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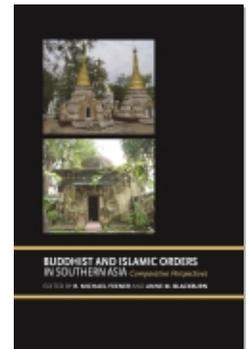
## Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia: Comparative Perspectives.

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018.

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## CHALLENGING ORDERS

*Ṭarīqas and Muslim Society in Southeastern India and Laṅkā, ca. 1400–1950*

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On June 24, 1889, a reader's letter was published in the Colombo-based Muslim weekly *Muslim Nēcaṅ*. Its author complained of magical practices that were supposedly going on in some *zāwiyas* (Sufi lodges) in Colombo, rhetorically asking whether "such magic practices belong to our religion?"<sup>1</sup> Such criticism of Sufi institutions and practices is hardly surprising in the context of nineteenth-century Muslim discourse. What is noteworthy is that the author of the letter identified himself as "a Qādirī Muslim," that is, as a member of a specific Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*). And it was clear to his audience that the Sufi lodges condemned in the letter were not general Sufi institutions but themselves connected with a particular *ṭarīqa*, the Shādhiliyya, a Sufi order that had been introduced to Laṅkā<sup>2</sup> in the middle of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly then, followers of the Shādhiliyya accused the writer of the letter and even the editor of the newspaper that published it of slandering their *ṭarīqa* unnecessarily for what was, in their eyes, a minor incident involving some uneducated people.<sup>3</sup> But what precisely did it mean to be part of a Sufi *ṭarīqa* in South India and Laṅkā in the nineteenth century? What kind of institutions were these *ṭarīqas*? What role did they play in Muslim society and in the history of Islam in the region? And how, if at all, did their constitution change over time? Despite the ubiquity of Sufi orders in historical accounts of Muslim societies in the region, there is surprisingly little research on the social history of *ṭarīqas* in southeastern India and Laṅkā.<sup>4</sup>

This is particularly surprising since the Sufi "order," or *ṭarīqa*, has often been treated as the single most important institution in South Asian Sufi traditions, if not in South Asian Islam as a whole. There are few treatments of the history of Islam in South Asia that do not assume the centrality of different *ṭarīqas*, an assumption evidenced in the casual references to collectives, such as Chishtīs or Naqshbandīs, or to "orders" and "brotherhoods" in general as a

central part of Muslim religious life in South Asia. Yet, despite the impression of familiarity with Sufi orders that these accounts suggest, precisely what kind of institution a Sufi “order” in South Asia is supposed to have been is far from clear. As Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence state in their magisterial study on the Chishtiyya, “We don’t understand [Sufi orders], or at least we haven’t figured out how to understand them as historical developments.”<sup>5</sup> I would suggest that the centrality of *ṭarīqas* in the history of South Asian Islam is more apparent than real, a product of historiographical preferences in terms of themes and sources.<sup>6</sup> From the perspective of postpartition South Asia, Islam has been treated predominantly as a political phenomenon, with the history of Islam in South Asia being written primarily as a history of empires, dynasties, and states.<sup>7</sup> In this narrative, the Sufi “orders” serve as a kind of parallel structure to the Muslim state—what empires and dynasties are in the “secular” domain is constituted by *ṭarīqas* and *silsilas* in the spiritual realm. Not surprisingly, Sufi “orders” are usually discussed with regard to how they related to the Muslim state, on the one hand, and to non-Muslims and the “Islamization” of South Asia, on the other hand. That this narrative seems so convincing is not simply because of its ubiquity but because it is rooted in the sources that have usually been used to write the history of Islam in South Asia—that is the Persian, Arabic, and Urdu texts that were composed by the elites of Muslim states, in which the relationship of worldly and spiritual “authority” (*wilāya*), of sultan and Sufi saint, was an established trope.<sup>8</sup>

Any investigation of South Asian Islam and Muslim societies that is genuinely interested in moving away from state-centric (which means, in most cases, Delhi-centric) narratives will therefore also have to question the role of the *ṭarīqa* as a supposedly central institution of Muslim religious life outside the circles of imperial political elites. Yet, at least as far as the Tamil-speaking parts of South India and Laṅkā are concerned, such a questioning has not happened. If anything, only the template of Sufi orders that are listed is changed: if, in northern India, the Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, and Naqshbandiyya are identified as the most important *ṭarīqas*, the Qādiriyya, Rifā’iyya, and Shādhiliyya are mentioned instead—there is no questioning of the centrality accorded to conventional ideas of the Sufi “order” in local Muslim society and history. This chapter aims toward initiating a discussion on the social role and constitution of Sufi “orders” in South India and Laṅkā between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries by reviewing the actual evidence in Tamil and Arabic sources from the region. Proceeding from the nineteenth-century encounter of the by-then-well-established Qādiriyya with the newly introduced Shādhiliyya, I discuss the presence of Sufi lineages, practices aimed at the recollection of *ṭarīqa* identities, and patterns of authority and controversy among Sufis in South India and Laṅkā. As I hope to show, there is little to suggest that Sufi “orders” were unchanging elements of Muslim life in the history of the region. Although localized teaching lineages transmitting Sufi thought were certainly part of Muslim

society from an early stage, there is little evidence for clear-cut *ṭarīqa* identifications among these lineages or institutions that could be clearly linked with specific orders. By contrast, the rise of Qādirī and Rifāʿī identities in the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seems to be more closely related to horizontal networks than to vertical lineages. Only in the mid-eighteenth century do patterns emerge that integrate vertical lineages with the horizontal networks in patterns assumed to be characteristic for Sufi orders, raising the question of what social processes led to change in the organization of Sufi networks and lineages.

## LINEAGE

At the center of the notion of the Sufi order stands the idea of the lineage (*sil-sila*), created by the initiation (*bayʿa*) of a disciple (*murīd*) by a preceptor (*murshid*) that allows the transmission of teachings as much as the power of blessing (*baraka*) of the preceptor across generations.<sup>9</sup> What is identified as a Sufi order in any given context is thus generally a network of lineages tracing their traditions back to the same eponymous master. In the case of the Shādhiliyya in nineteenth-century South India and Laṅkā, the connection between lineage and order was particularly salient. The Shādhiliyya had not only been introduced very recently, but, for the whole of the nineteenth century, it looked back to a single origin in Mekka and only a few acts of transmission into the region.<sup>10</sup> For South India, the person credited with the first act of transmission is one Abū Bakr Miskīn (d. 1872) from Kayalpattinam, an important center of Muslim religious life in South India and a stronghold of the Qādiriyya order. Abū Bakr Miskīn was initiated into the Shādhiliyya while on pilgrimage to Mekka. When he returned to his homeland, the new order seems to have spread rapidly. The introduction to Laṅkā is less clear. Some websites claim that a certain Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Yamanī established the first Shādhilī lodge in AH 1284 (1867–1868 CE), but other sources claim that three merchant brothers from Galle were first initiated into the order in 1846. Within a few years, the order spread in the southern parts of the Madras Presidency and the southwestern region of Laṅkā. Over time, individuals from the region would come to travel to the Middle East to seek their own independent initiation into the order, the most important of them being the gem merchant and politician Mohamed Macan Markar (d. 1952), who is sometimes erroneously credited with being the first to introduce the Shādhiliyya to Laṅkā in the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the presence of the Shādhiliyya in the region goes back to the efforts of only a few individuals has important repercussions for the order and its image in the nineteenth century, one that, as we shall see, it shared with its contemporaneous Qādirī contenders. For what was transmitted was in effect not the Shādhiliyya as a whole, but only one particular branch of it known as the Fāsiyya, after its founder, Muḥammad al-Fāsī (1803/1804–1872), who personally initiated Abū

Bakr Miskīn in Mekka. Born in Fez in Morocco, al-Fāsī had become a follower of a revivalist Shādhilī branch, the Darqāwiyya, which was spreading in the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire at that time. This provided the Fāsiyya with cohesion both through the common memory of its relatively recent origins, but also through the commonality of ritual that came along with it.<sup>12</sup> The link created between al-Fāsī's lineage and its South Asian followers has since been re-created repeatedly by visits of al-Fāsī's descendants to Sri Laṅkā and South India, beginning with his son and successor Shams al-Dīn al-Makkī.<sup>13</sup>

At first glance, the Qādiriyya had a far less uniform presence in nineteenth-century South India and Laṅkā. Indeed, its very ubiquity seems to make it impossible to arrive at any clear picture of its role in local Muslim society, not to speak of its origins. It often appears as if the Qādiriyya has been around ever since Muslims came to settle in the region. Yet, much as in the case of the Shādhiliyya, during the nineteenth century the local Qādirī landscape was dominated by individual lineages, some more visible than others, that effectively operated on their own even as they claimed a common Qādirī background. Perhaps the most important of these was the 'Arūsiyya, named after Sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, better known as Māppiḷlai Leppai or Imām al-'Arūs (1816–1898) of Kilakkarai near Ramanathapuram, one of the most prolific authors of Muslim prose literature in Tamil in the period. Māppiḷlai Leppai traveled widely in India and especially Laṅkā, attracting students and founding mosques and hospices. Although his lineage of initiation was local rather than Middle Eastern, it included several highly regarded Sufis from elite backgrounds. Through his own preceptor and father-in-law, Kīḷakkarai Taykā Ṣāhib (1778–1850/1851), a noted poet, Māppiḷlai Leppai traced his lineage to Shaykh 'Umar Walī (1748–1801) of Kayalpattinam and Sayyid Muḥammad Bukhārī Tañṅal (1731/1732–1792/1793) of Kannur in Kerala.<sup>14</sup> With both the Qādiriyya and the Shādhiliyya, the nineteenth century presents us with precisely the institutional structures that we have come to expect of Sufi "orders": clearly delineated spiritual lineages (*silsila*) linked up to a larger common "order" (*ṭarīqa*) and identified by compounding the names of both, such as Qādiriyya-'Arūsiyya or Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya.

Though the nineteenth century may present us with a textbook image of Sufi orders in South India and Laṅkā, a closer look at the available sources would suggest that this state of affairs was of rather recent origins. Whereas the Shādhiliyya is widely known to have been a nineteenth-century introduction to the region, the Qādiriyya is generally believed to have been the dominant Sufi order in the region for centuries before that. The vast majority of saints venerated in the region are claimed to have some connection to the Qādiriyya. Indeed, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is even claimed to have visited Laṅkā personally.<sup>15</sup> But a closer look at the available evidence suggests that there is little apart from modern hagiographies to suggest a widespread presence of Qādirī networks in the region before the seventeenth century. For example, although

names suggesting Qādirī devotion, such as ‘Abd al-Qādir or Muḥyī al-Dīn, are common in the town of Kayalpattinam today, none of the more than seventy individuals recorded in local epitaphs of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries mentioned in the works of Desai and Shokoohy has such a name. The first listed instance of “Qādirī” names in Kayalpattinam epitaphs is of a certain Sayyid Muḥyī al-Dīn b. Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir, dating to 1796.<sup>16</sup> The situation seems similar in other towns: none of the other pre-seventeenth-century Arabic and Persian inscriptions from Tamil Nadu listed by Desai records individuals with names that could be linked to a *ṭarīqa*.<sup>17</sup> The two earliest Islamic poems in Tamil, dating to 1572 and 1590, are almost unique in earlier Islamic Tamil literature as they lack a stanza in praise of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in their opening sections.<sup>18</sup> The first eulogies of the saint appear only in the seventeenth century, and, even with regard to these eulogies, we have to note that Qādirī devotionism does not necessarily imply the presence of an institutionalized Qādirī order—even one of the main Tamil Shādhilī hagiographies of the nineteenth century begins with a chapter on the life of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. That al-Jīlānī is part of the *silsila* of many Sufi orders, not only of expressly Qādirī lineages, makes devotional traditions around al-Jīlānī weak evidence for the presence of an institutionalized Qādirī order.<sup>19</sup>

It would not be correct to say, however, that lineages of initiation played no role or were not mentioned in this period. We have a number of examples, mostly dating to around 1700, where several generations of teachers are mentioned, especially when a teacher was well known, but without mentioning a particular order that was transmitted through such teaching lineages. A good example is provided by perhaps the best-known Muslim religious scholar of the Tamil country in the seventeenth century, Shaykh Ṣadaqatullāh b. Sulaymān of Kayalpattinam (1632–1703). Although Ṣadaqatullāh is generally assumed to have been a Qādirī and is frequently mentioned in the Tamil literature of the period, his affiliation to the Qādirīyya does not seem to be mentioned in that literature. It is indeed noteworthy that most present-day Qādirī lineages in the region seem to trace themselves to lineages that entered Tamil Nadu and Laṅkā during the eighteenth century at earliest and not to Ṣadaqatullāh. A prime example of this is Māppillai Leppai, who, as already mentioned, traced his initiation to an eighteenth-century preceptor from Kerala rather than to Ṣadaqatullāh even though he was descended from the latter through both his father and his mother.

It is not that the Qādirīyya or other Sufi orders were absent from the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather, it seems that affiliation to a specific order was not of particular importance, most probably because individuals were affiliated to several orders and not just to one, or possibly because notions about the meaning of *ṭarīqa* affiliation differed from those that are held nowadays. In the process, the precise lineage and preceptors who bundled affiliation to several orders would have become more important than the historically

more distant orders themselves. One such order whose presence beside the Qādiriyya in South India and Laṅkā during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is strongly suggested is the Shaṭṭāriyya, given the strong presence of that order in other parts of the southern Asian littoral, such as Gujarat or Java. The region's most celebrated Muslim saint, Shāh al-Ḥamīd of Nagore, was a disciple of the Shaṭṭārī preceptor Muḥammad Ghawth of Gwalior (d. 1563), though much less is nowadays made of Shāh al-Ḥamīd's connection to this order than of his additional initiation into the Qādiriyya. As I have suggested elsewhere, it is possible that Sām Shihāb al-Dīn (1634/1635–1709), a younger brother of Shaykh Ṣadaqatullāh, may have been a disciple of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (1614–1690) and the latter's teacher, Aḥmad al-Qūshāshī (d. 1661). Although both of these scholars were, like Shāh al-Ḥamīd, initiated into multiple Sufi *ṭarīqas*, al-Qūshāshī is most commonly remembered as a preceptor of the Shaṭṭāriyya, whereas al-Kūrānī has been most prominent as a Naqshbandī teacher.<sup>20</sup> In such contexts of multiple initiation and transmission of orders, it would hardly be surprising if distinct “lineages” became more important as points of identification than those of the broader framework of “orders.”

Although specific lineages seem to have played an important role in the early transmission of Sufi discourse in southern India and Laṅkā, individual lineages appear to have played a less conspicuous role in the process that first brought not just a particular lineage but a specific Sufi order into the limelight locally. The first clear mention that I have found of a Sufi order in a text from the region is in the *Vētapurāṇam*, probably composed in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. In a chapter devoted to becoming a disciple of a Sufi preceptor, the text claims that “it means a great blessing if one takes hold of the Qādiriyya.”<sup>21</sup> It appears that in this period Qādirī lineages in the region began increasingly to be linked to preceptors operating on the west coast of India, thereby possibly obscuring links to networks of orders, Qādirī or otherwise, that may have existed in the region earlier. The most conspicuous feature of these networks is their close interlinking of the Qādiriyya with another order, the Rifā'iyya. Although this order plays an important part in Muslim religious life in both South India and Laṅkā, it has not attracted the same attention from historians as the Qādiriyya, most likely because the Rifā'iyya is far less visible in written sources than the Qādiriyya, and it is most salient among the ranks of itinerant mendicant groups such as the Bawas.<sup>22</sup> The linkages between such groups and the Rifā'iyya connect this order with the Malangs and similar itinerant groups. Indeed, at Tamil Nadu's largest saint-shrine, the Nagore Dargah, Rifā'īs and Malangs play a central role in the rituals performed during the annual festival.<sup>23</sup> Already in 1805, the Scottish orientalist John Leyden (1775–1811), drawing on informants from Malabar, identified “the sect of Ruffii” as a division of the Madāriyya, the order with which the Malangs are most commonly associated.<sup>24</sup> Lifestyle thereby developed into a marker of affiliation to specific orders so that it is often difficult to establish whether certain individuals

were indeed formally affiliated with a specific order or were simply identified as members of these orders owing to their living as itinerant mendicants.

Both Rifā'iyya and Qādiriyya have historically spread through the same networks of itinerant Sufis centered on the Lakshadweep archipelago off the Indian west coast. The person who “discovered” the site of Jailani in the nineteenth century was from Androth Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago, as are many of the Rifā'i preceptors still active in the region.<sup>25</sup> The participation of Rifā'i dervishes in the celebrations of shrines with strong Qādirī connections, such as Nagore or Jailani, similarly points to the closeness of these two orders. Although it is from these common Qādirī-Rifā'i networks that the most prominent Qādirī lineages of the nineteenth century emerged, lineages seem far less salient in these networks as a whole. Furthermore, although family links appear to be rather important in the lineages we have discussed so far, with transmission from father to son or among brothers playing an important role in succession, such kinship links seem to have been of lesser importance to the itinerant Sufis who connected ordinary Muslims throughout South India and Lañkā to preceptors in the western archipelagos of Lakshadweep and the Maldives. This conjecture still requires far more investigation, but the point can be illustrated by taking a look at a *silsila* contained in a mid-twentieth-century manuscript in my possession (folios 129r–130r).<sup>26</sup> This manuscript was originally owned by a woman named Balqīs Bī, probably from the vicinity of Nagore, who was initiated into the Qādiriyya in February 1944 by a preceptor from Androth Island. From the *silsila*, it emerges not only that her preceptor, Sayyid Muḥammad Pūkōyā b. al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Qādir, was initiated into both the Qādiriyya and the Rifā'iyya, but that his own preceptor, at least in the Qādirī line, was not his father. Although their itinerant lifestyle allowed these Sufis to connect and integrate a larger region through a single network, this network was held together less by loyalty to particular lineages than by memories and practices that identified all those who participated in this network with the larger order that served as a common signifier.

## RECOLLECTION

In his recent overview of Sufi traditions, Nile Green cautions us not to overlook that, for much of the history of Sufism, Sufi *ṭarīqas* “were forced to operate largely as conceptual communities in which fellowship was built on bonds of memory and imagination rather than bureaucratic ties and direct communication.”<sup>27</sup> It was the memory of the transmission of authority and practices from master to disciple over the centuries that made it possible for Muslims to identify as members of such institutions as the Qādiriyya or Shādhiliyya, both named after the Sufi master who is supposed to have initiated the chain of transmission.

Given the importance of memory to the constitution of separate lineages into orders, it is actually surprising that one of the main technologies for the

transmission of such memories, namely, hagiographies of important saints, was almost absent from the repertoire of Islamic writings from southeastern India and Lañkā before the nineteenth century. Such hagiographies formed an important part of non-Muslim Tamil literature, however, the most important being Cēkkiḷār's twelfth-century *Periyapurāṇam*, a hagiography of the most important Śaiva saints of the region.<sup>28</sup> Although Muslim authors adopted the genres and conventions of Tamil literature and apparently especially of Śaiva literature, they focused their attention almost exclusively on the life of the Prophet and his family. For the most part, references to Sufi saints before the nineteenth century were limited to short stanzas in praise of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī or (rarely) other saints at the beginning of longer poems. Thus, Sām Shihāb al-Dīn's *Rasūl mālai*, more than a fifth of which consists of stanzas in praise of scholars and savants of Islam from the Prophet to the poet's own family, lists only five saints connected with establishing Sufi orders: al-Jīlānī (stanza 76), al-Suhrawardī (77), al-Rifā'ī (79), al-Shādhilī (89), and al-'Aydarūs (93).<sup>29</sup> Until the late eighteenth century, only 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī's life was made the subject of occasional hagiographical texts, and none of these was in the esteemed *kāppiyam* genre in which the life of the Prophet and his family had been told since the late sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Long poems in the *kāppiyam* genre concerning the hagiographies of important Sufis were not composed before the early nineteenth century, when there was a sudden efflorescence of such poems about al-Jīlānī (three poems dating to 1810, 1814, and 1816) and local saints (the *Tirukkāraṇappurāṇam* on Shāh al-Ḥamīd of Nagore of 1812, and the *Tiṇṇiḷakkam* on Sayyid Ibrāhīm of Ervadi of 1821).<sup>31</sup>

Things began to change rapidly with the adoption of print by Tamil Muslims from the 1840s onwards. Not only were further *kāppiyam* poems composed, but publishers increasingly printed poems in praise of both local and Middle Eastern saints. By the end of the nineteenth century, the extension of narrative prose in Tamil also affected the publication of hagiographies, including those of important Sufis. The first prose texts seem to have been composed in honor of local saints, especially Shāh al-Ḥamīd of Nagore, but it is noteworthy that among these earliest prose texts we find two Shādhilī hagiographies, *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Takhlīs al-Hālikīn* (1898) by Muḥammad Ismā'īl of Nagapattinam, and *Nafahāt al-'Anbar fī Manāqib al-Quṭb al-Akbar* (1902) by Nūḥ b. 'Abd al-Qādir of Kayalpattinam (1830/1831–1905/1906), a well-known scholar and author.<sup>32</sup> Shādhilī authors seem to have quickly adopted the technology of print for their own purposes: a short poem in praise of al-Shādhilī had already been published in 1871, and, by 1914, a full-fledged *kāppiyam* poem titled *Cātulināyakam* had been composed on al-Shādhilī.<sup>33</sup> But Shādhilī authors were not the only ones who competed for space in the developing market for Muslim publications in Tamil. Thus, in 1915, a printing press in Madras issued a volume containing Arabic panegyrics (composed by the Qādirī Māppiḷlai Leppai) and a hagiography of Mu'īn al-Dīn al-Chishtī as well as a collection

of stories about important Chishtī saints, though the Chishtiyya never attained the same popularity among Tamil-speaking Muslims as the Qādiriyya and the Shādhiliyya.<sup>34</sup>

Literary hagiographies were only part of the process of remembering and commemorating the Sufi masters of the past; stories and biographies also circulated orally among disciples and supporters of Sufi lineages and networks. The pattern of the production of hagiographic texts is nevertheless revealing. Literary texts brought with them prestige, especially if they were composed in highly regarded genres like the *kāppiyam*, as well as aiding the creation of “interpretive communities” that shared a common understanding of their lineages and networks as being grounded in an accepted recollection of the deeds and lives of earlier preceptors.<sup>35</sup> In this context, the historical development of the textual recollection of Sufi saints in the Tamil region is revealing. Until the late seventeenth century, it seems that Muslims in the Tamil-speaking parts of South India and Laṅkā were not particularly concerned about the creation of hagiographical accounts about earlier Sufi masters—the Prophet and his family were the prime focus of narrative poetry. When hagiographic writing emerged around 1700, it focused almost exclusively on ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, probably reflecting the rise of the regionwide Qādirī network spreading from the western islands in this period. It is only in the context of the nineteenth century that hagiographies of Sufi saints start to form a major element of Muslim writing in Tamil. It is not surprising that the same period saw Qādirīs discuss the propriety of certain stories about ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in the new medium of the newspaper or that some of the earliest catalogs of Sufi orders in Tamil are to be found in the Shādhilī hagiographies.<sup>36</sup> As more Sufi orders and lineages came to compete for followers in South India and Laṅkā, textual production increased and fed into the development of a print market for Muslim publications.

Yet orders were not only constituted and defined through a recollection of their past—the definition of certain practices in the present proved to be of similar importance, especially as many of these practices were themselves connected to the recollection of the place of the *ṭarīqa* and lineage in the divine order of things. To quote Nile Green again, “the method of master-disciple learning and the reading of training texts ensured some degree of standardization in the doctrines and practices held by fellow members of the same brotherhood.”<sup>37</sup> Nineteenth-century Sufi discourse in South India and Laṅkā placed a heavy emphasis on the practices enjoined by the *ṭarīqa* in question. The connection between *ṭarīqa* and practice is particularly salient in those practices that are limited to specific Sufi orders, such as the performance of litanies for recollection of God, the Prophet, and the saints, such as *dhikr*, *wird*, or *rātib*. Many of the important nineteenth-century lineages performed their characteristic litanies, such as the *Rātiba Jalāliyya* of the Qādiriyya-‘Arūsiyya composed by Māppiḷḷai Leppai or al-Fāsi’s *Ṣalāt al-Yāqūtiyya* in the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya.

Hagiographies were similarly not limited to extolling the learning, miracles, and lineages of the respective saints and preceptors. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl's collection of hagiographies of important Shādhilī preceptors is immediately followed by a 130-page tract on the meaning of *ṭarīqa* and the performance of *dhikr*, and then by about 120 pages of *wird* and other types of Arabic poems for ritual recitation. Thus, more than half of what is purportedly a hagiography is actually filled with information on how to be a practicing Shādhilī. Similarly, in the manuscript of a Qādirī woman of the 1940s that I have mentioned above, a short tract is devoted to the performance of *dhikr* in accordance with Qādirī "customs" (*ādāb*). In this way, the nineteenth-century lineages are comparable to what Jamil Abun-Nasr refers to as "Sufi brotherhoods," that is, centralized and exclusive communities of Sufis following only the distinctive rules and practices set down by the brotherhood's founder. This similarity is not surprising, especially in case of the Fāsiyya. Many of the "brotherhoods" discussed by Abun-Nasr formed in northern Africa and provided the context in which the Darqāwiyya, the branch of the Shādhiliyya to which the Fāsiyya belongs, developed. Furthermore, the development of such exclusive Sufi communities was itself a fairly recent development, usually not dating back beyond the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

It is therefore unsurprising that the connection between practice and a specific order was not always so close. This is not to say that practice and notions about the propriety or impropriety of certain practices played no role in earlier Sufi networks and that the emphasis on proper practice in the nineteenth century is part of a process of "Islamization" in which an earlier, somehow less "Islamic" and compromised situation is replaced by closer attention to proper religious behavior and an increased reception of Arabic texts. Rather, what seems to have been missing in the earlier period was the way in which "order" and "practice" defined and reinforced each other, with an order being defined by particular practices and particular practices being the domain of a specific order. In contrast, some of the earlier Islamic nonnarrative religious literature in Tamil, although drawing profusely on Middle Eastern Sufi authors, does not seem to proclaim its *ṭarīqa* background in any meaningful manner. Thus, Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Leppai's early eighteenth-century dogmatic tract *Iḏām al-Fawā'id fī Niḏām al-'Aqā'id* explicitly draws on works by al-Ghazālī, al-Nawawī, Ibn al-'Arabī, al-Jīlī, al-Burhānpūrī, and al-Qūshāshī but does not seem to ally with any particular order.<sup>39</sup>

The first texts that explicitly proclaim their affiliation with the Qādiriyya, in contrast, appear rather different from prose tracts like *Iḏām al-Fawā'id*. These are poems often dubbed "songs of gnosis," or *meyññāṇap pāṭalkaḷ* (sing. *meyññāṇap pāṭal*) in Tamil.<sup>40</sup> The peculiarity of these songs is that they combine the vocabulary of a Śaiva poetic tradition, so-called Siddha (Tamil *cittar*) poetry, with esoteric Islamic discourse in a dense and as yet insufficiently studied manner. The already mentioned *Vētapurāṇam* clearly draws on this tradition, whose author is significantly said to have been a disciple of the author of

*Izām al-Fawā'id*. Similar poetry is connected to later authors with clear-cut Qādirī affiliation, such as Shaykh 'Umar Walī and Kīlakkarai Taykā Ṣāhib. The latter was not only the preceptor of Māppiḷlai Leppai, but also the teacher of the most important exponent of this style of Islamic Tamil poetry, Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastān Ṣāhib. Although these songs drew considerable criticism from some quarters in the nineteenth century—the *Vētapurāṇam* was apparently refuted in AH 1272 (1855/1856 CE) by a convocation of Islamic religious scholars<sup>41</sup>—it is erroneous to characterize them as the product of a weakly Islamized convert society, as is still sometimes done.<sup>42</sup> A widely read scholar such as Māppiḷlai Leppai felt no inhibitions about quoting poems by Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastān Ṣāhib in his religious manuals, and such poems are commonly encountered in Qādirī contexts in South India and Laṅkā.<sup>43</sup> The 1940s manuscript of a Qādirī devotee that I have referred to similarly contains not only texts recording the woman's lineage and proper Qādirī devotional exercises, but also the text of the *Pismil Kuram*, a famous *meyññāṇap pāṭal* by the seventeenth-century poet Pīr Muḥammad of Takkalai. Apparently, Balqīs Bī considered such poetry and its interpretation to be as fundamental a part of her religious life as the performance of *dhikr* or the commemoration of her preceptor.

Thus, the situation observed in South India and Laṅkā casts doubt on common assumptions made in studies of Sufism in South Asia and elsewhere that Sufi orders played an important part in the Islamization of the general Muslim population.<sup>44</sup> There seems little evidence that the Qādiriyya or any other Sufi order aided early processes of Islamization, though for most Muslim authors of the period Sufism was a fundamental part of Islamic practice. Rather than the Qādiriyya simplifying Sufi discourse in vernacular poetry for an uneducated audience, it appears that part of the appeal of the Qādiriyya was provided precisely by the opposite process of drawing local Muslims into an “interpretive community” capable of decoding the complex esoteric poetry that was popular in Qādirī circles and that reached beyond the prose treatises on proper practice that circulated in more localized lineages.<sup>45</sup> Interpretation of such poetry thus came to be a practice that defined the Qādirī networks of the period much as Arabic litanies were to do in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although there were no formalized or even state-backed institutions among local Muslims that could inculcate a set of interpretive practices through an educational curriculum, as was the case in the rise of the Siyam Nikāya in eighteenth-century Lankan monasticism, it is clear that *meyññāṇap pāṭalkaḷ* and the capacity to interpret them in an Islamic framework were part and parcel of the extension of integrative and assimilative networks, networks that, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, increasingly came to define themselves by propagating specific practices of interpretation and recollection, thereby demarcating their boundaries and highlighting their individuality, which in turn allowed followers to identify with particular practices and lineages propagated within the network and thus to distinguish it further from other networks.

## AUTHORITY

Although the intersection of initiation lineages with certain practices may have helped to define these lines more clearly, this alone would not have been enough to integrate distinct lineages in different localities into common patterns of practice and identity across space as usually associated with the term “order” (*ṭarīqa*). The barriers of communication and limits of de facto authority meant that in many parts of the Muslim world, Sufi *ṭarīqas* were linked, if at all, by reproduction of a common memory and identity. But in order for different lineages to become, again in the words of Nile Green, “mechanisms of the reproduction and standardization of tradition,”<sup>46</sup> they required more than just an awareness of those lineages and sets of defining practices. They required networks through which their ideas and practices could circulate. These networks needed to command a certain authority to be able to extend themselves into new contexts, ensure adherence of individual groups and lineages to the network, and contest the claims of rival networks. In order to understand how authority was established in Sufi networks in southern India and Laṅkā, let us turn now to consider developments in the nineteenth century.

In the case of the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya, the importance of its network and the speed with which it was able to replicate this network in southern Tamil Nadu and the southwestern regions of Laṅkā is remarkable. Although more research is required to be able to map the extension of this network in the course of the nineteenth century exhaustively, it seems likely that a lot depended on individuals like Abū Bakr Miskīn, who brought the order to the region from Mekka. The participation of religious scholars like Nūḥ b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qāhirī, who could support the growth of the network through the production of texts and their distribution via a growing number of printers and booksellers, similarly may have boosted the prestige and appeal of the Shādhiliyya. A third factor may have been the institution of the lodge, or *zāwiya*. In a region where existing Sufi structures, especially shrines, had a long association with the Qādiriyya, the Shādhilī *zāwiyas* allowed the order to colonize local spaces effectively by creating distinctly Shādhilī cityscapes.

Yet the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya provided its followers with something even more attractive. As part of the Darqāwiyya, a larger movement of traditionalist Sufi revival, the Fāsiyya fit well within the religious context of Muslim societies in South India and Laṅkā during the later nineteenth century. The Fāsiyya offered more than a revival of Sufi Islam: in contrast to similar movements among the Qādiriyya in the region, the Fāsiyya was directly connected to the Middle East. Al-Fāsī and his successors resided in Mekka, the religious center of the Muslim world, while his branch maintained close connections with larger Shādhilī networks that spread across northern Africa, including Egypt, to Syria. Zāfir al-Madanī (1829–1903), the son of al-Fāsī’s own preceptor, had

even initiated ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II into the Shādhiliyya before the latter became Ottoman sultan. In the late nineteenth century, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, much more than North India, were the focus of interest among Tamil-speaking Muslims for their role in the revival of Muslim societies, as they were in other Muslim societies across Southern Asia. This interest was fueled by a growing consciousness among South Indian and Lankan Muslims of being part of not only a religious but also a political community defending itself against encroachments by European powers from the Sudan to Aceh and beyond.<sup>47</sup> That the Shādhilīs were well connected to the Middle East was repeatedly brought home by the announcements they circulated in Tamil newspapers informing the members of the order of the passing away of important preceptors in Egypt and Arabia and the memorial rituals that were to be conducted at local *zāwiyas*. Similarly, Nūḥ b. ‘Abd al-Qādir made it a point to mention that his hagiography of al-Shādhilī was based on “pearls [found] in books from Egypt and Mekka.”<sup>48</sup>

If its connections to the religious and political centers of the Middle East gave the Shādhiliyya a good measure of authority when it began spreading in South India and Laṅkā in the mid-nineteenth century, Qādirī lineages were able to draw on the already existing authority of a network that had spread throughout South India and Laṅkā one or two centuries earlier. The linchpin of this network lay also to the west, though much closer to Tamil Nadu and Laṅkā, in the Lakshadweep and Maldivian archipelagos off the western coast of India and especially on the Lakshadweep island of Androth. It was from there that itinerant Sufi preceptors traveled throughout present-day Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Laṅkā and initiated disciples into the fold of the two orders they were spreading—the Qādiriyya and the Rifā’iyya. These itinerant preceptors generally claimed to be descendants of the Prophet (Tamil *taṅkaḷ*; Malayalam *taṅṅal*). Although this often went along with a claim that they ultimately hailed from Yemen or Ḥaḍramawt, the appeal and charisma of these *taṅkaḷs* were predicated on the fact that their descent from the Prophet endowed them with *baraka*, blessings from God that allowed them to work miracles. An early eyewitness account of faith in the miracle-working capacities of the people from the western islands with linkages to the Qādiriyya and the Rifā’iyya was given by John Leyden. In autumn 1805, Leyden journeyed from the Indian west coast to Penang on board a native vessel. Among the crew, he noted that “the two Mu’allim’s or pilots are Maldivians prodigiously addicted to Sorcery and adepts completely [*sic*] in the Elmi Dawat [i.e., medicine].”<sup>49</sup> When the vessel was pursued by pirates off the coast of Sumatra, one of the Maldivians went into a trance and began to work charms to make the ship escape the pirates, “all which time he continued in a more ecstatic manner to howl forth Arabic prayers to God, the Prophet, Ali & the Imams but especially to Ruffī.”<sup>50</sup> Yet despite the importance of claims to descent from the Prophet and links to Arabian Sea networks and southern Arabia, this Qādirī-Rifā’ī combine in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries

drew as much authority from its decidedly vernacular character, embodied in the songs of gnosis, or *meyññāṇap pāṭalkaḷ*, that spread as part of the network and that tied followers into a common interpretive community.

Even in the case of early localized lineages, the authority that they wielded can sometimes be gleaned from the fact that their members were integrated into the highest levels of Muslim mercantile elites in the region. The most obvious example is the family of Shaykh Ṣadaqatullāh, whose daughter married the son of the merchant Māmu Nayiṇār, widely believed to have been the younger brother of the magnate Cīttakkāti. One son of this marriage, Leppai Nayiṇār, became the linchpin of power in the Ramnad kingdom during the 1720s to 1730s. It is noteworthy that two *kāppiyam* poems funded by Leppai Nayiṇār mention his maternal descent from Ṣadaqatullāh before his paternal descent from Māmu Nayiṇār, suggesting the repute of his Sufi grandfather.<sup>51</sup>

As Sufi networks, with their claims to distinctive practices and prestigious lineages, encountered each other they also got into conflicts over ideas, practices, and claims to status and lineage. Indeed, the noteworthiness of the Shādhiliyya in the region has been predicated on precisely the fact that it was able to carve out a niche for itself in a “religious marketplace” monopolized by the authority of the Qādiriyya. Like the latter, the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya spread among Muslim “householders,” often of elite background, rather than among the itinerant dervish groups where the Rifā‘iyya was and remains the dominant Sufi order in the region. These social dynamics provided ample opportunity for conflict between adherents of different Sufi orders.

Internal controversies in Muslim societies of Tamil Nadu and Laṅkā generally revolved around the propriety of various practices and claims to authority.<sup>52</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that not only individual Sufis or lineages came to contest each other’s claims, but also the followers of *ṭarīqas* as a whole. This became acutely visible when the Shādhiliyya began to challenge the authority of Qādirī networks in the second half of the nineteenth century. The letters to the editor of *Muslim Nēcaṇ* quoted at the beginning of this chapter are a good example of such exchanges. Concomitantly, the number of letter writers who identified as either Qādirī or Shādhilī Muslims similarly rose.<sup>53</sup> Although little can be said about the exact dynamics of these controversies, it seems that the complaints tended to be leveled in the first place by the Qādirīs against the Shādhilīs, suggesting that the former may have felt threatened by the expansion of the new order. The most important preceptors and scholars of the two orders seem to have maintained cordial relationships. Thus, the Shādhilī scholar Nūḥ b. ‘Abd al-Qādir wrote Arabic poetry in praise of both al-Fāsī and the Qādirī Mappiḷḷai Leppai, and a *kāppiyam* poem composed about the life of al-Shādhilī in 1914 acknowledged the seniority of the Qādiriyya in the region by praising the local Qādirī lineage extending from Bukhārī Tañṇaḷ via Shaykh ‘Umar to the latter’s son and grandson, Kāyalpaṭṭiṇam Taykā Ṣāḥib and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, before praising al-Fāsī, Shams al-Dīn al-Makkī, and Abū Bakr Miskīn.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, their followers appear to have not infrequently viewed each other with suspicion. Particularly irksome for the Qādirīs seems to have been the claim frequently made in Shādhilī writings that the Shādhiliyya was preferable to other *ṭarīqas*.

The second part of Muḥammad Ismāʿīl's collection of hagiographies, tellingly, more or less began with a chapter on the preeminence of the Shādhiliyya (*Faḍl al-ṭarīqa al-shādhiliyya*).<sup>55</sup> The most coherent and (for the Qādirīs) annoying exposition of this topic was a tract penned by al-Fāsī himself, titled "The Lordly Introduction Concerning the Preferability of the Shādhilī Ṭarīqa" (*al-Futuḥāt al-rabbanīyya fī tafḍīl ṭarīqa al-shādhiliyya*), which enumerated twenty-six reasons why the Shādhiliyya was preferable to all other Sufi orders. It is hardly surprising that the Qādirīs sought to counter this tract and ultimately published a rejoinder to it.<sup>56</sup> It also seems noteworthy that these controversies between the two orders appear to have been more pronounced in Laṅkā, where, in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, Muslim elites were beginning to formulate and contest political claims both among one another and with Tamil and Sinhala politicians. In this context, the two predominant orders (at least in the politically dominant southwestern parts of the islands) came to be linked up with rival political factions.<sup>57</sup>

There is, however, far less evidence for the role of *ṭarīqas* in local religious controversies before the nineteenth century. This is not particularly surprising given that, before the advent of print, such controversies were most likely local and left no trace in the written record. Nevertheless, two factors need to be mentioned. The first has to do with the language adopted as the Qādiriyya's dominant idiom of expression, namely poetry in the style and vocabulary of Śaiva religious poetry in general, and Siddha poetry in particular. Siddha poetry is often considered to have been highly critical of the existing social and religious order. Most scholars have interpreted the Muslim adoption of the Siddha idiom as a sign of accommodation, religious sharing, and an ecumenical commitment to "the brotherhood of a universal faith."<sup>58</sup> Yet this view is one-sided, as it only takes into account the appropriation of Muslim poets by Hindu audiences. Looking at the actual poetry makes it clear that not only did Muslims use standard notions and fundamental texts of Sufi Islam, but they also resignified the vocabulary of Siddha poetry for Muslim use—for example, by taking the term *ainteluttu*, or "five letters," to refer not to the Śaiva mantra *namaḥ śivāya*, but rather to the five-letter Arabic term *al-ḥamd*.<sup>59</sup> It may therefore be possible that the adoption of the Siddha idiom served a double purpose, namely, appropriating a popular idiom critiquing Hindu orthodoxy while at the same time subverting that very idiom from a Muslim perspective.

The other noteworthy factor is the peculiar dominance that the Qādiriyya and Rifāʿiyya had achieved in the region by the beginning of the nineteenth century. This first raises the question of how far this spread was accomplished at the expense of other lineages, such as the Shaṭṭārī or the Naqshbandī, and how

far their apparent integration into dominant Qādirī networks was harmonious. It is also surprising that other *ṭarīqas* that might have spread in southern India and Laṅkā have hardly been able to make inroads. Thus, the Chishtiyya with its pan-Indian networks is hardly present in the region beyond the minority Urdu-speaking communities. That the Chishtiyya was unable to spread beyond its social base while a *ṭarīqa* with no local ties whatsoever like the Shādhiliyya was may hint at what made the latter attractive, namely, its capacity to provide an alternative for Muslim elites (or, perhaps better, “householders”) to the predominant Qādirī network(s) while at the same time not being associated with any other established elite social formation in the region, as was clearly the case with the Chishtiyya. The Shādhiliyya was well equipped to offer an alternative to the Qādirīyya in the region. The network of *zāwiya*s not only permitted the order to operate independently of religious institutions dominated by Qādirīs, but also provided it with a sacred landscape in a country where the main shrines were associated with combined Qādirī-Rifāʿī networks. Furthermore, the authority that the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya could draw from its association with elites in Mekka, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire made the order more than capable to take on the established order, much as the connection with the western archipelagos, itinerant *tanḳaḷs*, and a cherished but esoteric body of poetry had provided the Qādirī-Rifāʿī networks with the authority to integrate apparently autonomous Sufi lineages in the preceding centuries.

The discussion presented above has shown that the common assumption of Sufi orders—more specifically, the Qādirīyya—playing a central and more or less unchanging part in Muslim religious life in the Tamil-speaking parts of South India and Laṅkā for many centuries needs to be questioned and possibly modified. Rather, the data seem to suggest three distinct types of Sufi formations in the region. The earliest recognizable institution is the simple teaching lineage, by which doctrine and practices were passed on through the generations. Although these lineages may ultimately have traced themselves back to a common origin in a particular preceptor, there is relatively little in the material to suggest that. Rather, lineages may actually have been affiliated to different preceptors and the *ṭarīqas* associated with them simultaneously so that what ultimately came to matter to an individual Sufi in the region in the earlier period was not so much the role as a member of a particular “order” but rather the particularized and localized participation in a teaching lineage through which multiple affiliations could be transmitted. The evidence for these lineages seems to suggest, furthermore, that they mattered only for those Muslims who were actively engaged in the study of religious knowledge, thus necessitating connection with an authoritative teacher for this purpose. There is little evidence of lay (if the term may be used) participation in Sufi practice during this earlier period. Sufism, in other words, seems to have been a part of Islamic learning that mattered to those who possessed or sought that learning, much like law or

knowledge of the *ḥadīth*, whereas ordinary Muslims do not seem to have sought out initiation into any institutionalized Sufi lineage.

This situation seems to have been transformed by new developments starting around 1600. The period that followed saw the expansion of a new type of Sufi network from the western islands via Kerala to Tamil Nadu and Lan̄kā—a network that was created by itinerant Sufis pledging allegiance to both the Qādirīyya and the Rifāʿīyya but that was linked to settled society in the Muslim towns of the region primarily through the Qādirīyya. This network seems not only to have integrated local lineages, but also to have drawn a wider spectrum of local Muslim society into Qādirī devotionalism and commemorative practice, partly by forming an “interpretive community” around the textual corpus of Tamil songs of gnosis. In this network, with its itinerant preceptors, the actual Sufi lineage a person was initiated into seems to have been less important, thanks to its removal from the local scene. What mattered to the initiated layman was not so much the lineage but integration into the network created by these itinerant preceptors. It is only around the end of the eighteenth century that some lineages in this network seem to have risen to prominence and begun to form the nucleus of integrated “lineage orders” of the type that have often been assumed to be representative of Sufi orders. During the nineteenth century, such lineage orders formed the model not only for Qādirī practice, but also for those who challenged Qādirī dominance in the region, most notably the Shādhiliyya-Fāsiyya.

What does that mean for our understanding of Muslim history and the role of “orders” in the region more generally? What social developments were behind the transformations that took place between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which factors influenced these developments? Much more research is required to address these questions properly, but some observations can be made based on this initial study. Our knowledge of the situation preceding the late sixteenth century is, admittedly, still rather sketchy. However, the extension of a transregional Sufi network that integrated Muslim communities in the region from around 1600 onwards coincides with what appears to be an era of increased competition among religious groups in the region. The inroads made by European powers into both the economic and the religious organization of the central Indian Ocean was only one aspect of these transformations, though one that affected coastal Muslim communities significantly. Another interesting aspect is that the peculiar structure of the network, with its emphasis on the horizontal, integrative aspects of shared texts, interpretive practices, and recollection of a common heritage rather than the vertical hierarchy of the lineage, may have been one way of integrating the dispersed Muslim communities of the region in a situation where no central institution, such as a church or an empire, was able to effect such an integration. Whereas farther to the north Muslim empires may have favored certain Sufi lineages and in the kingdom of Kandy royal patronage supported the spread of the Siyam Nikāya among

Buddhist institutions, these Sufi networks of the Tamil regions spread without state patronage that could have supported the development of strong vertical integration through teaching lineages, as in the case of the Siyam Nikāya. The Qādirī network of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus thrived not because it “Islamized” the local population but because it provided a means of social and religious integration for dispersed Muslim communities, operating as an integrative force in the absence of a centralizing Muslim state. The combination of strong vertical lineages with the horizontal integration of larger networks was fully achieved only when several developments made such integration feasible in the region. These included a stronger emphasis on the specificity and uniqueness of the lineage not only through common memory, but also through distinctive practices, a common political order that provided a more level playing field for religious groups competing with each other,<sup>60</sup> and technologies that facilitated the travel of individuals and the reproduction of texts to a far greater extent than had been possible earlier. It thus becomes clear that the history of religious “orders” needs to become far more cognizant of changes in the constitution of such institutions, their interaction, and integration into local society than has so far been achieved by historians of the region.

## NOTES

1. “Katiṭam,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.15 (12 Āṇi 1889): 60.
2. Following Anne M. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. viii, I have chosen to refer to the island as “Laṅkā” rather than using the anachronistic name of the postcolonial nation-state “Sri Lanka.”
3. “Katiṭam,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.16 (19 Āṇi 1889): 64.
4. The main exception is a massive but unfortunately still unpublished doctoral thesis on the Qādiriyya: Susan Elizabeth Schomburg, “‘Reviving Religion’: The Qādirī Sufi Order, Popular Devotion to Sufi Saint Muḥyūddīn ‘Abdul Qādir al-Gīlānī, and Processes of ‘Islamization’ in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2003). See also Frederick de Jong, “Note sur les confréries soufies à Sri Lanka,” in *Les ordres mystiques dans l’Islam: Cheminements et situation actuelle*, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1986), pp. 135–137; Muḥammad Yousuf Kokan, “Sufi Presence in South India,” in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, vol. 2: *Religion and Religious Education*, edited by Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), pp. 73–85; Dennis B. McGilvray, “Jailani: A Sufi Shrine in Sri Lanka,” in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004), pp. 272–289; Dennis B. McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 292–304.
5. Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 11.
6. This is admittedly a tall claim and would need much further investigation. My preliminary assessment stems from the impression that the critique of existing sources developed

in this chapter can be applied to other South Asian contexts. First, it seems noteworthy how unclear or vague the *ṭarīqa* background of many venerated saints and vernacular Sufi poets seems to be. This includes personalities without *ṭarīqa* affiliation (e.g., Makhdūm ‘Alī of Mahim) or of unknown affiliation (e.g., Shāh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf of Bhīt). If we add cases where a somewhat obscure lineage seems retrospectively to have been interpreted as a full-fledged *ṭarīqa* (as in the case of the Maghribiyya in Gujarat) or where a *ṭarīqa* seems to be ascribed on the basis of an individual’s peculiar traits (e.g., itinerant preceptors identified as Madārī or Rifā’ī), this covers a large number of South Asian Sufis. Second, it is noteworthy how rarely specific orders (in opposition to the basic meaning of *ṭarīqa* as part of the Sufi “path” in general) are mentioned in precolonial South Asian Islamic literatures apart from Persian. Important Sufi poets rarely mention their *ṭarīqa* affiliation, and the most central literary genre for the conceptual articulation of the Sufi order, the hagiography of local saints, seems strangely undeveloped in most vernacular Muslim literatures of South Asia, in striking contrast to both Muslim Persian and non-Muslim vernacular literature in the very same languages! This may suggest that Sufi orders were of greater importance as a discursive concept of Persianate political and historical discourse than as social institutions in South Asia.

7. The centrality of the Muslim state as an organizing trope characterizes otherwise very different works. Cf., for example, Raziuddin Aquil, *In the Name of Allah: Understanding Islam and Indian History* (Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2009); Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Mohammad Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: Allan and Unwin, 1967); Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

8. The classic treatment of this trope is Simon Digby, “The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India,” *Puruṣārtha* 9 (1986): 57–77.

9. The connection between the initiatory “lineage” (*silsila*) and the “order” (*ṭarīqa*) is so close that some authors translate *silsila* as “order”; see, for example, Aquil, *In the Name of Allah*, p. 10.

10. Desai mentions a “Mosque of Shaikh Shādhilī” in Kozhikode, Kerala, which contains an inscription dating to 1727/1728. I have not been able to find out more about this mosque, whether the mosque already existed by the time the inscription was made, and whether it was already known by that name then; Ziyāud-Din A. Desai, *A Topographical List of Arabic, Persian and Urdu Inscriptions of South India* (Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research and Northern Book Centre, 1989), p. 102 (no. 1065).

11. Concerning Abū Bakr Miskīn, see A. S. Satakattullāh, “Ṣātuliyyā tarīkkāvin caṅkaimiku kalīpa,” in *Paijūl Aṅvār Arapik Kallūri vellī viḷā cīrappu malar* (Kadayanallur: Paijūl Aṅvār Arapik Kallūri, 2000), p. 242; Tayka Shu‘ayb, *Arabic, Arwi and Persian in Sarandīb and Tamil Nadu: A Study of the Contributions of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu to Arabic, Arwi, Persian and Urdu Languages, Literature and Education* (Madras: Imāmūl ‘Arūs Trust, 1993), <http://www.maqbara.com/tariqa.php> (accessed March 16, 2014). On Laṅkā, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ummu\\_Zavaya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ummu_Zavaya) (accessed August 14, 2016); <http://www.fassianews.com/fassiyathush-shazuliyya/baitul-fassi/> (accessed August 14, 2016). The latter article was purportedly written by Hatoon Ajwad Al Fassi, a descendant of Muḥammad al-Fāsi and currently associate professor of history at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. De Jong, “Les confréries soufies à Sri Lanka,” 135, erroneously claims that Macan Marikkar was the first to introduce the Fāsiyya to Laṅkā.

12. Regarding the Darqāwiyya and the Fāsiyya, see Thomas Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī: Eine Studie zur Instrumentalisierung sufischer Netzwerke und genealogischer Kontroversen im*



*karuvūlam Vēta Purāṇam*, edited by Mu. Ceyyitu Muhammatu “Hasan” (Chennai: Mu.Ki.Mu. Muhammatu Hasan, 1999 [first published 1984]). In contrast, the term *ṭariqa* is used in this and other texts only as a general technical term for a stage on the Sufi path and the connected practices, not with regard to specific orders; e.g., *Vētapurāṇam* 25.103.

22. McGilvray, “Jailani,” pp. 276–283; McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict*, pp. 297–304.

23. Shaik Abdul Azeez Saheb, “A ‘Festival of Flags’: Hindu-Muslim Devotion and the Sacralising of Localism at the Shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu,” in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, edited by Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 63–65; concerning the Malangs, see Ute Falasch, *Heiligkeit und Mobilität: Die Madāriyya Sufibruderschaft und ihr Gründer Badī‘ al-Dīn Shāh Madār in Indien, 15.-19. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2015).

24. British Library MS 26562/2, folio 56v.

25. McGilvray, “Jailani,” pp. 276–280; also McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict*, p. 299.

26. The manuscript was purchased at an Islamic bookstall in Nagore in August 2007. It contains 137 folios of texts in Arabic and Tamil, almost throughout in Arabic script. The first 120 folios are carefully written in black and red ink and contain three sets of texts: a couple of Arabic poems (folios 1v–31v), a Tamil prose version of the Tawaddud story from the Arabian Nights (folios 33r–65r), and the *Pismil Kuram*, a Tamil “Sufi” poem by Pīr Muḥammad of Takkalai. The following folios (122r–126r) are taken up by Arabic poems written in blue ink, the quality of writing indicating that they may have been the writing exercises of a child. The final pages (again in a more mature hand) include a Qādirī *silsila* (129r–130r), a Tamil text on the Qādirī *adab of dhikr* (131v–134r), and a single page mentioning the names and dates of birth of three boys born between 1933 and 1952, possibly the sons or grandsons of the woman who owned the manuscript (135v). This is the only page in the manuscript fully in Tamil script. That Balqīs Bī was the owner of the manuscript becomes clear from a marginal note to that effect in Tamil script on folio 5v.

27. Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 82.

28. Indira Peterson, “Tamil Śaiva Hagiography: The Narrative of the Holy Servants (of Śiva) and the Hagiographical Project in Tamil Śaivism,” in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, edited by Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), pp. 191–228; a somewhat similar case, with a late development of hagiographies of Muslim saints despite the existence of non-Muslim hagiographies and Muslim narrative literature about the prophets, seems to be provided by Bengali; Hans Harder, *Sufism and Saint Veneration in Contemporary Bangladesh: The Maijbandaris of Chittagong* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 106–112.

29. The inclusion of al-Shādhilī at such an early date (ca. 1700) is surprising; *Rasūl mālai* 76–77, 79, 89, 93 (in Muḥammad Yūsuf Labbay, ed., *Uṣūl al-asnā fī ḥuṣūl al-ḥusnā* [Madras: Maṭba‘ Shāh al-Ḥamīdiyya, AH 1352], part 1, pp. 194–195).

30. For the two most important poems, Sām Shihāb al-Dīn’s *Mīrān* (or *Mīrā*) *mālai* and Javāṭuppalavar’s *Muhyittiṅṅāṅṅakai Piḷḷaitamiḷ*, see Muḥammad Yūsuf Labbay, *Uṣūl al-asnā*, part 1, pp. 223–232; and Ku. Jamāl Muhammatu, *Collampu: Makān Javāṭuppalavar* (Erode: Ku. Jamāl Muhammatu, 1999), pp. 59–113.

31. Regarding these poems and their literary context, see Tschacher, “Convention and Community”; Mahmood Mohamed Uwise, *Muslim Contribution to Tamil Literature* (Madras: Fifth International Islamic Tamil Literary Conference, 1990 [first published 1953]).

32. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl, *Hidāyat al-sālikīn*; Nūḥ b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qāhirī, *Nafahāt al-anbar fī manāqib al-quṭb al-akbar* (Bombay: al-Maṭbaʿ al-Gulzār Ḥasanī, AH 1320). Shuʿayb, *Arabic, Arwi and Persian*, pp. 274–289, 492–493, gives conflicting information on Nūḥ’s life-time; I have given the most likely dates. For early printed hagiographies, see J. B. Prashant More, *Muslim Identity, Print Culture and the Dravidian Factor in Tamil Nadu* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2004), pp. 203–228.

33. More, *Muslim Identity*, p. 209; Mukammatu Mukiyittīṅṅleppai Hāji Pulavar, *Cātuli nāyakam*, 2nd edition (Jaffna: Mukammatu Mukiyittīṅṅ Hāji Pulavar, 1964 [first published 1914]).

34. The copy in my possession consists of three separate parts that may have been printed separately and only bound together later by a reader; the titles of the three parts are *Mawlid ʿaṭāʾ al-rasūl fī maḥtid sakhāʾ al-batūl*, *Hidāyat al-rabb al-matīn fī manāqib al-shaykh muʿīn al-dīn*, and *Manāʾih al-qudsiyya fī siyar khulafāʾ al-chishtiyya*. Khwāja Muḥammad al-Kanjīwī, ed., *Mawlid ʿaṭāʾ al-rasūl fī maḥtid sakhāʾ al-batūl* (Madras: Maṭbaʿ al-Raḥmānī, AH 1333).

35. My understanding of “interpretive communities” is based on Blackburn’s use of the term in her study on eighteenth-century Lankan monasticism; Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning*, pp. 89–90.

36. For Qādirī debates, see, for example, “Kaṭiṭa tārpāriya viṭai,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.22 (31 Āṭi 1889): 86; “Caṅkaiporuntiya muslim nēca pattirātipa ravarkaluk [sic] calām,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.26 (28 Āvaṇi 1889): 103–104; “Cammānkōṭṭu ālimukku,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.27 (4 Puraṭṭāci 1889): 107. For catalogs of Sufi orders, see Muḥammad Ismāʿīl, *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn*, pp. 266–273. Regarding the link between print and the production of hagiographies, see Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 92–104. On the use of print by Sufis in Southern Asia in general, see Green, *Bombay Islam*, chaps. 3 and 6; Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 60–62, 143, 154.

37. Green, *Sufism*, p. 84.

38. Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), chaps. 5–7. At the same time, there has also been the opposite process of the transmission of Shādhilī texts outside Shādhilī institutions and contexts, such as the cases of al-Buṣṣīrī’s *Burda* and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh’s *Ḥikam* (personal communication by R. Michael Feener, Oxford, January 2016).

39. Leiden University Manuscript OR-7368, folio 5v; also Ph. S. van Ronkel, “A Tamil Malay Manuscript,” *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 85 (1922): 29–35. Most noteworthy, especially in a tract written by a student of Shaykh Ṣadaqatullāh, is the use of texts by al-Burhānpūrī and al-Qūshāshī, authors highly popular in Shaṭṭārī networks.

40. See Abdul Majeed Mohamed Sahabdeen, *The Sufi Doctrine in Tamil Literature* (Colombo: Abdul Majeed Mohamed Sahabdeen Trust Foundation, 1995 [first published 1986]); Susan Elizabeth Schomburg, “‘Hey, Girl! Dance the *Kummi* Called ‘*Moṭcam*!’”: The Sufi Poetics of Ḥaiyāṅkuṭi Kaccipiḷḷaiyammāl,” in *World Without Walls: Being Human, Being Tamil*, edited by R. Cheran et al. (Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2011), pp. 86–108; Schomburg, “Reviving Religion,” pp. 383–424.

41. “Cammānkōṭṭu ālimukku,” *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.27 (4 Puraṭṭāci 1889): 107.

42. See More, *Muslim Identity*, p. 57.

43. Sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qāhirī al-Kīrkarī, *Faṭḥ al-dayyān fī fiqh khayr al-adyān* (Bombay: Maṭbaʿ al-Shaykh Hasan b. Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Khatīb al-Kōkanī, AH 1291),

part 1, p. 46; translated in Sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *Fat-ḥud-dayyān*, p. 74. The respective stanza is from one of Mastān Ṣāhib's *kīrtanais*, no. 18 (1074.1) in Mā. Vaṭivēlu Mutaliyār, ed., *Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastān Cākipu pāṭalkaḷ (uraiyuṭaṅ)* (Chennai: Mullai Nilaiyam, 2004), p. 398.

44. For a critique of this assumption, see Torsten Tschacher, "Can 'Om' Be an Islamic Term? Translations, Encounters, and Islamic Discourse in Vernacular South Asia," *South Asian History and Culture* 5.2 (2014): 199–203.

45. See again Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning*, for my use of the term "interpretive community."

46. Green, *Sufism*, p. 82.

47. Torsten Tschacher, "'Walls of Illusion': Information Generation in Colonial Singapore and the Reporting of the Mahdi-Rebellion in Sudan, 1887–1890," in *Singapore in Global History*, edited by Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljuneid (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 57–78.

48. Nūḥ b. 'Abd al-Qādir, *Nafaḥāt al-'anbar*, p. 8. For newspaper items, see, for example, "Cātīliyyā tarīkkattīṅ ceykunāyaka mavarkaḷuṭaiya maraṅam," *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.29 (18 Puraṭṭāci 1889): 116; "Cātūliyyātarīka," *Carvaṅaṅānēcaṅ* 4.10 (March 23, 1889): 38; "Cātūlimavulāṅā avarkaḷiṅ vapāṭtu," *Carvaṅaṅānēcaṅ* 4.30 (September 16, 1889): 118; "Cātīliyyā," *Carvaṅaṅānēcaṅ* 4.35 (October 30, 1889): 138.

49. British Library MS 26562/2, folio 53v; the word read as "Sorcery" here might also be "Larceny."

50. *Ibid.*, folio 56v. A beautiful description of the way in which a Maldivian *taṅkaḷ* used his claim to be able to work miracles to gain patronage in a village in Kanniyakumari District early in the twentieth century can be found in one of the best-known Muslim novels in Tamil: Thoppil Mohammed Meeran, *The Story of a Seaside Village* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1998).

51. See *Ciṅṅa Cīrā* 11–12 (Paṅṅi Akumatu Maraikkāyar, "*Ciṅṅa Cīrā enṅru vaḷaṅkum Cīrāp purāṅam: Hijrattuk kāṅṅam-2*, edited by Em. Saiyitu Muhammatu "Hasaṅ" [Chennai: Millat Piriṅṅars (P. S. M. Ahmatu Aptul Kātir), 1990]); *Tirumaṅakkaṅṅāci* 31–32 (Vakutai Cēkāti Nayiṅṅarp Pulavar, *Tirumaṅak Kāṅṅci*, edited by Mu. Ceyyitu Muhammatu "Hasaṅ" [Chennai: Maraikkāyar Patippakam, 1990]). Regarding Cīṅṅakāti, Māmu Nayiṅṅār, and Leppai Nayiṅṅār, see Lennart Bes, "The Setupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits in Eighteenth-Century Ramnad (South India)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 44.4 (2001): 540–574; David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Prince of Poets and Ports: Cīṅṅakāti, the Maraikkāyars and Ramnad, ca. 1690–1710," in *Islam and Indian Regions*, edited by Anna Libera Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemand (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), vol. 1, pp. 497–535, though these authors seem not to have been aware of the family connections between Leppai Nayiṅṅār, Ṣadaqatullāh, and Cīṅṅakāti.

52. Green, *Sufism*, p. 175.

53. In addition to the two letters quoted at the beginning, see "Muslim Nēcaṅ pattirātiparavarkalukku," *Muslim Nēcaṅ* 7.19 (10 Āṭi 1889): 76.

54. *Cātūlināyakaṅ, Kaṅṅavuḷ vāṅṅtu* 15–20; for the poems authored by Nūḥ, see Muḥammad Ismā'īl, *Hidāyat al-sālikīn*, p. 219; Shu'ayb, *Arabic, Arwi and Persian*, p. 629.

55. Muḥammad Ismā'īl, *Hidāyat al-sālikīn*, p. 229. At the same time, this book was printed at a printing press called al-Qādiriyya!

56. Sayyid Muḥammad al-Naqshbandī, *Tab'īn al-ra'y al-qiyāsī*, an online biography of al-Fāsī, apparently produced by a Syrian lineage gives the title of al-Fāsī's tract as *al-Futuḥāt al-rabbaniyya wa al-ijāza al-madaniyya*, "The Lordly Introductions and the Authorization of

the Madaniyya,” and claims that it contains twenty-five arguments; [http://privat.bahnhof.se/wb042294/Texter/bionotes/bio\\_m\\_fasi.html#10](http://privat.bahnhof.se/wb042294/Texter/bionotes/bio_m_fasi.html#10) (accessed March 10, 2014).

57. Christian Wagner, *Die Muslime Sri Lankas: Eine Volksgruppe im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Konflikts zwischen Singhalesen und Tamilen* (Freiburg i.Br.: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut, 1990), pp. 83–85. For the general political context, see also M. N. M. Kamil Asad, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka under British Rule* (Delhi: Navrang, 1993); Wagner, *Die Muslime Sri Lankas*, pp. 63–98.

58. K. Kailasapathy, “The Writings of the Tamil Siddhas,” in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, edited by Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), p. 407.

59. E.g., *Vētapurānam* 25.82.

60. Green, *Bombay Islam*, pp. 8–23.