴³ Interview AK1, Informal discussion with a former follower in Acre.

⁴⁴ *Ḥaḍra mugharbiyya* is '*ḥaḍra* from the *maghrib* (North Africa)', communal *dhikr*, a ritual in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya which is usually performed at the end of a meeting. While most people continue to sit on the ground and sing *nashīd*, a few men move in a circle.

meeting where they pray, read *wazīfa*, read and discuss one of the *Shaykh's mudhākarāt*, and chant *nashīd*. This meeting is meant to pray and talk together, and to teach the children, to bring *abnā al-ṭarīqa* closer together and benefit from each other's words.⁴⁵

In the meeting I attended, two of the more knowledgeable men explained about the *ādāb* of the meeting and gave a short introduction and discussion of the *mudhākara*, and explained some parts of the *nashīd* that were sung. A few days later a follower explained that there was a structure to the meeting, but that the spirit came from *Sīdnā*, as was proven when one of the participants used a certain combination of words which they later also read in the *mudhākara*. After the meeting they had a more social chat, which was mainly dedicated to discussing the preparations to build a new *zāwiya*.⁴⁶

It is stressed to me repeatedly that this meeting is mixed because they are a family. These meetings used to be just for men and on Monday afternoons, but a few months ago *Sīdī* Ali suggested that they move the time to later in the evening so more people could attend and that they sit all together as they are members of one family anyway. Since then the meetings have been a success.⁴⁷

Part of the meeting is dedicated to the reading and discussing of one of the *Shaykh's mudhākarāt*. These are written down every week in Amman, but are not spread systematically. It does not matter which one they read during the meeting as it will remain the truth – the one during this meeting was from 1994 for example. The meeting in Amman is broadcast live via the internet for those who cannot attend and sometimes the followers in Jaffa watch after their own *ḥaḍra*, but mostly they have their own meeting at the same time.⁴⁸

The four pillars of the *ṭarīqa* are also deemed very important by the followers in Acre and Jaffa. They all agree *maḥabba* is the first, as it is their main attitude towards the *Shaykh*, each other and all human beings. *Dhikr* is the most important part of the spiritual practice. *Fikr* is understood as *ta'ammul*

⁴⁵ JA1 in Interview JA1 on 16-04-2012.

⁴⁶ Meeting of *ikhwānnā* in the house of a follower in Jaffa on 12-05-2013.

⁴⁷ Informal discussion with JA7 on 13-05-2013./

⁴⁸ Informal discussion with JA8 on 13-05-2013.

(contemplation): 'Focus (*twajjahū*), think about what is created, the heavens and the earth. How God, the Glorified the Exalted, created the heavens, created the earth, created the sea, created the sun, the moon.'⁴⁹ *Taslīm* is understood as the highest level of *īmān* as it dictates your relationship with God, it means accepting the will of God and obeying the *Shaykh*: '*sallim amrak la-rabbak. Sallim amrak la-shaykhak*.'⁵⁰ As everything on the path, it is based on the first pillar of love: 'When one loves someone, he obeys him right? You go as God wants. You go as your *Shaykh* wants.'⁵¹

AKR also discusses the four pillars, but he stresses the value of *fikr* above all others. When talking to an outsider, *ta'ammul* is often the first practice he talks about and he presents it as a central practice of the *ṭarīqa*. For him *ta'ammul* and *mudhākara* (in the sense of dialogue among the followers and with outsiders) are the most important values that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and *Shaykh* Ahmad respectively gave their followers, and for him it is what characterizes the *ṭarīqa*. He explains the practice of *ta'ammul* as observation and listening to nature, to each other, to collect awareness, transcend the differences and become one. AKR says that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din taught his followers to have a spectrum of opinions. In his opinion, everyone has a bit of the truth and by listening you accept diversity and suspend your judgements – there is no good and bad, no believer and unbeliever, no reward and punishment, no heaven and hell. 'My thesis and your antithesis become a synthesis.'⁵² 'There is no right or wrong, we all have different backgrounds. I have a secular background and understand things differently from someone with a religious background.' According to him, there is a full exchange between the *Shaykh* and the followers.⁵³

⁴⁹ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁵⁰ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁵¹ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁵² Interview AKR 23-02-2012 (our first meeting); lecture by AKR on the study day of the Hebrew University's MA in Islamic Studies, hosted by AKR in the *zāwiya* in Acre on 26-03-2012; presentation of AKR during the meeting with *Shaykha* Khadija and her followers in the *zāwiya* in Acre on 08-12-2013. He refers to the story of Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (713-801) who walked through the streets of Basra holding a torch and a bucket of water to burn heaven and extinguish hell. The Review Panel states: 'This is the person's own opinion, and does not coincide with the teachings of the *ṭarīqa*.'

⁵³ Interview AKR 16-05-2013.

According to AKR, *ta'ammul* is the basis of *mudhākara*: after his first meeting with the *Shaykh*, he developed his understanding through *mudhākara*, by listening to and discussing with the other followers.⁵⁴ He also classifies the dialogue he has with other groups in society as *mudhākara*, a dialogue in which *ta'ammul* is practised, listening to each other's potentially conflicting opinions:

We educate our followers to be tolerant, to respect, to accept, not to judge. We begin from our self first and then we dialogue with the others. (...) The spiritual aspect affects the real aspect. (...) It is connected, it is a chain. So spiritual and realistic are connected with each other.⁵⁵

While the idea of developing the spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh*, advancing on the path and achieving higher levels of knowledge is essential for their practice, the concrete definition of different levels is hardly discussed.⁵⁶ A follower in Jaffa explains to me that there are many levels (*darajāt*), but that normal people can never reach the level of the *Shaykh* and stay on earth with *ikhwānā* and other people and focus on *ādāb*, *taslīm* and *iḥtirām*. Some are further on the Path and understand more, but only the *Shaykh* knows who they are. Examples from the past show that it is possible, however, such as Mahmoud Abu al-Shamat and Abd al-Qadir al-Homsi to whom God gave the *nashīd (fataḥ 'alayhim)*.⁵⁷

The point we made regarding the *mubāya'a* in Amman – that it is not a strong watershed – is therefore even more valid in Acre and Jaffa. Like in Amman, the absence of personalized initiation and of clearly defined stages of the Path and the focus on communal *dhikr* leads to a strong egalitarian community. In Amman we saw that the *mudhākara* and study groups led to a relatively homogeneous body of knowledge, as expected based on Pinto's

⁵⁴ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁵⁵ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁵⁶ JA1 in Interview JA1 16-04-2012.

⁵⁷ Informal discussion with JA7 on 13-05-2013. Also told to me by AM3 in Interview AM1.

observations in Aleppo.⁵⁸ In Acre and Jaffa, therefore, we might expect that the focus on informal *tarbiya*, e.g. through the stories we analysed in paragraph 10.2, and the lower level of *mudhākara* and study groups, leads to the spread of a less homogeneous body of knowledge. We shall now turn to the issue of the transmission and communication of knowledge.

10.3 Modes of Communication

We discussed *ikhwānnā*'s understanding of *'ilm al-ishāra* in Amman. While this has not been explicitly discussed in Acre and Jaffa (except by AKR, whom we shall discuss later), there have been cases in which this interpretive mechanism was at work. We have seen how the *Shaykh* is seen as a teacher and father whose words should be obeyed. How are his words interpreted in daily life? We shall now discuss a case which shows the dynamic in which the followers take space to interpret the *Shaykh*'s words from within their own contexts, even in the case of a direct clear order from the *Shaykh*.

Shaykh Ahmad has clearly stated that he does not approve of smoking, either cigarettes or *narguila*, and advises his followers to avoid it.⁵⁹ Followers agree that it is because the *Shaykh* cares for them and for their health that he wanted to put a stop to this unhealthy and expensive habit. While I have no idea to what extent this is adhered to in Amman as I had no informal interactions in which a cigarette might be lit or a *narguila* might be presented, in Israel and the West Bank this ban is not strictly adhered to. I myself was sometimes the main

⁵⁸ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465–468; Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 125–127; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.' See paragraph 1.2.

⁵⁹ While this is clearly an attitude that can be found in the tradition of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya since the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din (or at least since his teachings were recorded in the publication of Fatima al-Yashrutiyya's books), it also coincides with a public discussion in Jordan. In 2008 the Ministry of Health passed Public Health Law Number 47 which prohibits smoking in public places, but has hardly been enforced since then. Elizabeth Whitman, 'Water Pipe Ban Lights up Jordan's Smokers', accessed 19 February 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/water-pipe-ban-lights-up-jordan-smokers-2014214185149588570.html>.

excuse: ‘the *Shaykh* has said to look after our guests and treat them well, and we know that Linda likes *narguila*, so we smoke *narguila*.’

Another follower did not manage to quit smoking cigarettes entirely, but says that as he is over fifty it is enough if he cuts down on the number of cigarettes:

Five years ago he [*Sīdnā*] said ‘*Ikhwānnā*, I do not want anyone to smoke arguileh and I do not want smoking.’ Around ninety percent of *ikhwānnā* stopped smoking and stopped smoking arguileh. Now there are those like me and like my older brother who have smoked for fifty years, he said ‘he whose age is this high I cannot tell him no, but smoke less.’ He does not want smoking for us, he fears for us, for our health, and he saw how much the smoking of arguileh happened. He said ‘I never want arguileh.’ And truly, every *ikhwānnā* from any town in the world stopped the arguileh. They listen to the word of *Sīdnā* because they know that *Sīdnā* wants our health. I obey him.⁶⁰

In this case we see that even though the *Shaykh* made his point very clear, followers still interpret it in a way to suit them in a particular situation.⁶¹ We can see this as an example of the mode of communication we have discussed on a theoretical level in chapter 6 – while the followers did not refer to these ideas explicitly, their treatment of this prohibition by the *Shaykh* as a sign which can be interpreted in their own individual and communal setting points to this frame of reference. Of course the clash of such a clear communication by the *Shaykh* (which is a rare occurrence) and such an addictive habit which is not only physically addictive but also plays a role in the social interactions of people in the Levant in general, asks for such divergent interpretations and discussions.

Another issue which requires individual and communal interpretation is the wearing of *ḥijāb* (veil covering head and chest). *Shaykh* Ahmad said in a

⁶⁰ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

⁶¹ The Review Panel explains this divergence by referring to the different degrees of commitment to the *ḥarīqa*. While it is not for me to judge the level of people’s commitment, the people with whom I discussed the issue of smoking struck me as very dedicated to the *Shaykh* and *ikhwānnā*, and this issue of individual interpretation seems to happen on all levels of commitment. Review Panel, ‘Detailed Comments and Remarks’, 30-08-2014, 50.

newspaper interview in 1996 that a woman has to dress modestly according to time and society,⁶² and in a television interview in 2014 that he does not encourage ‘certain clothes’ that are imposed on women, but leaves women free to decide.⁶³ While not aiming to give an all-encompassing discussion of the dress habits of the women of the *ṭarīqa* (as the following lines are based on informal discussions and observations, not on systematic inquiry into that particular topic), I do wish to point to a few observations I made that are relevant to the issue of interpretation of the teachings of the *Shaykh*. Some women in Acre wear *ḥijāb*, other women cover their head with a loose scarf when visiting the *zāwiya*, but do not cover elsewhere. In Acre the wearing of *ḥijāb* did not seem to be an issue of discussion at all. The religious climate in Acre and its surroundings has been quite liberal for decades and most women do not wear *ḥijāb*. While interpretations of Islam that do require women to wear *ḥijāb* are becoming stronger and some women of the *ṭarīqa* do wear *ḥijāb*, it is not a divisive issue in society and it is not a matter of discussion among *ikhwānā* in Acre.

In Jaffa however it is more of an issue. Some middle-aged ladies started to wear *ḥijāb* recently and this has become an issue of contention. Followers who oppose it, often including their own husbands, take any opportunity to state they do not agree. I once found myself in a particularly fierce discussion between two ladies, a *ḥijābī* and a non-*ḥijābī*, in which the non-*ḥijābī* argued that wearing *ḥijāb* is *taqlīdī*, traditional, and not part of sharia, referring to her interpretation of the *Shaykh*'s statement that they are free to dress as they please outside of meetings. The *ḥijābī* lady responded that the *Shaykh* had also said that it is important for them to be part of their society and for her, wearing *ḥijāb* is a sign of respect to other people in society. For her, being part of society meant to be in touch with those around her, and she said she went to the mosque regularly (once a month).⁶⁴ Another *ḥijābī* said she watched television preachers and

⁶² Interview with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, *al-Urdun*, 26-02-1996, p. 8-9.

⁶³ Interview by Akram Khuzam with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti. See paragraph 6.3.2.

⁶⁴ Informal discussion with JA2 and JA7 on 13-05-2013.

learnt from them as well, to which a disgruntled follower replied ‘there is only one *Shaykh*.’⁶⁵

It is typical of the *ṭarīqa* that people can follow their own interpretations and that there is a free discussion about these interpretations and practices. What is interesting is the difference between Acre and Jaffa that might point to a different religious climate in the two towns as combining being part of society and adhering to one’s own communal values seems to be harder in Jaffa.

AKR is the only person in Israel who explicitly refers to the dynamic of communication that we have discussed in chapter 6. He strongly stresses the space for the individual’s adaptation to his or her context and free interpretation based on the practices of *ta’ammul* and *mudhākara*. He says that *Shaykh* Ahmad encourages free and critical thinking, but he also understands *taslīm* as accepting what the *Shaykh* says, so in his thought the potential paradox between *fikr* and *taslīm* becomes strong. He resolves this potential conflict quite explicitly by referring to the *Shaykh*’s mode of communication.

Taslīm – there is one point you have to begin from. You have to accept that God exists. This is *taslīm*. And from this point you have the rights and the freedom to think about everything. (...)

Taslīm means when the *Shaykh* tells you something you accept it. (...) Dr. Ali Yashruti told me one day ‘That point is black.’ I said ‘No no, that point is not black, it is red.’ He said ‘Okay.’ After one day I thought: ‘That point is black.’ Sometimes you have to think but (...) the final word is for the *Shaykh*.⁶⁶

According to AKR, it is very rare for the *Shaykh* to speak so directly or to give direct instructions. He says *Sīdī* Ali usually listens, he does not contradict or argue, but he makes you think afterwards,⁶⁷ because he wants the followers ‘to believe in something that you are convinced of, not persuaded by.’⁶⁸ *Shaykh* Ahmad

⁶⁵ Informal discussion with JA1 and JA12 on 11-05-2013.

⁶⁶ Interview AKR 08-03-2012.

⁶⁷ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁶⁸ Interview AKR 29-03-2012.

gives you signs. Either you collect them or you don't. (...) Every week he gives one *mudhākara*. There is no explanation during the *mudhākara*. You have to understand during the *mudhākara*, according to your position. It is not objective, it is subjective. Maybe you understand something but your brother doesn't understand it. (...) He speaks generally. You have to understand what you want. What the *Shaykh* says, you explain it. *You* explain it. Maybe you have questions and your brother has a different question. The *mudhākara* of the *Shaykh* gives answer to all the questions, according to your knowledge. (...) There is an outward and inward. He speaks in the level of outward, your duty is to explain inwardly. (...) So you have to be all the time in awareness status in order to understand, otherwise you miss. [pause] It's not asking or answering. You have to understand by signs.⁶⁹

One can even get answers without being in the vicinity of the *Shaykh*:

If you have any question, you meditate, in order to make a connection with the *Shaykh*. Even [if] you are far away you will get an answer by sign, but you have to be aware. One day we discussed something and needed the opinion of the *Shaykh*. A small boy came and (...) answered us.⁷⁰

The ability of a follower to read the *Shaykh*'s signs depends on his/her spiritual development. During discussions *madad* will come which will enable you to 'discover a lot of meanings'. As we have seen, this *madad* is understood within the *ḥaṭṭa* as inspiration coming through the *Shaykh*, and AKR uses the concept the same way.⁷¹

But the question of the *Shaykh*'s role in his individual interpretations seems unresolved or difficult to put in words:

For myself if I want to make a research, I make it not what the *Shaykh* said, yes I respect what the *Shaykh* says, but what *I* say. This is the most important. What *I*

⁶⁹ Interview AKR 08-03-2012.

⁷⁰ Interview AKR 08-03-2012.

⁷¹ Interview AKR 08-03-2012.

understand. Not what God says. God said in these verses so and so. My opinion about what he said, I have to know it. My response, my understanding, to these verses.⁷²

When explaining a line of poetry, he says:

This is *my* explanation. (...) When he gives me the ability and the energy and enlightenment happened I could explain. It's not mine. He lent me the knowledge to explain. It is not mine.⁷³

Following this line of thought, AKR says that when you have reached a higher spiritual level you can decide for yourself which religious laws to follow. According to him, this is one of the new understandings *Shaykh* Ahmad gives to adapt the *ṭarīqa* to this day and age; not a change, but a renewal (*tajdīd*), a development, a more suitable explanation according to the era.⁷⁴

LS [summarizing the preceding discussion]: So do you decide yourself which laws you follow?

AKR: Exactly.

LS: It is not the path, the *Shaykh*, but it is you yourself who decides.

AKR: The *Shaykh* gives you the knowledge, tools.

LS: And then you can decide for yourself.

AKR: Exactly. Go back to your heart. (...) *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din] said: 'You and your God.' *Shaykh* Ahmad says: 'You alone decide.' It is new you see, *Shaykh* Ahmad (...) strengthens the individuality, more than *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din]. And he makes it clear that you have your God inside you. Go back to your God which sits inside you. This is the difference between the two *Shaykhs*.⁷⁵

⁷² Interview AKR 14-03-2012.

⁷³ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁷⁴ The Review Panel states that this is his own opinion, and does not coincide with the teachings of the *ṭarīqa*. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁷⁵ Interview AKR 27-02-2012. The Review Panel stresses that this is his own opinion and not a true story. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

In his thought we see a strong adherence to the idea of autonomy for the individual based on the bodily experience that is common in ‘new spirituality’ movements. He frames it in classical Sufi terms that enable *fikr* and *taslīm* to co-exist without problems, but his interpretation of *fikr* as critical thought and his strong stress on inspiration and individual interpretation, based on the relationship with ‘your God inside you’ takes these concepts far towards the paradoxical. In his thought, the authority and responsibility of the *Shaykh* is decentralized and transferred to the individual who refers to ‘God who sits inside you’. This way, only he is responsible for his interpretations and the behaviour based on them, even though the initial inspiration has come from the *Shaykh*. While maintaining his reverence for his spiritual master and claiming adherence to the principle of *taslīm*, this understanding of *ishāra*, inspiration, and individual interpretation provides him with a large degree of individual autonomy. This does not seem to be accepted by most followers in Acre and does not provide him with any legitimacy among *ikhwānā*, who focus on the *Shaykh* and the community rather than the individual, but it is seen as a mark of great spirituality by members of the Jewish Sufi ‘new spirituality’ network, who value the individual spiritual experience before everything else.

In his understanding, this relativist attitude to the sacred texts and the law and this space for individual interpretations and actions are part of the *Shaykh*’s teachings. He sees the spiritual meaning of all the rules as more important than the material, mechanical exercise of them – the five pillars of Islam are necessary, but other rules depend on your personal circumstances. ‘Not all the laws of the sharia fit me. Because the forbidden became [forbidden] for a reason. And if I do not have this reason, the law does not fit me.’⁷⁶ In his lectures to outsiders he stresses the space for this critical attitude. During a lecture to students of the Hebrew University he takes this relativist attitude even further by stating explicitly that in the West (to which he considers Israel to belong) one does not have to be a Muslim to be *min abnā al-ṭarīqa*.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁷⁷ Lecture AKR HU Study Day 26-03-2012.

Ben Arieḥ gives a similar interpretation of a discussion he says he had with *Shaykh* Ahmad and *Sīdī* Ali:

‘Could a non-Muslim be initiated in Sufism (*li-hitkabel derekh ha-nika ha-sufit*)?’

I asked Professor Ahmad Yashruti in the meeting that occurred in Amman.

‘Yes, of course’ he replied.

‘Is it necessary to have a teacher?’ I continued to ask.

‘Yes’ was the answer.

‘Is there a possibility to learn from a teacher without meeting him face-to-face?’

I asked.

‘In special circumstances, there is such a possibility’ answered the *Shaykh*.⁷⁸

Ben Arieḥ believes this dialogue referred to the role of new media in reaching out to non-Muslims with a universal message of love and tolerance. While the *ṭarīqa* does indeed connect its followers using digital media, spiritual communication is more important for the followers than such direct communications, as we have discussed in the previous chapters, and the *Shaykh*’s answer would more likely refer to spiritual communication rather than modern communication tools. *Shaykh* Ahmad’s reply that one does not have to be a Muslim to be initiated is puzzling as he has always made it perfectly clear to me that all followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya are good Muslims, both in his written answers to my questions and during my visits to the *zāwiya*.⁷⁹ When asked, the Review Panel says that the meeting never took place.⁸⁰

We thus see how the same dynamics of communication and interpretation explicitly discussed in Amman and connected to the Sufi concept of *‘ilm al-ishāra* are enacted in two very different ways in Acre and Jaffa. Most followers – who as we saw in chapter 9 place their *ṭarīqa* clearly in the historical Islamic Sufi tradition

⁷⁸ Ben Arieḥ, *Zāwiya*, 40–41.

⁷⁹ See also *Shaykh* Ahmad in an interview conducted in Beirut in 1999, in Sawafta, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Yashrutiyya*, 840. ‘Our *ṭarīqa* is Muhammadan in origin and development and meaning. And *Sayyidnā* Muhammad pbuh is master of the sharia and master of the truth (*ḥaqīqa*) simultaneously. And everyone who says differently, he does not know anything about the *ṭarīqa* and her rules (*ahkām*).’

⁸⁰ Review Panel, ‘Response to email of October 12’.

– see their *Shaykh* and community as the centre of their symbolic universe and the social structure based on it, and their *tarbiya*, their development of their relation with the *Shaykh*, and their interpretation of his teachings, happens within the community. AKR, on the other hand, is less connected to the community and maintains strong relations with people in the Jewish Sufi ‘new spirituality’ milieu, and his understanding of the relation between the *Shaykh* and the individual is influenced by this as it shifts towards a greater autonomy of the individual. The idea of the social structure centred on the relationship between *Shaykh* and disciple is maintained, but the meaning he attributes to it is very different. As we saw in chapter 9, when the connection with the community is disrupted, the socialisation process becomes less complete, and the symbolic universe and its plausibility structure will weaken, which seems to happen in the case of AKR.

Connected to this spiritual focus on the individual as found in the ‘new spirituality’ framework, is the perennialist idea that Sufism goes above and beyond the Islamic normative framework, which is connected to elements of the Sufi tradition that state that the sharia is no longer necessary for those who are advanced on the Path. By stating that he only abides by the rules of the sharia that fit him, AKR is at the same time claiming that he has reached high stages on the Path, and speaking to this perennialist audience. Such a statement is absolutely not accepted by the rest of *ikhwānā*, however.

While the followers in Acre and Jaffa do engage with and interpret the *Shaykh*’s words and base their actions on these interpretations, they would never go so far as to say that one does not have to be a Muslim to join. While – again – their understanding of what it means to be a Muslim is influenced by the *ṭarīqa* and by their immediate surroundings – the religious climate in Acre and Jaffa – the idea that one has to be a Muslim is heavily stressed. The followers in Acre, Jaffa and Amman, while loving and welcoming towards outsiders in their everyday life, do maintain those boundaries on the religious level as they consider their *ṭarīqa* to be essentially Islamic, and while they accept and love everyone as a part of humanity, they do not accept everyone in their *ṭarīqa*. The practice of *mubāyaʿa* might almost be a matter-of-fact practice amongst those

who grew up in the *ṭarīqa* and those who got to know and love them through marriage, but they maintain strict standards for their members, and when someone clearly misbehaves they do not associate themselves with them any more.

10.4 Conclusion

In the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya was a proselytizing movement. It is unclear when this stopped, but nowadays there is no notion of this and adherence to the *ṭarīqa* is passed on within the family and sometimes to spouses and close friends. The move from a 'sect' in which membership is voluntary and based on conversion, to a 'church' or 'denomination' in which one is born into the religious movement, is part of the institutionalisation of a religious movement.⁸¹ O'Dea argues that this might lead to a 'weakening of the interior disposition of the nominally religious', although he also notes that socialisation and education might substitute for the 'dramatic conversion experience' (or prepare for such a conversion).⁸² This is clearly the case in the Shadhuli-Yashruti process of *tarbiya*, in which the followers are prepared to accept the *Shaykh* as the leader who connects them to God and who lets them participate in his religious experience and spiritual power.

The practical roles of the *Shaykh* that were expressed by the followers in Acre and Jaffa, the teacher and the father, are in practice enacted mostly by the community. While the followers say that the *Shaykh* is their teacher, in practice, most of their *tarbiya* is done by the community. Through *tarbiya* (or socialisation), the community instills the initial emotions and attitudes towards the *Shaykh* that enable them to develop the spiritual relationship to such a degree that they consider themselves directed by him from afar. The community is therefore just as much the teacher as the *Shaykh* is (if not more so). The care the *Shaykh*

⁸¹ Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', 468–469; Swatos, 'Church-Sect Theory.' Based on what we know of the *ṭarīqa*'s history, this is only an organisational shift, not a shift in attitude to the world.

⁸² O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 84.

shows them as a father figure is manifested through the community – their love and care and hospitality towards each other is considered to come ultimately from the *Shaykh*, but in practice is enacted by the community.

This is mainly because the followers have been isolated for many years and still face challenges to meet their *Shaykh*. The importance of family for Palestinians in Israel is reflected in the image of *ikhwānnā* as both a family and a religious community – while this image is present in Amman, it is much more pronounced in Acre and Jaffa. The form of institutionalisation the *ṭarīqa* in Acre and Jaffa has taken is connected even stronger to the family than in Jordan. There is a strong correlation between the importance of the family as a unit of social and political organisation among the Palestinians in Israel (see chapter 8), the *ṭarīqa*'s organisation on kinship lines, and the strong family values shown by *abnā al-ṭarīqa* in Israel. These circumstances may have strengthened the link between family and religion as both are understood in terms of the other, and may have strengthened the interpretation of the *Shaykh* as a spiritual father who has authority over his children in family-related matters.

While the exact dynamic needs to be historically researched, we can surmise that the tendency to see the *ṭarīqa* as a family was already present before the *nakba*. It is an old Sufi theme that already existed in the earliest period of Islam in Palestine.⁸³ In addition to this classical Sufi attitude, due to their isolation after 1948 the identification of the *ṭarīqa* as the actual and spiritual family most likely increased. The transmission of the tradition had to happen exclusively by the followers themselves without input from the *Shaykh*, and there were no resources and therefore no means and little need to develop an effective administration outside the family and the community living in the *zāwiya*. Their presence in the *zāwiya* and the role of the family as the main means of transmission led the followers to trace their adherence to the *Shaykh* genealogically and thus connect to the 'charismatic moment' and the 'golden age' of the *ṭarīqa*, of which they still saw the physical remnants but of which they were the only living testifiers. It was a way to hold on to their heritage when there were

⁸³ Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, 102.

few other ways available – even the numbers to do *ḥaḍra* where often too small and the re-creation of the original religious experience through this ritual was often denied them. Circumstances were so challenging and different that their attitude needed to be redefined, and the family / community in the *zāwiya* was the group with which their attitudes were negotiated.

This was part of the same development in Palestinian society in Israel at large. As the Palestinians in Israel felt alienated from the state and those institutions and people related to it, the family remained an important institution for communal organisation. The religious establishment was considered co-opted and people turned to other places for their values – turning to the family and understanding religion in terms of the family is one such reaction. Political party activity on the municipal level was often intertwined with family and clan-networks, and the family continued to play an important role in social relationships. In the older generations, family affiliation is an important social identifier and a source of pride, and in some families, parents are still eager to see their children married and take an active role in matchmaking and in approving or disapproving their offspring's choice.⁸⁴

This does not explain the whole phenomenon though – as we have seen in previous chapters, *ikhwānnā* in Amman use similar concepts to describe the *ṭarīqa* as a family and also use the image of the *Shaykh* as a father, if not as often and as explicitly. The tendency to trace adherence to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din through the generations happens in both Israel and Jordan. It allows *ikhwānnā* an additional access to the charismatic moment, in addition to their relationship with the living *Shaykh*. This tendency is more pronounced in Acre and Jaffa, however, probably due to the more difficult access they had and still have to the *Shaykh*. When contacts were re-established the local communities in Israel were re-incorporated in the translocal *ṭarīqa* and connections with the *Shaykh* were

⁸⁴ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 26. Majid al-Haj, 'The Changing Arab Kinship Structure: The Effect of Modernization in an Urban Community', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 36:2 (1988) 237-258; Majid al-Haj, 'Social Research on Family Lifestyles among Arabs in Israel', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 20:2 (1989) 175-195; Majid al-Haj, 'Kinship and Modernization in Developing Societies: The Emergence of Instrumentalized Kinship', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 26:3 (1995) 311-328.

strengthened, but in Acre and Jaffa the attitude towards the community and the *Shaykh* had been firmly established and we can still see the small differences of focus. As there is still less interaction with the *Shaykh* than in Amman, the actual education is still done in the community. In addition to this, it should be noted that the sociological phenomenon that the *ṭarīqa* is transmitted through kinship affiliation, is also driven by the natural desire for spouses to share their religious views and emotions, and thus to marry someone from the same religious group, or to invite their partner into it. As in Jordan, a more thorough historical analysis of the development of the *ṭarīqa* would be needed to understand this dynamic fully.

The followers value the love, hospitality and *tarbiya* in the *ṭarīqa* as *karāmāt* from the *Shaykh*, but it is the followers themselves who enact these values. Through the stories they tell about this love, hospitality and spiritual connections among *ikhwānnā*, and the good relations they have with the rest of society, the followers transmit their values discursively and aim to inspire actions according to these values. By presenting these acts of love and hospitality towards the community and wider society as the *Shaykh's karāmāt* they participate in his spiritual power, allowing them to participate in his charisma through the cultivating of *ādāb* and the practicing of the *ṭarīqa's* main value of *maḥabba*. The fact that they are widely accepted in society strengthens their position and allows them to continue the activities of the *ṭarīqa* in the public space, which is especially relevant in the light of the renovation of the *zāwiya* in Acre.

The *Shaykh's* love and care is thus manifested through the community. The followers' presentation of stories of communal love and hospitality as *karāmāt* of the *Shaykh* underscores this point. Lindholm and Pinto have argued that even when charisma is routinized, it still needs to be manifested by each new *shaykh*.⁸⁵ *Shaykh* Ahmad manifests his charisma through his behaviour (which is seen as a manifestation of the Prophet Muhammad's behaviour in our times), and through his *karāmāt*. In chapter 9 we saw some examples of his

⁸⁵ Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9.

karāmāt of the *firāsa*-type, and in this chapter we have discussed the ‘community *karāmāt*’, in which the *Shaykh*’s *baraka* is experienced as flowing through the community. The *Shaykh* inspires them to be good to each other and be like a family, and to be good people who are accepted by society – these are seen as great miracles.

The forms the classical Sufi concepts of *karāmāt* and *ishārāt* take in the understanding of the followers in Acre and Jaffa are connected to the doctrine that God can be seen everywhere through *maḥabba* and spiritual development. As in Amman, the experience of the ‘breaking through’ of the sacred, the ‘charismatic moment’ and ‘religious experience’, are thus incorporated in the symbolic universe, both made possible through it and reaffirming it, and adding to the vernacular tradition in the process. All of this strengthens the social structure which depends on the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower. Everything good that happens to them is attributed to the *Shaykh*, and everything bad that happens is incorporated through adherence to the pillar of *taslīm*. In Acre and Jaffa, the community is experienced even more as a medium of the charismatic, and the social structure is thus tied even more closely to the symbolic universe. The charismatic is maintained and considered to be enacted through the community, and charisma and institution continuously reaffirm each other. In the case of Acre and Jaffa, this is even clearer than in Amman, as the essential role of the community in manifesting the *Shaykh*’s spiritual powers is very pronounced.

Berger argued that an important aspect of the routinization of charisma is the containment of the disruptive breaking through of other realities to specific times and spaces.⁸⁶ This is only partly the case in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. While charisma is primarily contained in the person of the *Shaykh*, the belief in *karāmāt* and *ishārāt* in everyday life enables the experience of the charismatic in everyday reality. This does not lead to disruption or rejection of society, rather the opposite: it is an important value of the *ṭarīqa* that they adapt to society and

⁸⁶ Berger, ‘Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion’, 132; Geaves, ‘Charismatic Authority in Islam’, 41.

participate in it, and explicit moments of such adaptation, participation and acceptance are considered *karāmāt* and moments in which one can see the *Shaykh's baraka*, in other words, charismatic moments. The *Shaykh's* charismatic authority is thus continuously reaffirmed in their experience in the community, and the community's transmission of the *Shaykh's* teaching continuously reinforces itself as the tool of the *Shaykh's baraka*. This way, institutional and charismatic authority reinforce each other. The followers thus maintain their emotional and spiritual focus on the *Shaykh*, but the community has reached a high degree of self-perpetuation in which the physical presence of the *Shaykh* is desired, but not necessary. We have reached the same conclusion in Amman, but the followers never had to be this independent as they have never been as isolated as the followers in Israel.

Tarbiya encompasses general Islamic practices and the *ṭarīqa's* four pillars of *maḥabba*, *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *taslīm*. Building on Pinto's observations in Aleppo,⁸⁷ we saw that the absence of personalized initiation and *dhikr*, the absence of clear stages on the Path, and the communal *dhikr*, leads to a strong egalitarian communal cohesion in Amman. In Acre, this is even more the case as the *mubāya'a* is even less of a watershed for most followers than it is in Amman. While for some it is experienced as almost a rite of passage, for most it was something that was a normal part of growing up in the community. The process of *tarbiya* is thus experienced as an ongoing continuum from a very young age until one's final moments, and the *mubāya'a* is not a break in that (as opposed to Pinto's observation that *tarbiya* in Aleppo only happen after the initiation⁸⁸). This further underscores the character of the *ṭarīqa* in Acre and Jaffa as a community one is born into, not a group one explicitly joins.

An important aspect of *tarbiya* in Acre and Jaffa is the discussion of stories about the *Shaykh's karāmāt* of love and hospitality within the community and towards wider society. These stories function to affirm the *Shaykh's* authority and the community's cohesion (see above), but also function as modes of

⁸⁷ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465–468; Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 125–127; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.'

⁸⁸ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 464–465.

instruction as they provide role models and inspiration and thus cultivate good behaviour and *ādāb*. There are less occasions for *mudhākara* and there are hardly any study groups in Acre and Jaffa; there are no organised study groups in Acre, and only one in Jaffa which only recently began to acquire a high level of attendance. Such meetings are important moments of transmission in Amman in which the *Shaykh*'s weekly *mudhākara* is discussed, and probably focus strongly on the 'aqīda (as our group interviews did). In Acre and Jaffa, however, the use of stories from the vernacular tradition that focus on love and hospitality in the community rather than discussions on 'aqīda, might lead to the strong focus on *maḥabba* rather than 'aqīda we noted.

Pinto has observed in Aleppo that study groups lead to the spread of a homogeneous body of knowledge.⁸⁹ The lesser degree of *mudhākara* and study groups in Acre and Jaffa as expected leads to a wider variety of interpretations in Acre and Jaffa. The more informal settings in which I met with followers in Acre and Jaffa gave me more of an insight into the dynamics of the mode of communication and the resultant interpretations in individual and communal situations. Due to their successful *tarbiya* they envisage *mudhākara* as a meeting of kindred spirits and as based on a more contemplative interpretation of *fikr*, and their discussion of matters within the *ḥarīqa* therefore keeps them closer to the community consensus. Even so, the sources from which they draw information are wide, due to the fragmented nature of their society, and this leads to quite opposing interpretations in some cases, could best be seen from their divergent attitudes towards the *ḥijāb*.

The only person who explicitly referred to the ideas behind this dynamic was AKR, who sees *fikr* mainly in terms of critical thinking, and in whose thinking the paradox between *fikr* and *taslīm* becomes very strong. He referred explicitly to the indirect communication by the *Shaykh* which gives the individual space for interpretations. While he acknowledged the importance to adapt to circumstances, he gave more weight to the individual in this dynamic, and to the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 465–468; Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 125–127; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.'

individual's autonomy and freedom to move away from rules that do not fit him or her. For him, *mudhākara* is not a meeting of kindred spirits, but a dialogue between opposites. When speaking to a non-Muslim public in a study meeting, he universalized the message of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and explicitly stated that in the West (in which he includes Israel), one does not have to be a Muslim to join. He legitimizes these acts of interpretations through an initial encounter with the *Shaykh* but mainly by referring to the 'God within', which is more in line with Western 'new spirituality' which is also found in the Jewish Sufi milieu in Israel (see paragraph 8.2.4). As discussed in chapter 9, his divergence from the attitude of the rest of the followers can be explained by the fact that he is less connected to the community and that the ongoing socialisation which is necessary for the maintenance of a symbolic universe and its social structure, has been disrupted in his case. His contact with people from the Jewish Sufi milieu, however, explains the development of his thought in that direction.

Such interpretations go too far for the other followers in the *ṭarīqa*, who do not always agree with his outreach to other groups in society based on such far-reaching interpretations of the *Shaykh's* teachings. They place themselves firmly in the Islamic tradition. Here we see the usefulness of Stjernholm's suggestion to focus on the historical tradition and narrative a group or individual adheres to,⁹⁰ as here we see a clear difference between the Islamic Sufi tradition of most followers in Acre and Jaffa, and the Israeli 'new spiritual' narrative with its Zionist undertones, of AKR. In order to fully understand the social consequences and controversial nature of such interpretations, we shall now turn to the discussion of the *zāwiya* in the life of the community and in local society.

⁹⁰ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

Chapter 11

The *Zāwiya* in Acre, *al-Zāwiya al-Umm*

This chapter will discuss the role of the *zāwiya* in Acre in the relationship between *Shaykh* and followers. Even though the *zāwiya* has hardly been functioning the past eight years due to the renovations, this unusual situation does permit us to examine the dynamic within the *ṭarīqa* from an interesting angle. First we will discuss what the *zāwiya* means to the followers in Amman and in Acre and how we should therefore understand the current renovations, and second how the *ṭarīqa*'s particular diasporic situation creates a situation in which AKR, the *mutawallī*, has a lot of space to interpret the *Shaykh*'s ideas regarding the development of the *zāwiya*.

The *zāwiya* in Acre is located in the northern part of the old town, adjacent to the Citadel – the eastern wall of the *zāwiya* complex is the western wall of the Citadel, and the northern boundary of the *zāwiya* complex is overseen by that part of the Citadel which was used as a prison and now houses the Underground Prisoners Museum. To the west the complex is bordered by the Majadla mosque, behind which to the West there is a complex belonging to the Baha'is, beyond which is the sea. During the Ottoman period the *zāwiya* was far from Acre's two gates, the sea gate and the land gate, but during the Mandate period the British opened the northern wall at two places to enable connections with the new neighbourhoods.

The *zāwiya* was established in 1868 after *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din returned from his exile in Rhodes. The *waqfiyya* mentions the *takiya* (the main hall used for prayer and study), a public kitchen, an inn, stores, and 613 acres of agricultural land in four villages near Acre.¹ After his the death, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din was buried in the *zāwiya* and the *mashhad* became an important part of the complex. Later, *Shaykh* Ibrahim and *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi were also

¹ Reiter, 'The Waqf in Israel', 111.

buried there. Many other members of the Yashruti family rest in the Muslim cemetery immediately outside the city walls. There are two tombs in which several members of the family are interred, and several graves of followers around them, as they prefer to be buried close to their *Shaykh's* family.²

Before 1948, the *zāwiya* was always busy. Followers came from all over the Levant, from all levels of society, to visit the *Shaykh*, pray, study and participate in life in the *zāwiya*. They brought in produce from the *ṭarīqa's awqāf* in the Galilee to provide food for those staying in the *zāwiya* and for the people in the neighbourhood. Nowadays, this period is seen as the golden age of the *ṭarīqa*, and by connecting to the *zāwiya* people seek to connect to the charismatic moment.

11.1 The Zāwiya in Acre as al-Zāwiya al-Umm

We have seen that the sacredness of the *zāwiya* in Amman comes primarily from the presence of the *Shaykh*, and secondarily from its function as a centre of devotion and communal life. While they treasure the memories attached to it, the building in itself means little to the followers. The *zāwiya* in Acre has a different status however:

There was a *zāwiya* [on Jabal Amman], but when the *Shaykh* built a new *zāwiya* [in Wadi Seer] it doesn't mean anything to us, that building as a building. As a building its holiness comes from the existence of the *Shaykh*. But if the *Shaykh* moved to another *zāwiya* or went to live in Beirut, the *zāwiya* in Acre would still be the first in our hearts. The *zāwiya* of Acre is the mother of all *zawāya*, and all of the poets from *abnā al-ṭarīqa* sing (*yataghannū*) and chant *nashīd* (*yanshidū*) on the *zāwiya* in Acre; their spirits are turned towards it.³

² Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

³ AM1-1 during interview AM1.

The *zāwiya* in Acre is considered *al-zāwiya al-umm* (the mother *zāwiya*) by all followers. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din came from the West to the East to found the *ṭarīqa* and build the *zāwiya*. ‘The *waḥy* came upon him and told him to anchor in Acre. (...) The light exploded and flowed from it and there were *karamāt* and gathering (*iltifāf*) around the *Shaykh*.’ In a well-known *nashīd*, ‘Acre’ is a symbol for the message of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din which started there, the embodiment of the Prophet’s revelation in Mecca, and Acre made them ‘bear witness’ of God in their hearts.⁴ In a twist on the familiar kinship notions used to describe the *ṭarīqa*, the *zāwiya* in Acre is described as the mother from whom the other *zawāya* sprang to continue the family (*a’ila*).⁵ As they chant in a *nashīd*:

Akkā al-munā, yā Sīdī, kull al-hanā’ fihā

Tasharrafat bi-’Alī, Allāh yahanīhā

Acre is the thing you yearn for, o *Sīdī*, all the longing is for her

She welcomed Ali, may God give her the good life⁶

The old buildings and heritage witnessed the times of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din. She represents (*bitmathel*) the origin (*aṣl*) and the *maqāmāt* are there, she has a unique position compared to the other *zāwiya* that are outside. All of her ties one to the foundation (*kullhā bitrūd al-waḥad li-l-usūl*).⁷

Therefore, even though historically the *zāwiya* in Tarshiha was established earlier, the *zāwiya* in Acre is considered to be the first and the one from which the *ṭarīqa* spread.

Acre, she is the mother, the mother of the *zawāya*. From Acre the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya was spread (*intalaqat*) to the surrounding Palestinian villages, from there to the Arab lands, then it connected to other foreign regions,

⁴ See paragraph 5.4 Interview AM4.

⁵ AM1-3 during Interview ZA1.

⁶ ZA2 in Interview ZA1. This *nashīd* was probably written in the time of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. It appears in a handwritten collection of *anāshīd* that was compiled at the beginning of the twentieth century, kindly shown to me by the *muqaddam* of Acre.

⁷ ZA1-4 during Interview ZA1.

Europe or the West or Africa etc. And that is why – when we see Acre – a view of respect, a view of esteem, a view of sanctification (*taqdīs*), she has something holy (*qudsiyya*) for us, like the Muslims see Mecca. (...) She is the foundation from which the *ṭarīqa al-Shadhuliyya al-Yashrutiyya* spread, and that is why she is always in our hearts.⁸

The followers love Acre as the centre of their *ṭarīqa* and it pulls their hearts because their spiritual roots are there,⁹ because the place connects them to the founding *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. He and his successors are spiritually present in their tombs and their light and *baraka* flows from there like their message did during the original charismatic moment: 'We visited Acre and we were honoured by *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* there and we saw the *nūr muḥammadī* radiating from all of Acre (*min ajwā' Akka kullhā*), and specifically from the *zāwiya* of the *Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya* itself.'¹⁰

However, as was discussed in chapter 4, for the followers in Amman the relation with the living *Shaykh* is considered more important than the relation with the previous *Shaykhs*.

What is the meaning of *umm al-zawāya*? In my opinion, the meaning is *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, he is the founder of the *ṭarīqa*. And in my belief the founder of the *ṭarīqa* did not go. He went by the body – as did the Prophet – but the teaching of the *ṭarīqa* is with *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* [Ahmad] now. (...) I went to Acre one time, in 1996. (...) Before I heard about Acre from my family, and through the teaching of the *ṭarīqa* I loved the founder. (...) When I saw Acre – I saw Acre before I saw the *zāwiya* – I feel... something different. In my heart (...) I feel more and more and more. Inside, I feel my *Shaykh* here. I feel my *Shaykh*, the founder of the *ṭarīqa*. (...) I am very happy. The *Shaykh* is the reason for my happiness, for my life, for everything. (...)

[When I see Acre, it makes me] extra happy, of course, because when you see Acre you feel and you know *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the founder. (...) I feel very happy

⁸ AM2-1 during Interview AM2.

⁹ Informal discussion with a follower in Amman on 26-03-2013.

¹⁰ AM2-1 during Interview AM2.

when I hear about Acre from anybody. (...) We cannot forget Acre, never we cannot. (...) Of course we *ikhwānnā* love Acre and everything in Acre. But the most important thing in our life is the relationship between us and *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ahmad* because we believe he is alive. The *madad*, the *ilhām*, is from *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* to me.¹¹

Similarly, several followers stressed that the physical relation to Acre is secondary to the spiritual relation. They are just stones.

According to us, the stones are not important. [It is] the symbolic representation which is important. Regarding Acre, we look behind the stones, like when we go to the *ka'ba*. It is not the stones of the *ka'ba* that are important, but God. We concentrate on the symbol which is a representation of the worship of God (*'ibādāt Allāh*). We turn towards God, not the stones!¹²

Just as the person of the *Shaykh* combines a connection with the timeless essence of the *'aqīda* and the *nūr muḥammadī* with a connection and adaptation to social circumstances, so the same attitude can be discerned amongst the followers in Amman towards the *zāwiya* in Acre. They respect and love it as part of their communal history and it is the focus of love and nostalgic longing, while at the same time the followers live their lives in Jordan. This attitude is illustrated by the following quote:

We see the *zāwiya* here [in Amman] as very important because of the presence of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. But we do not forget the mother. When people live together there will be love (*ulfa wa-maḥabbā*) between them, but they do not forget their origin (*aṣl*). People get married, have children, but they do not forget their mother. The mother is the foundation (*asas*) that is present in our hearts, and the love for her will stay in our hearts. But now we live in the present reality, we live in the life in which *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is present.¹³

¹¹ AM1-3 during Interview AM1.

¹² AM1-1 during Interview AM1. A similar opinion was expressed by TU1 in Interview TU1 with a follower in Tubas on 13-05-2013, hereafter referred to as Interview TU1.

¹³ AM2-1 during Interview AM2.

The followers' view of the *zāwiya* in Acre is also influenced by their view of their *Shaykh*. One follower says that for him the *zāwiya* is mainly important because that is where *Shaykh* Ahmad was born. An older follower remembers what life was like when he and *Shaykh* Ahmad were both young in the *zāwiya* in Acre.¹⁴ In this context it is also mentioned that *Shaykh* Ahmad himself values the *zāwiya* and is spending millions to renovate it, and they hope to visit it when it is ready.¹⁵

They believe that the *zāwiya* sends love and comfort (*maḥabba wa-rāḥa*) to all those who are present in Acre from all different backgrounds, because their 'aqīda is a continuous 'aqīda of love and comfort for all.¹⁶ During the festivities in 1996 this was acknowledged by the presence and words of guests from other religions – which as we saw in paragraph 10.2 was considered one of the *Shaykh's* *karāmāt*.¹⁷ This notion and the value of the continued position of the *zāwiya* in Acre as beacon of love and comfort for all inhabitants of Acre shows that the *zāwiya* has a continuous value for these followers that goes beyond the historical and symbolical.

I think Acre is a symbol for this group of people who have the right to have this place to worship God through this *ḥarīqa*. It's just a symbol. We want to keep this symbol by any means, we want people to visit us in the *zāwiya*, we want people to see what is in there, we want the books of *ḥarīqa* to be there, we want maybe sometime to translate some of the books and give people... (...) It's just a symbol. It's not the real religion, our religion itself. But we would like to have this symbol, to keep this symbol for us. And for other people, just to know that in this area people are free. To have any religion, to worship anything, so as a symbol it should stay there.¹⁸

¹⁴ ZA1-3 and ZA1-2 during Interview ZA1.

¹⁵ AM1-1 and AM3-5 in Interview AM3.

¹⁶ ZA3-1 in Interview ZA1.

¹⁷ ZA3-2 in Interview ZA1.

¹⁸ AM4-7 in Interview AM4.

For many the *zāwiya* in Acre is important because it is where the followers can connect to the first three *Shaykhs*. While they can know them through their teachings found in books and in the traditions of *ikhwānnā*, in the *zāwiya* in Acre they are spiritually present and they can be reached more directly – as we saw in the quotes above, the *nūr muḥammadī* is considered to shine from their tombs.¹⁹ For example, a follower remembered his first visit to Acre and stressed the strong connection he felt there to *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din:

I went to Acre one time, in 1996 together with my *Shaykh Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā*. Before I went to Acre we imagined her because of our tie to the *sāhib al-ṭarīqa*, the *Shaykh* of the *ṭarīqa* – now *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ahmad*. [The tie extends to] his father *Sīdnā* [Muhammad] al-Hadi, and *Sīdnā Ibrahim*, and *Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din*. I always try to live with them in my emotions and spiritual states (*ruḥāniyat*) etc. *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din* is the founder of the *ṭarīqa*. For us as *fuqarā* truly *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* is the current *Shaykh* of the *ṭarīqa*. There when we went I had strange feelings (*iḥsās*) and it was a big thing for us, because of the presence of the *maqām* of *Sīdnā Nur al-Din*. Most of our life in the *ṭarīqa*, we live according to his teachings. We read the books, we read his *ḥadīth*, and we live with him through his *aḥādīth*. That teaching and that *ma'rifa* that we obtain through the *ḥadīth* of *Sīdnā Nur al-Din*, when I went – it was as if I found him there in person. And the relation (*'alāqa*) was very strong. And in the relation was sanctity (*qudsiyya*), and love (*ḥubb*) and enthusiasm (*sha'f*).²⁰

One of the followers said his main motive for going to the *zāwiya* in Acre is his gratitude:

To show gratitude to the person who introduced you to this kind of life which you love. We are enjoying the *ṭarīqa*. It made us know Muhammad, it made us know Jesus, it made us know Moses, it made us know everything. (...) It made us know something about God. And *Sīdnā Ali Nur al-Din* and the *Shaykh* of this *ṭarīqa*, they introduced us to this joyous – this life which we enjoy. (...) His bones maybe

¹⁹ AM4-4 in Interview AM4.

²⁰ AM4-8 in Interview AM4.

now are dust but for the memory of the message he brought to us, to show our gratitude to him we go there and we just go for a visit.²¹

When discussing the *zāwiya*, several followers stress that what is most important for them is the *zāwiya* of the heart (*zāwiyat al-qalb*) and the relation with other followers wherever they are, and ‘the stones are not important.’²² Even so, the followers do connect to the *zāwiya* in Acre very strongly and they feel they can participate in the light of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din there. By reaching out to the *zāwiya* a follower can participate in what Kees Terlouw calls ‘traditional spatial charisma’ as one can participate in the charisma of the ‘golden age’.²³ In the case of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the time of the founding *Shaykh* is considered this ‘golden age’, but it extended to the whole period pre-1948 in which the *zāwiya* in Acre was the centre of the *ṭarīqa*.

There are clear parallels between the *ḥajj* to Mecca and the *ziyāra* to Acre, and the connection between Acre and Mecca is a recurring theme. One discussion on the *zāwiya* ends with several participants telling me enthusiastically about their experiences on *ḥajj* and ‘*umra*’.²⁴ There is a saying among the followers – attributed to *Shaykh* Ibrahim: ‘*Akka Makka ‘ayn al-nabī fīha* (Acre Mecca the source of the Prophet is in her).’ The ‘*ayn* – which means water source, spring – which is referred to is ‘*ayn al-baqara* (the source of the cow), at which it is said that God gave a cow to Adam, and which is believed by some to be located in Acre.’²⁵ AM2-2 shows the connection by pointing to the first letters of the holy places through time: in the time of Ibrahim, Makkah was called Bakkah. When Muḥammad lived there it was called Makkah, and the town of ‘Alī Nūr al-Dīn is called ‘Akkā.²⁶ Another follower adds that the first letter of the names ‘Alī and ‘Akkā – the ‘*ayn* – was also the first letter of the names of all four

²¹ AM4-1 during Interview AM4.

²² AM1-1 in Interview AM1 and Interview AM3.

²³ Terlouw, ‘Charisma and Space.’

²⁴ AM1-1 in Interview AM1 and Interview AM3.

²⁵ Told to me by a former follower from Acre and by ZA1-1 during Interview ZA1.

²⁶ AM2-2 during Interview AM2.

rāshidūn and of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Azīz, who is also often included in this list of righteous Caliphs.²⁷

As Issam Aburaiya and Efrat Ben-Ze'ev pointed out in the context of Palestinian refugees returning to their villages, any pilgrimage undertaken by Muslims is modelled on the *ḥajj*.²⁸ In the case of the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the visit is both a temporary return to their historical roots comparable to similar visits by other Palestinian refugees, and a religious act of reconnecting to the original charismatic moment. Both the *Shaykh* and the *zāwiya* in Acre are compared to the *ka'ba* in their symbolic function as the spiritual centre of the *ṭarīqa*. While the *ka'ba* is the spiritual centre and *qibla*²⁹ for them as it is for all Muslims, the *zāwiya* in Acre is the physical location of the foundation of the *ṭarīqa*, and the *Shaykh* continues to embody the message spread from this location. By reaching out to the *zāwiya* in Acre spiritually and/or physically, one can partake in the connection of all four *Shaykhs* to the true centre of the *ṭarīqa*, God.

This connection to the golden age and claim to continuity is an important part of *Shaykh* Ahmad's traditional authority, and controlling the *zāwiya* in Acre is part of maintaining this continuity. When discussing the status of *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil, a *shaykhin* Amman who claims to represent the Yashrutiyya but who is not recognized as such by *Shaykh* Ahmad, one of the arguments against his legitimacy is that *Shaykh* Ahmad controls the *zāwiya* in Acre.³⁰ Ever since *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din began the institutionalisation process of the *ṭarīqa*, the *zāwiya* in Acre, the Yashruti family, and the *ṭarīqa* are inextricably connected.

This connection to the past and claim to continuity is strengthened by the renovations. By following in the footsteps of the previous *Shaykhs* and adding to the development of the *zāwiya*, *Shaykh* Ahmad strengthens his link to the *zāwiya* in Acre and thus to the history of the *ṭarīqa*, the previous *Shaykhs* and the original charismatic moment, stressing the continuity of the *shaykhdom* and the

²⁷ ZA1-1 during Interview ZA1.

²⁸ Aburaiya and Ben-Ze'ev, "Middle-Ground" Politics', 645.

²⁹ The *qibla* is the direction which Muslims face when praying *ṣalāa*.

³⁰ Interview AKR 16-05-2013.

ṭarīqa: 'It is the mother *zāwiya*, built by *Sīdnā* Ali Nur al-Din, and now *Sīdnā* Ahmad is also building it.'³¹

The followers in Amman hope the *zāwiya* will be 'a lighthouse for the people', a gathering place for many people, both *ikhwānnā* and others. They do not proselytize – but if God has chosen someone to be part of the *ṭarīqa*, s/he can come and will be welcome.³² It will be 'a religious project, a social project, a cultural project. Not just for our *abnā* to read *wazīfa*, to study and to meet *ikhwānnā* (...) it will expand and be bigger than that.'³³ 'Our social, practical and worldly conditions permit us to be present in this moment, a very beautiful moment, in which our dreams are realized.'³⁴

While the current *Shaykh* is the main sacred centre of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the *zāwiya* in Acre does occupy an important place in the hearts of the followers and in the *ṭarīqa*'s symbolic universe as the original geographical sacred centre. It classifies as a 'sacred space'³⁵ primarily due to its connection to the original charismatic moment and the continued presence of the previous *Shaykhs* who are buried there, bestowing it with what Terlouw calls 'traditional spatial charisma'.³⁶ By reconnecting to the *zāwiya*, *Shaykh* Ahmad bolsters his own traditional charisma as he strengthens his connection to the charismatic moment and to his ancestors, and seeks to recreate the communal and social role of the *ṭarīqa*'s golden age. The strong connection between Yashruti family, *ṭarīqa* and *zāwiya* are thus maintained.

11.2 The Zāwiya in Acre as a Local Zāwiya – 1948-2000s

Acre's people in general are very attached to their town, and this is especially the case among the Shadhulis. For them Acre is the best place in the world because

³¹ Interview AK4.

³² AM4-3, AM4-4 and AM4-8 in Interview AM4.

³³ ZA1-1 in Interview ZA1.

³⁴ ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

³⁵ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–65; Brereton, 'Sacred Space.' See paragraph 1.4.1.

³⁶ Terlouw, 'Charisma and Space.' See paragraph 1.4.1.

she received *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and he rests in the *zāwiya*.³⁷ Whenever they enter the *zāwiya*, they first ‘visit’ the tombs of the *Shaykhs* and ‘greet’ them (referred to as *ziyāra*, the general Sufi word for pilgrimage to a person or a shrine, also used to refer to their visits to *Shaykh* Ahmad). Starting with the tomb of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and moving on to *Shaykh* Ibrahim and *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi, they recite the *fātiḥa*,³⁸ sometimes add a personal prayer (*du‘ā*), and kiss the threshold or the door post or the tomb itself, after which they walk out backwards, never turning their back on the tombs. It shows the special value they give to the *zāwiya* as the spiritual presence of the *Shaykhs* continues and their *baraka* lingers there. But like the followers in Amman, they focus on the living *Shaykh* and they love Amman because the *Shaykh* is there.³⁹ They stress that the *Shaykh* and the *zāwiya* share the same holiness (*nafs al-qudsiyya*)⁴⁰ and that ‘the spirit (*rūḥ*) is one.’⁴¹

For those who are originally from Acre and who lived in the *zāwiya*, these sentiments are strengthened by a strong personal connection, which correlates strongly with their stress on the *Shaykh* as a father and *ikhwānā* as their family.

A follower recollects life in the *zāwiya* during the 1950s and 60s, when the *Shaykh* was gone and many of the residents were not religious. Those who were from *abnā al-ṭarīqa* prayed and read *wazīfa*, but there were not enough people to do *ḥaḍra*. They went to the Jazzar Mosque to pray like other people in the neighbourhood – but society was not religious and even on a good day there were no more than ten people.⁴² Another follower remembers her happy days in the *zāwiya*. ‘We did everything together. Not all the families were Shadhulis, but they respected it. (...) It was very beautiful. All our life was like that, we were one family. It was very beautiful.’⁴³

³⁷ Informal discussion with AK6 on 13-05-03, Interview AK3.

³⁸ First *sūra* (chapter) of the Qur’an, which is recited regularly as praise to God and a prayer for guidance and mercy.

³⁹ Interview AK1 and Interview AK4.

⁴⁰ Interview AK4.

⁴¹ Interview JA2 on 10-05-2013.

⁴² Interview AK3.

⁴³ Interview AK1.

The stress on the *Shaykh* as a father we have seen in chapter 9 is linked by many to the *zāwiya* as a mother and the house of the family. A follower in Acre who grew up in the *zāwiya* says that it was his house and he still considers it to be so; he considers all visitors to the *zāwiya* to be his personal guests and wants them to leave happy. He sees the *Shaykh* as his father and the previous *Shaykhs* as his grandfathers. Even now, every time he enters the *zāwiya*, he first goes to the *mashhad* to greet the *Shaykhs*. 'It is like when you visit someone, you knock the door and ask permission to enter, and you greet them like a child greets his grandfather.'⁴⁴ A follower in Jaffa has similar sentiments: 'We see the *zāwiya* as we see our *Shaykh*. Going to Acre is like going to visit your parents.'⁴⁵

The social function of the *zāwiya* is also stressed. 'The *zāwiya* is very important; it is the only place (*al-maḥall al-waḥīd*) where people meet because they love each other.' It is a place of *raḥma*. Another follower in Acre shared this sentiment: 'The *zāwiya* for me is the place where I feel peaceful (*bartah fihā*). When I pray or recite *wazīfa* there is a feeling of comfort (*irtāh rāḥat al-ṣadr*), and I see people I love there (...) in a place that we love.'⁴⁶ Also, the people living around can see how much love the people have and how they 'go straight (*dukhīr*)'.⁴⁷

As the Palestinians who remained in Israel lived under military rule until 1966, it was difficult for the followers who remained in Jaffa and Umm al-Fahm to visit the *zāwiya* in Acre. Even so, the *zāwiya* remained in their hearts and their lives. A follower who grew up in Umm al-Fahm in the 1950s and 60s remembers how as a girl she used to stay at the *zāwiya* in Acre for several days because the journey was so difficult. All her relatives and friends – also the non-Shadhulis – wanted her mother to bring back *baraka*, so she would put some bread from the *zāwiya* in a piece of cloth and hand it around after her return, and everyone would kiss her hand.⁴⁸ A story told in Acre and Jaffa tells how in the early 1960s, a follower from Jaffa saw *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in a dream. The *Shaykh*

⁴⁴ Interview AK4.

⁴⁵ Interview JA2.

⁴⁶ Interview AK2.

⁴⁷ Interview AK4.

⁴⁸ Informal discussion with AK6 on 06-05-2013.

drove from Acre to Jaffa in a Cadillac, telling him he wanted him to be in Acre. Two days later the follower went to Acre with his family and settled in the *zāwiya*, where they worked as caretakers for more than forty years. He and his wife were among the last residents to leave the *zāwiya* in 2006.⁴⁹

When military rule was lifted in 1966 travel became easier, and a year later when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel, the followers in Israel were also able to reconnect with the *ikhwānnā* – friends and family – there. A follower in Jaffa remembered how the *muqaddam* from Tubas used to come to Jaffa in his Mercedes – fitting seven people in his car – to see her father, who would slaughter a sheep for his guests. For her 1967 was the opening of her Shadhuli world: ‘the war helped the *ikhwānnā* to meet.’⁵⁰

The followers regularly visited each other and met each other in the *zāwiya* in Acre for holidays. A follower who grew up in the *zāwiya* in the 1980s remembers how he learnt from the people living with him in the *zāwiya* and from those who came to visit. The *mawlid al-nabī* was the highlight of the year as it was so busy and beautiful, and the residents looked after all the visitors. The most memorable visit was that of *Shaykh* Ahmad in 1981, when he came to Acre accompanied by many followers to rebury his father *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in the *mashhad*, next to his father and grandfather. In 1996, *Shaykh* Ahmad visited Acre a second time to commemorate the centennial of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din’s passing, again accompanied by many followers. Many civil and religious dignitaries were present at this occasion, and the followers remember them praising *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and *Shaykh* Ahmad.⁵¹ For this occasion the street to the south of the *zāwiya* was permanently renamed Nur al-Din al-Yashruti Street.⁵²

Nowadays as the *zāwiya* is being renovated, there is not much going on. The followers meet in the *zāwiya* every Thursday evening to pray and read the

⁴⁹ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁵⁰ Informal discussion with JA2 on 12-05-2013.

⁵¹ JA1 in Interview JA1 10-05-2013.

⁵² Informal discussion with a former follower in Acre.

wazīfa – there are never enough to do *ḥaḍra* – and once a month they welcome followers from all over Israel to meet and do *ḥaḍra*.

In addition to its connection to the ‘charismatic moment’ and the ‘golden age’, the *zāwiya* can thus be classified as a ‘sacred space’ because of its communal function, which – like the community in general – is often expressed in terms of kinship as the *zāwiya* was a residential complex where the community / family lived from the *nakba* until the start of the renovations. Like the *zāwiya* in Amman nowadays, it was thus the main place where *tarbiya* took place – but obviously in a very different way due to the absence of the *Shaykh*. As we have seen in chapter 10, *tarbiya* happened within the community and had a more informal character, with less influence of the *Shaykh* over the process. Both the mode of *tarbiya* and the setting will thus have added to the stronger identification of the *ṭarīqa* with the family, the *Shaykh* as the father, and of the focus on *maḥabba* rather than *aqida*, and the even stronger stress on kinship in the process of traditional institutionalisation. Nowadays there is more connection with the *Shaykh* and community in Amman, but this slightly different focus remains. Due to the renovations, little is happening in the *zāwiya* and *tarbiya* has moved into people’s homes.

11.3 Renovating the Zāwiya

When it became possible to support the *zāwiya* financially from abroad after 1967, funds started to come in that made renovations possible. The first partial renovations were undertaken by *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi in the late 1970s and early 1980s – De Jong wrote in 1983 that the renovation of the *takiya* was finished in 1979 and that the *mashhad* was nearing completion.⁵³ From the early 1980s, inhabitants were requested to move out (and were financially

⁵³ De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 180, note 3. A few pictures of the *zāwiya* after these renovations can be found on ArchNet Digital Library, Shadhiliyya Zawiya, <http://archive.today/MEnw6>, accessed 21-07-2014.

compensated if they wished). The first families moved in the early 1980s, but it took more than twenty years before the *zāwiya* was empty.

Nowadays, there is no one. It is forbidden, it is over (*khalas*). (...) *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* does not want anyone in the *zāwiya*. It was an order (*‘amr*) and we had to leave, it was the order of the *Shaykh*, one cannot say no. (...) They are all far, outside, but we go and ask and visit each other, we talk on the telephone if we don't have time. No, we do not leave each other.⁵⁴

AKR is registered as main *mutawallī* and as such is responsible for the renovations. He also increasingly took on tasks representing the *ṭarīqa* to wider society and showing around groups of students and tourists. In 2006 the renovations finally started, accompanied by an increase in social projects and an increase in the purchase of additional properties in the old town.⁵⁵ The project is financed by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as a whole – every month the followers donate a certain amount, depending on how much they can afford.⁵⁶

Hopes for the renovations are high. *Shaykh* Ahmad has expressed that

We hope that the work in the *zāwiya* in Acre will finish soon, so that it will remain a place of Islamic civilization, and a lighthouse of intellectual and spiritual radiation, as was the wish of *Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā* the founder of the *ṭarīqa*, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti, *raḍī Allah ‘anhu* (may God be pleased with him). Since the mother *zāwiya* in Acre has an active role in the gathering of the *murīdīn* of the *ṭarīqa* who reside in Palestine specifically, and similarly hosts the *murīdīn* that visit from different places of residence in general; to perform the Islamic *‘ibādāt*, and the ceremonies (*sha‘ā’ir*) of the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. We also hope that the *zāwiya* will perform her most important role as a *minbar* of guidance (*minbar irshād wa-hidāya*), embodying the exemplary/pioneering (*rā’id*)

⁵⁴ Interview AK1.

⁵⁵ Informal discussion with a local from Acre, October 2013.

⁵⁶ Interview AKR 29-03-2012, Interview JA1 16-04-2012, informal discussions with followers in Acre and Jaffa.

role of the Sufi Path and its *zāwiya* in the development of contemporary society in Acre.⁵⁷

The followers in Acre also have high hopes for the renovations: ‘The first step is to restore the *zāwiya* and then to restore everything – to restore the world. To bring peace. The *zāwiya* will be open for everyone who loves the *ṭarīqa* and the *Shaykh*, and will give service to all.’⁵⁸ The house of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din is to become a library and a museum where outsiders are welcome to learn about the *ṭarīqa* – there are plans to construct a special entrance for visitors. There will also be rooms for visitors and students – because it is important to spread the light and to educate people, including non-Shadhulis. The *zāwiya* was a place where people came from all over the world to learn – it has to be like this again.⁵⁹

These hopes and plans are also expressed among followers in Jaffa: ‘*Sīdī* Ahmad wants it to be a place of knowledge (*maḥall al-‘ilm*), [he wants] the library to have books of all topics, so that everyone will see: this is the *Shaykh*, this is the *zāwiya*, this is *ahl al-tarīqa*,’ ‘all people will know *ikhwānnā* and the *murshid*.’⁶⁰ There will be an *infitāḥ*, a *renaissance*, they will be refreshed; there will be new relations and new knowledge of God. The happiness they know from the stories will be again, albeit in a different way.⁶¹

One follower hopes that the *zāwiya* will have a beautiful opening with many visitors from all countries, and that it will be open for everyone, bringing more visitors to Acre – but also:

Acre is the foundation. *Inshā’Allāh* the *Shaykh* will also come to Acre (...) because Acre is the origin, our fathers were all in Acre. (...) *Inshā’Allāh* he will return, *inshā’Allāh* all of them will return to Acre.⁶²

⁵⁷ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, 15-03-2014, p.1.

⁵⁸ Informal discussion with AK2 and AK4 on 08-04-2012.

⁵⁹ Interview AK4.

⁶⁰ JA13 in Interview JA2.

⁶¹ JA4 in Interview JA2.

⁶² Interview with a follower in Israel, Spring 2013. The possibility of the *Shaykh* returning is also mentioned by a follower in the West Bank, immediately followed by a discussion of the idea that they do not participate in politics.

True to the *ṭarīqa*'s rule not to involve in or even talk about politics, most do not comment on the issue of their brethren in exile. When I asked a few people in an informal group setting they replied that times have changed and the physical return of the refugees is not linked to the renovation – they should trust in God and the *Shaykh*.⁶³

We have seen in chapter 9 how the value of being accepted by society is articulated in miracle narratives about *Shaykh Ahmad* – the ability of *ikhwānnā* to be accepted and even respected by Israeli society – Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Jews – is considered one of his main powers. For the followers, such stories are proof of their spiritual advancement and the good behaviour based on it, but it also enables them to continue their public role in society, which is especially relevant in the context of the renovation of the *zāwiya* and the hopes that go with it to restore its role in wider society.

11.4 The Place of the Zāwiya in Acre's Society

The *ṭarīqa* is well-known in Acre and has always been well-respected. I have once seen a local Muslim pay his respects to the tombs of the *Shaykhs* when he entered the *zāwiya* on other business, but in order to understand how the wider Muslim community in Acre views the *ṭarīqa*, the *zāwiya*, and the shrines, wider anthropological fieldwork needs to be carried out. There are good relations with the Christian community. The *zāwiya* has hosted dinners during Ramadan and Christmas for Muslims and Christians for years. At the Christmas celebrations they have dinner together, they read from the Bible and the words of *Sīdnā Ahmad*, and they sing psalms and *nashīd*. Sometimes there are similar festivities for Easter in Tarshiha. Representatives of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Acre also attend other interfaith meetings, such as the annual Easter reception of the

⁶³ Interview with followers in Israel, Spring 2013.

Roman Catholic community in Acre.⁶⁴ In the words of the Review Panel, this 'shows that the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya interacts in good faith with the local community regardless to [*sic*] their beliefs as long as this does not contradict the 'aqīda.'⁶⁵ The celebration of each other's holidays was normal in Palestine and has only recently become a point of contention.⁶⁶ For the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, maintaining good relations with everyone in society and keeping this traditional spirit of neighbourliness alive in the face of Salafi challenges is an expression of their 'aqīda. The followers do not join to celebrate the birth or resurrection of the Son of God as the Christians do, but they want to show respect for their neighbours' beliefs and share in their joy.

More recently, the *ḥarīqa* has embarked on establishing more ties with other groups in society and cooperating with them. This increased effort started more or less simultaneously with the start of renovations, and is presented as part of the same project to restore the role of the *zāwiya* in society at large. AKR – who is registered as the *mutawallī* of the *waqf* and who is primarily responsible for the renovation – describes his function as *mas'ūl 'an al-'alāqāt al-khārijīyya*, 'responsible for external relations' in the absence of the *Shaykh*, 'to develop the view of the *Shaykh* and his policy towards other groups.'⁶⁷

This is the view of the *Shaykh* Ahmad. He wants to be back here. (...) We have to affect and to give the people their needs. I was the man suitable to do this function, but it is not my idea. I am just a mediator and I have no existence, I have no will, the will is from him, and the idea from him. (...) I do here the dream of *Shaykh* Ahmad. We are not renovating stones. We have to renovate hearts.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Informal discussion with Dr. Ali al-Yashruti on 26-03-2012, Interview AK3, Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁶⁵ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 57.

⁶⁶ For some examples of such shared celebrations, see Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*.

⁶⁷ Interview AKR 29-02-2012. According to the Review Panel his mandate is more limited: he is a 'public relations person, responsible for external relations in the absence of the sheikh *on a case by case basis*' (my italics). Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 56.

⁶⁸ Interview AKR 29-03-2012. The Review Panel states: 'This is personal view of one individual and does not necessarily represent the rest of the Yashruti community. There is no proof that this is true.' Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

He says he is mandated by the *Shaykh* to develop social projects with other local groups in the name of the Yashrutiyya, in order to restore the original function of the *zāwiya* adapted to contemporary society. As the Review Panel points out, this is to be done 'without affecting the main purpose of the *zāwiya* and without violating the teachings and principles of the *ṭarīqa*.'⁶⁹ Before 1948, the main problem in society was hunger and the *zāwiya* used its resources to feed people. Nowadays he sees violence as the main contemporary problem, which can be solved through education. This is why he chose to focus on educational projects.

Some people see us as passive. We are passive when we declare we are not dealing with politics – our tendency not to rule the regime or to rule the country. But no, we are not passive. I think we have principles and concepts. We *must* transfer it to the new generation. But it's an educational issue, not political.⁷⁰

The *zāwiya* donates money to the musical band, Tau Banda, of the Franciscan Terra Santa school in Acre.⁷¹ The *zāwiya* also provides a venue for activities organized by the students of Ayalim student village in Acre, a government-funded student movement which aims to develop marginalized communities in the Galilee and Negev, driven by a secular settlement ideology (see chapter 8). They operate their daily after-school centre for local children in a building on the square opposite the *zāwiya*.⁷²

AKR welcomes all kinds of groups in the *zāwiya* for religious, educational and tourist purposes. Curious tourists often wander into the *zāwiya* when the gates are open and they are free to look around and ask questions if there is someone there to answer them. When tour groups want to schedule a visit in

⁶⁹ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 57.

⁷⁰ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁷¹ Interview AKR 29-02-2012; informal discussion with the local priest. Website Terra Santa School Acco: <http://terra-santa-acre.com/>

⁷² Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

advance they need to contact AKR. He particularly works together with Zeev ben Arie, who specializes on 'spiritual tours' (see paragraph 9.3).⁷³

AKR tells his visitors that he does not believe in nationalism: 'God created the whole universe for mankind. Nationality, the homeland, it doesn't exist, it exists only in our mind, we create it, we divide. (...) For me, the universe is the universe, everywhere is my homeland. I belong to everywhere.'⁷⁴ He says there are many groups that appreciate this attitude and come to talk to them.⁷⁵ One of the main groups with whom he is connected is Derekh Avraham / Tariq Ibrahim (see paragraph 8.2.4). During the 2010 Fringe Festival in Acre, the *zāwiya* was the stage of a performance advertised as 'the Sufi/Jewish project: The mystical inner journey of the Kabbalah and Sufi mysticism,' an experiential evening including meditation, music, Sufi dance and a 'spiritual circle for peace,' with the participation of many people associated with Derekh Avraham.⁷⁶ During Acre's Fringe Festival in 2012, the Mevlavi *Shaykha* Khadija (see paragraph 8.2.4) gave a workshop in a venue owned by the Shadhuliyya. She also visited Acre during her Caravan in December 2013 when she held a meeting and a whirling workshop in the *zāwiya*.⁷⁷ A new initiative undertaken by Jewish Sufis and sympathizers in Israel is the Sufi Festival in the desert near Eilat, which was organised for the first time in 2012. While both Ghassan Manasra and AKR were involved in the preparations, they did not actually participate in the festival.⁷⁸

One of Derekh Avraham / Tariq Ibrahim's meetings (in March 2012) was hosted by AKR. The first lectures were held in the *zāwiya*, and there was a whirling workshop in one of the buildings owned by the *zāwiya* close by,

⁷³ Mysteries of Israel, <http://www.israelmystery.co.il/pws/>, accessed 11-04-2014.

⁷⁴ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁷⁵ He also said he talks to settlers, but I have not been able to verify this.

⁷⁶ The programme included: Practicing meditation of free space by Prof. Oded Maimon, Music by master oud player Yair Dalal and friends, Sufi dance with dancer Ora Balha, Holy utterance: the mystical inner journey of the Kabbalah and Sufi mysticism by *Shaykh* Ghassan Manasra, Dr. Avi Elkayam, Dr. Omer Reiss, Spiritual circle for peace with audience participation by *Shaykh* Ghassan Manasra, Rabbi Roberto Arbib.

<http://www.accofestival.co.il/english/catalog.php?id=175>, accessed 22-02-2012.

⁷⁷ *Shaykha* Khadija, <http://www.whirling-dervish.org/> These meetings are also mentioned in Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 132.

⁷⁸ Informal discussion with one of the organisers. Sufi Festival, <http://www.sufifestival.co.il/english>, accessed 30-10-2013.

performed by a follower of *Shaykhs* Khadija. In the evening there was a *dhikr* session in the hotel led by *Shaykh* Abd al-Salam al-Manasra, in which Arabic and Hebrew chants were combined. On the second day there were several lectures in the hotel. Apart from AKR, no-one from the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya was present.⁷⁹

The *zāwiya* also welcomes tour groups such as those led by tourguide Zeev ben Arie⁸⁰ and study groups. For example, in April 2012 AKR hosted a study visit from MA students of Middle East and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University in the *zāwiya*.⁸¹ The Arab-Jewish ensemble Diwan, associated with the Acco Theatre Center, has developed a Whirling Dervish act which performed in the *zāwiya* for a journalist from a tourism website while I was visiting the *zāwiya* in May 2012.⁸² In the words of the Review Panel: 'Even though the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is not concerned with the mentioned scientific or touristic functions, this is considered as support to science and interaction with the local communities.'⁸³

11.5 Fanā' as Collective Action

These efforts are supported by AKR's interpretations of the *Shaykh's* teachings. As we have seen in chapter 9 and 10 he presents *ta'ammul* as the central practice of the *ṭarīqa*, which leads one to accept diversity and realise the oneness of one and all. He sees the *Shaykh* as the contemporary manifestation of *al-insān al-kāmil*, and as such he has two aspects: He has a human character connected to mankind – in which capacity he is in a state of *baqā'*, embraced by God – and a 'light character', a ceaseless connection to the *ḥaḍra muḥammadiya*

⁷⁹ Personal observations.

⁸⁰ Mysteries of Israel, <http://www.israelmystery.co.il/pws/>, accessed 11-04-2014.

⁸¹ Study day of the Hebrew University's MA in Islamic Studies, hosted by AKR in the *zāwiya* in Acre on 26-03-2012.

⁸² Israel Arts Directory, Diwan Group.

<http://www.culture.org.il/directory/viewItem.asp?cat=2&subcat=2.3&idNum=7843>, accessed 30-10-2013.

⁸³ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 59.

– in which capacity he is in a state of *fanā'*, embracing all existence. He explains his love for the *Shaykh* because by being part of him, in *fanā'* with him, you are part of everything. 'The interpretation of *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din] to *fanā'* was to (...) capture and control the ego (*tatassalat al-nafs*). To (...) all the time remember that you are part of something huge.' He repeatedly refers to sayings of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din: 'You are not a small star, but you have the whole universe inside you.'⁸⁴ 'If you love me, you'll be part of me. Even you'll be me.' And: 'In our path there is no I, only we.'⁸⁵ This is the classical Sufi idea of *fanā'* in the *Shaykh* (*fanā' fi-l-shaykh*) which developed out of the earliest ideas on *fanā'* in God as a more accessible preliminary goal for those on earlier stages of the Path.⁸⁶ He illustrates this with a story from the *Yashrutiyya*:

There is a story about one of our followers. He lived in Lebanon. And one day he saw a tiger. And when he saw a tiger, he imagined that the tiger was his *Shaykh*. He ran toward the tiger and hugged him and held him and told him 'My love, where are you? My *Shaykh*, I am looking for you.' According to the story the tiger did nothing, he left the man. Because he believed that the tiger had been integrated with the *Shaykh* and the *Shaykh* with Muhammad and Muhammad with God and he and the tiger and the *Shaykh* and Muhammad and God are one.⁸⁷

Based on this, AKR says that a Sufi needs to dissolve his/her independent existence to contain his/her opposite. On one level one needs to respect diversity, only to make the achieving of unity possible on a higher level. He

⁸⁴ Interview AKR 12-04-2012. The Review Panel points out that this is a saying of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Review Panel, 'Response to email of October 12'.

⁸⁵ Interview AKR 29-02-2012. The Review Panel points out that these are not sayings by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 60.

⁸⁶ Mojaddedi, 'Annihilation and Abiding in God'; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 63–64, 141, 203; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 100, 131–137; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 69–73. See paragraph 1.2 and the glossary.

⁸⁷ Interview AKR 29-02-2012. This story can be found in al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Haqq*, 81–82. In this version the follower is a shepherd from Tubas who fell asleep and lost his stock. When he went to look for them he encountered the lion and he embraced the lion because he thought he was his *Shaykh*. The lion then led him to his livestock who had wandered off in the *wadī*. In a footnote, the author explains that it is necessary for the true *murīd* (*al-murīd al-ṣādiq*) to abolish himself (*hālahu*) in his *Shaykh*, and his *Shaykh* in Muhammad, and Muhammad in God.

explained this through another nineteenth-century story about the relations between *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and Baha'ullah's son Abbas Effendi:

Abbas, the son of Baha, loved *Shaykh* Ali [Nur al-Din] very much. And one day he asked him: 'If I ask you to be part of your path, would you agree?' *Shaykh* Ali said: '*Ya Efendi*, what you have inside you is enough. You don't need more.' This respecting the concept of the other is a kind of *fanā'*. Because Abbas must not be like me. We must be a spectrum with various colours in order to make *fanā'*. If we are all the same we are not *fanā'*. We are God, all of us we are God. But God created us to be various and different.⁸⁸

According to AKR, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi developed the concept of *fanā'* to include the relations between the different communities in Mandate Palestine (see chapter 9), and *Shaykh* Ahmad interprets *fanā'* as 'collective action': not just becoming one with God, the *Shaykh* and the followers, but also with the larger community.⁸⁹ This diversity also relates to questions of power: the powerful need to give space for the less powerful and include them rather than exclude them. Someone who has more power should not abuse his power but use it to be a part of the whole and perform together. 'You educate these powerful people to act with less powerful people in order to build a collective. Otherwise gaps will happen between the strong and the weak. And this we call injustice.' In his view, this is also the purpose of the sharia: 'By making a law, the sharia, you allow the strong to be equal before the law like the less powerful. So you build collective societies or a collective company or a collective community. This kind of collective is a kind of *fanā'*.'⁹⁰

He explains his support for the communal projects mentioned above from within this framework. Regarding the musical centre of the Terra Santa School, Tau Banda, he says:

⁸⁸ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁸⁹ According to the Review Panel, '[t]here is no link between *fana* and Mandate Palestine. This is mixing of spiritual matters with political issues.' Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 60-61.

⁹⁰ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

The students play in a collective way, to develop among the community the character of collectivity; to act collectively (*jama'ī*), to work collectively, to do or to build collectively, and to play music collectively, not only one to show himself. To play collectively means you belong to a group, and you do your best to restore the group. (...) This came from the Sufi principle, *al-fanā'*. You are part of a huge entity. (...) You have to kill yourself for the collective. Not physically, but to control your ego, not to say 'I am,' but to say 'we are.'⁹¹

The dialogue initiatives especially relate to these ideas:

I am in touch with every group, I have no limitation, I make no selection. (...) We are open to talk with everyone, about everything. And this is our policy. Any group which is willing to talk, we are ready to talk... and to hug. Not to confront. To hug, to understand.⁹²

For example, 'a Jewish group came here, almost every day. And they have a stereotype [image] of Islam. By discussing and dialoguing with them, most of them got confused. And this is our call. Not to influence them. Just to tell there is another way.'⁹³ He is very clear that one cannot call this 'change'. It is the beginning, the initial confusion when ideas are challenged, that might lead to change eventually.

The change will happen by yourself. Otherwise, it is not a change. If we control the whole change, this is an imposition. We give you tools, small tools (...) We give you to think, [we give you] questions... You have to answer it, in any way you like. (...) It is not direct action with immediate results. This is a process. A process must begin with beliefs. (...) And this is enough for us. It is not our duty to repair the whole society. If we contribute one drop to the society it is enough. The others will make other drops. But our duty [is] to make one drop only.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁹² Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

⁹³ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁹⁴ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

By reflecting love, understanding and tolerance, you can influence those around you. Because he sees Israel as a democratic state, he believes these grassroots initiatives will make a difference: 'You have to act at the lowest level. When this level demands the upper one will obey because they are politicians.'⁹⁵ Following this, it is up to the Muslims to make the Jews feel welcome:

I understand the fears of the Jews. What happened in the Holocaust, it's not easy, but we, the Arabs, must know how to reflect safety and security towards the Jews because they need it. They need to live and to feel they live in safety and security. You must understand them. If we reflect this, I think we could solve big problems. When we negotiate and they feel safety, with security, the negotiation will be easy.⁹⁶

I discussed these ideas with AKR in the *zāwiya* in Acre during several meetings in the Spring of 2012. He encouraged me to prepare questions for *Shaykh* Ahmad based on our discussions and send them to him so he could forward them to the *Shaykh*. Because of this, when meeting *Shaykh* Ahmad a year later in the *zāwiya* in Amman I included the question 'AKR said that you have a new interpretation of *fanā'*: *fanā'* as 'collective action'. Could you speak about this topic?'⁹⁷ During my second visit to the *zāwiya* two days later AKR happened to be visiting as well, and *Shaykh* Ahmad and Dr. Ali asked him to explain it.

When I asked AKR later about this interaction, he said it was not a problem, as he is allowed to have his own understanding of these matters. When I asked if the *Shaykh* agreed with this interpretation, he answered that the *Shaykh* never disagrees, he does not explain or impose a way of understanding. He gives one sentence and you should explain it for yourself. He guides you to the right questions, not to the right answers. He does not direct the followers, he makes them think. In the practical issues of the restoration of the *zāwiya* he gives

⁹⁵ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁹⁶ Interview AKR 27-02-2012.

⁹⁷ Email sent to AKR on 15-03-2013, forwarded to *Shaykh* Ahmad.

general outlines, such as ‘connect with others,’ and AKR has the space to decide how to implement this.⁹⁸

As we have seen this mode of communication and the space it leaves for personal interpretation is a common feature of the *ṭarīqa* among all followers, and is particularly strong in AKR’s view of the *Shaykh* as he strongly stresses the individual inspiration the *Shaykh* bestows on his followers. In the case of most followers this individual autonomy is mediated and thus controlled to a certain extent through the community, but in the case of AKR has little mediation and has truly become a high level of individual autonomy. He thus legitimizes his interpretations and the actions he bases on them, which is accepted by those who like him value such autonomy (those of the ‘new spiritual’ movement), but is not accepted by those who see the interaction within the community and an adherence to its basic principles as an essential prerequisite for the acceptance of interpretations.

Here we see the dynamic of interpretation at work on a level that surpasses the individual and the community of *ikhwānnā*, but directly shapes the social role undertaken by the *zāwiya* in Israeli society. AKR explains his choices by referring to his own interpretations of the teachings of the *ṭarīqa*, explicitly referring to the freedom individual followers have to interpret these teachings when combining their spiritual life with their life in society. AKR’s interpretation of *fanā’* – like his interpretation of the role of the *Shaykh* (see chapter 9) – might be explained from his secular background, the alternative influences he had in his spiritual path (such as his meetings with Western and Jewish Sufis) and his understanding of the political and socio-economic situation. AKR’s interpretations, the projects of interfaith cooperation and dialogue he bases on them, and his presentation of the *ṭarīqa* as an organisation of ‘moderate Arabs’ place him within a certain stream of thought that is deemed controversial by many Palestinian citizens of Israel who understand Israel to be an ethnocracy rather than a democracy and do not feel represented by the government (see chapter 8).

⁹⁸ Interview AKR 16-05-2013.

As we discussed in paragraph 8.3.4, the practice of ‘dialogue’ is problematic in the Israeli context as it presumes two equal partners in dialogue who simply need to talk to achieve reconciliation. This is not doing justice to the reality on the ground as there is a clear power imbalance. The continuous marginalization and dispossession of the Palestinians is turned on its head as they become the ones who have to make the Jews feel at home, despite facing continuous policies of exclusion and expulsion. In addition to this, dialogue often focuses on secondary problems rather than core issues. In the case of interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine, this is certainly the case. While Judaism and Christianity play large roles in Zionism, religion only plays a secondary role in the experience of Palestinians, who primarily suffer from dispossession, expulsion and discrimination, leading to a range of socio-economic problems. By focusing on religious issues, the discussion becomes too abstract and by not contextualising the situation it is misrepresented and misunderstood.

Another problematic aspect of these interfaith initiatives is related to a common contemporary (often Western) understanding of ‘Sufism’ as an universalist religion which is not concerned with rules and outer forms and can therefore be combined easily with other forms of spirituality. This is partly a continuation of eighteenth-century ideas of ‘mysticism’ and Orientalist ideas of Sufism in which the lines between different religions are blurred in search for a ‘mystical core’ common to all religions (see chapter 1), but should also be seen as part of the development of New Religious Movements and New Age. Geaves points to the possibility inherent within certain *ṭuruq* of individualistic, eclectic and antinomian approaches.⁹⁹ Some contemporary Sufi movements take this to such an extreme that they do not consider themselves to be Muslims any more. Most Sufis are uneasy with this development however as they stress that they are first and foremost practising Muslims and believe one cannot be a Sufi without being a Muslim.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, most members of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel,

⁹⁹ Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, 140–141, 162–164.

¹⁰⁰ The clearest example is the phenomenon of ‘Universal Sufism’, but there are also traditional *ṭuruq* who have shifted their self-definition. *Ibid.*, 161–188; Lewisohn, ‘Persian Sufism in the Contemporary West.’

while very open towards people from other religions, place value on being proper Muslims, and do not relate to such purposefully syncretistic interpretations and practices as AKR has occasionally uttered.

These ideas and the projects based on them are considered controversial by many locals. The poor, neglected, criminal environment in which many people live in the old city, combined with the increasing take-over by rich outsiders, both Arabs and Jews, has led to an intense distrust of outsiders (see chapter 8).¹⁰¹ While many locals respect the Shadhuliyya, others see the Shadhulis as outsiders and see the evacuation of the *zāwiya* in this light as they consider the renovations of the *zāwiya*, the development of its tourist potential and its interfaith approach to be part of the development of Acre's old town which is being restyled as a model of coexistence while dispossessing its inhabitants (see chapter 8).¹⁰² The attitude towards Ayalim should also be seen in this light. In 2007, the ILA handed three renovated buildings in the old town to Ayalim without any legal auction (see chapter 8). They approached AKR in 2011 and have been given venues for their after-school activities. According to AKR the Shadhuliyya gave Ayalim legitimacy to enter society,¹⁰³ but the mixed responses Ayalim gets in Acre leads to the question if this association is not damaging the Yashrutiyya's position in society.

For the followers, these projects and initiatives show the respect and love of the *ṭarīqa* for Acre's cultural diversity: 'I think the issue here is to work with the people of the town, with the factions (*ṭawā'if*) that are present in the town. This will lead to smoothness (*suhl*) and *maḥabba*.'¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, there is also unease and distrust related to the choice of guests that come to the *zāwiya* and the partners that the Yashrutiyya is supporting.¹⁰⁵ Some followers oppose these projects, but how deep this unease reaches is difficult to fathom. One follower in

¹⁰¹ 'Acre facing the New and Old Colonizers', Tarabut-Hithabrut 25-01-2012, <http://www.tarabut.info/en/articles/article/Colonizing-Acre/>. Accessed 22-02-2012.

¹⁰² These observations are based on informal discussions with former followers and people in the town, including one recorded interview. Further systematic research would enable us to reach a deeper understanding how widespread these views are.

¹⁰³ Interview AKR 16-05-2013.

¹⁰⁴ Interview AK2.

¹⁰⁵ Interview AKR 29-02-2012.

Jaffa told me that some of *ikhwānā* are nervous (*bikhāfu*), but accept it has to be done (*hek lāzim*).¹⁰⁶ Others choose to focus on the positive side of the cooperations and the good things that are being done to help the children of the neighbourhood.¹⁰⁷ As AKR says: ‘Even if they have intentions, so what? Let’s see the positive phenomena.’¹⁰⁸

In fact, the answer *Shaykh* Ahmad gave to my question on *fanā*’ shows that their understandings of *fanā*’ are quite far apart – or at least the image they present. *Shaykh* Ahmad does not understand *fanā*’ as the dissolution of the individual. He explains that when you get to know someone thoroughly only the ignorance of this person disappears, while the two entities remain separate. He writes that *fanā*’ means that all moral imperfections are lost from the worshipper (*yafnā min al-‘abd*) because he is in a state of presence between the hands of God (*bayna īday al-Ḥaqq*). He loses his impurities because he is nearing perfection. The *Shaykh* stresses that the worshipper’s impurities are dissolved but the worshipper remains. The worshipper’s attributes (*ṣiffāt*) are perfected; the perfect attributes originate from the attributes of God (*al-ṣiffāt al-kāmil aṣalin min ṣiffāt al-haqq*). The Prophet Muhammad calls for this in his Sunna when he told the believers: ‘Have the morals of God (*takhallaqu bi-akhlāq-i Allāh*),’ and this is why he is *al-insān al-kāmil*, just as the Qur’an is the divine text that expresses the will of God.¹⁰⁹

It is unclear how the communication between *Shaykh* Ahmad and AKR operates and to what extent *Shaykh* Ahmad is involved in these projects. As can be seen from his hopes for the *zāwiya*, he stresses the Islamic character of the *zāwiya* and does not refer explicitly (if at all) to interfaith dialogues – the only sentence that could be taken to hint at it is

we also hope that the *zāwiya* will perform her most important role as a *minbar* of guidance (*minbar irshād wa-hidāya*), embodying the exemplary/pioneering (*rā’id*)

¹⁰⁶ Informal discussion with a follower in Jaffa on 12-05-2013.

¹⁰⁷ Informal discussion with a follower in Jaffa on 12-05-2013, informal discussion with AK1; Interview AK4.

¹⁰⁸ Interview AKR 16-05-2013.

¹⁰⁹ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, 14-10-2013, p.11-13.

role of the Sufi Path and its *zawāya* in the development of contemporary society in Acre.¹¹⁰

Regarding the *ṭarīqa*'s social projects in Acre, AKR claims to be working on the *Shaykh*'s orders and to openly communicate with him while retaining a lot of freedom of interpretation, while the Review Panel states he is only responsible for managing the *waqf* and represents the *Shaykh* only on 'a case by case basis',¹¹¹ and the *Shaykh* writes the following about these projects:

Every group (*jamā'a*) in Acre has social projects which embody its specific vision, and we do not go into specifics of any of these groups. We have our own specific vision, the Muhammadan Islamic vision, relying on the path (*sīra*) of the founder of the *ṭarīqa*, featured in the book *Rihla ila al-Ḥaqq*, and his *tawjīhat* and teachings, *raḍī Allah 'anhu*, and contained in his sayings featured in the book *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq*, such as 'the path is the Book and the Sunna' and 'all of the path is *ādāb*' and his saying 'all of me is Muhammadan.' *Regarding Ayalim, we do not know anything about it [my italics].*¹¹²

As we have seen the idea of 'spiritual communication' enables the *ṭarīqa* to function as a highly centralized community which at the same time is adaptable to local circumstances enabling the follower to participate on both levels, and resolves the potential paradox of *fikr* and *taslīm*. In the case of the material and social renovation of the *zāwiya* in Acre, however, these paradoxes have reached a socially and politically charged level. AKR refers to the same mechanism of 'spiritual communication' regarding his mandate for the renovation and social activities of the *ṭarīqa* in Acre, but it is unclear how far this mandate actually reaches and whether he is indeed acting on the *Shaykh*'s orders or on his own as their concrete relationship is unclear. The Review Panel's statement

¹¹⁰ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, 15-03-14, p.1.

¹¹¹ Review Panel, 'Major Comments and Remarks', 3-4; Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 56-57.

¹¹² Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, 15-03-14, p.1.

that this happens on a 'case by case basis' does not really clarify this issue.¹¹³

The impossibility to articulate the exact nature of the spiritual connection between *Shaykh* and follower is thus extended to the material realm when it comes to the exact dealings regarding the renovation and the space of the *ṭarīqa* in society.

11.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the *zāwiya* in Acre occupies a special place among the *zawāya* of the *ṭarīqa*: while the *Shaykhs* and followers may move around, Acre will always remain the historical centre of the *ṭarīqa* which connects them to their history – the founding period of the *ṭarīqa* and the golden age of the *ṭarīqa* in pre-1948 Palestine. Even so, their true sacred centre is the *Shaykh*, in whom the light of God continues to be manifested.

The *zāwiya* is a 'sacred space' in the true sense of the word, as a space where the sacred, God, manifested His light through *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, the embodiment of the same message that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca, a 'hierophanic event' as Eliade would call it, participating in two realms, simultaneously remaining itself and becoming the absolute other, and as such 'the ultimate reference to the context of a culture', or in this case, *ṭarīqa*.¹¹⁴ Such a hierophanic event makes the space in which the divine manifested itself into the *axis mundi*, the cosmic pillar at the centre of the universe around which the whole world is constituted.¹¹⁵ Just as the *Shaykh*, the *quṭb al-zamān*, is the axis of the world, so the space where he manifested God's light, from which he spread his message and from which he continues to spread his *baraka* and the *nūr muḥammadī*, functions as the *axis mundi* for his followers. It is not the point of origin of the whole world, as is the case of some of the shrines described by Joel Brereton,¹¹⁶ but it is the point of origin for the *ṭarīqa*.

¹¹³ Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 56.

¹¹⁴ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11–12, 20–65; Brereton, 'Sacred Space', 526.

¹¹⁵ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–21; Franke, 'Khidr in Istanbul', 36–38.

¹¹⁶ Brereton, 'Sacred Space', 533.

By connecting to the *zāwiya*, the followers can participate in the charisma of the first three *Shaykhs* who are still spiritually present there, and connect to their history. Sacred spaces remove the temporal distance between follower and event, original community,¹¹⁷ to which they are also connected through a genealogical bond. The *zāwiya* thus plays an important role in the institutionalisation of the *ṭarīqa*, as it manifests both the traditional and the charismatic. As a symbol of the original charismatic moment in which *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din started the institutionalisation of the *ṭarīqa*, and as the space in which the charismatic continues to be present through the tombs of the previous *Shaykhs* and through the community itself, the *zāwiya* in Acre is an excellent illustration of the maintenance of charisma within a Sufi movement – even when the *Shaykh* himself is not present.

In addition to this, the devotional and communal functions of the *zāwiya* bestow sanctity on the place.¹¹⁸ It strengthens the cohesion and solidarity of the community, both the local community in Acre and the translocal community in Israel. As Brereton points out: ‘Grounding the precarious and fluid structures of social organization in these places imparts to them a sense of conformity to a system that is not arbitrary but intrinsic to the very nature of things.’¹¹⁹ The socialisation process that happens here therefore strengthens the attachment to the traditional and charismatic aspects of the symbolic universe, the Yashruti family and the continuing spiritual power that they enact through the community, and the particular structure of authority to which this is connected.

The form of a sacred space can be an essential aspect of its holiness, either by conferring sanctity or by representing the order of the universe.¹²⁰ In the case of the *zāwiya* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Acre, it is the dynamic

¹¹⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–65; Brereton, ‘Sacred Space’, 533.

¹¹⁸ This is comparable to a mosque, which has no sanctity of its own and represents no connection to the sacred, but offers those who enter this possibility to interact with the sacred through their individual and communal acts of worship. The architecture of a mosque shows ‘the tension between the sanctification of a place and the denial of any localization of divine presence’, but due to its function as ‘a place of ritual and a place of meaning’, it does count as a sacred place. Brereton, ‘Sacred Space’, 528.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 533.

¹²⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20–65; Brereton, ‘Sacred Space’, 527.

nature of the *zāwiya* that expresses the fundamental value of the *ṭarīqa* to adapt to society and go with the times. By renovating the *zāwiya* the *Shaykh* strengthens his ties to his predecessors and to the *ṭarīqa*, and he and his followers hope to rekindle the important role the *zāwiya* had in Acre's society as a lighthouse for the people. We have argued that the notion that the *Shaykh* continues on the path of spiritual renewal and adapts the *ṭarīqa* to the times, and that the community's participation in and acceptance by society, are seen as major marks of his spiritual power and thus important bases for his authority. The renovation of the *zāwiya* is the best proof of this continued care for the community and commitment to innovation. In addition to the *Shaykh's* connection to the original 'charismatic moment' of this ancestors, his commitment to the *ṭarīqa's* future is thus an important aspect of his authority.

Such an enterprise naturally calls for an effective administration and a larger degree of bureaucratisation. Because of the diasporic conditions of the *ṭarīqa*, the *Shaykh* cannot oversee the renovations himself and has to rely on AKR, who refers to the dynamic relationship and communication between *Shaykh* and follower to legitimate his interpretations of the *Shaykh's* will – interpretations which do not always reflect the consensus within the rest of the *ṭarīqa* but come closer to the Jewish Sufi milieu with which he has connections. This has far-reaching consequences for the social role of the *ṭarīqa* and the *zāwiya* in Acre as he connects to some people, groups and organisations that are deemed controversial by Acre's society and by some followers, politicizing what might on the surface seem an apolitical message of love and tolerance.

Here we touch on the question 'who speaks for this *ṭarīqa*' – a question which is inherent in the contemporary situation characterized by fragmentation of authority and Muslim Politics,¹²¹ and particularly relevant in the context of dialogue initiatives.¹²² AKR takes the role of 'representative of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya' upon himself, but he is not authorized to do so by the *Shaykh* in Amman, and he does not accurately represent the views of either the 'official

¹²¹ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5.

¹²² Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel.' See paragraph 8.3.4.

religion' in Amman nor of the vernacular religion of the followers in Acre and Jaffa – in fact, he represents his individual religion, to follow Bowman's tripartite classification of the levels of religion.¹²³ This confirms Klinkhammer and Bram's comments on the problematic nature of interfaith dialogue initiatives as paths to peace,¹²⁴ as the individuals and groups involved rarely represent a large group.

¹²³ Bowman and Valk, 'Vernacular Religion.' See paragraph 1.2.

¹²⁴ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel'; Klinkhammer, 'Sufism Contextualised', 209–210.

Conclusion to Part III

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Acre and Jaffa

Several scholars have noted a limited Sufi revival as several types of indigenous Sufism seem on the rise in Israel and Jerusalem: centrally organised *ṭuruq*, local Sufi groups around a *shaykh*, or individuals interested in Sufism. In some of these cases, Sufism is understood as ‘Islamic ethics and religious education framed within tradition’, renamed *‘ilm al-tawḥīd*, as is common in many reformist Sufi movements around the world, and the general trend of rebranding Sufism as Traditional Islam¹ At the same time, Israeli ‘new spiritual’ groups started to reach out to Sufism as ‘the other Islam’.² As Howell argued, this renewed focus on Sufi spirituality might be seen as a reaction to Modernism,³ but we should not forget the local factors influencing these developments. Geaves suggests that for Palestinians this revival might stem from the need to find a ‘third option’ between secularism and Islamism – a way to reconnect to their religious heritage which is not deemed political.⁴ Similarly, the Israeli Jewish Sufis are interested in Sufism as ‘the other Islam’, a potential partner for dialogue.⁵

Dominguez Diaz and Stjernholm’s criticism of Hermansen’s classification of contemporary Sufi movements in the West is thus very valid. In Israel’s hybrid society, the categories of ‘East’ and ‘West’ are problematic, and the classifications ‘transplants/hybrids/perennials’, or ‘theirs and ours’, confuse more than they clarify.⁶ Jewish Sufi ‘new spirituality’ is heavily influenced by Western hybrid and perennial movements, but the traditional *ṭuruq* and Sufi groups do not fall in either category – they are not transplants as they have their centre either in

¹ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’; Hamid, ‘The Rise of the “Traditional Islam” Network(s).’

² Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel.’

³ Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks.’

⁴ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 43.

⁵ Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel’, 120–124.

⁶ Hermansen, ‘In the Garden of American Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Global Sufism.’; Dominguez Diaz, ‘Performance, Belonging and Identity’, 230; Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?’

Israel or among the Palestinian diaspora, but they differ significantly from the hegemonic culture, as do transplants studied in the Western context. The Shadhuli-Yashruti's local community in Acre, specifically, is located both at the centre and the periphery of the *ṭarīqa*'s spiritual geography due to on the one hand the presence of the *zāwiya*, the continuing locus of spiritual power associated with the charismatic moment and the first three *Shaykhs*, and on the other hand, due to its physical separation from the personal symbolic centre, the *Shaykh* in Amman. In addition to this, our case study shows that different attitudes can exist in one *ṭarīqa* or local community. Stjernholm's suggestion to focus on a group's relation to a historical tradition and narrative and cultural milieu is indeed more useful here,⁷ as it sheds light on the different attitude of most of the followers, who explicitly adhere to the Islamic tradition, and AKR, who has a hybrid attitude, seemingly influenced by Jewish 'new spirituality' and Western perennialism in the religious sphere, and Zionist narratives about the role of Palestinian Muslims in Israel in the socio-political sphere. The Israeli Sufi milieu shows that an analytical approach that focuses solely on the *ṭuruq* – like Weismann's and Hermansen's – is inadequate to explore all aspects of Sufism, and it is therefore more useful to turn to Stjernholm's approach of focusing on the relationship between *Shaykh* and disciple,⁸ which in this case study also goes far in explaining the different narratives the followers and AKR adhere to, and how the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya fits in the larger Israeli Sufi milieu.

In Acre and Jaffa, the institutionalisation of the *ṭarīqa* seems to have developed on even stronger kinship lines than in Amman. The *Shaykh*'s legitimacy is based on the same doctrines as those that were explained to me in Amman: the *Shaykh* is the *nūr muḥammadī, al-insān al-kāmil*. But this is not discussed as much as in Amman, and there is much less discussion of the concept of the *'aqīda*. The *Shaykh*'s spiritual and genealogical link to his predecessors and to the history of the *ṭarīqa*, and the followers' genealogical link to this history are commented upon extensively, more so than in Amman. For

⁷ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

⁸ Ibid.

most people, the most important aspects of the *Shaykh* seem to be his intertwined practical roles as teacher and father.

These images can be found throughout the history of Sufism, and are found in Amman as well, but the specific potency they have in Acre and Jaffa seems to arise from their specific circumstances, especially the settings in which their *tarbiya* took place while they were completely disconnected from *ikhwānā* outside of Israel. This all happened in a period in which the family was an important social unit for the Palestinians in Israel,⁹ but this is by no means the only explanation of their dependence on the family / community. Without access to the *Shaykh* and with their movement generally restricted under Military Rule, *tarbiya* had to happen completely in the local communities, which were constituted on strong kinship lines. In Jaffa, all followers belong to the same family, while in Acre the few families who remained all lived in the *zāwiya*. There were no resources and little incentives to develop an effective administration transcending these family ties. The genealogical connection to the 'golden age' before 1948 and its connection to the *zāwiya* was the only way to hold on to their heritage as often the community was even too small to participate in their main ritual, the *ḥadra*, although they could read *wazīfa* collectively.

We have seen in Amman how the *ṭarīqa*'s rituals encourage strong egalitarian communal bonds, and how the absence of personalized initiation adds to this. In Acre and Jaffa, the role of the *mubāya'a* is even less of a watershed as it is seen by many as part of growing up in the *ṭarīqa*, rather than a life-changing choice to dedicate oneself to the path. One would expect the informal mode of *mudhākara* and the near absence of study groups to lead to weaker social control and less homogeneous spread of knowledge, and this is indeed seen through my fieldwork. My access to people was easier, my discussion with them more informal, and I witnessed some heated discussions about the topics of smoking and wearing *ḥijāb*. Due to their strong communal bonds created in other aspects of *tarbiya*, however, they understand *fikr* along the contemplative line of the spectrum rather than the critical one, and see

⁹ Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, 26.

mudhākara as a meeting of kindred spirits, and their opinions generally do not diverge far from the general consensus, and from the ‘official narrative’ in Amman.

Despite their isolation, they maintained the charismatic image of the *Shaykh*, and again the community played an important role in this. This is extremely clear in our discussion of miracle narratives. As Lindholm and Pinto argued, even in traditional institutions in which charisma is maintained through ‘templates of sainthood’, charisma needs to be performed.¹⁰ The miracles narrated by *ikhwānnā* in Acre and Jaffa can be classified according to functionality¹¹ and put in two categories. In chapter 9 we discussed the miracles that manifest his strong mental spiritual powers and ability to see into the hidden things (*fīrāsa*), such as clairvoyance and knowing people’s names even though he has never met them before. It should be pointed out that these things are also told about followers who have reached high spiritual levels, showing that they believe they can share in his charisma.

The second category is especially relevant for this discussion, as these are miracles performed by the community and attributed to the *Shaykh*, rather than miracles performed by the *Shaykh* himself. As in Amman, the fact that they love and care for each other and for the wider society, and are accepted and respected by society, are considered to be *min faḍl Sīdnā*. This acceptance by society is considered one of the main aspects of his holiness – the interfaith aspect of these stories show that these stories are adapted to the particular society in which they are told. Through these stories, the *Shaykh*’s powers are illustrated, codes of behaviour are transmitted, and the idea is firmly entrenched that the community is strongly connected to the symbolic universe. The charismatic – while found in its strongest in the person of the *Shaykh* – is thus also manifested within the community. *Ikhwānnā* become the tools of this charisma in everyday life. They are signs of the presence of the *Shaykh* in their community, and ‘charismatic moments’ in the sense that they partake of his

¹⁰ Lindholm, ‘Introduction’, 9, 24; Pinto, ‘Performing Baraka.’

¹¹ Aigle, ‘Miracle et Karāma’, 29.

spiritual powers. This further underlines the teaching that God is visible in all of His creation. The stories told by a follower in Jaffa about her ancestors (see paragraph 10.1) further strengthens the *ṭarīqa*'s institutionalisation on kinship lines by connecting the individual to the family and to the original charismatic moment, also illustrating how the followers can participate in the *Shaykh*'s spiritual powers.

These experiences are incorporated in the symbolic universe, both made possible through it and reaffirming it, and adding to the vernacular tradition as they become stories that allow them to relive these moments and to encourage other people to see the world this way. All of this strengthens the normative codification of behaviour and the social structure which depends on the relationship between *Shaykh* and follower. The charismatic is maintained and considered to be enacted through the community, and charisma and institution continuously reaffirm each other. The concretization of the message thus strengthens the charismatic, rather than lessening it, as O'Dea posited in his second dilemma.¹² At the same time, the community's autonomy is strengthened, as they become role models for each other, in the absence of their supreme role model.

An important aspect of many of these stories is their acceptance in society. This is not only seen as a sign of their spiritual and moral status, but also provides them with a more secure place in this society, and the ability to continue their *ṭarīqa* in the public sphere. This becomes very tangible in the case of the *zāwiya* in Acre, which is currently being renovated. In addition to having a communal function for the communities in Israel, it plays an important role in the entire translocal *ṭarīqa*. The *zāwiya* is a sacred space because of this communal function, but mainly because it connects the followers to the original charismatic moment (in Eliade's words, the original 'hierophany'), both as the historical place where this happened, and through the continuing spiritual presence of the three first *Shaykhs* who are buried there.¹³ As such it is the axis around which the

¹² O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 78–80.

¹³ Brereton, 'Sacred Space', 526.

ṭarīqa spread. As it manifests both traditional and charismatic elements, it is an essential part of the *ṭarīqa*'s institutionalisation, and it provides the *Shaykh* with 'traditional spatial charisma'.¹⁴

One might expect the followers in Acre and Jaffa to turn to the shrines when they lost access to the *Shaykh* and the wider community, but this did not happen, and they continue to see the *Shaykh* in Amman as their main spiritual focus. The maintenance of charisma is very clear in Acre and Jaffa, despite a strong institutionalisation on kinship lines. The disruption of ties between *Shaykh*, shrines, and community, has therefore not led to decentring of authority as is happening in many Sufi *ṭuruq* and groups that became disconnected from their *shaykh* and/or shrine in the diaspora.¹⁵

The followers and the *Shaykh* in Amman, while focusing on the living *Shaykh* in their midst, have similarly not forgotten the *zāwiya* in Acre. The *Shaykh* is committed to renovating the *zāwiya* and thus bolsters his own traditional charismatic authority, and the followers have high hopes for the new role the *zāwiya* will play in the world once it is finished. The renovation also allows *Shaykh* Ahmad to manifest his role as spiritual renewer, the who inspires his followers to participate in society and go with the times. In addition to the *Shaykh*'s connection to the original 'charismatic moment' of his ancestors, his commitment to the *ṭarīqa*'s future is thus an important aspect of his authority

It does not seem therefore that the renovation can be seen as an aspect of a wider Islamic revival, as De Jong wondered,¹⁶ or the need for a 'third option', as Geaves noted in Jerusalem,¹⁷ but it seems to primarily rise from the traditional and charismatic dynamics within the *ṭarīqa* itself. The deterritorialisation which developed among those who had no access to the *zāwiya* seems to have been a phase that is left behind as soon as opportunities arise to reconnect.

The renovations call for more bureaucratization, and while all those involved report back to the *Shaykh* regularly, it is unavoidable that he has less

¹⁴ Terlouw, 'Charisma and Space', 335–48.

¹⁵ Raudvere and Stenberg, 'Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority', 5, 10; Geaves, 'Cultural Binary Fission'; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism.'

¹⁶ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 180.

¹⁷ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 120–124.

strong control over what is happening in Acre than he has in Amman. AKR, the *mutawallī* of the *ṭarīqa*'s *awqāf*, is in charge, and in addition to overseeing the renovations he hosts tourists and students, undertakes social projects and participates in interfaith dialogue initiatives. The picture he presents of the *ṭarīqa*, its ideas and practices, is quite different from that of the other followers as he focuses more on the individual interpretation, even explicitly saying at one point that one does not have to be a Muslim to join.

He explicitly refers to *'ilm al-ishāra* to account for his different interpretations, but due to his focus on individuality and inspiration, the dynamic involved is different than for those who do their interpretation in the group, and he exercises a much higher level of autonomy in interpreting the *Shaykh*'s teachings and communications. He sees both *ta'ammul* and *fikr* as essential aspects of the *ṭarīqa*'s practice, but his understanding of *fikr* as critical thought and his focus on the individual gives him a large degree of autonomy, which makes the potential paradox between *fikr* and *taslīm* very real.

When discussing the renovations of the *zāwiya* in Acre and the social projects that are being undertaken alongside them, this dynamic of communication and interpretation happens on a more social and even political level as AKR takes his interpretations quite far from the views communicated to me by other followers in Israel and Amman. While he mostly places the *ṭarīqa* within the Islamic tradition, he also takes elements from other traditions, such as the one discussed in chapter 1 that sees Sufism as universal mysticism, in one occasion leading him to say that in the West one does not necessarily have to be a Muslim to join.

In his opinion, the Yashruti *Shaykhs* were always involved on both the mystical and ethical levels, and were very involved in the community. In this sense, he sees them as his role models. In his view, the *Shaykh*'s focus on education and his understanding of *fanā'* as communal action is one of *Shaykh Ahmad*'s profound innovations which adapts the tradition significantly to its time, and in the Israeli context revives the *ṭarīqa*'s social role after a sixty year hiatus, but maintaining the connections between mystical experiences and social

engagement that have characterized the *ṭarīqa* from the start, and connecting these to the Yashruti family and the current *Shaykh* Ahmad. Rather than a shift from the mystical to the ethical, often accompanied with a shift in the role of the *Shaykh*, that can be seen in contemporary rationalizing Sufi movements and Traditional Islam,¹⁸ in his thought we see a shift away from Islamic norms and a more individual spiritual focus on the *Shaykh* that has more in common with ‘new spirituality’. It is comparable to the attitude among the first generation of Western adherents to the Burhaniyya.¹⁹ This goes together with his presentation of the *ṭarīqa* as ‘good Arabs’ who participate in society and accept Zionist hegemony.

His participation in interfaith dialogue should be seen in this light. He presents it as an essential aspect of the *ṭarīqa*’s practices, understanding *mudhākara* as a meeting between opposites rather than a meeting of kindred spirits. None of the followers understand it this way, and they do not participate in these initiatives. The Review Panel stressed that he does not represent the *ṭarīqa*, but participates in these things on an individual basis. Indeed, he represents his own ‘individual religion’ more than the vernacular tradition or ‘official religion’ (to use Bowman’s categories).²⁰ He does present himself as official spokesperson, however, and is accepted as such by outsiders – it therefore does not give him any legitimacy in the *ṭarīqa* itself, but it does provide him with prestige in the Jewish Sufi milieu. This confirms Klinkhammer and Bram’s comments on the problematic nature of interfaith dialogue initiatives as paths to peace,²¹ as the individuals and groups involved rarely represent a large group – in these cases he represents himself.

The differences between his ‘individual religion’ and both the vernacular tradition and ‘religious narrative’ were explicitly underlined by the Review Panel. These differences can be explained through his socialisation process. Berger points out that socialisation is an ongoing process of world construction and

¹⁸ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’; Hamid, ‘The Rise of the “Traditional Islam” Network(s)’; Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 5, 10; Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 10–11; Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*.

¹⁹ Klinkhammer, ‘Traditionalizing Spirituality.’

²⁰ Bowman and Valk, ‘Vernacular Religion’, 4.

²¹ Bram, ‘Sufi Circles in Israel’; Klinkhammer, ‘Sufism Contextualised’, 209–210.

world maintenance, and that when connections with the community diminish, so will adherence to the symbolic universe²² – in this case, AKR's interpretation developed in quite a different way than that of the local community as his exposure to other Sufi groups and to the hybrid and perennial Jewish Sufi milieu influenced his ideas.

We see how his understanding of the *Shaykhs* (especially his portrayal of their social and political roles), of the practices of the *ṭarīqa* and of the doctrine of *fanā'* leads him to support social projects and interfaith initiatives that not all the local followers feel comfortable with. While the interpretations of the followers seem to be more influenced by local Islamic groups and views, his interpretations lean more towards Western and international understandings of Sufism that see Sufism as a universal mystical religion that is only partly linked to Islam and that is often used by political actors over the world to support a counterweight to radical Islam, politicizing an apolitical message in the process. His understanding of the social situation of the *ṭarīqa* is influenced by local Zionist understandings of the nature of the Jewish state and its relation to the Palestinian citizens of Israel. He claims to be doing all of this with the support of the *Shaykh*, but the exact nature of the relationship between AKR and the *Shaykh* is unclear.

These differences between the two 'official narratives' that were communicated to me, by the *Shaykh* and his 'custodians of tradition' in Amman on the one hand, and by AKR in Acre on the other, show the merit of the anthropological method as it enables us to get a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the *ṭarīqa* and how to place it in its context. It warns us never to take official statements and publications at face value, but seek out the followers and hear their points of view as well. While the followers believe that the *Shaykh's* point of view and communication is the right one, as an anthropologist I do not value one over the other but see them all as expressions and variations of the vernacular Shadhuli-Yashruti tradition. By understanding the relational dynamic between *Shaykh* and follower we understand in what way their mode of communication gives space for these variations and interpretations without the

²² Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 18.

interpreters giving up their identification with the *ṭarīqa* and the feeling that they belong to a cohesive community which is the same in every time and place.

Chapter 12

Final Conclusion

This study aims to add to the understanding of Sufism in contemporary society and the task of redefining ‘tradition’ by discussing the changing authority of Sufi *shaykhs* in an increasingly globalised world, using the emic concept of *tarbiya*, which corresponds to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s etic notion of ‘socialisation’¹ and Talal Asad’s approach to the transmission of a discursive tradition.²

Increasing flows of people, goods, and ideas, and the spread of ‘modernity’ – greater reliance on technology, industrialisation, bureaucratization, centralisation of government – shaped the development of the ideology of Modernism. Important elements of this ideology are the autonomy of the individual against authoritarianism, the search for empirical knowledge, and the striving for ‘progress’.³ Based on this, many scholars expected science to replace religion in what is known as the ‘secularisation thesis’.⁴ Sufism has been seen as incompatible with Modernism due to its support for irrational as opposed to rational approaches to knowledge, its other-worldly orientation that is unconcerned with material progress, and its call for absolute submission to the authority of the *shaykh*. For these reasons, it was predicted that Sufism would decline in the face of modernity.⁵

The secularisation thesis has been challenged and reformulated, but it is generally acknowledged that religion continues to play a role in contemporary societies. It has developed significantly under influence of and in reaction to both

¹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.

² Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14–16.

³ Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 5; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 358–359, 422; Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 27.

⁴ Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 185–186.

⁵ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 358–359. See for example Arberry, *Sufism*.

modernity and Modernism.⁶ Some religious intellectuals have engaged with Modernist thought, and in the Islamic tradition there have been fierce debates on the attitude to modern technology, institutions, and ideas, and the definition of Islam itself (and the place of Sufism within it).⁷ Opposition to traditional institutionalised religion and/or to Modernism for its perceived lack of spirituality and morality has led to a focus on the individual and the embodied experience, either in the form of a more individualised ‘new spirituality’ (generally associated with the New Age movement)⁸ or in the form of a renewed focus on spirituality and morality within the established religions.⁹

The continued presence of Sufism has been attested by numerous case studies. The intellectual challenge posed to its doctrines,¹⁰ the decline of the traditional social base of the Sufi *ṭuruq*, and globalisation have led to far reaching changes within Sufi movements. Many have underwent a form of rationalisation, which might have lead to increased autonomy for their members in terms of affiliation, behaviour and/or interpretation (with space for rational-critical thought). Some *ṭuruq* re-invented themselves as voluntary associations, business enterprises and networks, or political parties.¹¹ Modern means of communication have provided Sufi *shaykhs* and movements with new ways of connecting and maintaining their movements, and we see ‘new modalities in the global context of Sufi networking’.¹² The general trend towards deterritorialisation has led to shifts in attachment to Sufi *shaykhs* and shrines, and several scholars have noted the rise of a trend of adherence to Sufism without *shaykh* or *ṭarīqa*. Geaves for

⁶ For an overview of the debate on ‘secularisation’, see Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 185–214.

⁷ Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 3.

⁸ Huss, ‘Spirituality.’

⁹ Voll, ‘Contemporary Sufism and Current Social Theory’, 296–298; Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks’; Van Bruinessen, ‘Saints, Politicians and Sufi Bureaucrats.’

¹⁰ As discussed in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5, criticism of Sufism is not new. Certain Sufi individuals, ideas, and practices, have been criticized and sometimes even persecuted for centuries, but Sufism as a whole was always considered an essential aspect of Islam. In the modern period, however, Sufism as a whole came under attack. For more on this, see De Jong and Radtke eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*.

¹¹ Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 10–11.

¹² Hemansen, ‘Global Sufism’; Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks.’

example has tracked the development of the Barelvi Sufi coalition in the UK and the related development of a global Traditional Islam as reactions to deterritorialised universalist Islamic movements. On a different line of development, the Western 'new spirituality' trend has connected itself with certain perennialist Sufi movements.¹³ The global Sufi scene is thus very diverse, and research into its developments has so far only scratched the surface. Our main concern in this study is how these trends affect authority within the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the particular local circumstances of Jordan and Israel.

By analysing original material obtained during fieldwork in Jordan and Israel, this study analyses the authority of *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Hadi al-Yashruti, contextualising the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya by examining how the challenges of the changing religious climate and the challenges faced by the Palestinian people affect the role of the *Shaykh* and the cohesion of the community, as the links between *Shaykh*, community and *zāwiya* have been disrupted since 1948. The centre of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya shifted from Acre to Beirut in 1948 and to Amman in 1980. Most Palestinian followers became refugees; some remained in Acre and Jaffa and were isolated from the *Shaykh* and the rest of the community until 1967 when contacts were slowly restored. We have analysed how this influenced their attitude towards the *Shaykh*, the *zawāya*, and the community. Did they develop a deterritorialised approach according to the general trend within Islam, or did they continue to focus on the *Shaykh* or the shrine in Acre to hold on to their identity and community? Can we indeed speak of a revival as Frederick de Jong noted in the 1980s,¹⁴ and is it a manifestation of the larger Islamic revival, or of something else?

Like most Sufi movements, the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is embedded in other networks.¹⁵ While not the entire Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya exists within the Palestinian diaspora, the section examined in this study, does. Before 1948 the

¹³ Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten'; Hamid, 'The Rise of the "Traditional Islam" Network(s)'; Heck, 'The Politics of Sufism', 15.

¹⁴ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 180.

¹⁵ Hermansen, 'Global Sufism.'

ṭarīqa spread in a ‘chaordic’ way¹⁶ due to explicit proselytizing and general migration – after 1948 the *ṭarīqa* was dispersed together with the Palestinian diaspora. Thus while the *ṭarīqa* as a whole is itself a multi-ethnic diasporic movement, its followers in Jordan, Israel and Palestine are all Palestinians, and this particular section of the *ṭarīqa* – which includes the *ṭarīqa*’s personal and geographical symbolic centres, the *Shaykh* and the central *zawāya* of Amman and Acre – therefore exists within the global Palestinian diaspora. In addition to this, this section of the *ṭarīqa* is interwoven with an extended family network and connected through strong family ties.

These particular movements and shifts of centre challenge the classification of contemporary Sufi movements based on centre-periphery models and Western/non-Western dyads, particularly Marcia Hermansen’s classification of transplants, hybrids and perennials.¹⁷ As Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler and Gritt Klinkhammer point out, the process of globalization and migration diminishes the value of traditional centre-periphery models, to the point that ‘the meaning of East and West starts to lose its geographical significance’.¹⁸ In addition to this, Simon Stjernholm and Marta Dominguez Diaz criticized these models for assuming unity within a *ṭarīqa* and for focusing on relations to ‘the West’, while processes of dissemination and development are much more diverse.¹⁹ The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is a case in point. When most followers became refugees in 1948, the original centre in the original homeland became the periphery, while the host city became the new centre. The refugees in Amman found themselves in a culture not much different from their own; the followers who remained in Acre and Jaffa, on the other hand, found themselves in a new environment with a significantly different culture that itself is a hybrid,

¹⁶ Werbner, ‘The Place Which Is Diaspora.’ For a discussion of Pnina Werbner’s concept ‘chaordic’, see paragraph 1.5.3.

¹⁷ Hermansen, ‘In the Garden of American Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements’; Hermansen, ‘Global Sufism’; Dominguez Diaz, ‘Performance, Belonging and Identity’, 230; Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?’

¹⁸ Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, ‘Introduction’, 4.

¹⁹ Dominguez Diaz, ‘Performance, Belonging and Identity’, 230; Stjernholm, ‘What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?’ See for example Lewisohn, ‘Persian Sufism in the Contemporary West’; Dressler, ‘Between Legalist Exclusivism and Mysticist Universalism’; Webb, ‘Third Wave Sufism.’

but is usually characterized as Western due to Ashkenazi hegemony. The categories 'transplant', 'hybrid' and 'perennial' are thus confusing in this situation. More illuminating is Stjernholm's approach to focus on identification with historical narratives rather than geography.²⁰ In Amman, Acre, and Jaffa, the *Shaykh* and followers place themselves clearly within the Islamic tradition. In Acre, however, AKR has a hybrid approach that comes close to the Jewish Sufi milieu, which is characterized by a perennialist 'new spirituality' and an implicit adherence to Zionist understandings of history.²¹

I argue that this internal variation can be explained through the process of *tarbiya*, including the socialisation in the *ṭarīqa*, the transmission of the tradition and the specific mode of communication employed by the *Shaykh* and his followers. Paulo Pinto makes a similar point in his analysis of Sufi groups in Aleppo, but it should be noted that his use of the word *tarbiya* remains restricted to the process of education after initiation,²² whereas in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is used in its general Arabic meaning to refer to the entire pedagogical process. This different understanding of the concept *tarbiya* actually reflects the different organizational base of the *ṭarīqa* – while the groups Pinto describes are entered by choice and through a moment of initiation, membership in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya depends mainly on family initiation and the *mubāya'a* is therefore not so much based on choice, but rather a natural part of the process of *tarbiya* that happens in the family. Even those people who convert or reaffiliate to the *ṭarīqa* do so through their significant others.

Following Asad, Green, and Pinto, this study understands Sufism as a discursive tradition, a guiding pattern of behaviour, ideas, practices, and submission to authority, which is built up of different elements that are in a continuous process of transmission and reinterpretation.²³ The identification of these elements and how they are transmitted and reinterpreted is therefore the first step when analysing a Sufi movement. Asad sees education as the process

²⁰ Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 215–218.

²¹ Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel.' See paragraph 8.2.3.2.

²² Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 464–465.

²³ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 14–16; Green, *Sufism*, 3; Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles.' See paragraph 1.2.

during which tradition is transmitted and authority is exercised and can be resisted. Bruce Lincoln argues that authority is a speech act and a relationship,²⁴ and many scholars have pointed out that the relation between *shaykh* and follower is at the centre of Sufism.²⁵ The development of this relationship and the knowledge and normative framework that accompany it are developed through socialisation, in which the symbolic universe and the connected (sub-)social structure (the 'plausibility structure') are simultaneously maintained and constructed.²⁶ This is similar to Asad's notion of an ever-evolving dynamic discursive tradition in which meanings are transmitted and reinterpreted to become incorporated in the tradition. Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori see elements of tradition as symbols which are subject to continuous interpretation due to their ambiguous nature, simultaneously providing a connection to the past and an opportunity for change.²⁷ As new experiences are objectified, they are incorporated in the wider body of knowledge of the vernacular tradition through hagiographies, poetry, etc.²⁸ Berger points to the important role of the community in the continuing socialisation process: 'the individual appropriates the world in conversation with others and, furthermore, (...) both identity and world remain real to him only as long as he can continue the conversation.'²⁹

Therefore, this study discusses the following question: What is the relation between *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Hadi al-Yashruti and his followers in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, Acre and Jaffa? To answer this question, the following sub-questions will be examined: On which elements is his authority based? Is his authority charismatic or institutionalised? What does he mean to the followers in different contexts, which roles does he take on and are attributed to him? How does he exercise these roles? What role does this give the community and the individual followers in their specific contexts? Where does this exercise of

²⁴ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–4, 11, 188.

²⁵ Green, *Sufism*, 9; Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization'; Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order?'; Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement.'

²⁶ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.

²⁷ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 28.

²⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 86.

²⁹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 18.

authority take place (in Lincoln's words, what is the 'stage' of his authority)? How does this affect the larger societies in which these communities and individuals are present? How does this affect the doctrinal, practical and communal cohesion of the *ṭarīqa*?

The main claim to originality of this thesis lies in the fact that I have used an anthropological approach to study the contemporary *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, which has not been done before. Previous studies on the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the Levant focussed on the life and teachings of the founder, *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din al-Yashruti, based on the writings of his daughter Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, or only discussed the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in passing.³⁰ Since no anthropological research has been done on this *ṭarīqa* in the Levant so far, I have used an adapted grounded approach: I have used secondary literature to achieve an initial understanding of the research area and to identify useful approaches and concepts to the concept of authority in general and Sufi authority in specific, but have also aimed to identify the concepts relevant to this particular case study.

This study has been based on the methodological agnostic approach, following Berger and Ninian Smart. I have bracketed the question whether the beliefs and experiences of my respondents are actually true, as these are not questions that can be answered in a scientific work based on empirical observation. This is not to say that the meta-empirical is not valuable and therefore not worthy of study, but that the scientific method requires us to stick to the empirical.³¹ As Thomas O'Dea pointed out, this does not in itself deny the transcendent, as the transcendent needs to become immanent if it has meaning in this world.³² Therefore I have focused on what such statements of belief and experience mean to believers and how they affect their ideas and practices, and

³⁰ Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya'; De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine'; De Jong, 'Les Confréries Mystiques'; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 308–309, 316; Geaves, 'That Which We Have Forgotten', 40–41; Bram, 'Sufi Circles in Israel', 131; Abu Hanieh, *Sufism and Sufi Orders*, 138–141.

³¹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 25–26, note 34, 144–153; Hanegraaff, 'Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism'; McCutcheon, *The Insider/outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 216–217.

³² O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, 18.

adherence to a particular institution. I will leave arguments on the truth value of their religious tradition (or lack of it) to others – here I have been concerned with the social meanings and effects of these religious experiences.

The limits of the anthropological method – in addition to its dedication to the empirical rather than the meta-empirical – are due to the fact that the respondents have a large degree of control over the access to knowledge. This was specifically the case in Amman, where large aspects of their religious everyday life and of groups within the *ṭarīqa* were thus inaccessible. The differences in access due to different codes of guesthood and degrees of central control further complicate the comparative potential of the research. This is an unavoidable result of ethical anthropological research that respects the boundaries of the respondents. It might be remedied by a longer period of fieldwork and a fuller immersion in the community, but a researcher can never completely surmount these limits.³³

The contest over authority in the Islamic framework in general centres on the struggle over the authority to interpret the word of God as revealed in sacred scripture and define ideas, shape behaviour and set the boundaries within which the tradition can be transmitted and reinterpreted – what Eickelman and Piscatori call ‘Muslim Politics’, the struggle over who is the ‘custodian of tradition’ and who is the ‘spokesperson of Islam’.³⁴ Who is given this authority depends on the concrete historical and social situation.

Arthur Buehler points out that the main element of authority in Islamic and Sufi traditions is the connection to the Prophet which can be established in four ways:

- lineage (genealogical and/or spiritual);
- embodiment of the Prophetic Sunna, in other words ‘being a Prophetic exemplar’;
- transmission of religious knowledge;

³³ It should be noted that respecting the limits of access imposed by the community during fieldwork is not the same as submitting to censorship of written material after the research has been done, which has not been the case. See paragraph 2.4.

³⁴ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5.

- a 'transformative spiritual experience' and spiritual travel.³⁵

In addition to these elements, we have discussed the importance of space as an element of authority, especially Kees Terlouw's notion of 'traditional spatial charisma' as leaders cultivate places connected to a 'golden age' to bolster their traditional charisma.³⁶

The doctrinal base of the authority of *Shaykh* Ahmad (and in fact all the *Shaykhs* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya) is the belief that the *Shaykh* embodies the *nūr muḥammadī* and the 'aqīda. Followers can see his good Muhammadan behaviour, and they believe that those who have developed their 'eye of the heart' can see the Muhammadan light shine in him. As such they see him as the inheritor of the Prophet Muhammad in a chronological succession as exemplified by the *silsila*, but also as a direct embodiment of the Muhammadan light and morals, and of the message that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca. This connects the *Shaykh* to the personal symbolic centre of Islam and makes him the personal symbolic centre of the *ṭarīqa*; he not only *transmits* the 'aqīda, but he also *embodies* it enabling his followers direct access to the *nūr muḥammadī* and the 'aqīda. This is both a traditional and a charismatic image as he both transmits and embodies the *ṭarīqa*'s ultimate values.

Because this light shines equally in all *Shaykhs* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the followers believe that 'all the *Shaykhs* are one.' It is important to note that while all Sufi *shaykhs* are respected, by this they mean the founding *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din and his three successors *Shaykh* Ibrahim, *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadi and the current *Shaykh* Ahmad. They are the ones who embody the light and transmit the teachings from one to the other and to their followers. *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's coming to Palestine as a spiritual renewer and the subsequent period in which he spread the message is considered the *ṭarīqa*'s 'golden age' and the original 'charismatic moment'. This charisma has subsequently been transmitted through hereditary succession as the *ṭarīqa* has

³⁵ Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*.

³⁶ Terlouw, 'Charisma and Space.'

been institutionalised on traditional kinship lines and the Yashruti family has maintained full control over the *ṭarīqa*.

While the followers love and respect the previous *Shaykhs*, their relationship is with the current *Shaykh*. Seen from this perspective they do not yearn for a 'golden age' because the *nūr muḥammadī* is among them, embodied in their *Shaykh*. They consider the previous *Shaykhs* to be spiritually present – especially in the *zāwiya* in Acre where they are buried – but they focus on the current *Shaykh*, the current embodiment of the *nūr muḥammadī*. They feel that they can participate in this through their love for him, the development of their relationship with him by practising on the Path, listening to his words and following his example, and by participating in the community as they understand their acts of love and hospitality as signs of the *Shaykh's* spiritual power for which they have become the medium.

This maintenance of charisma shows that classical sociological theories positing the decline of charisma through its routinization should be re-examined, as has also been noted by other scholars of Sufism.³⁷ Firstly, the fact that *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din referred to his own *silsila* as a basis of legitimation and acted within the general Sufi tradition with its modes of organisation and 'templates of sainthood'³⁸ shows that charisma can happen within an institutionalised tradition.

Secondly, he already started the institutionalisation process – on the same traditional lines of the Sufi tradition, if more centralised – during the 'charismatic moment'. This shows that the clear break between charisma and institutionalisation does not hold. When he came to Palestine, he began to spread his message and build the foundations of its institutionalisation. He issued *ijāzas* to those who spread the message, he appointed *muqaddamīn* and built *zawāya*, most notably those in Acre and Tarshiha. Most importantly, he brought his son from Tunisia to prepare him to be his successor, institutionalising hereditary succession from a *Shaykh* to his 'most able' son. This practice is

³⁷ E.g. Pinto, 'Knowledge and Miracles'; Lindholm, 'Introduction.'

³⁸ Lindholm, 'Introduction', 24.

based doctrinally on the belief that the *nūr muḥammadī* is passed genealogically, a common belief in recent Sufism as Hoffman has argued.³⁹ The decision who is the most able son is made by the *Shaykh* himself, which is doctrinally justified by the belief that due to his spiritual rank he has the ultimate knowledge and can see in the deepest hidden essence of things (*firāsa*), and therefore knows whom God has destined to be the next *Shaykh*. The actual decision making process is thus lost to history.

Finally, more than a century after his passing, his third successor still inspires his followers to see him as a charismatic leader who embodies the same spiritual power and values as the founder *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din, which shows that charisma can be maintained within an institutionalised movement without declining.

Adherence to the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Jordan and Israel – while originally based on proselytizing and conversion – is now mainly transmitted in the family. The institutionalisation of the succession on genealogical lines is thus mirrored in the *ṭarīqa*'s membership based on family affiliation. The *ṭarīqa* thus moved from a sectarian organisation based on conversion to an organisation in which socialisation largely replaced conversion.⁴⁰

The followers accept the *ṭarīqa*'s institutionalisation on traditional kinship lines due to their successful socialisation which leads them to accept the social structure and the roles in it, and which teaches them to perceive signs that confirm the high state of the future *Shaykh*. Similarly, the *Shaykhs* have been socialised to accept their role and the behaviour that goes with it. As Berger and Luckmann pointed out, the inculcation of specific roles is an essential aspect of socialisation as people experience reality through these roles and influence it in turn.⁴¹ The inculcation of the roles of *Shaykh* and follower within the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is very explicit – as one of the followers in Amman said, 'The *muṭīd*

³⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 87–88, 128–129, 390 note 129.

⁴⁰ Here we use the terms 'sect' in the classical sociological sense to refer to mode of organisation, not attitude to the world. Berger, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', 468–469; Swatos, 'Church-Sect Theory.'

⁴¹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 33–34.

has his *sulūk* and the *Shaykh* has his *sulūk*.⁴² Through this process, the followers are prepared to see their *Shaykh* as charismatic and to recognize his spiritual powers.

As Charles Lindholm and Pinto have pointed out, even in cases of highly institutionalised succession of Sufi *shaykhs*, a *shaykh* still has to prove his worth by manifesting his *baraka*, grace.⁴³ The followers consider his *baraka* to be manifested through *karāmāt* and *ishārāt*: direct and indirect speech acts, gestures, and occurrences in everyday life. Such signs show them who will be the next *Shaykh*, and *karāmāt* strengthen this belief. Among these are *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Hadī's explicit statements that *Sīdī* Ahmad represented him, and *Sīdī* Ahmad's pious and good behaviour, following the example of the Prophet and of his father. The *karāmāt* attributed to *Shaykh* Ahmad refer to his spiritual mental powers, his omniscience and clairvoyance (*firāsa*), and to his inspiration for people to be good people in their community and in their society, which points to his role as spiritual renewer and his call for them to participate in society.

Ikhwānā incorporate these *ishārāt* and *karāmāt* in their vernacular traditions by spreading them as miracle narratives, and interpret them in the community. Therefore, not only does their presence confirm the followers' belief in the symbolic universe and its plausibility structure, but the particular form they take and the mechanism of interpretation further strengthen the community's cohesion and give it an aura of transcendent facticity that makes them feel they participate in the *Shaykh*'s spiritual state and make them ever more committed to the *Shaykh*, the *ṭarīqa*, and the community.

Based on Asad's notion of 'disciplinary practices, Pinto shows that the particular form of transmission of the tradition shapes the relationship between *shaykh* and follower, and among the followers themselves.⁴⁴ Pinto sees a difference between a *ṭarīqa*'s collective rituals such as collective *dhikr*, which can be practiced by both initiates and by non-initiated followers and which allows

⁴² ZA1-3 in Interview ZA1.

⁴³ Lindholm, 'Introduction', 9, 24; Pinto, 'Performing Baraka.'

⁴⁴ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 77–79, 125–126; Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 125–126.

them 'various degrees of socialization into the symbolic and experiential universe' of the *ṭarīqa*, and the more individualized process of initiation which allows them to develop an individualized religious self through a personalized *wird* and subjective mystical experiences. In addition to this, he notes that study groups encourage reflection, lead to a homogeneous distribution of doctrinal categories and religious knowledge and ultimately to shared doctrinal understandings, and an egalitarian moral community.⁴⁵

Indeed we see that the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, which is characterized by very strong communal bonds, predominantly incorporates rituals that foster egalitarian bonds. Not only is there a large role for collective *dhikr*, study groups and *mudhākara*, but also – and very tellingly – there is an absence of personalized initiation that according to Pinto leads to an individualized religious self. There are no degrees of initiation or a corresponding clear conceptual framework of *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt*, and the hierarchy that goes with them.⁴⁶ While people do adhere to the notion that spiritual progress should go hand in hand with morality, there is no formal hierarchical framework based on it. Even the *mubāya'a* is less of a watershed than it seems to be in many other *ṭuruq* – rather than a conversion, it is more an affirmation of adherence.⁴⁷ Through the devotional practices encompassed by the concepts of *dhikr* and *fikr* the egalitarian community is created which is objectified in the concept of *maḥabba*. The only explicit hierarchical relationship is that between *Shaykh* and follower; the *Shaykh* is believed to be essentially on a different spiritual level which the followers can never reach, and all they can do is submit themselves to him completely (*taslīm*). Following Asad, we can argue that through the disciplinary practices incorporated in the process of *tarbiya* attitudes are created that encourage obedience as a virtue in the spiritual and social framework.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Pinto, 'Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition', 126–127; Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 465.

⁴⁶ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria', 126.

⁴⁷ Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'i Tariqa in Britain', 151. In addition to Pinto, see Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 130–131; Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order?', 27–28.

⁴⁸ Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 125–126.

Even so, the idea that spiritual progress is manifested in someone's behaviour leads to the formation of informal hierarchies, which affects the transmission of knowledge through the aforementioned meetings of *mudhākara* and study groups. Understanding the emic notion of 'spiritual progress' through Berger and Luckmann's theoretical framework, we can say that those further on the Path have reached higher levels of socialisation, having internalised the symbolic universe to a higher degree and negotiating marginal situations without problems. Because of this, they have an extensive grasp of the 'official religion' and can act as 'custodians of tradition'. The ultimate custodian is of course the *Shaykh*, but also the *muqaddamīn* and others who are considered high on the path.

We have seen that the followers understand 'spiritual progress' as the development of their connection with the *Shaykh* as a spiritual relationship between hearts which is developed through spiritual practice; as Hoffman puts it, 'an intense spiritual and emotional identification that leads to a merging of the boundaries of two personalities.'⁴⁹ They see their spiritual communication and the interpretation of this communication as an important aspect of this relationship. They believe that the *Shaykh*'s gestures and spiritual speech acts (as opposed to his explicit verbal statements) can be found in every aspect of everyday life. One of the main Sufi doctrines, explicitly taught and encouraged in this *ṭarīqa*, is that 'the life of a Sufi is one that seeks to be God-permeated'⁵⁰ and the followers are taught to see God in everything, and to perceive signs from their *Shaykh* in everything.

They believe that these signs can be perceived and understood more clearly the higher their spiritual development. While those higher on the path experience *ishārāt* in the classical Sufi sense, as allusions used to communicate ineffable experiences,⁵¹ for those on all levels, including the lower ones, *ishārāt*

⁴⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 63–64, 140, 188–195, 203–205.

⁵⁰ Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel, 'Expressions of Spirituality in Islam: Unity and Diversity in Sufi Thought and Practice', in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Geaves and Gabriel, 21.

⁵¹ Corbin and Izutsu have explained this as a 'returning' (*ta'wīl*) of the sign and the soul to the meta-empirical realm in which there is no contradiction between *fīkr* and *taslīm* and in which the Divine is known in both His transcendence and His immanence. This highest level can only be

are signs, non-verbal gestures, occurrences – all considered spiritual speech acts of their *Shaykh*.

According to our methodological agnostic method, we need to bracket the question if this is indeed a communication in the meta-empirical realm, seen by the followers as the *zāwiya* of the heart, or whether it springs solely from the socialized mind of the follower. Either way, we can say that it is thoroughly intertwined with practising the Path, *tarbiya* in emic terms, socialisation in etic terms. The goal of this path is the strengthening of knowledge of, belief in, and adherence to the symbolic universe and the plausibility structure, through absolute submission to the representative of this universe, the one who embodies its message and values. The further one travels on this path, the more one will see signs that validate it – regardless of whether these have a divine or a human origin. In fact, we see that many manifestations of the *Shaykh*'s spiritual power are actually purely communal acts – the question whether their hospitality is of divine or human origin, for example, is less relevant than the question how they understand it, why they perform it, and how it strengthens their belief system, communal cohesion, and relations to the wider society. 'Spiritual communication' is therefore an emic term we use to refer to the follower's perception of certain events – of whatever origin – as meaningful moments of communication in which the *Shaykh* teaches them something.

From an anthropological point of view, it makes sense to understand authority as a speech act, but in this case of 'spiritual communication' the definition of a 'speech act' is stretched to the point that we do not have access to it any more as it happens on the spiritual level – in the *zāwiya* of the heart, in the terminology of the followers. Therefore we should focus on what the followers consider to be a legitimate speech act and how they deal with these speech acts – or signs (*ishārāt*), as they call them. Anything the *Shaykh* says and does can be understood as a directive speech act/sign and seen as the answer to a

reached by *al-insān al-kāmil*, however, and none of my respondents have talked about '*ilm al-ishāra*' in those terms. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 28–35; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 7–; Poonawala, 'Ta'wīl'; Nwyia, 'Ishāra'; Berger, 'Allusion (in Ṣūfism).' See paragraph 6.4.

question, whether it is intended as such or not. Visions of the *Shaykh* in dreams can be considered a speech act/sign, and anything that happens can be considered a speech act/sign from the *Shaykh*. It is the follower who transforms these things into a sign from the *Shaykh* – depending on the spiritual level of the follower as shown in his/her exterior practice of the *'aqīda* it is accepted as such. Once identified, the speech act/sign is interpreted in the community.

The *Shaykh* engages in explicit speech acts when meeting people in the *zāwiya*, and most specifically, during the *mudhākara* he does after the *ḥaḍra*. The text of the *wazīfa*⁵² is the subject of the *Shaykh's mudhākara*, and as such is subject to continuous interpretation and *mudhākara* among the followers. While they believe they develop their relationship to their *Shaykh* especially through *dhikr*, I have not heard any accounts of spiritual communications *during dhikr* sessions.

Other signs can be perceived spontaneously – or evoked, as in the practice of *istikhāra*. In *istikhāra* we see explicitly the large role of the community and the autonomy they have in these matters. While in other cases it is the religious specialist who does the praying, dreaming, and interpreting,⁵³ here it is the followers themselves. Similarly, they are the ones who perceive the *ishārāt* in the world around them, and interpret these. The community thus has a large degree of autonomy. They perceive charisma in everyday life, and often themselves are the medium of this charisma when the *Shaykh's* powers are perceived in their social relations and communal actions.

Both explicit speech acts and such moments of spiritual communication are heard and perceived by followers, and then discussed in a communal setting. This way they are incorporated in the larger vernacular tradition, the stock of lore in the community from which they continue to draw. The *Shaykh's* previous speech acts continue to be discussed, and those of previous *Shaykhs*, as written down in the *ṭarīqa's* books, and as passed orally by *ikhwānnā*.

⁵² *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din's version of the *ṣalāa mashishiyya* (the prayer of of Ibn Mashish, a famous prayer on the Prophet in the Shadhili tradition), and prayers by Muhammad al-Arabi al-Darqawi. Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 5.

⁵³ See especially Edgar and Henig, 'Istikhara.'

Those appointed explicitly by the *Shaykh* to represent him, the *muqaddamīn* or in Amman the Welcome Committee, act most clearly as ‘custodians of tradition’,⁵⁴ steering these discussions and interpretations, and could be seen as an inner circle from this perspective. Also followers with no explicit mandate but who are considered knowledgeable and highly spiritually developed – as shown through their devotional and moral behaviour, in other words the practice of *ādāb* – have a stronger influence over these discussions and a certain measure of authority in these interpretations. In the end, however, these are informal hierarchies, as they all consider themselves equal and value each other’s opinions, and a measure of difference in interpretation continues to exist. The level of social control is thus of such a degree to maintain communal cohesion, but does not extend its power to all aspects of opinion and practice. The exception is AKR, who does not discuss them in a communal setting, and whose explanations diverge considerably. As Berger points out, socialisation is the most powerful form of maintaining cohesion, and when practised successfully, no other form of social control is necessary: ‘the fundamental coerciveness of society lies not in its machineries of social control, but in its power to constitute and to impose itself as reality.’⁵⁵

This brings us to the question what the practical relationship is between *Shaykh* and follower, in addition to the doctrinal relationship which posits the *Shaykh*’s absolute authority. To put it in Lincoln’s terms: what is the role of the audience in the enactment of the authoritative speech act?⁵⁶ Or in Bowman’s: to what degree can the local communities’ vernacular religions influence the official narrative?⁵⁷ Both Sedgwick and Stjernholm have given examples of the influence of Sufi disciples on the sayings and actions of their *shaykhs* – Stjernholm’s example of an incident of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya in particular is an excellent illustration of Lincoln’s theory as it entailed the literal silencing of

⁵⁴ Shils, *Tradition*, 96–97.

⁵⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 14–15.

⁵⁶ Lincoln, *Authority*, 1–4, 11, 168.

⁵⁷ Bowman and Valk, ‘Vernacular Religion’, 4

Hisham Kabbani as he tried to deliver a speech during a meeting of the *ṭarīqa* in London.⁵⁸

In the communities of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya we have examined here, we do not see this explicit influence as all followers accept the doctrine that the *Shaykh* is the ultimate reference. Because of his largely indirect mode of communication, however, and their space to perceive *ishārāt* and *karāmāt* everywhere that can then be interpreted and incorporated into the vernacular tradition, they have a large degree of influence over their own belief system while still acknowledging absolute obedience to the *Shaykh*. Due to the fact that adherence to the *ṭarīqa* rests mainly on family affiliation and socialisation rather than conversion, the element of choice which Rachida Chih used as her main argument in favour of the followers' agency is less pronounced (but still valid, as the *mubāya'a* remains a moment of personal choice with a reciprocal dimension).⁵⁹ We do see this agency in the negotiation of tradition in local contexts, and at the same time we see how the local and translocal aspects of the *ṭarīqa* are balanced, while the followers explicitly follow the pillar of *taslīm*, absolute submission to God and to their *Shaykh*.

The process of *tarbiya* accounts for local variations in doctrine and practice, which following Marion Bowman can be seen as local vernacular religious traditions ('folk religion'), and in some cases even as 'individual religion'.⁶⁰ The followers' belief in the *Shaykh's* infallibility as the embodiment of the *nūr muḥammadī* is accepted by all as 'official religion', accepted orthodoxy. He acts as the 'custodian of tradition', the person who selects and interprets the relevant elements of tradition and posits the limits within which people can engage in the same. Through the transmission in the community and the discussions of the *Shaykh's* teachings, the followers negotiate this 'official religion' and make it relevant for their community by stressing different elements, resulting in several parallel vernacular traditions. Due to the strong centralisation

⁵⁸ Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 91–93; Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 210. Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*, 1–4.

⁵⁹ Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order?', 28–29.

⁶⁰ Bowman and Valk, 'Vernacular Religion', 4.

and the strong bonds among communities these parallel traditions do not differ significantly from the 'official religion' – they are mostly points of different stress, rather than real differences in interpretation. Individuals, based on their different levels of understanding, and their different characters, life experiences, and degree of exposure to the community and the *Shaykh*, relate to these parallel traditions in different ways. There is space for discussion and differing views that sometimes even go beyond the 'official religion'.

This also accounts for local variations in the local understandings of the general paradigm of authority. As Vincent Cornell and Valerie Hoffman have argued, the attribution of authority happens within a cultural framework as general templates of Islamic authority are understood in their local contexts.⁶¹ In fact, Roman Loimeier points out that translocal traditions that claim universal hegemony often only acquire relevance and acceptance when they are translated into a specific local context.⁶² While all followers subscribe to the underlying paradigm of authority and the basic elements of the tradition, they do so on different levels of understanding, and they attribute different roles to the *Shaykh*. While some take a lot of time to explain the doctrinal base of his authority, others focus on the *Shaykh's* roles as a guide, teacher, role model, father, protector, and/or spiritual renewer.

This different attitude could be explained by a difference in exposure to the *ṭarīqa's* teachings and the different role of the *zawāya* in which this happens. *Shaykh* Ahmad encourages theological discussions and in his *mudhākara* he often discusses complicated theological issues, often using recent scientific discoveries. In the *zāwiya* in Amman there are study groups teaching followers Qur'an and issues related to the *ṭarīqa*. The followers in Amman therefore have a lot of exposure to the many concepts that are available in the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* and will have a wide range of possibilities to explain their emotional and spiritual experiences to an outsider in the language of the *ṭarīqa*. The exposure to these teachings in Israel is limited. Followers do not visit the *zāwiya* in Amman

⁶¹ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxxviii; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 340–343.

⁶² Loimeier, 'Translocal Networks of Saints.'

regularly. In Jaffa there is a weekly study meeting in addition to the *ḥaḍra* in which a *mudhākara* from *Shaykh* Ahmad is read and discussed and texts of *nashīd* are explained, but in a small community like Acre followers meet weekly to read *wazīfa* but hardly have study meetings. Followers living in ‘mixed cities’ such as Acre and Jaffa might have a less developed knowledge of written Arabic which could lead to difficulties reading the books of the *ṭarīqa*. When someone has visited the *zāwiya* in Amman they enjoy hearing about the *Shaykh*, the people and the teachings, but this is of course not the same as a weekly direct exposure. Someone in Acre who has a demanding job and/or has to maintain a household and goes to the *zāwiya* once a week will have less exposure to the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* than someone in similar circumstances in Amman. The *zāwiya* in Acre functions more as a symbol of the ‘golden age’ and as a spiritual or actual home for the followers, bolstering the essential authority of the *Shaykh* and the community in Acre, rather than the teaching process.

The slightly varying enactment of *tarbiya* in the local communities accounts for these differences. Devotional practices are very similar and create egalitarian communities with a slight informal hierarchy in all localities, but the role of the *mubāya’a* in Amman is more pronounced and regulated than in Acre and Jaffa, where in many cases it is administered more as a natural part of their upbringing in the *ṭarīqa* than as an explicit choice. This exacerbates the notion of an egalitarian process of *tarbiya* without degrees of initiation. The most important difference, however, is that between the settings of the *mudhākara*, which in Amman is supervised heavily by the *Shaykh* due to the presence of ‘custodians of tradition’ – especially when this happens in the *zāwiya*. In Acre and Jaffa, on the other hand, *mudhākara* happens in the community / family with less ‘custodians of tradition’ – even when it happens in the *zāwiya* in Acre, which for many actually used to be their home. As we have argued, the *zāwiya* in Amman bolsters the role of the *Shaykh* and enables his role as teacher, which might account for the predominance of this image in Amman’s vernacular religion, and their strong focus on the *‘aqīda*. The *zāwiya* in Acre, on the other hand, bolsters the local community, which is understood as a family even more than in Amman

because it actually largely is connected through kinship ties. This might account for the strong focus on the *Shaykh*'s role as a father, and their overwhelming focus on *mahabba*, and their many stories that illustrate how the *Shaykh* acts through the community.

The image of the *ṭarīqa* and the *Shaykh*'s teachings presented by AKR diverges from this pattern. AKR's precise role remains unclear: while the Review Panel stresses that his role is limited to his activities as *mutawallī* of the *waqf* in Acre, except when he represents the *Shaykh* 'on a case by case basis',⁶³ in practice he acts as the *ṭarīqa*'s representative when dealing with outsiders. In his communications he focuses on the inspiration the *Shaykh* gives his followers and stresses the role of the individual rather than the community in the interpretation of the *Shaykh*'s signs – and following this takes a lot of space for his own interpretations. He visits the *zāwiya* in Amman more often than most and has more exposure to the teachings of the *Shaykh*, but his ideas on the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa* seem to diverge considerably from those of *Shaykh* Ahmad and of other followers in Amman, Acre and Jaffa. This could be explained by the context in which his ideas developed. He does not seem to be such a close member of the community. As we have seen, the community shapes the borders within which interpretation takes place. His lack of integration in the local community might therefore explain this divergence. He has clearly read many books and spoken to many other spiritual figures of all kinds of backgrounds, which has brought his ideas closer to the Western idea of Sufism as a universal mystical path that does not focus on the exterior performance of rules and that is historically but not essentially linked to Islam and can be combined with other approaches. The image he communicates is highly theologically developed but rests on more sources than just the teachings of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, and seems to be aimed mainly at the Jewish community and Western visitors.

This image is mainly communicated in the *zāwiya* as this is the place where outsiders are received. Therefore the *zāwiya* in Acre is not only the

⁶³ Review Panel, 'General Comments and Remarks', 20-08-2014, 3-4; Review Panel, 'Specific Comments on Conclusions of Individual Chapters', 4; Review Panel, 'Detailed Comments and Remarks', 30-08-2014, 56

symbol connecting the *Shaykh* and followers of today to the 'golden age' and providing the *Shaykh* with traditional charisma, or the original family home bolstering the community in Acre, it is also the location where an alternative interpretation of the teachings of the *ṭarīqa* and the *Shaykh* is communicated to outsiders as part of the efforts to revive the *zāwiya*'s 'golden age', albeit in a different way than envisaged by the *Shaykh* and most of the community.

The variations could further be explained by the different circumstances of the Palestinians in Jordan and Israel. Education is one of the main career paths of Jordanian Palestinians, and in fact many 'custodians of tradition' in Amman work in the field of education, which probably influenced their imagery (see chapter 4). In Israel, the family is still the main social network providing for people in the absence of a secure position in the state (see chapter 8) – this was even more so during the period of Military Rule when the community's attitudes were formed. The general settings of these communities might have influenced their varying attitudes.

Here, the role of the *muqaddam* deserves some attention. Dominguez Diaz notes that the ritual function of the *muqaddimīn* in the Budshishiyya is mainly to minimise variations and thus safeguard the legitimacy of the ritual. As a link between the local community and the central *zāwiya* in Morocco, the *muqaddim* reinforces the central *zāwiya*'s authority and accommodates the tensions between the central and the local. This is also done by the European leaders, who act as 'cultural brokers' by providing a link with the *Shaykh*, yet at the same time allowing for local variations.⁶⁴ We could say the same for the *muqaddamīn* of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the localities I have encountered as they have a regular connection to the *Shaykh* enabling them to transmit his teachings, act as 'custodians of tradition', and thus to a degree control the transmission of knowledge and minimise variations, yet acting within their local contexts. It is important to note, however, that many followers actually participate in these mediating functions and the process of transmission of knowledge and providing communal guidance is not limited to the *muqaddamīn*.

⁶⁴ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity', 234.

At first glance, AKR seems to act as a ‘cultural broker’, but we have seen that his ideas should be seen more as expressions of his individual religion rather than as expressions of the local vernacular religion or official religion, and he therefore in practice does not act as ‘cultural broker’ in the community of *ikhwānnā*. He does help to translate the *ṭarīqa*’s ideas to interested outsiders, but in contrast with the Budshishiyya, these are not actual members. This does influence his ideas, however. After his conversion, he at first practised and discussed within the community, but nowadays his ties with them are less strong. He has maintained his ties with other Muslim and Jewish Sufi groups and individual, which seems to have steered his thought in a different direction. This shows the need for continuing socialisation in the community, as Berger argued.⁶⁵

Pinto explains a *ṭarīqa*’s variation of local configurations by referring to traditional *ṭuruq* in which the leading *shaykh* initiates several *khulafā*’ who have a large degree of spiritual power of their own – to the point where they might break away and become a *shaykh* in their own right.⁶⁶ In the case of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya there have been cases of *muqaddamīn* breaking away,⁶⁷ but in Amman, Acre, and Jaffa, the *muqaddam* is seen as a brother who – while a respected member of the community – does not have spiritual power in his own right. The idea of a *muqaddam* breaking away is therefore inconceivable for them.⁶⁸ The power of a *khalīfa* in other movements is divided between the *Shaykh* and the community in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. The local configuration of the *ṭarīqa*’s tradition does not depend so much on the *Shaykh*’s local representative, but on the interaction and debate among the followers. They

⁶⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 18.

⁶⁶ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 149–150; Pinto, ‘Creativity and Stability in the Making of Sufi Tradition.’

⁶⁷ The *muqaddam* of Sha’b in the 1880s, the *muqaddam* of Hebron in the early twentieth century (who switched his allegiance to the Khalwatiyya and founded the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya), and Abd al-Rahman Abu Risha in the Ghuta in the 1960s. Van Ess, ‘Die Yašrutiya’, 26–29, 68–69; De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 174–175; Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 195, 219–224.

⁶⁸ The image sketched by Ahmed and Von Oppen shows a different role of the local leaders in East Africa. Further comparative research would be interesting. Ahmed and Von Oppen, ‘Saba Ishirini’; Ahmed, ‘Un Pèlerinage Maritime.’

are given this role both through the organisation of the *ṭarīqa*, and through doctrinal and devotional incentives to contemplate and discuss. The strong process of *tarbiya* ensures that they are socialized to the degree that they do not diverge significantly from the *Shaykh*'s teachings. As we have seen, AKR has partly separated himself from the ongoing process of socialisation in the community, and shows the level of independence that might enable him to break away. He presents himself to outsiders as the representative of the *Shaykh*, and is accepted by some outsiders as a *shaykh* in his own right. He does not occupy an official position in the *ṭarīqa*'s organisation, however, suggesting that Pinto's observation in the Syrian context should be widened from the *khulafā'* and official leaders to include individual members who occupy a special position.

Through the exercise of the roles attributed to him, the *Shaykh* can further bolster his functional authority. These roles allow him to act as custodian of tradition and charismatic leader who through his charisma bolsters the tradition, allowing him to exercise both his discursive and miraculous power. The economic power that comes with this further allows him to host and support his followers in their visits and studies, and to embark on renovations, as is expected from him by his followers. From this he derives functional authority, which further roots his authority. This points to the circular logic of authority discussed by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori).⁶⁹

In practice, however, most of these roles are enacted by the community. The community functions as a family, educates and adapts to society. Through the transmission and interpretation of old and new elements of tradition the followers explicitly aim to participate in their societies and seek to adapt their practices – within limits. These limits are defined by the 'custodian of tradition'. Again, the *Shaykh* is considered the ultimate 'custodian of tradition' who defines the boundaries within which this reinterpretation can happen, but only in those places where he is often present, most notably in the *zāwiya* in Amman, can he practice this role effectively. In practice the community plays the main role in limiting this interpretation.

⁶⁹ Green, *Sufism*, 6–7; Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58–59.

In Amman the *zāwiya* and the organisational framework of the local community serve to strengthen the *Shaykh*'s influence over their interpretation as the followers are constantly exposed to his presence, his words and examples. These different levels of influence extend to outsiders visiting the *ṭarīqa*. As I follow Graham Harvey's preference for fieldwork as 'methodological guesthood',⁷⁰ I took the role of guest-researcher and submitted myself to the local 'codes of guesthood', which differed considerably per community. In Amman, my interactions with followers were closely regulated. As a guest-researcher I remained an outsider who was given a glimpse of the inside but within certain clear limits. While I think that my interactions were more closely guided than those of the followers themselves, I think the basic dynamic was the same. Control over my access to knowledge was large, and affected the data I was able to gather as most of what was moderated to closely reflect the 'official narrative'. In Acre and Jaffa, interactions were more informal, and I was able to get a better insight into the dynamics that form the 'vernacular religion' and personal interpretations. These differences seem to me to be genuine reflections of the different situations in Acre and Jaffa on the one hand and Amman on the other: they are linked to society in general as Jordanian society is much more formal than Israeli society, but mainly seem to be strongly related to the presence of the *Shaykh*.

In addition to this steering of my access to knowledge, the *Shaykh* and the anonymous Review Panel sought to edit my writing to ensure I wrote the right message, again based on the idea that there is only one truth that is represented by the *Shaykh*. While I think it is good ethical practice to allow respondents to view one's writing and respond to it, at this stage of the research they cannot have the final word. As George Chryssides put it, the believers are the experts when it comes to representing their religion, and the academic is the expert when it comes to contextualising it.⁷¹ Therefore, I have carefully weighed their comments and when I felt them to add to my representation of their views I

⁷⁰ Harvey, 'Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method.'

⁷¹ Chryssides and Geaves, *The Study of Religion*, 72–74.

incorporated them in the main text or in a footnote, but when I felt them to infringe on my conclusions, I have not heeded them. The role of AKR in particular was the main controversial point, further stressing the ambiguous position he occupies in the *ṭarīqa*.

The question is, in such differing research settings, is it possible to compare people's attitudes? While it is clear that all followers adhere to the same underlying paradigm of doctrines and practices, the elements of tradition and of authority that people relate to more strongly seem to differ per community: in Amman the concept of the '*aqīda*' was the centre of most discussions, whereas in Acre this was hardly discussed. Whereas the image of the *Shaykh* as a teacher and guide – based on the idea that he embodies the '*aqīda*' and the *nūr muḥammadī* – seems to be predominant in Amman, the image of the *Shaykh* as a teacher and a guide is combined with the image of the *Shaykh* as a father in Acre and Jaffa, with less explicit reference to the essence of his spiritual rank but with many words that convey deep love and awe, stressed by non-verbal communication such as gestures and intonation. There seems to be a different level of engagement with the *ṭarīqa*'s teachings in these localities: in Amman many of the people I interviewed and spoke to in the *zāwiya* explained their emotions and experiences using explanations and metaphors they took from the stock of the tradition, and showed the ability to combine them with their own knowledge and experience, and with the metaphors they expected the outsider to be familiar with. In Acre this also happened, but seemingly to a lesser extent than in Amman. But does this reflect a true difference, or are these observations the result of the differences in research setting?

First of all it should be stressed that the fact that someone focuses on an intellectual explanation in an interview does not deny his or her spiritual involvement. It could simply be the result of the interview setting where an outsider who is not emotionally involved has to be made to understand their devotion. As it is easier to convey words and ideas than emotions, those with the capability to convey words and ideas efficiently will choose this approach. This was actually repeatedly stressed by many participants. Similarly, those who

communicate in short, emotion-laden sentences (such as ‘the *Shaykh* is everything in my life, that’s all’) with little or no reference to theological concepts might know more than they say, but for reasons of their own choose not to communicate this. It is a Sufi attitude not to divulge their secrets to outsiders, as Hoffman noted.⁷² They might want to stress the importance of the emotional ties over the intellectual ideas. They might feel I know too little philosophy or Arabic, or might fear that without the appropriate emotional conviction I would not understand these concepts. Or – in the case of group interviews – they might be intimidated by others present whom they feel to understand better than they do.

The more emotional answers which tend to be less articulate and shorter do appear in the group interviews in Amman, but participants might be discouraged from issuing them by respect for the hierarchy of rank, age and education and by the way their answers are ‘explained’ by other participants who are higher in this hierarchy. On the other hand, the group-interviews simulated the followers’ *mudhākara* in which they are used to discuss the *ṭarīqa*’s teachings, and might have led to more expanded answers than would have been the case in individual interviews.

Even so, these differences are backed up by other observations than interviews (such as the different attitude to pictures of *Shaykh* Ahmad and the Yashruti family discussed in chapter 9), and we can therefore conclude that the interviews do reflect a basic distinction in attitude even though it is hard to determine how stark this distinction really is.

Comparing *Shaykh* Ahmad’s authority with the elements of authority identified by Buehler, we see that the transmission of knowledge and the embodiment of the Prophetic Sunna are part of his authority – but rather than primary bases of authority they are part of his functional authority as the roles attributed to him *because* he is the *Shaykh*. The spiritual journey is hardly part of the imagery – the exhibition of spiritual states is neither a primary base of authority nor part of a role of the *Shaykh*. His spiritual state is constant and can only be witnessed by the followers when they have reached a certain level of

⁷² Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 11–13.

understanding through their relationship with him – the acceptance of authority has to happen before these states are witnessed (at which point they serve to strengthen the conviction of the follower).

An aspect of traditional authority which Buehler does not incorporate into his elements of authority is the attachment to space. While he sees the *zāwiya* as the space where the *communitas* of the charismatic community is enacted, he does not see the attachment to the *zāwiya* as an element of authority in itself.

In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the attachment to the founding *Shaykh* and the history of the *ṭarīqa* is materialised through the attachment to the material remnants of this period: the *zāwiya* in Acre (and to a lesser extent, in Tarshiha). The *zāwiya* in Acre is the *ṭarīqa*'s geographical symbolic centre, the material aspect of the spiritual and genealogical link to the founding *Shaykh*. The founding *Shaykh*'s charismatic connection to the *nūr muḥammadī* is brought to the present through the embodiment of the current *Shaykh*, the *ṭarīqa*'s personal symbolic centre, and still radiates from the *zāwiya* in Acre where the founding *Shaykh* is buried. As such, efforts to renovate the *zāwiya* and once again make it an active spiritual centre should be seen as efforts to reconnect to this charismatic moment and bring it into the present. By continuing the work of his forefathers, *Shaykh Ahmad* strengthens his connection to his lineage and the history of the *ṭarīqa*. In this way, the *zāwiya* provides traditional charisma to the *Shaykh*. In addition to this, the *zāwiya* in Acre allows him to enact his role of spiritual renewer through the renovation.

This function of bestowing traditional charisma is unique for the *zāwiya* in Acre. The other *zawāya* are places where the community comes together and where the tradition is transmitted through teaching and practicing. In several *zawāya*, most notably the one in Amman, the *Shaykh* is often present to supervise this transmission of the tradition – when he is absent, other people take over this supervising function. Therefore, the *Shaykh*'s role as 'custodian of tradition' is stronger in the *zāwiya* in Amman than in those *zawāya* and communities which he does not visit regularly.

All this points to the fact that the routinization of charisma in the form of traditional institutionalisation on kinship lines in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya has not led to the decline of charisma. This becomes especially clear when discussing the *ṭarīqa*'s institutionalisation through the lense of O'Dea's five dilemmas of institutionalisation.⁷³ There is no sign of what O'Dea called the dilemma of administrative order characterized by bureaucratization, elaboration and alienation.⁷⁴ The administrative structure started by *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din was more centralised than most traditional *ṭuruq*,⁷⁵ which has been perpetuated by his successors. It is a simple structure with the *Shaykh* at the top and *muqaddamīn* in local communities, and some extra staff and volunteers in locations where there is a lot of work (especially in Amman). In Amman, this structure gives the *Shaykh* a large degree of control, but in Acre and Jaffa he has less direct control because he cannot go there himself and is dependent on others. This is a very simple and effective administrative structure which ensures the *Shaykh*'s centrality yet also encourages the followers to get involved. The adherence to a translocal *ṭarīqa* representing a universal truth is therefore well balanced with the local needs of the community, both through the positions of the *muqaddamīn*, as we also see in Dominguez Diaz's discussion of the Budshishiyya,⁷⁶ and through the level of autonomy the followers have in transmitting the tradition, which differs per locality.

We have seen that adherence is largely based on family affiliation. Conversion has thus been replaced by socialisation. We have seen that this in no way diminishes the charismatic nature of the community, and the first meeting with the *Shaykh* and/or the *mubāya'a* are still experienced by many as a life changing event. Thus the organisation of the *ṭarīqa* is quite stable, and there is space for the development of loving and reverential relationships between *shaykh* and follower, and for spiritual and emotional experiences, leading to

⁷³ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas.'

⁷⁴ Ibid., 80–82.

⁷⁵ De Jong, 'The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine', 179–180; Weismann, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Syria and Israel', 316.

⁷⁶ Dominguez Diaz, 'Performance, Belonging and Identity.'

creativity – expression, re-presentation and re-creation of the charismatic moment.

The issue of mixed motivation⁷⁷ is difficult to comment on. While the institutionalisation of authority and the material power that comes with it provides security in the form of wealth and social prestige for the Yashruti family and those closely associated with them, it also comes with a great responsibility towards the community. The material inheritance enables the Yashruti family and the *Shaykh* in particular to perform those roles that lead their followers to attribute authority to them – the lack of performing these functions might lead to the lessening of authority (what Eickelman and Piscatori call the circular logic of authority).⁷⁸ In addition to this leadership over a Sufi *ṭarīqa* also comes with challenges in the contemporary religious climate. Being a Sufi *shaykh* in the contemporary world is a mixed blessing, and it seems that the original motivation continues to be strong for the *Shaykh* and for the followers.

The concretization and objectification of normative codes, practices, ideas and relationships has not led to stagnation, alienation and the loss of the charismatic,⁷⁹ but have rather ensured the continuing relevance of the symbolic universe and the related system of social relationships. The standardized rituals recreate the religious moment and elicit emotions and spiritual experiences and a strong communal cohesion – even more so due to the absence of personalised devotional practices. The body of knowledge is continuously discussed and added to, both in the form of the editing of old books, the production of new written material (such as the *Shaykh's mudhākara* and studies by followers), and the development of the vernacular tradition in the form of oral narratives. Concretization – rather than leading to the normalisation of the extraordinary – is considered one of the most valued aspects of the *ṭarīqa* and qualities of the *Shaykh*, and understood as a way for the religious experience to break into everyday life. These ongoing charismatic moments strengthen *ikhwānnā's* adherence to the symbolic universe and plausibility structure as they incorporate

⁷⁷ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 75–78.

⁷⁸ Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 58–59.

⁷⁹ O'Dea, 'Sociological Dilemmas', 78–80.

all aspects of life into it and transform their world into a divinely sanctioned reality.

This points to the importance of innovation (in the sociological sense, not in the contemporary Islamic sense of *bid'a*). The *ṭarīqa*'s elements of tradition are not simply transmitted as they are but actively engaged with and made to speak to the current situation and the follower's life. While the rituals such as reading *wazīfa* and performing *ḥaḍra* are considered to be the same everywhere (and are in this moment in time), other aspects of the tradition are explicitly open to change. This importance of spiritual renewal is an essential element of the *ṭarīqa*'s self-image, commented on by both *Shaykh* and followers who see *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din as a spiritual renewer, and who see *Shaykh* Ahmad in the same light. The idea that the *'aqīda* is essentially the same but its manifestations change allows for this focus on the present. The followers are encouraged to live in the present, to participate in society, to ensure that society accepts them.

Through this explicit dedication to spiritual renewal and the implicit adaptation to the local context through *tarbiya*, and specifically through *mudhākara*, the original message continues to speak to the people, preventing stagnation and alienation. His ability to speak to the modern situation of the followers, leads to their identification with the spiritual leader and the attribution of charisma. Their successful adaptation to society and their good behaviour is seen as proof of the *Shaykh*'s spiritual power and charisma. Innovation understood as adaptation of the tradition is therefore an essential aspect of the maintenance of the charisma in this institutionalised *ṭarīqa*. We could even argue that institutionalisation provides the possibility for innovation, as it strengthens the *Shaykh*'s position from which he can embark on innovation without losing his audience.

Similar remarks have been made by Chanfi Ahmed and Achim von Oppen, who argue that the maintenance of charisma in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Tanzania is due to the innovations they have made to adapt the annual Saba Ishrin festival to new circumstances.⁸⁰ It seems likely that these

⁸⁰ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini'; Ahmed, 'Un Pèlerinage Maritime.'

attitudes stem from the fact that they belong to the same *ṭarīqa*, but more comparative research needs to be done to establish this for certain. The examples of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in the Levant and in East Africa suggest that Pnina Werbner's theory of 'waxing and waning'⁸¹ due to the presence or absence of charisma needs to be rethought, as we see here the opposite pattern: innovation actually leads to the attribution of charisma.

As part of their adherence to the notion of spiritual renewal and innovation and their aim of adaptation to society, the followers make a strong point of being apolitical and of being good citizens in their countries. When we use a broader definition of 'politics' however, the decision to be apolitical is in itself a political decision. When examining the *Shaykh*'s locational authority and the *ṭarīqa*'s attitude to 'Muslim politics' (the competition among spokespeople of Islam),⁸² we see that the *ṭarīqa* in Jordan does not participate explicitly, but implicitly supports the 'traditionalist official Islam' championed by the king and contested by Islamist movements. In terms of Bruce Lincoln's categorisation of the political roles of religious movements – religion of the status quo, of resistance or rebellion⁸³ – the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Jordan is best described as a religion of the status quo, because of their self-professed apolitical attitude, their focus on the spiritual relationship with the *Shaykh*, and their value of being part of society and being good citizens. Their focus on character formation and guidance thus leads to the strengthening of the hegemonic approach to Islam.⁸⁴

Similarly we can classify the *ṭarīqa* in Israel as a religious movement of the status quo; the followers' apolitical attitude implies a passive acceptance of the status quo, whereas the controversial social role of the *zāwiya* actively supports the status quo. On the other hand, we should also take into account that the strong bond that *ikhwānnā* build and maintain with each other and with their history, both in the spiritual and the physical sense, means that they continue to connect to the *ṭarīqa*'s places of origin, most notably Acre. This connection is

⁸¹ Werbner, 'Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah.'

⁸² Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 4–5.

⁸³ Lincoln, 'Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution.'

⁸⁴ Pinto, 'Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria.'

materialised through the connection to the *zāwiya* and its renovation, which remains a landmark in Acre, testifying to their presence. As such it can be seen as a symbol of *sumūd* (steadfastness) (which is not a concept free of discussions surrounding issues of collaboration⁸⁵) – although it has to be noted that no-one associated with the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya has referred to it as such.

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is a very interesting example of a translocal *ṭarīqa*. Even when focusing on only three locations a lot interesting points are raised. We have already discussed the questions it poses to Hermansens's classification of contemporary Sufi movements, and how Stjernholm's approach serves us better to understand its different attitudes in different localities – being a traditional *ṭarīqa* within the Islamic discursive tradition for most followers, while AKR has a more individual and perennial approach that reaches out to the Jewish Sufi milieu with its Zionist undertones. Let us now look at several characteristics of translocal *ṭuruq*.

Several translocal *ṭuruq* are characterized by ethnic diversity. Dominguez Diaz notes that the Budshishiyya in France and Spain consists of transplant 'enclaves' of Moroccan immigrants, and hybrid groups of converts from different ethnic backgrounds, while in the UK there are only hybrid groups.⁸⁶ Tayfun Ayat saw little connection between members of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya of different ethnic backgrounds, but Stjernholm argued that the large meetings in London and Cyprus had a strong multi-ethnic character.⁸⁷ In contrast, the ethnic homogeneity of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Amman, Acre, and Jaffa is striking as the *ṭarīqa* in these localities exists completely within the Palestinian diaspora. This can be explained by referring to the form of institutionalisation, as it is not a proselytizing movement any longer but has become institutionalised on traditional kinship lines, and is maintained largely within the family.

Even though the communities in Israel, Palestine and Jordan solely consist of Palestinians, who are mainly connected through family ties, the larger *ṭarīqa* consists of multiple ethnicities. Further research on the multi-ethnic

⁸⁵ Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* (London: Quartet, 1982).

⁸⁶ Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?'

⁸⁷ Simon Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement, 83–101

character of the larger *ṭarīqa*, focusing on other localities where followers have different ethnicities and on the role of the *zāwiya* in Amman as the centre of the wider *ṭarīqa*, would be very interesting, especially when comparing our findings with the research of Ahmed and Von Oppen which shows additional focuses of authority and sacred space among followers in East Africa.⁸⁸

AKR's 'individual religion' and outreach to Jewish spiritual seekers shows signs of hybridity, but this is not supported by the rest of the *ṭarīqa* and has not resulted in any conversions or creations of hybrid groups comparable to those noted by Dominguez Diaz. Similarly, AKR cannot be seen as a 'cultural broker' like the Budshishiyya's Sidi Munirand Skali,⁸⁹ as his personal hybrid interpretation is communicated to outsiders, but does not influence other followers within the *ṭarīqa*. His commitment to 'Sufism and the politics of peace'⁹⁰ call to mind similarities with the activities of Hisham Kabbani,⁹¹ with the difference that the followers are not involved and have no influence over these initiatives.

Related to the issue of Hermansen's classification, is the issue of multi-centredness. While this is not an exceptional situation for the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as many *ṭuruq* nowadays have multiple centres due to activities in the diaspora or migration of the leader (for example the Budshishiyya, Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya and Burhaniyya), the particular relation between these centres in the case of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is quite unique. While the centre shifted to Amman, the *zāwiya* in Acre did remain an important spiritual centre for the followers and an actual centre for the followers in Israel, giving the *ṭarīqa* a certain multi-centredness. The followers look to the *zāwiya* as a strong connection to the charismatic moment due to its place in history and the tombs of the three previous *Shaykhs*, most notably *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. *Shaykh* Ahmad encourages this orientation and materially invests in the *zāwiya*'s renovation, hoping to give it a stronger position in the *ṭarīqa* and in Acre's society again, in the meantime strengthening his own traditional charisma and enacting his role of

⁸⁸ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini.'

⁸⁹ Dominguez Diaz, 'The One or the Many?'

⁹⁰ Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization.'

⁹¹ Stjernholm, 'A Translocal Sufi Movement', 91–93; Stjernholm, 'What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Tariqa?', 210; Ernst, 'Sufism, Islam and Globalization.'

spiritual renewer. AKR's hybrid approach also depends for a large measure on his use of the *zāwiya* as his platform to present himself as the representative of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel and the West, which provides him with charisma and authority for Jewish seekers. The *zāwiya* presents both *Shaykh* Ahmad and AKR with authenticity and a connection to the original charismatic moment.

The situation of the Khalwatiyya-Rahmaniyya might come close to that of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, but more research on the former is needed to understand its organisational structure, its different branches, and the relations of its leaders. While their *zāwiya* in Baqa al-Gharbiya houses the tombs of several previous *Shaykhs*, this *zāwiya* is relatively new and does not have the same connection to the *ṭarīqa*'s history as the *zāwiya* in Acre does, and a comparison between the two would be interesting. The Burhaniyya's case might be closest as the grandson of the founding *Shaykh* of the Burhaniyya is now based in Germany where the German followers play a large role in the organization of the *ṭarīqa*, but the Sudanese followers maintain the charismatic and traditional authority for being closer to the source of spirituality, the Sudan.⁹² The fact that *Shaykh* Ahmad's separation from the *zāwiya* in Acre is not voluntary and he is including the original centre in his innovative actions shows a stronger focus on the original centre than seems to be found in the Burhaniyya. There is also no similar ethnic diversity. The question whether the German followers might claim more (bureaucratic) authority in the Burhaniyya in future,⁹³ therefore has no parallel in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. In addition to this, as we saw above, the successful process of *tarbiya* also makes the rise of an alternative authority among the followers unlikely.

Finally, a comparable case is that of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Tanzania, where most followers from the original centre in Khilwa Pande moved to Dar al-Salam for economic reasons, but reconnect to their history and the original spiritual centre in the region every year, showing a similar combination of

⁹² Klinkhammer, 'The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany'; Lassen, 'Strategies for Concord'; Lassen, 'Growing up a Sufi.' See paragraph 1.5.3.

⁹³ Lassen, 'Strategies for Concord', 206.

adherence to tradition and innovation, in which innovation actually is a strong factor in maintaining charisma in a *ṭarīqa* that is strongly institutionalized on traditional kinship lines.⁹⁴ It seems likely that these attitudes stem from the fact that they belong to the same *ṭarīqa*, but more comparative research needs to be done to establish this for certain.

It is important to note that the process of shifting centres is continuous, as Werbner also pointed out in her discussion of the multcentredness of diaspora. In this sense there is a process of 'waxing and waning', not of a *ṭarīqa* as a whole, but of the centres within the *ṭarīqa* as the followers spread, the *Shaykh* moves, and attention to certain centres is enhanced. As we have seen however, the charisma is maintained throughout these shifts through the *tarbiya* in the local communities, and the 'waxing and waning' is not the result of a rise of charisma. What we see is actually the opposite: the connection to the *zāwiya* in Acre actually bestows charisma on the *Shaykh*, and the renovation especially so. This innovation is possible due to the highly centralised and organised nature of the *ṭarīqa*, as it provides the *Shaykh* with the funds to renovate the *zāwiya* without outside help. We thus see how institutionalisation and charisma reinforce each other, rather than being opposites.

Therefore, we cannot say that the *ṭarīqa* is deterritorialized in the sense of being unconnected to its geographical roots. It is semi-deterritorialized at best, as the official ideology teaches that 'the stones are not important' and the centre of the *ṭarīqa* is where the *Shaykh* is, but the strong connection to the *zāwiya* in Acre remains. The particular conditions of this *ṭarīqa*'s diaspora have forced it to rely more on the official doctrine, but the *Shaykh* and the followers take every opportunity to reconnect to the *zāwiya* and undo the forced deterritorialization. It will be interesting to follow the developments of the *zāwiya* in Acre as the renovation draws to its end.

While this particular disconnection from the *zāwiya* is embedded in the Palestinian refugee experience, the followers in Amman see it mainly as an aspect of the general translocal character of the *ṭarīqa* that had been established

⁹⁴ Ahmed and Von Oppen, 'Saba Ishirini'; Ahmed, 'Un Pèlerinage Maritime.'

before 1948. The example of the followers in the Comoros is a case in point for them. A comparison between the attitude towards sacred space in general and the *zawāya* in East Africa and in the Levant in particular amongst those followers would be revealing. The work of Ahmed and Von Oppen shows that the *ṭarīqa* in the Comoros and Tanzania is in no way deterritorialized but attaches great importance to their local leaders and their *zawāya* and *ziyārāt*. Their visits to the *zāwiya* in Amman show they also attach importance to their relationship with the living *Shaykh*. The question remains what their attitude is towards the *zāwiya* in Acre.

Despite the strong attachment to the *Shaykh* and to the *zāwiya* and the strong desire to visit both on the material plane, the main enactment of the *ṭarīqa* in the form of adherence to the four pillars and the maintenance of the strong cohesion of the community, happens primarily in the local communities, with or without access to the *Shaykh* and a *zāwiya*. Through their belief in the possibility of a spiritual relationship and spiritual communication in dreams and visions and through signs in the material world, a 'religious experience' or 'charismatic moment' can break through in every time and place, sanctifying their everyday life and especially the community, the main locus in which such experiences happen. Their relationship is developed through love, education, and ritual practices in the local communities, and reaffirmed during actual and spiritual meetings with people from other communities. In this way they do exchange social and cultural ideas that become incorporated in the local vernacular tradition, transforming local realities and cultural behaviour, so that enclaves become glocal, but this does not lead to 'characteristic eclectic religiosities typical of a glocalized religious hybridity' as Dominguez Diaz predicted.⁹⁵ The most obvious explanation would be because the different communities we have examined here all consist exclusively of Palestinians who adhere to the same grand historical narrative that places them within the same Levantine Islamic Sufi tradition. Again, the interaction with followers from other ethnicities, most notably those from the Comoros, would be interesting to compare with these findings.

⁹⁵ Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, 'Introduction', 4; Dominguez Diaz, 'Shifting Fieldsites', 73.

One of the main characteristics of contemporary Sufism is its ‘decentring of authority’ as it is characterized by a looser organisational structure, often with a large role for modern modes of communication, a stronger focus on the community rather than the *shaykh*, and a high degree of autonomy for the believers, either individually or as part of a community, to the point where there sometimes not even is a *shaykh*.⁹⁶ Howell, for example, describes the development of a ‘new urban Sufi network’ in Indonesia,⁹⁷ and Raudvere and Gaši show that the Swedish Bosniak diaspora communities have taken over their *shaykhs*’ community functions and only left them the facilitation of *dhikr*.⁹⁸

The disruption of the link between *Shaykh* and community led to the distance of the *Shaykh* and the lower degree of control he has over the communities in Acre and Jaffa. Because of the large role of the community in the transmission of tradition one could say that the authority of the *Shaykh* has become decentred, but due to the followers’ specific understanding of their mode of communication, the act of interpretation is considered a religious act, the very practising of which maintains their bond and their identification with the translocal *ṭarīqa*. In classical Sufi theory, the interpretation of *ishārāt* happens through the return of the soul to its origins – both are referred to as *ta’wīl*.⁹⁹ Therefore, even the interpretation of the most explicit, mundane sign, is considered a religious act that is both result and cause of their *tarbiya* and their relationship to the *Shaykh*. The mode in which the variations of traditional elements come into being ensures that these variations are still considered part of the tradition and the followers continue to identify themselves with the tradition and see the *Shaykh* as the centre of their *ṭarīqa*.

The followers in Amman on the other hand might be close to the *Shaykh*, but they are separated from the historical centre of the *ṭarīqa*, the mother *zāwiya* in Acre. This has not led to a clear ‘deterritorialisation’ however. While they do

⁹⁶ Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 5, 10; Geaves, ‘Cultural Binary Fission’; Heck, ‘The Politics of Sufism.’ See paragraph 1.5.2 and 1.5.3.

⁹⁷ Howell, ‘Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia’s New Sufi Networks.’

⁹⁸ Raudvere and Gaši, ‘Home, Nation and Global Islam.’

⁹⁹ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 28–35; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 7–15; Nwyia, ‘*Ishāra*’; Poonawala, ‘*Ta’wīl*.’

adapt to their circumstances and concentrate on the living *Shaykh*, and official doctrine states that ‘the stones are not important’, the *zāwiya* in Acre is not forgotten and it occupies a central place in their spiritual geography. The yearning for the *zāwiya* is materialized in the *Shaykh*’s preoccupation with the renovation. The need to work through an intermediary is a direct result of the challenges the Palestinians face as the *Shaykh* cannot visit Israel himself, and the mode of communication between the *Shaykh* and AKR, which is presented as a more individual version of the mode of communication between the *Shaykh* and the followers in general, leads to a specific social role of the *ṭarīqa* in Acre which is considered controversial by some local followers.

We have seen that this *ṭarīqa* is very well compatible with modernity. While indeed ‘progress’ is not seen as a goal, they seek to adapt to the situation and to participate in society, but basing this on spiritual development. As part of this attitude, they are open to science – based on the belief that they hold the absolute truth, logically for them there can be no clash with scientific knowledge. Finally, we have seen that despite the explicit submission to the absolute authority of the *Shaykh*, in practice there is more space for individual understanding and practice – to practice within their society, as is the *ṭarīqa*’s explicit aim.

One of the main aspects of modern religious movements is their organisational and intellectual rationalisation.¹⁰⁰ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya there is a clear valuation of education, science and rational thinking – which they present as a traditional element as *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din supported education for all his followers from the start (including the women, as is best proven by the work of his daughter Fatima al-Yashrutiyya) and is continued in his successor *Shaykh* Ahmad. Even so, it is still considered secondary to emotional and spiritual knowledge which only the *Shaykh* can bestow. References to rational and empirical knowledge are used in the *mudhākara* to explain certain points, but there is no sense of a redefinition of the entire tradition on rational terms.

¹⁰⁰ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 42–44, 112–119, 133; Raudvere and Stenberg, ‘Translocal Mobility and Traditional Authority’, 5, 10; Howell and Van Bruinessen, ‘Sufism and the “Modern” in Islam’, 10–11.

We do see a certain rationalisation in the attitude to the maintenance of the *zawāya*, which seems a reaction to local circumstances that stems from the desire to remain independent yet functioning within society at the same time. Other than that, the *ṭarīqa* remains organised on the same traditional yet centralised lines as it was since the beginning. It is an explicitly traditional Sufi movement that revolves ideologically and organisationally around the *Shaykh*, who inherited the *shaykhdom* from his father. There is no hint of the Traditional Sufi ideas of Sufism without a *ṭarīqa* or even a *shaykh*, or of Sufism as a manifestation of a universal Religion of Love, that we have examined in paragraph 1.5.¹⁰¹

We have noted that the followers show a high degree of autonomy in the transmission of the tradition and in their interpretations, but this is the result of the dynamic of interaction, rather than due to a change in doctrine or organisation. Whether this is a new development or whether this was present in the *ṭarīqa* from the start should be subject of further historical research.

The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya thus continues the classical ‘template of Sufi sainthood’ including the maintenance of charisma based on classical Sufi doctrines and manifested through *karāmāt* – although the *karāmāt* are more adapted to their time and situation as they focus on the *Shaykh*’s psychological spiritual powers, and on his powers to inspire good ethics and to inspire them to be good people in their community and in society. The focus does seem to be on being good people, rather than reaching high spiritual heights, but this needs to spring forth from spiritual development. The downplaying of the *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt* and general mystical experiences in favour of the ethical is pronounced, however. Whether this is the result of a historical development, or whether this is due to my respondents’ hesitance to speak of such hidden things as Hoffman pointed out is common among Sufis,¹⁰² will need further research.

In the contemporary Sufi milieu we see a wide variety of different forms of Sufi organisation, ranging from informal networks and local groups to traditional

¹⁰¹ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’; Hamid, ‘The Rise of the “Traditional Islam” Network(s)’; Heck, ‘The Politics of Sufism’, 15; Lewisohn, ‘Sufism’s Religion of Love.’

¹⁰² Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 11–13.

ṭuruq, among others. Many Sufi movements benefited from the general Islamic revival in the 1980s. This leaves us with the question whether we can speak of a revival that is part of the general Islamic revival, as De Jong wondered in the 1980s,¹⁰³ or which Geaves witnessed in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ The strong aspect of traditional institutionalisation on kinship lines among the followers and the continued connection to the Yashruti family and the *zāwiya* in Acre, do not seem to support this assumption. The Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in Israel and Amman should definitely be classified as a traditional *ṭarīqa*, revolving around a charismatic family, and institutionalised on kinship lines. Their renewed activity, especially in the renovation of the *zāwiya* in Acre, is made possible by the same circumstances that made the Islamic revival in Israel possible – renewed contacts with the wider Muslim world – but ultimately derives from inner dynamics in the *ṭarīqa*. They do relate to some new trends in Sufism: in Jordan they implicitly support the King’s Traditional Islam, and in Israel AKR reaches out to the Jewish Sufi milieu, but this does not influence their organisational forms.

There is indeed a revival, as is illustrated most clearly in the renovation of the *zāwiya* in Acre (but also in the publications of the *ṭarīqa*’s books and the renewed contacts among *ikhwānnā* across the borders), but it seems to be part of the reconnection of the Palestinian diaspora, rather than connected to the larger Islamic revival. Tradition was maintained through the community / family and is now revived due to reconnections. It does not seem to be connected to the general disappointment with secularist nationalism or political Islam, with quietism and revolution, or with modernity in general – it does not seem to be a ‘third option’ for the followers, as Geaves suggested as an explanation for the recent revival of Sufism in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the public face this renovation has taken in Israeli society, AKR’s outreach to the Jewish Sufi milieu, seems to connect the *ṭarīqa* to the Zionist historical narrative. This is, as we have seen however, rather his personal interpretation than representative for the *ṭarīqa* at large.

¹⁰³ De Jong, ‘The Sufi Orders in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Palestine’, 180.

¹⁰⁴ Geaves, ‘That Which We Have Forgotten’, 39–46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 44–46.

The value of the anthropological method has been seen in this study as it has helped us to uncover and explain the differences between the images portrayed by the *Shaykh* and his 'custodians of tradition' in Amman on the one hand and AKR in Acre. This method has allowed us to look beyond what is presented as the 'official narratives' to hear the followers' voices. By understanding the relationship between the people in authority and those who submit to this authority, we achieve a deeper understanding of what the *Shaykh* and the *ṭarīqa* mean to the people and what is the social role of the *Shaykh* and *ṭarīqa*, in other words, how we should locate the *Shaykh* and community in the struggle for authority that Eickelman and Piscatori call 'Muslim politics'.

This study has aimed to be a first excursion into the world of the contemporary Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya. It does not claim to be the final word on the subject, as much more work needs to be done to place the *ṭarīqa* in the wider context of the Sufi and Shadhuli tradition. Specific questions that could be asked are how the *ṭarīqa* developed its conceptual and devotional framework, especially its understanding of the Path (*marātib*, *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt*, and the practice of *dhikr bi-ism al-madd*, for example). More historical research might shed more light on the history of the *ṭarīqa* after the demise of *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din. Interesting questions would be the process of institutionalisation, for example when the *ṭarīqa* shifted from being a proselytizing movement to a traditional institution based on kinship, and an oral history of the development of the *ṭarīqa* in Israel and Palestine after 1948. A wider focus comparing the attitudes of *murīdīn*, *muḥibbīn*, ex-followers, and people in wider society would give us additional insight into the effectiveness of the *tarbiya* as it would also include those people who chose not to remain connected to the *ṭarīqa*, and tell us more about their position in wider society. As mentioned above, further research into other communities and comparisons with other Sufi groups in Israel would also be revealing.

Important in further research is to include an analysis of the *ṭarīqa*'s published sources. As reflections of the official narrative, these are indispensable to get a fuller understanding of the official religion. It is also interesting when

researching contemporary vernacular and individual religion to take the role of the literature in consideration, focusing on what these texts mean for the followers today, and how they use and interpret them. This would surmount the narrow anthropological focus of this study.

When identifying useful general concepts for approaching Sufi movements, we should consider that while *silsila* and *baraka* are often seen as the emic concepts to best describe tradition and charisma in Sufism, I suggest that we are better served by focusing on *tarbiya*. Following Asad, Pinto argued the same, but his focus was on the process of *tarbiya* after initiation,¹⁰⁶ while we have seen that in this *ṭarīqa* it refers to the whole process of upbringing within the *ṭarīqa* from the moment of birth. This fact, and the different role of initiation related to it, is due to the specific form of institutionalisation the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya underwent, along traditional lines and dependent on hereditary succession and family affiliation. Berger and Luckmann's concepts of institutionalisation and socialisation¹⁰⁷ are very useful in understanding the dynamics of *tarbiya* and of the community's interpretation of the *Shaykh's* speech acts and spiritual communication in the form of *ishārāt*, especially in the dynamic between the community's relatively high degree of autonomy while at the same time adhering to the doctrine of *taslīm*, absolute submission to the *Shaykh*. This adds to our understanding of the maintenance of charisma in institutionalised Sufi movements, and draws attention to the importance of innovation and adaptation to society as a concretization which enables the charismatic to continue to speak to people. This enables us to understand the development of Sufism as a discursive tradition, to understand Sufi authority as a relationship between *shaykh* and follower, to understand the dynamic of the transmission and reinterpretation of a Sufi tradition in its context(s), and to see that a Sufi movement can be both traditional and innovative at the same time, thus maintaining its charisma by looking both to the past and the future.

¹⁰⁶ Pinto, 'The Anthropologist and the Initiated', 464–465.

¹⁰⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.

Appendix – Silsila of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya¹

0. Prophet Muḥammad (ca.570-632)
1. 'Alī b. Abū Ṭālib (599-661)
2. Ḥasan b. Fāṭima al-Zahrā' (d.669)
3. Abū Muḥammad Jābir
4. Sa'īd al-Qazwīnī
5. Muḥammad Faṭḥ al-Su'ūd
6. Sa'd
7. Abū Muḥammad Sa'īd
8. Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad al-Marwānī
9. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī
10. Zain al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī
11. Shams al-Dīn as-Sīwāsī
12. Tāj al-Dīn
13. Nūr al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan
14. Fakhr al-Dīn
15. Tuqayy al-Dīn
16. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī
17. 'Abd al-Salām b. Mashīsh (d.1228)
18. 'Alī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhili (1196-1258)
19. Abū al-'Abbās al-Mursī (1219-1287)
20. Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Aṭā'Allāh al-Iskandarī (d.1309)
21. Dāwūd al-Bākhillī
22. Muḥammad Baḥr al-Ṣafā' (1301-1363)
23. 'Alī Wafā' (1358-1404)
24. Yaḥyā al-Qādirī
25. Aḥmad b. 'Uqba al-Ḥaḍramī (d.1490)

¹ al-Yashrutiyya, *Mawāhib al-Ḥaqq*, 17–18.

For an extensive discussion of the *silsila*, see Van Ess, 'Die Yašrutiya', 32–38.

26. Abu al-Abbas Aḥmad al-Burnusi, al-Zarrūq (1442-1493)
27. Ibrāhīm al-Faḥḥām (d.1520)
28. 'Alī al-Şanhājī (d.1534-5)
29. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Majdhūb (d.1569)
30. Yūsuf al-Fāsī (1530-1604)
31. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Kabīr (1570-1652)
32. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fāsī (1631-1684)
33. Qāsım al-Khaşşās (d.1673)
34. Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh
35. al-'Arbī b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh
36. 'Ali al-'Imrān al-Mulaqqab bi-l-Jamal (d.1799)
37. Abū Aḥmad al-'Arabi al-Darqawī (1737-1823)
38. Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Ḥamza Zāfir al-Madanī (1780-1847)
39. 'Ali Nūr al-Dīn al-Yashruṭī (1794-1899)
40. Ibrāhīm al-Yashruṭī (1844-1927)
41. Muḥammad al-Hādī al-Yashruṭī (1900-1980)
42. Aḥmad al-Hādī al-Yashruṭī (1928)

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

Title of Project: The Yashrutiyya in Israel and Lebanon

Name(s)/Title of Project Research Team Member(s): Linda Sijbrand

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Glossary¹

<i>abnā al-ṭarīqa</i>	‘the children of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> ’, used by the followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to themselves
<i>adab - ādāb</i>	good quality of the soul, correct behaviour, good manners, courtesy, good upbringing, social and ethical etiquette, culture. In the Sufi sense it encompasses the embodiment of Sufi values and the performance of the spiritual states: ‘he who has achieved courtesy has achieved perfect refinement of words and deeds by weighing himself in the scale of the Law as embodied in the person of the Prophet.’ ² It is ‘a lofty code of ethics and a standard of etiquette that are essential to traveling the spiritual path’, governing relationships with God, then with the <i>shaykh</i> , with other disciples, and society at large. ³ It is both a means of purification and a final goal and as thus is central to the Sufi Path. One’s spiritual states and ‘inner qualities of the self’ are to be expressed in the correct behaviour, ‘embodied as guiding disposition of all concrete actions and choices (...) expressed in his posture, gestures, glances, and emotional states.’ As moral performances they create a framework of public morality. ⁴ Fatima al-Yashrutiyya quotes <i>Shaykh</i> Ali Nur al-Din: ‘The <i>ṭarīqa</i> is the Book and the Sunna. All of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> is <i>ādāb</i> .’ ⁵
<i>ahl al-bayt</i>	‘the people of the house’, used by all Muslims to refer to the family of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sufis believe the <i>nūr muḥammadi</i> passed through his descendants ⁶ . The followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya also use it to refer to the Yashruti family
<i>akhlāq</i>	ethics Islamic ethics gradually developed from several sources: pre-Islamic Arab codes of behavior, the Qur’an and the Sunna of the

¹ The definitions in this glossary are predominantly based on the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second and third editions, on explanations from followers of the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, and on comments by the Review Panel. If additional material has been used, a footnote has been provided.

Please note that for the benefit of those who do not know Arabic, this list is ordered alphabetically according to the transcriptions into the Latin script, not according to the Arabic originals.

² Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 174–179.

³ Valerie J. Hoffman, ‘Un Cheikh Soufi peut-il être un Héros Moderne? Le Cas du Cheikh Ahmad Radwān (Égypte)’, in *Saints et Héros du Moyen-Orient Contemporain. Actes du Colloque des 11 et 12 Décembre 2000* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002), 145–149; Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 300; Ian Richard Netton, ‘“The Breath of Felicity.” Adab, Aḥwāl, Maqāmāt and Abu Najīb Al-Suhrawardī’, in *The Heritage of Sufism. Volume 1.*, ed. Lewisohn, 458.

⁴ Pinto, ‘Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality in Syria’, 125.

⁵ al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahāt al-Ḥaqq*, 57.

⁶ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 68–87.

Prophet and his Companions, and Persian and Greek ethical systems. As the Sunna became the basis of the sharia, it also strongly influenced the development of *ādāb* and *akhlāq*.⁷

' <i>ālim</i> - ' <i>ulamā</i> '	religious scholar who possesses ' <i>ilm</i> (intellectual knowledge) of the Qur'an, <i>ḥadīth</i> , and <i>fiqh</i> .
' <i>aqīda</i>	often translated into English as 'belief', 'creed', 'dogma' or 'doctrine'. For the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is an umbrella term that encompasses both belief (<i>imān</i>) and divine law (<i>sharī'a</i>), which consists of devotional and social rules. It is not just an abstract theoretical concept, but is present in the hearts and minds of the followers – a good follower 'has the ' <i>aqīda</i> inside'.
<i>arkān al-islām</i>	the five pillars of Islam: <i>shahāda</i> (profession of faith), <i>ṣalāa</i> (prayer), <i>zakāa</i> (charity), <i>ṣawm</i> (fasting), and <i>ḥajj</i> (pilgrimage to Mecca)
<i>arkān al-ṭarīqa</i>	the four pillars of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya: <i>maḥabba</i> (love), <i>dhikr</i> (remembrance), <i>fikr</i> (contemplation), and <i>taslīm</i> (submission)
<i>awliyā</i>	friends of God (see sg. <i>walī</i>)
<i>awqāf</i>	religious endowments (see sg. <i>waqf</i>)
<i>awrād</i>	litanies (see sg. <i>wird</i>)
<i>baqā</i>	'permanence, persistence', returning to one's self after <i>fanā</i> ' (annihilation in God), subsistence in a higher mode of consciousness after annihilation of a lower mode of consciousness, 'surviving' or 'abiding' with God (<i>baqā fi-llāh</i>). In this state, the believer keeps the perfect attributes as his will is replaced with the will of God ⁸
<i>baraka</i>	divine grace, blessing; 'a spiritual power associated with holy people, time, places, or things. It is communicable and can bring disaster on evildoers or unbelievers, just as it brings blessing on believers' ⁹
<i>barzakh</i>	the connection between the Creator and His creation, envisioned either as an ontological realm, or as embodied in <i>al-Insān al-Kāmil</i> , the Perfect Man ¹⁰
<i>bāṭin</i>	interior, spiritual, as opposed to <i>zāhir</i> (exterior, material)

⁷ Walzer and Gibb, 'Akhilāk'; Marlow, 'Advice and Advice Literature'; Adamson, 'Ethics in Philosophy.'

⁸ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 59–62; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 321–324.

⁹ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 419.

¹⁰ Chittick, 'Ibn Arabi and His School', 65–66.

<i>bid'a</i>	'innovation'. In Islamic thought it often has a negative connotation because it changes the practices of the <i>salaf</i> , but there are also Islamic movements which distinguish between good and bad innovations.
<i>da'wa</i>	'call, invitation', used by all Muslims to refer to the 'invitation to Islam', education and proselytizing
<i>dhawq - dhawqiyāt</i>	lit. 'taste'. In Sufism: discernments and experiences achieved through the inner (non-physical) senses. It provides knowledge that cannot be reached by the physical senses and reason, but requires the experiencing of the spiritual states, and as such can be used in the sense of 'inspired knowledge', 'experience of the divine presence'. It is often seen as the first stage on the Path to knowledge, the first experience which does not yet provide contentment. A common Sufi metaphor that goes back to the Prophet and is also used by the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya is that one cannot describe the taste of honey, one has to taste it oneself.
<i>dhikr</i>	'recollection', in Islam 'remembrance of God' - in Sufism in general: ritualized recitation or recollection of the Names of God by 'gathering together the dispersed powers of the soul and focusing them on the Real himself', ¹¹ meditation in which a formula is repeated, usually the <i>shahāda</i> or one of the names of God, either aloud or silent, solitary or communally ¹² - in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya: one of the pillars of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> , all those acts that serve to remember God (<i>ṣalāa</i> , <i>du'ā'</i> , recitation of the Qur'an, recitation of the <i>awrād</i> , reading <i>wazīfa</i> , and several kinds of <i>dhikr</i> and <i>ḥaḍra</i>)
<i>dhikr bi-ism al-madd</i>	<i>dhikr</i> performed by advanced followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, during which they repeat the name <i>Allāh</i> aloud and with stretched vowel.
<i>dhikr bi-ism al-qaṣr</i>	<i>dhikr</i> performed by the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, during which they silently repeat the name <i>Allāh</i> with short vowels, either as part of a meeting or during their everyday life
<i>dīn</i>	commonly translated as 'religion'. Originally it did not refer to a separate system. Rather, it is the obligation mankind has towards God. Based on a <i>ḥadīth</i> recorded in the <i>Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī</i> , the <i>dīn</i> of the Prophet Muhammad consists of <i>īmān</i> (faith), <i>islām</i> (submission, practice), and <i>iḥsān</i> (interiorization, 'worshipping God as if you see him').

¹¹ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 58.

¹² Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism'; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 420.

<i>du'ā' - ad'iya</i>	personal prayer, supplication, invocation (as distinct from the obligatory ritual <i>ṣalāa</i>). There are no fixed rituals and words, but one's attitude and <i>ādāb</i> (etiquette) are important. One can use Qur'anic verses, traditional prayers or one's own words; one can pray silently or aloud. ¹³
<i>fanā'</i>	<p>'annihilation', the annihilation of Self-affirmation until only God's self-disclosure remains. It is the annihilation of self-consciousness and of the imperfect human attributes, being replaced by a pure consciousness of God and the perfect attributes bestowed by God.</p> <p>Throughout Islamic history, <i>fanā'</i> has been understood in many interrelated ways: ethically (the annihilation of man's attributes which are replaced by God's attributes); annihilation of the individual consciousness in the divine; seeing God's oneness underlying the multiplicity of the creation. It has to be accompanied and replaced – and thus validated – by a new subsistence (<i>baqā</i>); it is the annihilation from a specific mode of lower consciousness and the simultaneous subsistence through a specific mode of higher consciousness.¹⁴</p> <p><i>Fanā' fi-l-rasūl</i> (annihilation in the Prophet) and <i>fanā' fi-l-shaykh</i> (annihilation in the <i>shaykh</i>) were later developed as more accessible 'preliminary goals' for those on the earlier stages of the Path. By focusing on the <i>shaykh</i>, the follower submits his will and identifies completely with him.¹⁵</p> <p>The particular interpretations of the concept in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya and the relevant social circumstances in which these interpretations are articulated and enacted are discussed in chapters 9 and 11.</p>
<i>faqīh - fuqahā'</i>	Islamic jurist, an ' <i>ālim</i> (religious scholar) who specialises in <i>fiqh</i> (Islamic jurisprudence)
<i>faqīr - fuqarā'</i>	'poor person', used by Sufis to refer to themselves as they do not care for material wealth and are fully dependent on God: 'a person who lives for the Lord alone' Also used by the followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to themselves
<i>fikr</i>	discursive or contemplative reflection, 'the power of thought or cogitation, the ability of the soul to put together the data gathered by sense perception or acquired from imagination in order to reach rational conclusions'. ¹⁶ Al-Ghazali included both meditative reflections (<i>tafakkur</i> and <i>ta'ammul</i>) and more intellectual types of thought such as the derivation of conclusions based on

¹³ Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 516–518.

¹⁴ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 59–62; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 321–324; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 141–145, 216.

¹⁵ Mojaddedi, 'Annihilation and Abiding in God'; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 216, 237; Ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order', 320.

¹⁶ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 159.

observations in the category of *fikr*. Subjects of these reflections can be human qualities and their corresponding actions, the Divine Names and Attributes, God's creation and the manifestations of His Wisdom and Creative Power – never His Essence. When performed in the right way it is complementary to *dhikr*, as such a reflection 'brings to the heart a knowledge which transforms it and heightens the consciousness and spiritualizes the action of the seeker.'¹⁷ Ibn Arabi distinguished between *fikr*, rational thought disengaged from the senses, and 'imagination', the inner perception that perceives ideas in their sensory form with the inner (non-physical) senses, which leads to unveiling (*kashf*). Perfect knowledge of God needs both – one *knows* God's transcendence (*tanzīh*) through reason, and one *sees* His immanence (*tashbīh*) through imagination.¹⁸

Fikr is one of the pillars of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, and has a range of meanings and forms in this *ṭarīqa*, including rational thought, reflection, contemplation, contemplative meditation (*ta'ammul*), discussion (*mudhākara*).

See paragraphs 6.3.4 and 10.2.

<i>firāsa</i>	discernment, perspicacity, ability to see into hidden things and read the hearts of other people, as is stated in the following <i>ḥadīth</i> : 'Beware of the <i>firāsa</i> of the believer, for he sees by the light of God' ¹⁹ It is one of the spiritual powers given to the <i>awliyā</i> .
<i>ḥadīth</i> - <i>aḥādīth</i>	'narrative, talk, speech', used by all Muslims to refer to the traditions about the words and deeds of the Prophet, and of his Companions and Successors. It can refer both to a single account, and to the entire body of literature containing these accounts. Based on these accounts, one can learn about the <i>sunna</i> (model behaviour) of the Prophet. Hence the body of <i>ḥadīth</i> is an important source for sharia (divine law), and has been important in the development of <i>ādāb</i> (etiquette) and <i>akhlāq</i> (ethics). It has often been translated as 'tradition' in the sense of something handed down from one to another, but this has led to confusion as the English term carries the connotation of something oral, anonymous and imprecise. The <i>ḥadīth</i> accounts, on the other

¹⁷ In his chapter on *tafakkur* in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazali mentions *tafakkur*, *ta'ammul*, and *tadabbur* as meditative reflection, and *tadhakkur*, *i'tibār* and *nazar* as intellectual reflection. He sees all these forms as part of a 'process of extending one's cognition and understanding through disciplined and regular meditation.' Waley, 'Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism', 541–547.

¹⁸ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 16; Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 69–72.

¹⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 205; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 304; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 221–222. It corresponds with Gramlich's category of 'spiritual powers of the friends of God (*die geistigen Kräfte des Gottesfreundes*)', in which he incorporates clairvoyance (to know someone's thoughts, to recognize strangers, to see someone's religious state, to answer questions before they are asked, and to see and influence what happens far away), knowledge of God, the universe, the future, etc. Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, 148–241.

hand, are textual reports that explicitly name the transmitters and their sources to ensure maximum precision.²⁰

The followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya also use the term to refer to traditions about the words and deeds of their *Shaykhs*, particularly *Shaykh* Ali Nur al-Din.

<i>ḥadīth qudsī</i>	an account of speech by God (as opposed to an account of speech by the Prophet or one of his Companions). Like the Qur'an it might come through Gabriel, but it can also come through another medium, such as <i>ilhām</i> (inspiration) or in a dream.
<i>ḥaḍra - ḥaḍrāt</i>	'presence' - communal <i>dhikr</i> ; a ritual in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya in which participants stand in a closed circle or line holding hands, slightly bending back and forth, and cite the name <i>Allah</i> , often accompanied by the singing of <i>nashīd</i> . - title of respect, e.g. <i>Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā</i>
<i>ḥaḍra muḡharbiyya</i>	' <i>ḥaḍra</i> from the <i>maghrib</i> (North Africa)', communal <i>dhikr</i> , a ritual in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya which is usually performed at the end of a meeting. While most people continue to sit on the ground and sing <i>nashīd</i> , a few men move in a circle
<i>ḥaḍra muḡammadiya</i>	'the Muhammadan presence', the first of God's creations, the spirit of Muhammad which emanated in all the Prophets
<i>Ḥaḍrat Sīdnā</i>	form of address used by followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to address the <i>Shaykh</i> and to refer to him. <i>Ḥaḍra</i> is a title of respect; <i>Sīdnā</i> is colloquial for <i>sayyidunā</i> , 'our master'
<i>ḥajj</i>	one of the five pillars of Islam, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca during the month Dhū al-Ḥijja, the last month of the Islamic year. On the third day of the <i>ḥajj</i> all Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha. It is a duty for every Muslim to go on <i>ḥajj</i> at least once in his life, if s/he has the opportunity.
<i>ḥāl - aḡwāl</i>	spiritual state, a fleeting spiritual state received from God, ²¹ the 'actualization of the divine encounter' and 'the point of equilibrium of the soul in a state of acceptance of this encounter'. ²² In Sufi theosophy the concept is paired with <i>maqām</i> , a lasting station which is acquired after effort of the seeker. They are 'the psychological, moral, and spiritual attributes and perspectives that mark degrees of spiritual growth which travelers on the path to God must experience, assimilate, and in most cases pass

²⁰ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:63–64.

²¹ Schimmel quotes from al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Maḡjūb*, 181: 'State is something that descends from God into a man's heart, without his being able to repel it when it comes, or attract it when it goes, by his own effort.' Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 99.

²² Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 10.

beyond.²³ They are usually grouped in complementary pairs that must be actualized together in an ‘ascending hierarchy’.²⁴ Every Sufi author has his own progressive classification of *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* with different concepts occupying different places in such classifications.

<i>ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya</i>	the eternal archetype from which the specific exemplifications are derived, ‘the rational principle of the Godhead, mediating the creative process.’ ²⁵
<i>ḥijāb</i>	veil covering head and chest
<i>‘ibāda - ‘ibādāt</i>	Islamic devotional practice, worship
<i>iḥsān</i>	interiorization, worshiping God as if you see him
<i>ijāza - ijāzāt</i>	authorization to transmit a <i>ḥadīth</i> or the teachings of a <i>ṭarīqa</i> , and the document given to the authorized person
<i>ikhwānā</i>	‘our brothers’, used by the followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to themselves.
<i>ikhwānā al-‘arab</i>	‘our Arab brothers’, used by the followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to the Bedouin followers of the <i>Shaykh</i> , who live in Gaza
<i>ilhām</i>	divine inspiration, revelation of God who casts knowledge into the hearts of those who are prepared for it through spiritual practice
<i>‘ilm</i>	knowledge, obtained through teaching and/or sense perception ²⁶
<i>‘ilm al-ishāra</i>	‘knowledge of <i>ishāra</i> . See <i>ishāra</i> . Used by the followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to their spiritual communication with the <i>Shaykh</i> through signs (see chapters 6 and 10)
<i>‘ilm ladunnī</i>	knowledge that is with and from God, granted by an act of divine grace, often translated as ‘gnosis’ ²⁷
<i>īmān</i>	faith
<i>al-insān al-kāmil</i>	‘the Perfect Man’, the archetypal human being, often equated with the <i>ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya</i> , a manifestation of the totality of the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. Chittick gives the examples of hope and fear, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety, annihilation and subsistence.

²⁵ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 61, 385, note 37.

²⁶ Ibid., 218.

²⁷ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 193.

divine names and attributes, which are also manifested in the created world, taken as a whole. Man is created as an intermediary (*barzakh*) between the divine oneness and the created world of manifestations, a microcosmos in which God contemplates Himself, which is the goal of creation. In the Perfect Man mankind's potential is fully realized; he sees the flow of the Divine through all the planes, both in His transcendence and immanence²⁸ and manifests His attributes.

According to some only the Prophet Muhammad is the Perfect Man – others see it as a station that can be reached by the prophets and *awliyā* (Friends of God), especially by the *qutb*.²⁹

ishāra – ishārāt

literally sign, gesture, indication, used as a non-verbal tool of communication.³⁰

In the context of Qur'anic exegesis, it is the deeper inner (*bāṭin*) meaning for those with spiritual understanding (*khawāṣṣ*). Its interpretation is *ta'wīl*, lit. 'returning to its origin or source' as the signs are restored to their true and original meanings, accompanied by a similar 'returning' of the soul by traveling the Sufi Path.³¹ *Ishāra* is also an 'allusion', an attempt at expressing the ineffable visions and experiences encountered when travelling the Path, also used as ways to hide these experiences from those who do not had the same experiences and might misunderstand.³² For those who see with the inner eyes the whole of the cosmos is pervaded by the Divine's self-disclosures, by signs that point to their Divine origin. Both the everyday reality and alternative realities (dreams, imaginations, etc.) are 'symbolic representations of Reality' – hence Izutsu speaks of 'the symbolic structure of the world'.³³

In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the *Shaykh* communicates with his followers spiritually through signs. These range from 'allusions' in the classical Sufi sense to quite explicit speech acts and gestures and everyday occurrences, which are all to be interpreted according to the follower's spiritual level and in community to receive guidance from the *Shaykh*. (see chapters 6 and 10)

isnād

chain of transmission guaranteeing the authenticity of a *ḥadīth*

islām

lit. 'submission', 'the act of submitting to God (...) accepting personal responsibility for standards of action held to have transcendent authority (...) a personal acceptance of godly ideals'.

²⁸ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 19.

²⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 224, 272–273, 280–282; Chittick, 'Ibn Arabi and His School', 65–66; Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 15; Chittick, 'Ibn Arabi', 125, 131–132.

³⁰ Nwyia, 'Ishāra.'

³¹ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 28–35; Poonawala, 'Ta'wīl.'

³² Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 249.

³³ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 7–15.

It has become the name for ‘the whole social pattern of cult and creed’ which grows out of ‘the act of *islām* of the individual believer’ and the messages of the prophets.³⁴

<i>istikhāra</i>	‘Islamic dream incubation practice’, ‘an approved form of seeking guidance through dreams’. One prays the <i>istikhāra</i> prayer, after which one goes to sleep and expects the answer will be provided in a dream (although daytime guidance also happens in some cases). In many cases, religious specialists pray, dream, and interpret, ³⁵ but the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya do it themselves. For a discussion of <i>istikhāra</i> in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see chapter 6.
<i>ka’ba</i>	the most sacred place in Islam, the centre of the mosque of Mecca (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām), the <i>qibla</i> (direction which Muslims face when praying <i>ṣalāa</i>), and around which pilgrims circumambulate when on <i>ḥajj</i> and ‘ <i>umra</i> .
<i>karāma – karāmāt</i>	‘dignity’, often translated as ‘miracle’. Muslims distinguish between <i>mu’jizāt</i> , miracles performed by prophets, and <i>karāmāt</i> , performed by other people with God’s grace, although this distinction is not always very clear. It is related to the relationship between <i>wilāya</i> and prophethood. <i>Karāmāt</i> are considered attributes of the <i>walī</i> , given to him, not performed by him. It is the trace of closeness to God that can be witnessed and experienced by the believer. Miracles can happen both before and after the <i>walī</i> ’s death as he remains forever present spiritually, especially in his tomb, but also elsewhere. ³⁶
<i>khalīfa – khulafā’</i>	successor. In Sufism in general it means the one who functions as spiritual director of a part of a Sufi Order and who may be heir to the shaykh’s position when he dies. ³⁷ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, it is used to refer to the designated successor of the current <i>Shaykh</i> .
<i>khatm al-wilāya</i>	‘seal of <i>wilāya</i> ’, in analogy with the Prophet Muhammad who is <i>khatm al-nubuwa</i> (seal of prophethood)
<i>khawātnā</i>	‘our sisters’, used to refer to the female followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya (female version of <i>ikhwānā</i>)
<i>khuṭba</i>	sermon in the mosque on Friday and during a religious festival

³⁴ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:72–73.

³⁵ Edgar and Henig, ‘Istikhara’; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 214–215; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 307–308.

³⁶ Aigle, ‘Miracle et Karāma.’ For a classification of miracles as found in the Sufi literature, see Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*.

³⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 421.

<i>madad</i>	lit. 'assistance, protection', especially the spiritual aid granted by a <i>walī</i> due to the his proximity to God which allows him to intercede on behalf of those who place themselves under his protection. ³⁸ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is used in the sense of spiritual energy, divine inspiration
<i>maḥabba</i>	love for God, love for the Prophet and his family, love between <i>shaykh</i> and disciple. Central element of Sufism that pervades all its aspects. The love between God and His creation is celebrated in <i>Sūrat al-Mā'ida</i> 5:54: 'He loves them and they love Him.' Sufis love God for His own sake rather than out of self-interest. In later Sufism, love is seen not just an attribute or experience but as the essence of the Divine. Many Sufis wrote about it in theoretical treatises and poetry. It is seen as both a goal and a stage on the Path towards losing oneself in the Beloved (see <i>fanā</i>). ³⁹ It is the first pillar of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> , around which all the others revolve. See paragraph 6.3.2.
<i>maqām - maqāmāt</i>	- lasting spiritual station, 'discrete psychological and ethical quality', which the soul acquires after effort. The seeker progresses through different stations on the path ⁴⁰ In Sufi theosophy the concept is paired with <i>ḥāl</i> , a lasting station which is acquired after effort of the seeker. They are 'the psychological, moral, and spiritual attributes and perspectives that mark degrees of spiritual growth which travelers on the path to God must experience, assimilate, and in most cases pass beyond.' ⁴¹ They are usually grouped in complementary pairs that must be actualized together in an 'ascending hierarchy'. ⁴² Every Sufi author has his own progressive classification of <i>maqāmāt</i> and <i>aḥwāl</i> with different concepts occupying different places in such classifications. - shrine
<i>ma'rifa</i>	knowledge of God based on experience rather than discursive reason, knowledge of the heart rather than the intellect, attained by advanced seekers through a light cast by God into their purified hearts, often translated as 'gnosis' It is 'an immediate experience of God, a personal realization of a truth heard and believed, but now witnessed. The soul that is purified becomes receptive to divine revelation.' ⁴³ <i>Maḥabba</i> and <i>ma'rifa</i> are sometimes

³⁸ Chih, 'What Is a Sufi Order?', 29; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 422.

³⁹ Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love'; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130–134; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 188. See paragraph 1.2

⁴⁰ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 99–100; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 102.

⁴¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 10.

⁴² Ibid. Chittick gives examples such as hope and fear, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety, annihilation and subsistence.

⁴³ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 219.

considered complementary, and sometimes one is thought to lead to the other. They lead one to practise the Path in order to draw near to the Beloved, until one constantly remembers and completely surrenders to the Beloved (see *fanā*).⁴⁴

<i>martaba – marātib</i>	level, rank, office, in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya also used to refer to spiritual level
<i>masbaḥa</i>	string of prayer beads, used to pray <i>awrād</i>
<i>mashhad</i>	'sacred place', part of the <i>zāwiya</i> in Acre where the first three <i>Shaykhs</i> are buried
<i>mawlid al-nabī</i>	1. Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad's on the 12 th of Rabī' al-Awwal. It is an important celebration for most Sufis and it is an official festival in some places. It is the biggest celebration for the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya and the occasion for which most followers gather in the <i>zāwiya</i> in Amman. 2. The poem read at the occasion of the <i>mawlid al-nabī</i> by followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, composed by <i>Shaykh</i> Abd al-Qadir al-Homsī (see chapter 7).
<i>mawrid – mawārid</i>	'source and resource', source of knowledge and spirituality, spiritual knowledge
<i>mawsim – mawāsīm</i>	annual religious festival, usually to mark the birth or death of a prophet or saint
<i>min faḍl Sīdnā</i>	'from the grace of <i>Sīdnā</i> ', common expression among followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya expressing the conviction that everything good they do or that happens to them should be attributed to the <i>Shaykh</i>
<i>mi'rāj</i>	the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven, based on <i>Sūrat al-Takwīr</i> 81:19-25 and <i>Sūrat al-Najm</i> 53:1-21, often celebrated in Islamic communities. Sufis see it as a metaphor for each person's spiritual journey. In Islamic tradition it is connected to the Prophet's night journey (<i>isrā</i>) from Mecca to 'the furthest mosque', which came to be defined as al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, from which the <i>mi'rāj</i> is believed to have taken place.
<i>mu'allim</i>	teacher
<i>mu'amalāt</i>	Islamic social regulations
<i>mubāya'a</i>	the pledge of allegiance to the doctrines and practices of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya and the authority of the <i>Shaykh</i> . In the Sufi tradition (and in Islamic culture in general), the oath of

⁴⁴ Hossein Nasr, 'God', 321; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 130–135.

allegiance is called *bay'a*. It is the acceptance that the person to whom allegiance is promised derives his authority from God (either due to his spiritual power or due to a political doctrine that teaches this), and it is therefore an oath of adherence to this person's teachings and/or a promise of obedience. The pledge of new Muslims to the Prophet is the prototype on which both *bay'a* to the ruler and to a Sufi *shaykh* build. The *mubāya'a* is considered to go back to the Prophet's time and is mentioned in the Qur'an in the *Āyat al-Mubāya'a* (*Sūrat al-Faḥ* 48:10, more commonly known as *Āyat al-Bay'a*) (see chapter 6)

mudhākara – mudhākārāt

In Sufism in general, spiritual exhortation⁴⁵

In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya:

1. the *Shaykh's* lecture, delivered to the followers during the weekly meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman, during which he comments on a part of the *wazīfa*.
2. the practice of the followers to discuss the *Shaykh's mudhākara* and other sources, such as sacred scripture, the books of the *ṭarīqa* and religious poetry

muftī

scholar qualified to deliver fatwas, official legal opinions (in the text, I have used the anglicized plural *muftīs* rather than the Arabic *muftūn*)

muḥibb - muḥibbīn

'lover'. Both in Sufism in general and in the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya someone who loves and respects the *Shaykh* but has not dedicated him/herself fully to the *ṭarīqa* through the *mubāya'a*

muqaddam – muqaddamīn

one of the followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya who has been authorised by the *Shaykh* to be responsible for his local community and look after the followers (see chapter 3)

murabbī

educator, pedagogue

murīd – murīdīn

'seeker', religious seeker and follower of a Sufi *shaykh*. Used by the followers of the *ṭarīqa* Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to themselves

murshid

guide, someone who accompanies you. Used to refer to a Sufi master who spiritually guides his disciples

mutawallī

custodian of a *waqf* (religious endowment), appointed by the *qāḍī* (Islamic judge) (in the text, I have used the anglicized plural *mutawallīs* rather than the Arabic *mutawalliyūn*)

muwajjih

guide, someone who points you in the right direction

⁴⁵ Michon, 'The Spiritual Practices of Sufism', 279–280.

<i>nabī – anbiyāʾ</i>	prophet
<i>nafs</i>	‘self’, lower soul, base instincts. When untrained, the <i>nafs</i> is driven by desires and causes blameworthy actions and sins. The seeker trains and purifies the <i>nafs</i> until it serves him/her on the path to God. ⁴⁶
<i>nakba</i>	‘catastrophe’, the occupation of Palestine and expulsion of most Palestinians in 1948
<i>nashīd – anashīd</i>	poem composed by a follower of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya as a result of divine inspiration, chanted during <i>ḥaḍra</i> and other formal and informal meetings
<i>nūr muḥammadī</i>	‘Muhammadan light’, the primordial light from which everything was created, the first stage of God’s self-disclosure. It is the unifying principle of all archetypes. The <i>nūr muḥammadī</i> was manifested in all the prophets and lives on in the <i>awliyāʾ</i> . It is one of the reasons the Sufis venerate the Prophet Muhammad to such a high degree, which is reflected in prayers and songs, and the celebration of the <i>mawlid al-nabī</i> , which is the major festival for many Sufi <i>ṭuruq</i> . ⁴⁷
<i>qāḍī</i>	Islamic judge (in the text, I have used the anglicized plural <i>qāḍīs</i> rather than the Arabic <i>quḍāa</i>)
<i>quḍwa</i>	role model
<i>quṭb al-zamān</i>	‘axis of the age’, the highest rank of <i>awliyāʾ</i> , the spiritual centre around whom the universe revolves ⁴⁸
<i>ṣāhib al-ḥaqq</i>	‘master of truth’
<i>ṣāhib al-waqt</i>	‘master of time’
<i>ṣalāa</i>	the obligatory ritual Islamic prayer which is prayed five times a day, one of the five pillars of Islam. It is derived from the verbal root ṣ-l-y, which means to join as the believer joins himself to God through the prayer. For the Sufi, remembrance of God and attentiveness are essential aspects. ⁴⁹
<i>salaf</i>	the first generations of Muslims

⁴⁶ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 112–113.

⁴⁷ Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 236–238; Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 59–60, 89; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 214–216.

⁴⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 200; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xxxv–xxxvi.

⁴⁹ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 514–516.

<i>salafiyya</i>	common denominator for a variety of movements that all aim to ‘return’ to the Islam of the <i>salaf</i> and ‘purify’ Islam from ‘innovations’, but have little else in common (see chapter 1)
<i>sharia</i>	Islamic law as contained in God's revelation. It is discussed, described, and explained in <i>fiqh</i> , which is based on Qur'an, Hadith, analogous reasoning (<i>qiyās</i>), the consensus of the scholars (<i>ijmā</i>), and sometimes the opinions of individual scholars (<i>ijtihād</i>). Because this is the only access Muslims have to the divine law, the result of <i>fiqh</i> is often also referred to as sharia. There are four legal schools (<i>madhāhib</i>) in Sunni Islam that ‘follow the same legal principles and recognize each other as valid interpretations of the law’. ⁵⁰
<i>Sīdnā</i>	‘our master’ (colloquial for <i>sayyidunā</i>), used by followers of the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya to refer to their <i>Shaykh</i>
<i>silsila</i>	chain of spiritual descent, chain of initiation, connecting the <i>shaykh</i> of a <i>ṭarīqa</i> to the Prophet
<i>sulūk</i>	lit. ‘to travel or follow a path’, wayfaring, behaviour. In the Sufi context, <i>sulūk</i> refers both to progression on the path to the Divine (‘the process of ascension and advancement – psychical, ethical and spiritual’), and to the required ‘traveling-manners’ which the traveler (<i>sālik</i>) needs to undertake the journey, the ‘appropriate spiritual attitude and proper ethical comportment’, in other words ‘spiritual correctness’ – it thus combines the associations with the concepts of the Sufi <i>ṭarīqa</i> and Sufi <i>ādāb</i> . ⁵¹
<i>sunna</i>	‘custom’, model behaviour, ‘the generally approved standard or practice’ introduced by primarily the Prophet, but also his companions and successors. After the Qur'an, it is the second source of sharia (Islamic law) ⁵²
<i>ta'ammul</i>	contemplative thinking, intellectual meditation. Ghazali classifies it as one of the six forms of <i>fikr</i> , reflection. ⁵³ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, it is also considered as a form of <i>fikr</i> (see chapter 6).
<i>takiya</i>	domed hall in the <i>zāwiya</i> in Acre where most meetings happen
<i>ta'lim - ta'limāt</i>	teaching

⁵⁰ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 423–424.

⁵¹ Lewisohn, ‘Sulūk.’ Lewisohn points out that the term came in use in the twelfth century as a synonym of the Qur'anic concept *ṭarīq* (path), was first mentioned by al-Qushayri and then used extensively by al-Ghazali in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, after which it was fully incorporated in Sufi terminology.

⁵² Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:63–64.

⁵³ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 541–547.

<i>tarbiya</i>	upbringing, training, education, pedagogy. The basic meaning of the verbal root r-b-y is ‘to increase; to grow; to grow up’, and <i>tarbiya</i> means ‘education, upbringing; teaching, instruction; pedagogy; breeding, raising (of animals)’. ⁵⁴ Similarly, in Sufism it is the process of training and education a disciple undergoes with his <i>shaykh</i> . ⁵⁵ Ter Haar notes that it has the connotation of the father-son relationship. ⁵⁶ For its meaning in the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, see chapters 6 and 10.
<i>ṭarīqa – ṭuruq</i>	‘path’. In Sufism, it refers to the path towards God, to the practices one has to undertake to travel on this path towards God as taught by one’s <i>murshid</i> (guide) – devotional, ethical, intellectual, social etc. – and to the institution which gathers those who follow the same path. It is often translated as ‘brotherhood’ or ‘order’.
<i>taṣawwuf</i>	literally ‘the process of becoming a Sufi’. It is the verbal noun from the fifth form of the root ṣ-w-f – this fifth form has the basic connotation of ‘assimilating or taking on a religious or ethnic identity’. Ernst argues it has a didactic rather than a definitional purpose: ‘Definitions of Sufism are, in effect, teaching tools.’ It is used to cover ‘a broad spectrum of spiritual qualities’, both mystical and ethical, and the external social and historical manifestations. The European equivalents of the term, especially Sufism, came into being during the eighteenth century. ⁵⁷
<i>tashrīf</i>	‘honouring’, the moment in which <i>Shaykh</i> Ali Nur al-Din honoured Palestine by settling there
<i>taslīm</i>	‘submission’ – one of the pillars of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> , submission to God, acceptance that there is only one Creator and that He is the one who rules his creation and his creatures, acceptance of His will. Because the <i>Shaykh</i> is the <i>wārith muḥammadī</i> (Muhammadan heir), ‘ <i>taslīm</i> to the <i>Shaykh</i> ’s words means <i>taslīm</i> to God’s will’ ⁵⁸ (see chapter 6)
<i>tawḥīd</i>	the act of believing and affirming that God is one and unique (<i>wāḥid</i>), as is stated in the first article of the Muslim profession of faith: ‘there is no other god but God’ (<i>Lā ilāha illā Allāh</i>), and is at the centre of the Islamic faith. Theologians have aimed to prove this rationally, and in Sufism it has transformed from an intellectual statement into a spiritual experience.
<i>‘ulamā’</i>	religious scholars (see sg. <i>‘ālim</i>)

⁵⁴ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed.; ‘Tarbiya.’

⁵⁵ Pinto, ‘The Anthropologist and the Initiated’, 464–465.

⁵⁶ Ter Haar, ‘The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the Naqshbandī Order’, 319.

⁵⁷ Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 21. Ibid., 21–31.

⁵⁸ Written answers *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti, 15-03-2014, p.3

<i>ʿumra</i>	pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time during the year
<i>ustādh</i>	teacher
<i>uwaysī</i>	an <i>uwaysī</i> initiation is an initiation by the spirit of a physically absent or deceased person, often the Prophet or al-Khidr. The term derives from Uways al-Qarani (d.657) who was instructed by the Prophet Muhammad without ever having physically met him. It enables a Sufi to claim initiation without submitting himself to a master, but places him within institutional Sufism as well. ⁵⁹
<i>waqf – awqāf</i>	‘religious endowment’, charitable trust founded according to sharia (Islamic law). Generally speaking, a <i>waqf</i> is unalienable and its proceeds serve towards the upkeep of an institution for public benefit (see chapter 8 for the situation in Palestine and Israel) ⁶⁰
<i>walī – awliyā</i>	‘friend, someone who is close, someone who is under protection’. In the general Arabic and Islamic tradition, a <i>walī</i> is a ‘next of kin, ally, friend, helper, guardian, patron, saint’, and it has a broad range of meaning in political and legal contexts. ⁶¹ In Sufism, a <i>walī</i> or <i>walī Allāh</i> is ‘a friend of God, someone who is close to God, someone who is under God’s protection’, often translated problematically as ‘saint’. The friend of God has acquired God’s good qualities, is blessed with spiritual powers (such as the ability to perform <i>karāmāt</i> (miracles), and possesses spiritual and sometimes socio-political authority. In Sufi theosophy ideas on the <i>awliyā</i> have been discussed since the ninth century, including ideas on a hierarchy of <i>awliyā</i> , the highest <i>walī</i> being the <i>quṭb</i> (axis), and the <i>khatam al-wilāya</i> (seal of the saints). ⁶²
<i>wārith muḥammadī</i>	‘Muhammadan heir’
<i>wazīfa</i>	‘task’, devotional text or litany recited daily by the members of some <i>ṭuruq</i> as part of their assignment of daily devotions, and also as part of a <i>ḥaḍra</i> or communal <i>dhikr</i> , usually consisting of prayers, invocations, and Qur’anic verses. In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya it is the great <i>wird</i> (litany), a combination of Qur’anic texts and prayers which is read twice a day, after <i>ṣalāat al-fajr</i> and <i>ṣalāat al-‘isha</i> , either individually or in a group (see chapter 6)
<i>wirātha muḥammadiya</i>	‘Muhammadan inheritance’

⁵⁹ Baldick, ‘Uwaysiyya’; Green, ‘Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 299–301.

⁶⁰ See Dumper, *Islam and Israel*.

⁶¹ For more on the concept in the broader Islamic tradition, including its use in the Qur’an and its political and legal uses in Sunni and Shī’i Islam, see Landolt, ‘Walāyah.’

⁶² Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 199–213; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xviii–xx; Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 58–80; Christmann, ‘Reclaiming Mysticism’, 92–103.

<i>wird – awrād</i>	‘set, supererogatory personal devotion observed at specific times,’ ⁶³ a litany consisting of verses from the Qur’an and prayers, prescribed by a <i>shaykh</i> to be recited at set times. The practice of reciting <i>awrād</i> goes back to the Prophet, and consists of reciting pious formulas, Qur’anic verses and prayers composed by spiritual leaders. They differ per <i>ṭarīqa</i> , and in many cases the <i>shaykh</i> gives the disciple a personal <i>wird</i> according to his personal needs and spiritual advancement. In the case of collective <i>dhikr</i> , it is regulated by the <i>shaykh</i> or his representative (see paragraph 1.2). ⁶⁴ In the Shadhuliyya-Yashrutiyya, the <i>wird</i> is read after <i>ṣalāat al-fajr</i> and <i>ṣalāat al-maghreb</i> , using a <i>masbaḥa</i> (see chapter 6).
<i>wilāya</i>	the verbal noun based on the root w-l-y, with its basic meanings of ‘friendship’, ‘assistance’, and ‘authority, power’. Broadly speaking, <i>wilāya</i> conveys the meaning of ‘power, authority, domain of authority’, while the closely related concept of <i>walāya</i> conveys the meaning of ‘friendship, closeness’. Due to the general absence of vocalization, the two are often indistinguishable in written texts, and they rely on each other for their meaning. ⁶⁵ In Sufism, it means the spiritual and/or worldly authority exercised by a <i>walī</i> based on his closeness to God, often translated problematically as ‘sainthood’. ⁶⁶ <i>Wilāya</i> is manifested by <i>karāmāt</i> (miracles). ⁶⁷
<i>zāhir</i>	exterior, material (as opposed to <i>bāṭin</i> , interior, spiritual)
<i>zakāa</i>	charity, obligatory donation of a set portion of one’s property, one of the five pillars of Islam
<i>zāwiya – zawāya</i>	literally ‘corner’, in the Sufi context usually translated as ‘lodge’ or ‘hospice’, where followers of the <i>ṭarīqa</i> and visitors live, visit, meet, practice their rituals, study, etc. It is a religious institution that is connected to a Sufi <i>shaykh</i> and / or <i>ṭarīqa</i> and can take many different forms. It can be one building or a big complex. It can be a centre of (mystical) religious instruction and practice, a hospice for guests, the home of a community. It sometimes includes a tomb-shrine. It often has an important role in society.
<i>ziyāra – ziyārāt</i>	‘visit’, pilgrimage to a <i>shaykh</i> , holy place, tomb or shrine. This is based on the belief that the saint, or any object associated with him, confers his <i>baraka</i> (grace, blessings). By visiting, the believers profess their love for God and the saints, who intercede

⁶³ Denny, ‘Wird.’

⁶⁴ Waley, ‘Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism’, 511–513; Gardet, ‘Dhikr’; Denny, ‘Wird.’

⁶⁵ Comell, *Realm of the Saint*, xviii–xx; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*, 13. For more on the concept in the broader Islamic tradition, including its use in the Qur’an and its political and legal uses in Sunni and Shi’i Islam, see Landolt, ‘Walāyah.’

⁶⁶ See note 66.

⁶⁷ Landolt, ‘Walāyah’, 321.

for them before God. In the case of a deceased *shaykh*, he is considered to be spiritually present.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt*, 95–96.

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Review Panel, 'Arabic terms', 06-08-2014

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Study text discussed at the women's meeting at the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-11-2013

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- **Interviews**

Interview AKR Interview with AKR at the *zāwiya* in Acre on
23-02-2012 (unrecorded)
27-02-2012
29-02-2012

	08-03-2012
	14-03-2012
	29-03-2012
	12-04-2012
	30-04-2012 – tour <i>zāwiya</i>
	10-05-2013 (unrecorded)
Interview AK1	Interview with a follower in Acre on 04-05-2013 at her home
Interview AK2	Interview with a follower in Acre on 05-05-2013 at her home
Interview AK3	Interview with a follower in Acre on 05-05-2013 at his home, one follower present (unrecorded).
Interview AK4	Interview with a follower in Acre on 04-05-2013 at the <i>zāwiya</i> in Acre (unrecorded)
Interview AK5	Interview with a follower in Acre on 16-05-2013 at his home, two followers present (unrecorded)
Interview AM1	Interview with three followers in Amman on 12-04-2013
Interview AM2	Interview with nine followers in Amman on 15-04-2013
Interview AM3	Interview with seven followers in Amman on 16-11-2013
Interview AM4	Interview with nine followers in Amman on 23-11-2013
Interview D	Interview with a former follower of <i>Shaykh</i> Sidi Muhammad Jamal in Jerusalem on 02-04-2012
Interview E	Interview with an expert on interfaith dialogue in Jordan in Amman on 25-11-2013
Interview JA1	Interview with twelve followers in Jaffa on 16-04-2012
Interview JA1	Interview with three followers in Jaffa on 10-05-2013
Interview JA2	Interview with six followers in Jaffa on 10-05-2013 (unrecorded)
Interview NA1	Interview with one follower in Nablus on 23-05-2013 at the house of a follower after the <i>wazīfa</i> , ca. twenty followers present
Interview TA1	Visit to the <i>zāwiya</i> in Tarshiha and interview with two members of the caretaker's family at their house on 15-05-2013 (unrecorded)
Interview TU1	Interview with a follower in Tubas on 13-05-2013 at his house, four followers present
Interview UF1	Interview with a follower in Umm al-Fahm on 10-04-2012 at his house, five followers present
Interview ZA1	Interview with twelve followers in Zarqa on 01-11-2013

- **Other Unrecorded Interactions**

Meeting with *Shaykh* Abd al-Jalil in his home in Amman, June 2011

Meeting with *Shaykh* Ahmad al-Yashruti and Dr. Ali al-Yashruti in *Shaykh* Ahmad's office at the *zāwiya* in Amman on 26-03-2013

Meeting with the Welcome Committee in the *zāwiya* in Amman before the *ḥaḍra* on 28-03-2013

Shaykh Ahmad's *mudhākara* during the meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 28-03-2013.

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Meeting of *ikhwānā* in the house of a follower in Jaffa on 12-05-2013

Women's meeting in the *zāwiya* in Amman on 30-11-2013

Informal discussions with followers in Amman, Acre, Jaffa, Beit Hanina

- **Audiovisual Material**

DVD of the *mawlid al-nabī* in the *zāwiya* in Amman in 2013

Lecture AKR HU Study Day 26-03-2012 – Lecture by AKR on the study day of the Hebrew University's MA in Islamic Studies, hosted by AKR in the *zāwiya* in Acre on 26-03-2012

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