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Historical and Religious Background of the Demirdashiya

It is helpful to see the Sufi way as encompassing three major driving interests: action, love, and knowledge.¹ There has been a dynamic relationship between these three elements throughout Islamic history, creating a metaphysical tapestry of considerable sophistication. Yet the movement has not been isolated from the larger cultural milieu of Islam, whose contribution adds to the Sufi complexion. Furthermore, it has been shaped by elements that have become incorporated into the Sufi modus operandi, such as influences from the philosophical and social milieu.² The rise of the Khalwatiya seems to reflect the institutionalization of personal withdrawal and the ascendancy of silent meditation within the Sufi tradition. It also denotes a philosophy (or perhaps a theosophy) of the Divine Names, itself rooted in the power of mandala-like articulation. It indicates how malleable Islamic tradition was in its early history, for the *khalwa* (retreat) denotes an influence from the periphery of the Islamic world, which gained significance in the heart of the religious establishment.

Scholars of Islamic history, such as Spencer Trimingham, stress the impact of eastern spiritual impulses on the Islamic empires as the fulcrum for Sufi life, but Abu Wafa' al-Taftazani, in his book, *al-Tasawwuf misriya*, emphasizes that the movement was more one of local religious experience than of regional and ethnic influences:

The early Sufis like Rabi'a were reaching for something higher, for a love which is the pure love of God. Al-Makki noted this kind of person:

"Some of the seekers have said to the teacher: 'I have come upon some of that love.'

"Then I said, 'Have you been doomed with a lover other than Him, so that you preferred him to Him?'

"Then he said: 'No.'

"So then I said: 'Don't be pining for this love, for if a slave gave this love, he would be doomed.'"

Thus the Sufis, in their counsels, and in their preachings, gave examples of lovers who were lost in a devotion to a beautiful person to whom they were devoted. They learned from them, so that they encouraged their followers to expend greater effort to find the love that is beyond that of true lovers. For they wanted to die in a love more worthy than those who loved their lover. . . . It is like the madness of Beni Amr, who, if asked about Laila, would say "I am Laila," for he would be out of his mind from Laila, by Laila. He would not find any meaning except that of Laila and he would see everything as Laila.³

By the time our story begins, in the fifteenth century, the word Sufi had already been used for over five hundred years, and the tradition had moved from a nebulous and inchoate group of practices, liturgical forms, and ideas to an international spiritual movement embodied in institutional structures called orders, directed by a distinctive leadership of masters and saints, and each based on an *adab* (discipline).

The Face of Pre-Khalwatiya

The face of Egyptian Sufism had been shaped in distinctive ways before the coming of the Khalwatiya. First came Dhu'l-Nun al-Misri (ca. AH 180 / AD 796–AH 245 / AD 860), whose esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an was influenced by Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth imam in the Shi'a tradition,⁴ and who developed a view informed by gnosis (*ma'rifa*), drawing on an esoteric ideology of some antiquity. This he sets against the ordinary knowledge (*ilm*) that we use daily and that is part of the

wisdom of the law (*shari'a*). He also begins the systematic articulation of the inner spiritual path by identifying the stations (*maqamat*) and states (*ahwal*) of an inner spiritual process.⁵

The second influential figure is the mystical poet, Ibn al-Farid (d. AH 632 / AD 1235), whose phrases have so charmed across the centuries that they inspired an unknown young Moroccan, on hearing his poems, to mourn the paucity of his day: "All that, alas, is only a memory." This in turn inspired the great mystic Ibn 'Arabi who engaged Ibn al-Farid's phrases. Ibn 'Arabi went on to become known as the great sage, for his ideas have become embodied in many orders, but most especially in the Khalwatiya.

Ibn 'Arabi was born in al-Andalus in AH 560 / AD 1165. In his thirtieth year, he began a series of journeys which he interpreted as part of his eternal destiny, visiting Fez, Tlemcen, Bougie, Tunis, and other North African cities. It was in Tunis that he composed a poem he did not recite or write down, but which he committed to memory, and when that poem was recited back to him by an unknown student in Cordoba some months later, the whole experience changed his life. How could he explain the recitation when no one knew what he had composed? He came to hold that there was a visionary reality to which both he and the reciter had personal access. This was an inner world associated with spiritual truths and the names of God. This foundational expression of a dramatic visionary experience and what it meant set Ibn 'Arabi's life work before him.

Egypt figures in Ibn 'Arabi's journeys and spiritual itinerary in two ways. First, because his spiritual 'mantle' had been conferred upon him by his friend, Taqi al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, who had received it, he says "from the shaikh of the shaikhs of Egypt, Sadruddin, whose grandfather had received it from Khidr."⁶ Egypt was therefore his place of direct spiritual ancestry.

Second, and to set Egypt within another framework, Egypt as a country came to symbolize a terrain of conflict and inhospitableness. It came to be, in Ibn 'Arabi's view, a profane environment beset by the influence of the worst forms of bigotry from among the *fugaba'* (jurisprudents). This fact is worth remembering when we ponder the meaning of the Khalwatiya's coming to Egypt. After he arrived, he was denounced and arrested; he may have been beaten. At any rate, he fled

Cairo, never to return. Egypt was somewhat of a pariah to Ibn 'Arabi, a perception that resided in the memory of the Sufi cognoscenti.

Ibn 'Arabi was concerned with the relationship between the Divine Names and God. After all, Christians had been roundly censured by Islam for arguing that God was to be understood as having three personalities or 'beings,' and Ibn 'Arabi wanted to develop a theory that would side-step the problems Christians faced, the most obvious being how there could be one God but three 'persons.' For example, what relationship did al-Rahman and the other Names of God have to God? On one level, one might ignore the problem by saying that these are just names with no implications for the divine being. They literally are powerful because they had been around for a while. That is an easy but false way to dispense with the problem, for Muslims have found deep spiritual satisfaction in reciting the Names of God. At another level, one could hold that the names are indicative of attributes of God, in which case the weight of the problem shifts to the meaning of 'attribute.' Despite its difficulties there is something true about God being called al-Rahman that cannot be accommodated by calling it 'just a name.'

Yet anything more than calling it a name risks dividing God's essence into elements, which was precisely the problem Christians had to contend with and which eventually ended up with them identifying three 'persons' in the Godhead. Muslims were very mindful of the problems such thinking had for God's unity, and were reluctant to move down that path. Still, the Qur'an itself had articulated a devotional practice focused on Names. *Sura 7:180* says, "*The most beautiful of names belong to God, so call on Him by them.*" Some way had to be found to make this command relevant. Moreover, *Sura 17:110* seems to imply distinctions between Names: "*Say: 'Call upon God, or call upon Rahman: By whatever name you call upon Him (it is well) for to Him belong the most beautiful names.'*" This suggests that access to God may be through several of His Names and that all are in effect conduits to Him. Yet what could such diversity mean for God's unity and how did these Names relate to God's essence?

One answer arose out of Sufi devotionism. For example, Ibn 'Arabi moved away from a literalist interpretation of the Names by placing this devotionism within a conceptual system: God's Names

relate to potential aspects of God that humans have been able to relate to and name. These potentials have been there for all eternity, so we can see that there may be many more Names than have been articulated. These Names are not just happenstance; they are potentially there as part of the way that people can come to say something meaningful about God. Thus the Names are ways of envisioning God, which means He can be related to through the language of life and of the Qur'an.

This profound notion that the mind is powerful enough to create reality for itself and in some sense create the world is notably discussed in another of Ibn 'Arabi's great works, *al-Futubat al-makkiya*:

I have reached a far greater distance in imagination to the extent that my love would materialize whom I love, outside my eye, exactly as Gabriel was made real to the Prophet, so that I could look at him. And in the same way as he was speaking to Muhammad, and he could listen and understand him, so could I. And he left me days without eating. Whenever they presented a table of food, he would stand near the edge of it, and would speak to me with a voice I could hear: "Eat while you are looking at me." Then I don't find myself hungry and I am filled with him until I become fat without eating. So he is to me like nourishment and my friends and household are surprised that I am getting fat without eating, since I stayed many long days without tasting food. Nor do I feel hungry or thirsty for he never left my sight while I was standing, sitting, moving about or immobile.⁷

For Ibn 'Arabi, God wants us to be able to articulate something about Him through Names; God wants there to be a deep connection as when one says, "Yes, that's it, that's His Name!" even though a fellow-believer next to one might say, "No, that's not it." So, within divine providence there is the desire to be known, to have someone say, "That's His Name!" in a meaningful, powerful way, because in so doing God is known. For Ibn 'Arabi, reciting the Divine Names is a potentially overwhelming experience, because each of the Divine Names contains this deep connection to the fundamental essence of Allah and to the

potential resident in all the Names of God. Consequently all these Names are potential ways God wants to be known. Julian Baldick sums up this aspect of Ibn 'Arabi's thought:

The ultimate and highest Reality in Ibn 'Arabi's system is the Divine Essence, revealed through a number of God's names. These names are manifested as his attributes in this visible world. The mystic cannot reach the supreme level of Oneness (*ahadiya*), which belongs to the Essence. He can attain only the level of Uniqueness (*wahidiya*), which belongs to the names. God reveals himself to the mystic by being present to him through a given name in its absolute form, as opposed to its terrestrial manifestation. So the One is known through self-revelation (*tajalli*, theophany or irradiation), which must not be confused with the incarnation of a spirit in a body. Moreover, there can be no question of unitive fusion (*ittihad*), since as Ibn 'Arabi's followers observe, that would require two essences to join together, and there is really only one Essence, that of God.⁸

How does this apply to the Demirdashiya? Later, we will see in the liturgy of the Demirdash reference to the letters *kaf* and *nun*. For those who would like a section of Ibn 'Arabi's language about the two letters that constitute the word 'be' in Arabic, I have reproduced here what he says in his tract that is designed to help ordinary believers of the law understand the deeper meanings of the Qur'an's words. This is his 'creedal' statement, and as such depicts how he wants Divine Names understood; it is his science of the Qur'an. Ibn 'Arabi's discussion begins with an attempt to articulate what the Qur'an means by its reference to the Pen and the Table. Here, in summary, are the key mystical elements:

1. The traces of existence, whose power no filament is able to contain, have been inscribed by the Pen of Distinction (even though they exist only) in nothingness.
2. When one says 'on the Table,' the Table exists for no other purpose than to receive the Pen's marks.

3. This Table and this Pen are comprehensible because their meaning resides in a secret 'science,' and this science connects it to Eternity!
4. Contraction (*ratq*), expansion (*fatq*), and synthesis (*ijmal*) are distillations of the Light that reflects God, even in shadows.
5. Contraction is broken by the *kaf*, which is followed by the *nun*, and their secret is found in the letters of adjuration (*abruf al-qassa*).
6. The *kaf* of the superior world and the *nun* of the inferior world have been divided so that the profound truth of the command to 'be' (*batin al-amr*) is an indivisible word.
7. The two letters belong to the secret command and are ultimately the expression of He who commands all that is eternal (reality).
8. Creatures are the 'traces' prescribed by the great Lord (*al-mulk*) and the (spiritual) realm (*al-malakut*). His command is the origin of all existence, of all action, and of all division. As for the principles (operating in this world and the spiritual world), differentiation between them is only a (useful) synonym and solely a (practical) distinction. Distinction is (part of) that which is one.
9. In addition, through the Letters and by (means of) the Divine Names is grasped the immensity of this (secret) divine science that is confounding to humans.⁹

This philosophy of Names also utilizes specific letters in the Qur'an, along with the letters of the Prophet's name. For example, all the letters of Muhammad's name derive from a conception of the Divine Light, which gave rise to the spirit of Muhammad. According to Ibn 'Arabi, these letters are indicated by the first letters in the text, announced one by one: *alif*, *lam*, *mim*. (*Alif*, *lam*, *mim* constitutes the first verse of *Suras* 2, 3, 29, 30, 31, and 32.) This analysis is all part of a complicated grammatical system that indicates the relationship of these letters to each other and to his theosophy. Ibn 'Arabi summarizes his ideas this way:

Alif is the name of Essence (*ism al-Dhat*), while *mim* is the name of integrality (*ism tamam*). *Mim* is the letter of manifestation (*zhuhur*). . . .

The *ba* (of Muhammad) is the immense Throne (*'arsh 'azhim*—see Qur'an 9:128, 23:86, 27:26) and a sacred territory (*haram*) forbidden to all the unchaste (that is, as Mecca is today) with the elements of an awareness and a way that no road on earth can provide.¹⁰

As indicated above, the second doctrine that lies behind the liturgy is the conception of deity. Most commentators agree that Ibn 'Arabi held there really is only one reality, so he affirmed some kind of monist position. But he did not hold that all things are only real in one way. He specifically called his theory "the unity of existence" (*wahdat al-wujud*). Just as many Names can arise out of the experience of God, so in the whole realm of existence there are many perceptions of reality. Depending on which way we are looking at the realities around us, we can delineate different ways of speaking. We talk about computers, birds, planets, and universes, and these are 'creation' (*khalq*). But when we are talking from another perspective—from the view of what God is—then we can talk about the fundamental reality or essence of all reality, and we might use the term 'the truth' (*al-haqq*, the real). Both perspectives are 'true' from within their own perspective. One logic cannot cover both perspectives because of the limitations of human understanding. But Ibn 'Arabi wants us to 'find' God in creation; he does not want creation to be devoid of the presence of God. Creation articulates something about Him, even as each of the Names articulates something about Him. Moreover, certain kinds of experience indicate a more fundamental unity to us: children from one generation look amazingly like their grandparents; despite a fairly sophisticated palette of colors, we recognize and distinguish them in their various occurrences; the sun and moon continue unabated in their courses; and so forth. These are continuities and unities that have to be explained. Baldick notes that Ibn 'Arabi's enemies and critics often misunderstood his teachings:

The Truth is the One, the Lord. Creation represents the many, the slaves. So paradoxes arise: the Truth simultaneously

is creation and is not. In helping God to reveal himself, and in knowing him, the mystic in fact creates him. The One appears in images in mirrors, as colors in substances, and as food permeating our bodies. Thus the various objects in the universe are God, but he is not limited to being identical with any one of them taken in isolation. Nor is he identical with the universe taken as the sum total of its constituent parts: the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi is not pantheism (the belief that all is God and God is all), and does not incline toward pantheism in such a way as to deserve to be called pantheistic. The term is grossly overused, and often applied too loosely to be helpful.¹¹

Egyptian Influences on Sufi Religiosity

In addition to Ibn 'Arabi's reaction to Cairo, there are other Egyptian spiritual resources in the background. Despite Ibn 'Arabi's negative depiction, Egypt had considerable credentials in mystical life going into the medieval period. The Baghdadi Sufi, 'Abd al-Qahir al-Suhrawardi (d. 1161), established the oldest *tariqa* on record, and as an official representative of al-Nasir, Baghdad's last caliph, al-Suhrawardi was sent to Egypt for part of his career. The caliph believed that the Sufi would have a spiritual impact on the city. Another resident of Baghdad, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166), founder of the Qadiriya *tariqa*, exported his discipline all over the Muslim world, including Egypt. Similarly, the famous loud *dhikr* of Ahmad al-Rifa'i (d. 1175) took hold in Egypt and has been present there ever since. Abul-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1256) from North Africa settled in Alexandria and died there, bequeathing his silent inner discipline to the wide variety of fraternities that issued from it.¹²

Furthermore, permanent mystical institutional structures were already in place in Egypt by the fourteenth century. Ibn Batuta (d. 1377), whose *Voyages* demonstrate the way in which Muslims moved about their world, visited Cairo in 1326, more than a century before the first visitors of the Khalwatiya. He notes the Mamluk emirs' propensity to construct pious buildings, mosques, schools, chapels, and tombs, a tendency that was passed down through all the social classes. Significantly, he singles out their cultic residential institutions that were specifically

funded for Sufis (*khanqah*), such as that of Baybars II (d. 1309), which is still standing today. Ibn Batuta also mentions that *faqirs*, drawn mainly from among Persian Sufis, lived a life of “withdrawal from society” guided by strict rules. In a further note he indicates the presence of separate meeting places for married devotees, an indication that religious discipline not only was organized, but also had sophisticated physical facilities that existed for meditation by married devotees, making them more than just places dedicated to prayer. Such environments also presuppose structures formed according to social criteria.¹³ In short, the *tariqa* system must have been thoroughly in place, and complicated distinctions within the Sufi movement were already operative.

The mention of withdrawal from society signals the underlying meaning of *khalwa*, or retreat. A Persian word, it denotes an ascetic, world-renouncing orientation. Devotees of *khalwa*, however, point not to Persia for its origin but to the Prophet and his withdrawal to the cave of Hira for meditation, where he ultimately encountered Jibril and received his first revelations. It is important to note that Hira has a longer history than since the time of Muhammad. Yehia Gould, in his *Dreams and Their Meanings in the Old Arab Tradition*, indicates that Hira was associated with visionary experience long before the time of the Prophet:

The genie responsible for nightmares and the like is Hera'e (or Hira'a)—an ancient lunar divinity in Semitic magic. It is noteworthy that the name has been widely used since time immemorial in what has now become Saudi Arabia. For example, the cave in which the Divine Message was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by the archangel Jibril (Gabriel) is called Hera'e. Likewise there is a Mount Hera'e, and nowadays many restaurants bear that name, without their owners having any knowledge of what it refers to. As a matter of fact, Arabs in the pre-Islamic era reportedly stayed away from the Hera'e cave, because it was believed to be the center of unusual spiritual activity. The Holy Prophet realized it was the ideal place for meditation.¹⁴

The ascetic retreat derives from a much broader category of religious understanding than just a ‘place apart.’ It has affinities with Hinduism’s

world-renouncing period of life, that is, to the time of the aged Brahman who leaves his home and family to seek spiritual enlightenment, never to return. The same renunciation lies behind the Buddha's forsaking his kingdom to determine the meaning of suffering.

In its Islamic form, the ascetic retreat is not a concept applied to all elderly males, but only those, like the Buddha, who voluntarily give up the world to pursue the spiritual quest. The use of a specific place of retreat seems to have arisen in Azerbaijan as a form of piety associated with the Naqshbandiya, a *tariqa* begun by Baha' al-Din Naqshband (d. 1388) in Bukhara, which developed into such a powerful movement by the time of Khawaja Ahrar of Herat (1404–1490) that it dominated political life in the Timurid court. The development of the retreat may have been partly a reaction against the vigorous pursuit of political power by the leadership of the order. At any rate, the Naqshbandiya were conservative, and their long association with the powerful probably moderated any tough disciplinary trends. If we agree that the Khalwatiya are an extension of some aspects of the Naqshbandiya in Egypt, then we would hardly expect the order to be militant or to promote a tough asceticism. In fact, both the Naqshbandiya and the more numerous Shadhiliya are moderate orders, which have refused to lay inordinate burdens upon their devotees. Both have retained silent *dhikr* as a component of their devotional liturgies, choosing to see the mediation of words as impediments to contemplation of the reality beyond all symbols, and rejecting the more voluble meditations with music as too distracting for the *murid* (novice). Indeed, these issues had not been resolved at the end of the fourteenth century when the winds of change were blowing. They were both to have an impact on Egyptian Sufism.

One other fact about *khalwa* should be noted here. Usually *tariqas* carry the name of their founder-saint or someone closely associated with the order. The Khalwatiya are unique in that an element of their discipline is carried in their title. This serves to provide an immediate place for *khalwa* orders within the universe of confreries and to identify them with a Sufism of ascetic practice. In addition, it signals that the order is not just about carrying on the power of the saint but also is an order of practice. That they have continued to do this despite the overwhelming public pressure to focus upon the *baraka* (spiritual power) of the shaikh indicates the priority practice has within the worldview of

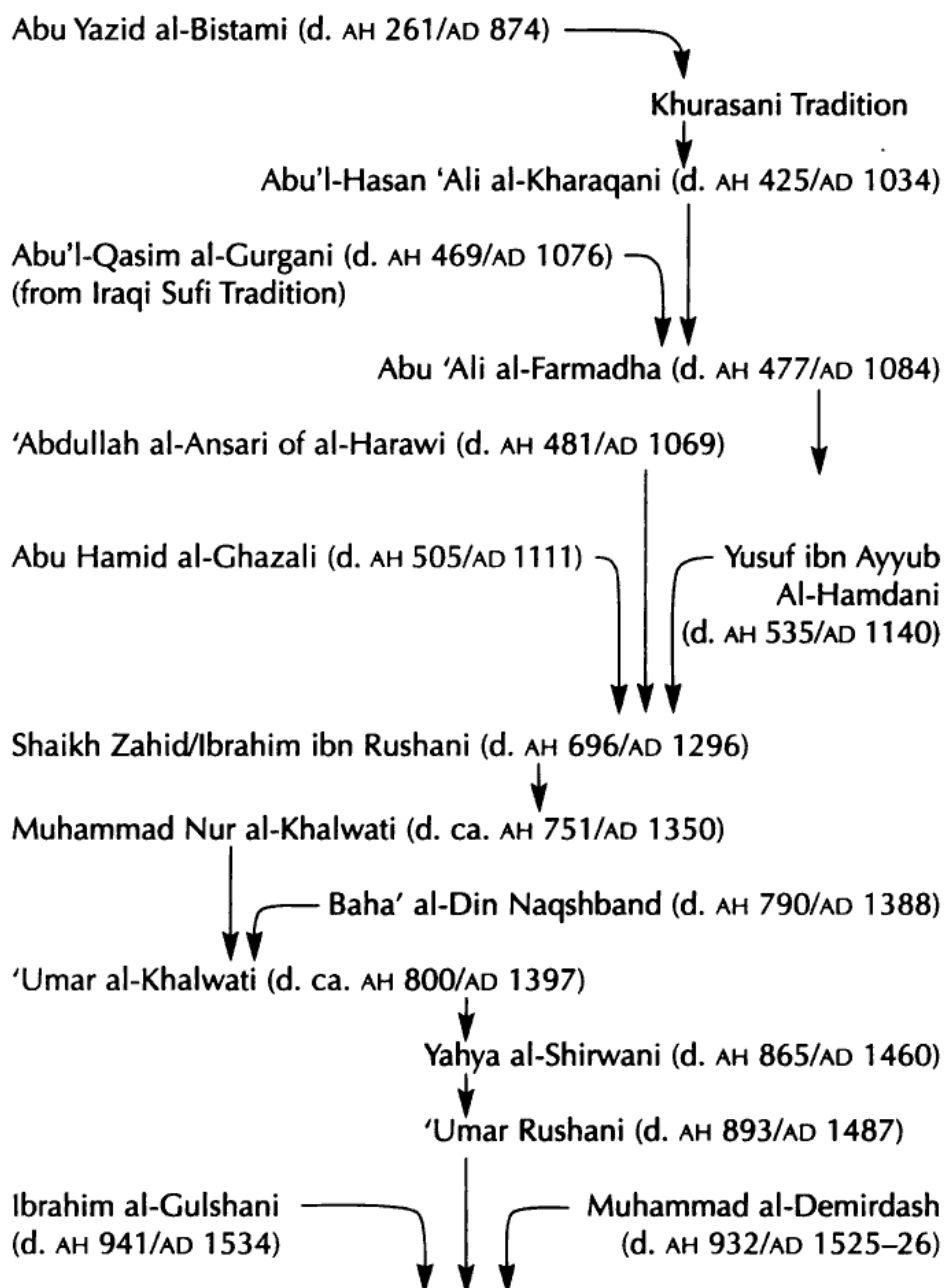
the order. In effect, liturgical proclivities are just as important as the shaikh in the construction of identity within the Khalwatiya family.

Two more roots of the tradition should be noted before we turn to *silsilas* (chains or lineages) of Sufi shaikhs who form a continuous line back in time—that of the Malamatiya and of Abu Yazid al-Bistami. Both were to leave an impression on Egyptian religious culture for many years to come. The Malamatiya encourage a tradition of defying the norms of society as a means to attaining divine insight. This arose out of the teachings of the Persian ascetic ‘Abdallah ibn al-Mubarak of Merv (d. AH 181 / AD 797), who apparently taught a doctrine of self-denial and indifference to social approbation. It may be that this extreme asceticism was not directly related to the growth of the Sufi way (and therefore to include it in Sufism’s roots is erroneous), but it left a legacy of self-denial and eschewing of the pleasures of the world for the higher gain of godliness that might have been a model to those who formulated the Sufi way.¹⁵ Echos of these elements are still present in the Khalwatiya of Egypt.

The final influence relates to the ecstatic utterances (*shathiyat*) of Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. AH 261 / AD 874), a Persian mystic whose refusal of conventional language led to the development of a Sufi lexicon, including the use of *fana*’ (passing away or extinguishing) to describe the experience of encountering God. Abu Yazid is well known for his affirmation of a precise mystical moment of union and elation. He also appropriated the ascension (*mi’raj*) of the Prophet as a metaphor for the process of engagement with the divine. Even though he was Persian, Abu Yazid’s influence on Egypt was almost direct, as he was a close associate of Dhu’l-Nun al-Misri.

Still, it is one thing to note the ideas and influences embodied in specific individuals, it is another to demonstrate the institutionalization of those influences. Sufism’s embrace of the *tariqa* was an important building block in Islamic life, and the order became the way that spiritual greatness was continued after a saintly person died. Trimingham also sees the eastern (Khurasani) trajectory as much influenced by asceticism and indifference to society at large. He gives the following chain of connection for the growth, development, and eventual coming of the Khalwatiya to Egypt:¹⁶

Malamati Asceticism in Egypt



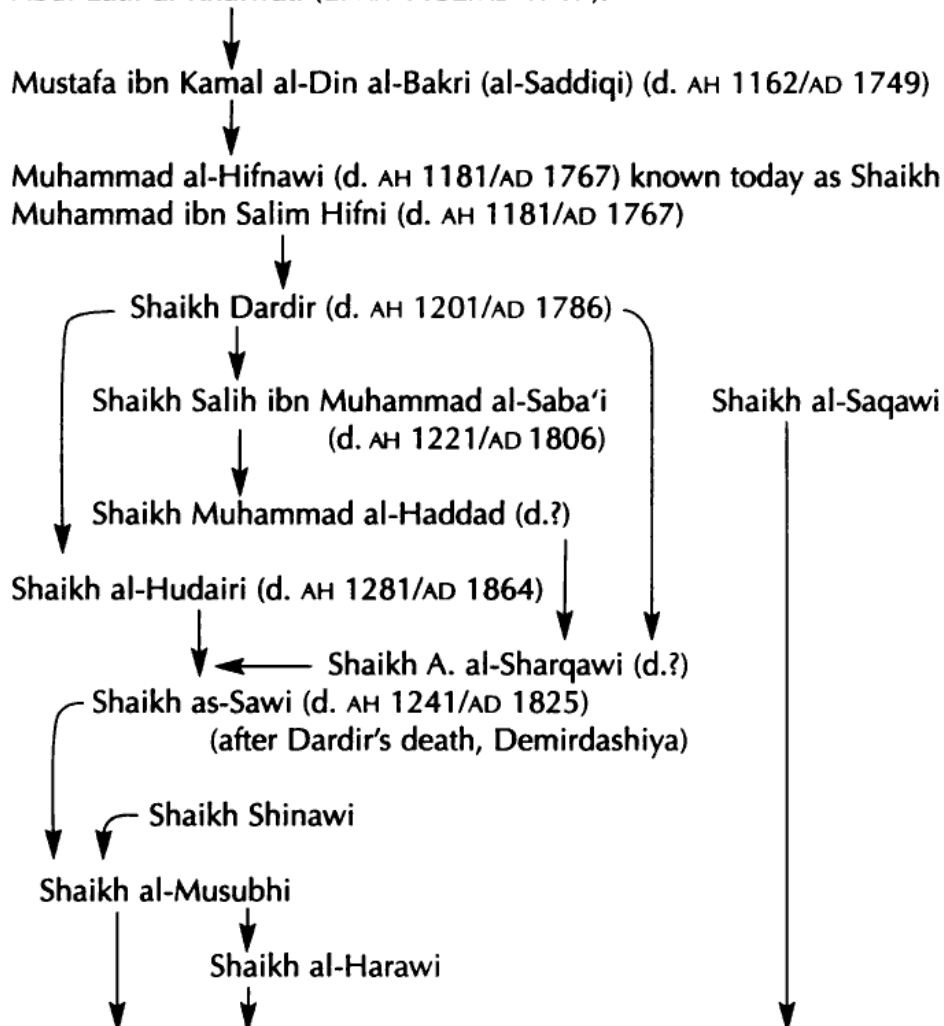
Khalwatiya Diversity in Egypt

This *silsila* roots the Khalwatiya firmly in the Persian wing of Islam, stressing this movement of pious Islam further away from the central Arab-speaking regions toward central Asia. Moreover, Trimmingham sees the influence of a religiosity critical of participating in the world and

indifferent to the achievements of class. Both of these elements, he believes, merged in full-blown form in the Khalwatiya in central and western Islam, but had little influence in their places of origin.

A somewhat different picture emerges from the work of al-Taftazani, who was *shaikh al-mashayikh*, during the 1980s when my first work on the Demirdashiya was undertaken. He wanted to raise the profile of the other Khalwatiya in Egypt, so he did not include the Demirdashiya, who have a different *silsila*. The following is his *silsila* for the lineage of the other Egyptian Khalwatiya shaikh, Abul-Latif al-Khalwati (d. AH 1132 / AD 1717).

Abul-Latif al-Khalwati (d. AH 1132/AD 1717).



From this diversity, al-Taftazani lists the following branches of the Khalwatiya in present-day Egypt, indicated on this list:

al-Semmaniya al-Khalwatiya
al-Daifa'iya al-Khalwatiya
al-Siba'iya al-Khalwatiya
al-Haddadiya al-Khalwatiya
al-Habibiya al-Khalwatiya
al-Marwan al-Khalwatiya
al-Musalamiya al-Khalwatiya
al-Harawiya al-Khalwatiya
al-Musibahiya al-Khalwatiya¹⁷

While he is aware of the early influence of the Demirdashiya, al-Taftazani clearly thinks they had little impact on the development of the Khalwatiya in the eighteenth through to the twentieth century, for he does not include the Demirdashiya in his list. One may speculate that, in his role as political appointee, he did not want to regard the Demirdashiya as significant at a time when the influence of powerful groups could be misinterpreted. It should be noted that several of the leading members of the Demirdashiya held important posts in other orders, so some attempt to diminish their role may have been made. On the other hand, he may have merely been thinking in numerical terms, as other Khalwatiya orders have more members. It was apparent during my interview with al-Taftazani that he did not believe the Demirdashiya to be significant today.

One important feature has to be indicated: al-Taftazani regards the Khalwatiya of today as largely the result of the impact of Syrian Sufism on Egypt, not of an influence from further afield. Whatever might have been the role of the ascetic branch, al-Taftazani roots the asceticism in the Arab-speaking world, not in Persia. He sees the ascetic concerns of the western regions of Andalusia and Morocco present here and thinks *khalwa* is more a product of the ideology associated with Ibn 'Arabi than with the more distant reaches of Persia and the world-renunciation of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Furthermore, because of the role the Khalwatiya have played in Egypt, al-Taftazani stresses the Egyptian connection. This might be conceived of as good politics on his part, since Egypt at the time was intent on affirming its role as spokesperson for the Arabs. On the other hand, there are good reasons why his view should not be accepted, as

the Khalwatiya tradition was shaped by concerns not found within Egypt until they were introduced from further east, and the Khalwatiya are still found in Turkey and especially in Istanbul (for example, in the Cerrahi order). Finally, the *khalwa* tradition not only embodied Ibn 'Arabi's ideas, but also instituted a regime of fasting, as well as a liturgy focused upon a vivid experience of deity. It is evident that to see anything less is to reduce the complexity of the roots of the Khalwatiya tradition.

Al-Taftazani's chain is somewhat different from that held by the Demirdash order today. Here is the order's *silsila* of shaikhs, with available dates provided by Naqib Mahmud al-Zeiny:





Despite the vicissitudes of history, the chain of Demirdash shaikhs has remained quite constant, and the family's commitment to the *tariqa* is regarded by many members as a key to its success (Plate 2). We shall have occasion to look at some of the outstanding members of this line in the pages ahead. I will address the distinguishing features of the Khalwati ideal as they grew out of the order's initial thrust into Egypt and attempt to portray the effect on the Demirdashiya of significant reformist leaders among the Khalwatiya.

Elements of a Khalwatiya History in Egypt

However nuanced the influences may have been, it is fairly clear that the Khalwatiya came to Egypt during the period of Mamluk ascendancy and particularly during the time of Qaitbay. It might be helpful in this regard to point out that the Khalwatiya have lived through several different kinds of government from Qaitbay to the present, and their success lies largely in their ability to carve out a place of importance among the diverse political and social factions of Sufism within Egyptian society.

That the Khalwatiya have not only survived but also thrived indicates that the tradition has strong roots in Egypt and that the country's sociopolitical institutions have not presented insurmountable obstacles to the order's continuance. The success of the order can hardly be attributed to its relationship to Mamluk operations, so the order clearly developed structures that disengaged it early on from its political connections with the Mamluk hierarchy. Given the problematics of the Mamluk reign—such as lack of continuity, inconsistent rules, and destruction of property and families—disengagement was a necessary strategy.

Khalwatiya Beginnings

Rachida Chih in her recent book, *Le soufisme au quotidien: Confréries d'Égypte au XXe siècle*, appears to emphasize the Egyptian nature of the Khalwatiya by devoting one section to them: "The Khalwatiya: une confrérie de la vallée du Nil." She points out the discrepancies in the historical sources over the identity of the order's founder. On the one hand, the teachings that established the *khalwa* concept come from the Persian mystic, Ibrahim al-Zahid, who indicates that 'Umar al-Khalwati (who died in Tabriz in 1397) was responsible for institutionalizing the Sufi tradition. 'Umar al-Khalwati earned his name on account of his frequent retreats.¹⁸ Yet, as we have seen in the *silsila*, the Khalwatiya themselves claim that the order was founded by Muhammad ibn Nur al-Khalwati, 'Umar's master. The German orientalist, H.J. Kissling, claims that because the Khalwatiya's members wanted to maintain the name of the saint in the order's identity, the true founder was not given the credit for founding the order. He concludes that the second master after 'Umar.¹⁹ Yahya al-Shirwani al-Bakubi (died in Baku in 1464), was the order's true founder.

Yahya al-Shirwani al-Bakubi also had a powerful disciple in the person of 'Umar Raushani (d. 1486). 'Umar died in Tabriz, a city east of the lower end of the Caspian Sea and almost directly north of Baghdad, in a region that at one time had been predominantly Armenian Christian. Historical sources unanimously claim that 'Umar Raushani gave the *abd* to three disciples who played a decisive role in transplanting the Khalwati tradition to Egypt. The three are Muhammad Demirdash (d. 1524), Ibrahim Gulshani (d. 1533–34), and Shahin al-Muhammadi (d. 1547–48). Clearly none of these bears the Khalwatiya name.

The Diversity of the Mission

The Khalwatiya line is not as straightforward as the three disciples arriving to set up orders. One of the three, Shahin al-Muhammadi, had no intention of setting up a *zawiya*, and settled in a cloister quite removed from the city and its political structure. In true monastic style, he lived in a *khalwa* at the foot of the chain of the Muqattam Hills, and was so powerful that his remoteness only served to attract visitors. 'Abd al-Wahhab Sha'rani writes of Ottoman emirs and viziers coming to pay

homage to him.²⁰ Muhammad Demirdash and Ibrahim Gulshani established independent *zawiyas* in Cairo with the intent to attract muridīn—the groups were named the Demirdashiya and the Gulshaniya. Complicating the picture is the fact that Shahin and Demirdash both belonged to the Shadhili order. Chih picks up the story:

The journeys of Shahin al-Muhammadi and Muhammad al-Demirdash have strange resemblances. According to the Arab sources, both arrived in Cairo at the first time along with the Mamluks of Sultan Qayt-bay and became the disciples of a Shadhili master, Abu'l-'Abbas al-Hadrami. On the death of their master, they returned to Tabriz where they affiliated with 'Umar al-Raushani, who sent them to Cairo to spread the Khalwatiya. On their return from Cairo, their destinies separated. Shahin retired from the world, while Demirdash founded a *zawiya* in which he dispensed a teaching very much influenced by Ibn 'Arabi.²¹

Mahmud al-Sirghani, chronicler of the Khalwatiya presence in Egypt, renders Muhammad al-Demirdash as already a devout, Sufi-like figure, affiliated with 'Umar al-Raushani, without any mention of his connection to the Shadhilis:

Sh. Muhammad al-Demirdash al-Muhammady was born in the town of Tabriz in Iran in 858 H. He did not rest at night because he was performing prayers and he fasted a great deal, and followed the way of 'Umar al-Raushani, a system of Muhya-din ibn al-'Arabi. When he was 16 he accompanied QaitBay to Egypt as a Mamluk. . . .

Demirdash had a pleasant face and good character and was a man of honesty and truthfulness. When QaitBay saw these good qualities, he sent him to a good teacher to develop him and he became the principal person responsible for QaitBay's financial affairs. He also was responsible for investing money and he spent much time working for QaitBay. . . .

After he finished his work, he went to his room, took off his robes of office and dressed in an old tattered galibiya. So

he said: "After I see the King, I serve God, who is the King of the King." He turned off all the lights and began his prayers. When they inquired why he did that, he said "This light is from the Sultan, and I am not serving the Sultan now, so I cannot burn the light." He was well known in the palace and they told him their secrets. QaitBay's group challenged his goodness but QaitBay checked him out and said, "Yes he is a good man." . . .

When QaitBay had his dream, he was friendly with Muhammad and that's the reason he took him to Egypt.²²

Demirdashiya Mytho-history

A key element in the Demirdash story is his visit with the Prophet in the Prophet's tomb. This visit is usually understood as a vision, in which the Prophet himself addresses the youthful Demirdash. The language of the encounter, however, always describes an actual occurrence and the responses in the tomb as an actual conversation. The result of this encounter was dramatic; and the young Demirdash was left dumb-founded, as the following selection from al-Sirghani illustrates:

When he (Muhammad al-Demirdash), came from the tomb of the Prophet, he could only say *Allah* and *Hu*, because he couldn't move his tongue. So when QaitBay asked him what happened, he could not speak. Thus Qaitbay said, "You are Demir-Tash, which means you are 'dumb' or 'speechless' in Turkish. From that time the people called him Muhammad al-Demirdash. . . .

Since he was speechless, all he did was pray and perform *dhikr*. Then QaitBay gave him land and built him a mosque and house. Muhammad lived in the house with his wife and many people came to him so he built a *khatwa* around his own *khatwa*. And he was inspired to write many Sufi books and he arranged the books of *fiqh* of the schools so it was clear. He had many books that were famous in the cities of Constantinople and Anador, because the Mamluks took them back to Turkey with them.²³

Ernst Bannerth, drawing on al-Shar'ani's *al-Tabaqat al-kubra* and in keeping with his view of the reformist nature of the Khalwatiya, presents Muhammad Demirdash as a figure of withdrawal and conscientiousness.

He cultivated a neighboring field to his *zawiya* in the environs of Cairo in the quarter of Husayn. He and his wife lived in a cabin of reeds (*knoss*); for five years he planted trees. He told me, "I have not eaten of their fruit because I have planted them with the intention of giving them to our *fuqara'*, the beggars, the travelers, and the mendicants." I have sometimes spent the night with him and I have never seen him sleep but very little during the night. Then he rises, does his ablutions, prays, and recites the Qur'an. Occasionally he finishes the entire Qur'an before daybreak. In Cairo you scarcely can find fruit more pleasing than that of his orchard. He divides the results of this *waqf* into three parts: one part for the requirements of the orchard, one part for children and one part for the *fuqara'* who live in his *zawiya*. He prescribes that they recite the Qur'an entirely each day, in relays from one to the other. He makes them follow the pathway found in the books of Muhyia al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi—may God bless him—and this discipline was truly serious . . . The saint died several years after AH 930 / AD 1522 and was buried in his *zawiya*.²⁴

Shortly after Demirdash came to Cairo, Ibrahim Gulshani (d. 1533–34) joined him. Gulshani left Tabriz not because he was sent on a mission, but to escape the Safavids who had occupied the city. He needed protection, and was granted it by Sultan Ghawri (r. 1501–1517) in Egypt. He did not have the intention of building a *zawiya* either. That came after the intervention of Demirdash, who persuaded him to do so. He was so popular with the Ottoman army that was sent back to Istanbul for a period.

Both *zawiyas* utilized individual cells for meditation, so part of the *raison d'être* in establishing the order must have been the retreat. It is possible to see this feature as the most predominant 'new teaching' that was brought to Cairo. If Trimmingham is correct in insisting that the retreat was a key part of the Khurasani tradition, this explains why the

Khalwatiya were consistently regarded as Sufis from Persia and Turkey, even well into the eighteenth century. The other reason could be that both *zawiyas* were passed down through the descendants of the saints, thus maintaining a name associated with that region of the Islamic world.

There is another, more fascinating issue that could have played a role both in the popularity of the orders and in the impact of their liturgies, and that relates to the association of Persian Sufis with dream interpretation and foretelling the future. Shar'ani goes so far as to imply that this was a key element in Demirdash's impact. Chih puts it this way:

According to Shar'ani, the members of the Khalwatiya consistently applied alchemy and the occult sciences; had they not found in the *zawiya* of Shaikh Demirdash, after his death, alchemy equipment? He accused the disciple of Shaikh Demirdash, Muhammad ibn Ahmad Karim al-Din, who seemed to have been his rival, of using the science of the Divine Names on material things, such as predicting the future great events in the world. This last would teach the science of the circular table (*'ilm al-za'irja*), magical squares (*'ilm al-awfaq*) and the science of letters (*'ilm al-huruf*) the manipulation of which permitted also the prediction of the future. Even if Sha'rani had something against the Khalwatiya, it seems that the use of the occult sciences in Egypt were associated with Turco-Persian Sufis, which they had inherited from the Khalwati of Persia and of Turkey.²⁵

The Gulshaniya and Demirdashiya within Khalwatiya Growth

We will have occasion to examine some of these issues later, but for the moment I point out that it seems the Gulshaniya and the Demirdashiya remained the most powerful of the fledgling Khalwatiya line. The power that the saints had can be measured in the following excerpt by al-Bayyumi (died after AH 1142 / AD 1732), who wrote a commentary on the Demirdashiya. The following is an extract from the concluding portion of his eighteenth century treatise on the Khalwatiya, as preserved by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti:

Among the favors and blessings which God has granted me is the privilege of having seen Shaikh Demirdash in heaven. "Fear not," he said to me, "neither in this life nor in the life to come." And I used to see the Prophet—blessings and peace upon him—while I was in my place of seclusion on his birthday. One year, he said to me, "Fear not, neither in this life nor in the life to come." I also saw him saying to Abu Bakr—God be pleased with him—"Let us go to look down on the *zawiya* of Shaikh Demirdash." They came and entered my cell and stood beside me while I was chanting, "Allah! Allah!" When I became frightened at the vision of the Prophet there in my cell, I saw the great Shaikh (Demirdash) say to me at his tomb, "Give your hand to the Prophet, blessings and peace upon him, for he is here with me."²⁶

Such conviction in the power of the Demirdash line indicates that the Khalwatiya had dug deep roots into the spiritual psyche of Egypt, and that the country of origin of the saint had little or nothing to do with how he was perceived. Once he had moved beyond the line of connection to an elite, he became a saint of Islam, as the testimony of the Arab-Egyptian al-Bayyumi indicates.

In time the Demirdashiya and the Gulshaniya were joined by offspring who formed smaller Khalwatiya, such as the Muwahhidiya, the 'Uwaysiya, the Shamsiya, the 'Ushaqiya and the Sinaniya. The Demirdashiya remain today the only one of the two founding Khalwatiya in existence, as the Gulshaniya were not able to sustain themselves beyond the second half of the nineteenth century.

According to oral tradition, Demirdash's impact reached beyond the borders of Egypt; it is known that when the Ottoman sultan Salim I Yavuz came to Egypt in AD 923, he returned home with some of Demirdash's books. These books are reputed to be written in Turkish, but I have not been able to confirm this. The role of the Khalwatiya beyond Egypt's borders is a more complicated story, which I will touch on later. Suffice to say here that the role of Demirdash in creating a space for a particular kind of message, the *khalwa*, is absolutely essential, and it provided the masses with both a meditational orientation for their Islam and a linkage to the *baraka* of a powerful saintly line. Thus the seekers in Cairo had another option in the ever-expanding Sufi firmament.

The Demirdashiya and Reforms

In bringing the story of the beginning of the Khalwatiya to a close, several factors appear to stand out. One is that the Khalwatiya came to Egypt *before* the Ottomans, so that, in the eyes of locals, the tradition was not connected with the negative perception accorded to that Turkish lineage. Long before the Ottomans, the religious practices and reputation of the saints had taken hold in Cairo. Another is that can one cannot contend, as does Chih, that the Demirdash order remained without Arab converts, for a look at the names of the shaikhs or *wakils* in the order's history does not indicate the dominance of the Turco-Persian ethnic group (apart from the shaikh's original line). The same holds today among the nuqabat. It does appear that it was the practice associated with the *zawiya* that preserved the order's power. Despite its focus on world-renunciation, there is much evidence that the Demirdashiya continued to take an active part in state-religion affairs. The saint himself changed his legal affiliation to Hanafi shortly after coming to Egypt and wrote popular books on unifying the schools of law—an activity that cannot be construed as world-denying. The deep roots planted by the order in the Egyptian milieu are better explained by the judicious distance it maintained from the Ottoman authorities, and its attention to the spiritual welfare of the murid, who could only have come from Cairo's Arab dwellers.

It is incumbent that we examine the way in which reform is defined by the order. Bannerth sets the stage for a reformist interpretation in using Shar'ani's opening statement about Demirdash: "The shaikh appeared in the community of Sayyidi 'Umar Raushan (Raushani) of Tawriz (Tabriz) in Persia . . . may God agree. He carried on his life like had been done by the first Muslims (the *salaf*) with manual labour and distributing anonymously the surplus."²⁷

This suggests to us that Sha'rani, and apparently Bannerth, may be connecting Demirdash's lifestyle of withdrawal not with medieval Sufi developments in eastern Islamic lands but with the relatively recent movement in the late Ottoman period of the *al-salaf al-salib*, or *salafiya*. This movement urged a return to the pious life of the Muslim ancestors (*salaf*), as well as advanced political activism as a means of reaching certain objectives. The Salafiya was at one level a reaction against the rising tide of secularist politics, such as that espoused by the Young

Turks and various Arab revivalists. Such reformers struck at both popular religious practices, including many practiced by ordinary Muslims (including Sufis), and the privilege of the entrenched scholarly class, the '*ulama*'. By sweeping away the dross of centuries of Islamic development, they hoped to free up the Islamic environment for a leaner, tougher Islam able to take advantage of nonreligious innovations from the west but refined to the original purity of the first believers.

This puts Shar'ani's denigration of Demirdash's "occult science" in quite a different light. The fact is that nothing Demirdash espoused was strange within the Islam of the time when viewed from the perspective of the order. We can only think, then, that the reform that Shar'ani had in mind was not to bring a meditative and cloistered Islam to a city whose reputation was one of driving Sufis out. Rather, it was a return to a simpler and more integrated life of service to Islam, which was the ideology that lay behind the Salafiya movement.

For the contemporary members of the Demirdashiya, this simple interpretation of reform has no relationship to their life experience. They point out that neither the saint nor his followers deliberately abandoned the normal household life of the city dweller. Shaikhs of the order engaged in business and pleasure, constructed houses, and raised families that were educated and successful. The *khalwa* was not a call for a return to rural life, nor even to Bedouin life, but the enshrining of a religious retreat within the round of day-to-day existence, so that meditation and prayer had a fixed place in life. They suggest that all Muslims try to emulate the early Muslims in piety, and it is that aspect of reform that they embrace through silent meditation. The saint was bringing a religious practice that made better Muslims, providing them with the opportunity to emulate the Prophet in his retreats but without promoting a 'monastic' lifestyle that would be un-Islamic.

Contemporary members point to the meditation enclosures in the *zawiya*, ask how many people these will accommodate (fifty-six), and then indicate that even in the saint's day, Cairo numbered in the hundreds of thousands. If the intention of the *khalwa* had been to herald the return to a simpler life for the masses, it clearly had been poorly planned and could not accommodate many people. In sum, if the Salafiya message was what the saint had sought to bring, neither his *zawiya* nor his plans were congruent with it. Rather, his was a spiritual practice, institutionally

shaped and designed only for those who felt dedicated to emulating the Prophet's retreat to Hira in their meditations. The members consider his reform to be the institutionalization of the practice of retreat in a thriving urban setting, the founding of an *awrad* (practice) based on the remembrance of God, and the continuation of the shaikh's presence for the people in the physical surroundings of the Muhammadi area in Cairo.

Change and the Demirdashiya in Egypt

We now turn to the ways in which the Demirdash order has undergone change. Whatever the original form of the order's life, its practice has undergone modification under the influence of several reforming personalities in the Sufi milieu of Egypt. We consider first the influence of al-Bakri, al-Hifni, and al-Bayyumi. All three contributed to the shape of life in the Demirdashiya.

Mustafa ibn Kamal al-Bakri al-Siddiqi (1687–1749),²⁸ was born in Damascus, where he became the disciple of the well-known Sufi, 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi (1641–1731). Al-Nabulusi was a devoted student of the works of Ibn 'Arabi who not only immersed himself in the sage's ideas but also applied them in his commentary on the diwan of 'Umar ibn al-Farid. Al-Nabulusi was an ascetic who oriented himself to spiritual withdrawal, so doubtless he was sympathetic to the *khalwa* notion, but al-Bakri did not immediately join the Khalwatiya. In fact, it was only after al-Nabulusi himself encouraged and supported al-Bakri that the latter took the *ahd* from 'Abul-Latif al-Khalwatiya (d. AH 1132 / AD 1717) in Aleppo. His association with al-Nabahani and the Khalwatiya also gave him connections to the Ottoman centers of power, and he entered the entourage of Muhammad Raghîb Pasha, a writer and intellectual who eventually became the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire. Like Ibn 'Arabi, al-Bakri began a series of journeys that took him in a great arc from Istanbul to Adrianopolis, Mosul, Baghdad, and Cairo (1746). During these trips, he was working on a new liturgy for the brethren and no doubt discussed it with Sufis wherever he went. After a stay in Jerusalem, he finished his litanies, which were published under the title *al-Fath al-qudsi*. A central feature of these litanies was *when* they were to be recited: toward the end of the night. His meditations were designated as *wird al-sahar* (a litany just before dawn). He was immediately attacked by some Sufis and '*ulama*', who regarded this as *bid'a*—an innovation

outside Islamic law. He began seeking support in the religious establishment and appealed to 'Ali Qarabash of Adrianopolis, a leading Sufi legist of the day. Qarabash gave mild approval for this recitation.²⁹

In fact, the 'ulama's opposition to al-Bakri's *wird* was not just to his idea of a special *dhikr* at a particular time before dawn (a notion that is adjustable to the piety of the individual), but also to the *dhikr* not being silent, as was the preferred *dhikr* of the Naqshbandiya. In his book, *al-Manhaj al-'adhab al-sa'igh li-waridibi*, al-Bakri defends his *dhikr* before sunrise and deals with the matter of oral *dhikr*. While he agrees that oral *dhikr* is not very dignified, he believes its teaching value for the fledgling mendicant is far greater, providing better focus and spiritual assistance.

In effect, he argues the *dhikr* itself, formed from various *Suras* from the Qur'an, could not be claimed as innovation, as its detractors held, since they were but a repetition of God's word. The *dhikr* was followed by a plea for pardon from sins (*al-istighfar*), repeated seventy times. Such a requirement, while certainly excessive for some of the critics, could not in itself be *bid'a*. Rather it was the next section, which was also part of the *wird* that raised eyebrows among 'ulama':

O my God! You have opened the hearts of the enlightened (*ahl al-istisas*) and you have liberated them from the prisons of their bodies. Free their interior senses from the tendency to behold things other than you. Exterminate us so that we will not perceive ourselves but will seek only your grandeur, O our God. We have come to You, imploring You to accept us; we beg for pardon from our sins. My God! Refuse not Your pardon. Your honour suffices us, because we are the servants of the most high and the slaves of Your illustrious and exalted Being. My God! We do not want to turn back from You, because for us, we will never find anyone other than You . . . so how can You turn us away from You?³⁰

This was followed by two poems of obvious Sufi persuasion, broken by supplication to the Prophet. Then praises to God and benedictions on the Prophet were recited, which were derived from the litanies of Yahya al-Shirwani al-Bakubi (d. AD 1464), *al-sattar*. These are principally recitations of the Names of God relating to protection, power, and

clemency (that is, *ya sattar*, *ya 'aziz*, *ya ghaffar*), along with *la ilaha ila Allah*, deemed to free one from terror.

The difficulty lay not in the language of supplication, which, in all likelihood, might be said by anyone who felt the burden of weighty sin, but in the vocalization of the supplication. It had been understood that the relationship between the human heart and God is a private one, but the loud articulation of one's sins in this manner, as well as the language of 'exterminate us' and the urgent pleas for protection, would bring certain opprobrium upon the reciter in a public place. We can speculate that it was the *khalwa* notion that allowed the supplication to be accepted by the authorities. It took place in private. Since the prayer was to be recited after rising from one's bed, it would be carried out in one's private quarters. Thus, while the Naqshbandi shaikhs would decry the oral *dhikr*, the isolated place of recitation would mean that the public would not be present and the matter would remain between God and the murid. The 'ulama' of the court would find the entire exercise unnecessary, given the requirements of prayer five times a day, but they could countenance this as private prayer. Echoes of this *dhikr* are apparent in the Demirdashiya liturgy.

Al-Bakri's liturgy might not have had the impact it did (and certainly not a reforming effect on Egypt's orders) had he not encountered Muhammad al-Hifni in Jerusalem. Al-Hifni was known to his contemporaries as Muhammad ibn al-Salim al-Hifnawi; he was born in Egypt in the Delta village known as Hifna. As a student and later a teacher at al-Azhar, he became associated with the cloister of Shahin al-Khalwati in the Muqattam Hills, but he never became a member of a *khalwa* order until he was invited to Jerusalem by al-Bakri in AH 1149 / AD 1736–37, where he was initiated into the Khalwatiya order. He returned to Cairo, where he set out to institute al-Bakri's reformed liturgy and raise the profile of the Khalwatiya tradition. Some time later, al-Bakri himself was with him in Cairo, where he died in AH 1162 / AD 1748. But it was really al-Hifni who brought the reforms to the Khalwatiya in Cairo. The embrace of the *dhikr* of *la ilaha ila Allah* began with al-Bakri and was institutionalized by al-Hifni in Egypt. The *dhikr* had a profound effect on the residents of Cairo, and along with the recitation of the Divine Names became a powerful affirmation of confidence for the devotees. With al-Hifni, whatever perception there was of the order as a Turco-Persian transplant was definitively modified.

Al-Hifni was esteemed by his contemporaries both for his piety and for his learning. He brought a sense of stability and insight to the public that garnered him the praise of people like Muhammad Ragib Pasha, who called him the Shield of Egypt. So great was his impact that he was revered from the Mediterranean to the Sudan,³¹ and he passed on his teachings to Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, who was his close associate for almost thirty years and who later established the Rahmaniya order in Algeria.³² His most illustrious disciple in Egypt was Ahmad al-Dardir (d. AH 1201 / AD 1786), whose writings were influential at al-Azhar. Al-Dardir was given the title Chief of the Sa'idis, referring to the fact that he came from Upper Egypt and administered the *waqf* and *mufis* from that region. Al-Hifni's reputation for having control over almost everything that happened in Egypt derives partly from the effectiveness of people like al-Dardir, who brought a certain al-Hifni élan to the religious establishment, which was quite happy to be connected with such a well-respected scholar-saint. At his death, al-Hifni was buried near his master al-Bakri, across from Cairo's mosque of Qaitbay.

Another Demirdashiya disciple, 'Ali ibn Hijazi ibn Muhammad al-Bayyumi, developed a separate order, al-Bayyumiya, which had as its distinctive goal to reach the masses. If the *khalwa* piety of the Demirdashiya was too rigid and problematic for the peasants who had to support their families and could not take time off for three days, al-Bayyumi shaped a more accessible order that encompassed the powerful impact of the Demirdash *dhikr* and the ecstatic trance often associated with popular mysticism. Al-Jabarti gives us a succinct depiction of this popularizer:

Shaikh 'Ali ibn Hijazi ibn Muhammad al-Bayyumi, a Shaf'i, Khalwati, and later an Ahmadi—was a pious imam, venerated holy-man, ecstatic, and scholar. Born about AH 1108 / AD 1696–97, he committed the Qur'an to memory while still a child. He became a student and attended the lectures of the shaikhs. He studied hadith and *musalsalat* under 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Salam al-Tatawani. He was initiated into the Khalwatiya by Sayyid Husayn al-Demirdash al-'Adili and continued in this order for a time. Then he entered the Ahmadiya Order at the persuasion of a number of his associates. At this point, he began to be seized by ecstatic trances.

Many hearts were sympathetic to him, the people began to have tremendous faith in him, and their spirits gravitated toward him. Many men walked in accordance with his way and recited his *dhikr*. He shortly came to have many followers and disciples. He lived in the Husayniya Quarter and held *dhikr* sessions in the mosque of al-Zahir (Baybars), just outside the Husayniya, where he and his associates used to stay because of its proximity to his house. He received 'visitations,' outpourings of divine grace, and extraordinary states.³³

Al-Bayyumi wrote many books, among them a commentary on *al-Jam' al-saghir*; a commentary on *al-Hikam* by Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Iskandari; a commentary on *al-Insan al-kamil* by al-Jili; a work on Sufism, devoted especially to the Demirdashiya Khalwatiya (the work was composed in AH 1144 / AD 1731-32); a commentary on *al-Arba'in al-nawawiya*; a treatise on legal punishments; a commentary on the formula used by the Ahmadiya; and a commentary on the formula employed in making talismans.

When al-Bayyumi began to hold *dhikr* in the courtyard of the shrine of Husayn every Tuesday until the break of day, the '*ulama*' rose in opposition to him. They criticized the way al-Bayyumi and his circle of disciples soiled the mosque with their feet (most of them came barefoot) and raised their voices to a high volume. Through the influence of certain amirs, the '*ulama*' almost succeeded in having al-Bayyumi barred from the mosque; however, al-Shubrawi, who had a great affection for mystics, intervened on his behalf. "This man," he told the pasha and the amirs, "is one of the greatest scholars and saints. It is not seemly for us to oppose him." Shubrawi then invited al-Bayyumi to lecture at al-Azhar. Al-Bayyumi also taught at the Taibarsiya madrasa, where he lectured on *al-Arba'in al-nawawiya*. Most of the '*ulama*' attended, and what he related to them so dazzled their minds that their opposition to him fell apart and the flames of strife died down.

Several important aspects of the order should be noted here. First, the Demirdashiya order never imposed restrictions on its followers concerning belonging to other orders. Second, al-Bayyumi was loyal to the Demirdashiya *tariqa*, to the point that even years after he had left the *tariqa* and founded his own order, he wrote a book of commentary

on the Demirdashiya. This loyalty is evident in the Bayyumi order to this day and was certainly effective in as late a period associated with Muhammad al-Demirdash as the 1930s, when the shaikh called upon the Bayyumi order to support him in a crucial vote concerning the Sufi organization in Cairo. He insisted that the Bayyumiya members swear an oath "on pain of divorcing your wives" to give him the support he needed. He received the vote.³⁴

Third, al-Bayyumi reflects the transformation of *dhikr* from the time of al-Demirdash, with its emphasis on silent *dhikr*, through the support of oral private *dhikr* by al-Bakri, to the encouragement of oral *dhikr* in *zawiyas* by al-Hifni, to finally the recitation of that *dhikr* in relatively public places. Moreover, that the *dhikr* was now performed in mosques reflected the increasing importance of this kind of liturgy in Islamic piety. In effect, oral *dhikr* came to be seen as acceptable piety open to the public, provided it was not conducted during regular prayer times.

Finally, the founding of the Bayyumiya order, which was directed at the urban poor indicates a shift in social class for the leader away from the aristocracy. Whereas the will of the people had always been expressed in informal ways that political authorities feared to flaunt, now the Sufi establishment was able to articulate a public position represented by an organization centered on a network of populist shaikhs. The resulting diversification of power signaled the rise of Sufi orders as important shapers of public discourse in Egypt. With al-Bayyumi, Egypt's reputation for being inhospitable to mystics, given credence by Ibn 'Arabi, was finally undermined. The Khalwatiya helped raise Sufism in the esteem of the authorities and firmly planted the tradition among the inhabitants of Cairo and beyond. One would have to say that the original *da'wa* had been successful.

3

Reform through the Liturgical and Religious Life of the *Tariqa*

Music is flesh. Silence puts it on.

—E.D. Blodgett, Canadian poet

It was Duncan Black McDonald who signaled the importance of ritual life as a means of distinguishing between various orders. He had compared the rituals of the Demirdashiya to those of a far bigger order, the Shadhiliya:

Among the latter may be mentioned the rites of the “khalwet’ees,” and the “Shazilees,” two great classes, each of which has its shaikh. The chief difference between these is that each has a particular form of prayer to repeat every morning, and that the former distinguish themselves by occasional seclusion; whence their appellation of khalwet’ees. The prayer of this class is repeated before daybreak, and is called ‘wird al-sahar’; that of the Shazilees, which is called ‘hezb ash-Shazilee,’ after daybreak. Sometimes a Khalwatee enters a solitary cell, and remains in it forty days and nights, fasting from daybreak till sunset the whole of this period. Sometimes also a number of the same class confine themselves, each in a separate cell, in the sepulchral mosque of the

shaikh al-Demirdash, on the north of Cairo, and remain there three days and nights, on the occasion of the moolid of that saint, and only eat a little rice, and drink a cup of sherbet in the evening. They employ themselves in repeating certain forms of prayer, etc., not imparted to the uninitiated, only coming out of their cells to unite in the official daily prayers in the mosque, and never answering anyone who speaks to them but by saying "There is no God but God." Those who observe the forty days' fast, and seclude themselves during that period, practise nearly the same rules, and employ their time in repeating the testimony of the faith, imploring forgiveness, praising God, etc.¹

In fact, there are several aspects to the liturgical life of the Demirdashiya, each reflecting a dimension of the spiritual life and attracting different classes of followers. In total they represent a diverse perception of the Demirdash ritual experience. There is, first and foremost, the liturgical year itself, with its demands and blessings, designed to bring a structure to the encounter with the sacred world of the order. Then there is the social complex that embraces the follower in various ways, depending upon his advancement into mystical truths. Then there are the underpinnings of the mystical enterprise, which we might call the order's theosophical system, which appeals in different ways to the murids.

The Liturgical Year

The overall goal of the ritual year is to provide the means for the adept to encounter the *baraka* inherent in the Divine Names—in other words, to have a pathway laid before him through the shaikh and the order's structure to the experience of ultimate reality. This pathway can roughly be broken into two main areas: the ritual year, which is interwoven with the ritual year of Islam itself, and the liturgical structure.

The ritual year is marked by crucial activities during certain prescribed times of the year. Among the Khalwatiya Sufis, the opportunity to engage in an organized retreat is the pinnacle of religious liturgical involvement. Among the Demirdashiya, the retreat is followed immediately by the celebration of the birthday of the original shaikh. The

two blend together to cap a most exciting time for ordinary members. These events shape the coming year, in terms of both a sense of religious refreshment and personal renewal. At the same time, these activities intersect with the ritual year of Islam, especially of the Sunni branch, and this provides an additional basis for spiritual development.

The Islamic year is dominated by the time of the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca, which in Cairo has a direct impact on believers. At the same time, Demirdashiya followers are gearing up for an intense engagement with spiritual acts during Sha'ban, because it is during that month that the *khalwa* ceremony takes place. Like Ramadan for Muslims in general, this time is governed for the adepts by rules altering eating, sexuality, and spiritual engagement. During the three days of the retreat, life is guided by restricted eating practices. It is, of course, considered to be especially blessed when both the order's activities and Ramadan fall during the same period.

While it is true that the Prophet's birthday receives much common celebration in Egypt, recent resistance from conservatives has muffled this in public ways, so it is not as crucial as it might once have been among Sufis and other groups. Still, the birthday can be seen as part of a ritual year that plays a role in manipulating time according to religious intents.

Rites of the Liturgical Year

The liturgical year is focused on the spiritual development of the adept. Its goal is to provide a complete religious rendition for life and living, which will then engage the whole person and his family in spiritual achievement. This is brought about initially through the regularized liturgical opportunities provided by the order. These include: 1) the standard *dhikr* (*mabiyā*) celebration that takes place every Thursday evening; 2) the rites associated with the three-day retreat (*khalwa*); 3) the rituals of the *mulid*; 4) the official sessions of joining or advancement that take place within special periods during the year; and 5) personal rituals. All of these provide an enlightening route for a sacred encounter.

The Rituals Associated with *Dhikr* (*Mabiyā*)

The liturgy is the weekly gathering at which all members actively participate together in the recitation of the *awrad*. Members are usually

dressed in white shirts and western pants; very few are dressed in *gallabiyas*. They all have white skullcaps on, unless they are visiting.

Most arrive shortly before the evening prayer and join in the prayer with others in the mosque. Once that is done, they quickly organize themselves into lines facing the shaikh's carpet, or along the walls. Since the *dhikr* only lasts for forty-five minutes, it is incumbent that one be on time. Given the nature of the *dhikr*, the spiritual benefit would be severely limited if one were late, and no one arrives after the shaikh has taken his place on the carpet facing the muridin.

About five minutes before the shaikh arrives, the muridin are seated in the *zawiya* and one of the nuqabat straightens the lines facing the shaikh. One of the brethren brings in the censor and walks around all the muridin, while they cup their hands and pull the incense over their heads and bodies. One of the nuqabat rolls up the covering of the *maqam* and the chamber is filled with incense. During this process, one of the nuqabat brings around scented oil and draws a line of fragrance upon the back of each murid's hand. There is a general air of expectation throughout as the *mahiya* is about to start.

The *mahiya* begins when Hassan or another assistant to the shaikh carries the lantern from the reception room in another part of the *zawiya* in front of the shaikh; they move in procession, with lantern carrier, incense carrier, and shaikh walking through the mosque and into the domed *zawiya*. One of the nuqabat is busy during the last few seconds with straightening lines and fixing seating arrangements to ensure lines of equal length.

The muridin and nuqabat await the arrival of the procession. All conversation ceases. A row of nuqabat stands at the front of the lines facing the front. A naqib announces *al-mahiya* three times, and the shaikh enters the *zawiya* and proceeds immediately to the *maqam*, wherein lies the sarcophagus of the founder, Shaikh Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Demirdash, which he enters. The covering is lowered while he prays inside. One of the nuqabat lights the two giant candles positioned to the right and left of where the shaikh will sit and a little in front of him. The candles are incensed in a counterclockwise manner. This is followed by the placing of the shaikh's carpet, which is also incensed. He then leaves the *maqam*, and the *maqam* covering is rolled back and lights left burning inside. He proceeds to his carpet, sits down

in the kneeling position, visually checks the lines of the muridin facing him, and gestures if he wants someone's position changed.

The *mahiya* officially begins with a recitation of the Qur'an. There are two Qur'an reciters present, one a member of the order and the other a professional reciter. The professional always recites first. The theme of the recitation is either chosen by the head of the nuqabat in charge of obtaining the reciter, or he recites passages relevant to the time of the Islamic year. Members listen closely to these passages, since they may be considered especially applicable to their lives.

Once the passages are complete, the reciters sit back or find a place to participate in the *dhikr*. All recite together:

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful. God, none can appear like unto Him and none could claim to be like unto Him. He is one, not from others; He exists, not in suffering. He is known for generosity and loving kindness. He is beyond fathoming, and His description is without end. Neither has He beginning nor ending. No offspring come from Him. Time and the passage of years leave no impression on Him. All creatures are subject to His command, and by his order of Kaf and Nun. Through His remembrance, success is secured, and the eye finds fulfillment in its vision of Him. Embracing His oneness delights the believer. He guides people obedient to Him on the straight path, and grants those who love Him a marvelous paradise. He taught all living creatures His ancient wisdom. Lo, in the dark of night, He sees the movement of the ant's legs; the bird in his nest repeats His name; the animal in the forest extols Him. All that His worshipper does secretly or openly is known to Him and he grants Him faithful assistance and triumph. Hearts fall calm with His mention and discover His power. By the ayat of His Qur'an, heaven and earth stand at His command. All is known to Him, and He forgives the sins of Muslims in kindness and patience. Nothing is like unto Him, and He hears and sees all.

O God, please, keep evil from us as You will and by Your will. You are the capable One. You are the most reliable and

the best supporter. Grant us Your forgiveness, You our ultimate goal. No strength or power exists apart from our Great God; O God we repeat Your name, but we cannot mount up Your praise as You praised Yourself. All honor to Your face and Your glorious appearance. God acts as He wills with his power and rules what He wishes with His might. You are alive and standing over all You created in earth and sky. Respect and generosity are Yours. There is no God but You and, with Muhammad (pbuh), aid us. Aid us, You the Kind and the Merciful.

There is no God but You and, with Muhammad (pbuh), aid us. Aid us, You the Kind and the Merciful. Grant us Benevolence. Grant God's benevolence and blessings upon the Prophet's family, he is honored and respected. God desires for the Prophet's family no evil, and refine them as pure as pure can be. God and His angels pray for the Prophet. O you who believe, pray for him and greet him with peace.

God prays for our Prophet Muhammad—His worshipper and your Prophet and Lover, the unlearned Prophet—and God bless his family and friends (repeat five to ten times).

God accepted all the Prophet's companions.

There is no god but God—Allah . . . Allah, Allah . . . Huwa . . . Huwa . . . Huwa.

Then a leading naqib along with some other nuqabat and some murids begin to chant:

There is no god but God—Allah . . . Allah, Allah . . . Huwa . . . Huwa . . . Huwa.²

This is followed by some reciting of the Qur'an by a member of the order or by a visiting *faqih*. Then follows the *huwayya*, which may take one of two forms. In the first *huwayya*, the shaikh remains seated and the nuqabat stand and perform the *huwayya* in a line facing the shaikh. General members do not stand. From his position kneeling on his

prayer carpet, the shaikh begins low in tone and voice, moving his head from right to left (the symbolic removal of all but Allah in the heart), "There is no god but God." The nuqabat replicate the action, moving their bodies in the same right-left fashion, "There is no god but God." The shaikh raises the pitch and loudness of voice, "There is no god but God." The Nuqabat repeat with same pitch and loudness, "There is no god but God." Again the shaikh raises the pitch and loudness, saying, "There is no god but God." At the height of this exchange, the shaikh says, "Hu Allah." The *huwayya* is at an end and general blessings are commenced. These are as follows:

Blessings on our Prophet Muhammad and his family and his companions and peace be upon them all . . . *wa sallam* . . .
wa sallam.

And may God grant them all His acceptance.

Please, God, hear us, for You are a wise listener. Bring us to repentance, for You are kindly to the penitent. Forgive us and spare us, O you who are magnanimous. And bring us to our end with you, a goodly end. Amen.

Power and Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family and his companions. Glory to God, the God of the glory they ascribe to Him and peace be upon all messengers. Praise be to God, the God of the universe.³

The leading naqib then begins the closing benedictions:

Al-Fatiha.

To the owner of the *maqam* (Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Demirdash): May God take care of you, your visitors and followers and all those who love him and seek his help.

Al-Fatiha.

To our (past) shaikhs: May God grant them the luxury of paradise and the pleasure of seeing God's kindly face.

Al-Fatiha.

To Shaikh Ahmad: May God grant to you holy wisdom.

Al-Fatiha.

To all those among us who have passed on, and Muslims who have died.

Al-Fatiha.

May God sustain Islam and Muslims, and create harmony within Muslims' hearts, and return the return of debts to the debtors. Provide more for the poor worshippers, heal sick Muslims, and grant help to those who ask.

Al-Fatiha.

Al-Fatiha for God's Word. (For those who went astray.)

Following this benediction, the naqib prays silently to God, then says "Ameen" and states:

God prays for Muhammad and his family and his companions.
All Glory to God, the God of the glory ascribed to Him and peace be upon the messengers, and praise be to God, the God of the Universe.

The second form of the *buwayya* is a revolving circle and includes the shaikh's physical involvement. The same procedure takes place, except the shaikh stands first, invites the nuqabat to join him, and picks one or two members from the adepts to join them. All members rise in anticipation of being chosen as part of the circle. It is considered a great blessing to be chosen to join in the *dhikr* circle or the circling *buwayya*. This proceeds with the shaikh composing the group into a tight circle, with their hands on each other's shoulders. The circle slowly revolves from right to left with the right foot placed behind the left and the whole group dipping down as the movement is made. The dance begins with the shaikh intoning, "There is no god but God," in a very low tone as above, which is then repeated by the circling group at the same speed and tone. The entire process continues with "There is no god but God" being raised a tone with each step until the shaikh breaks free from the group and enters the middle of the circle, where he says, "Hu Allah." With this climax, the group mills around the shaikh in joyous recognition that God is indeed present (Plate 1).

It should be noted that the Demirdashiya have been criticized in the past for this circular movement. In the year AH 1105 / AD 1693–94, a local member of the '*ulama*' criticized the Demirdashiya for "dancing" and other customs, mainly because they attracted the most undesirable types of people. It may have been that the '*alim*' (scholar) insisted on some kind of orthodoxy and opposed what he and his colleagues regarded as *bid'a* in the Sufi orders. Judging from my research in Cairo, the arguments have not changed much.⁴

The meeting ends with the brethren being favored by one of the nuqabat handing out blessed candies and special bread or cake. The members disperse rapidly, with both the shaikh and the nuqabat returning to the garden where the nuqabat have their individual rooms. On some occasions the leaders help members with their problems during these quiet moments.

Rites of the *Khalwa* and of the *Mulid*

The *khalwa* is the outstanding activity of the order's ritual year. It takes place every year on the birthday of the founding shaikh. The three days are organized into individual and community moments of devotion. It is a liturgy of silence and fasting. It begins the evening before the ritual activity, when all those participating gather with the shaikh for a dinner. Then, early in the morning after the dawn prayer, general instructions are given in the mosque for procedures: the adept is to maintain a silence as if he is in the tomb (some of them even shroud themselves so that their faces cannot be seen). Once these instructions have been given, the process of placing the participants in the cells begins. This is known as the ceremony of the keys. A naqib will have chosen a cell for each person, identified a verse for him, and generally given him encouragement to endure the difficulties to come. The shaikh or nuqabat whisper a verse into the ear of each adept outside his cell and unlock the cell. He then enters the cell, where he commences his discipline. The murid only leaves the cell for prayers or the bathroom. Should anyone speak to him during his time outside the cell, he is to answer with, "There is no god but God," but no more. If he does speak more, his vow of silence has been broken and the benefits of the retreat are forfeited.

During the time within the *khalwa*, professional reciters are retained to recite the entire Qur'an in the mosque. The adept can, in

addition to his own whispered meditation, also immerse himself in the Qur'an. In the evening, the participants are provided with yogurt and a biscuit—this is the only food they are to receive. Following the morning prayers of the third day, the *mulid* begins for the shaikh. Should the *khalwa* fall during Ramadan, a major meal is prepared in the foyer of the shaikh's house and all the adepts, nuqabat, and the shaikh participate in a special meal, breaking the fast. The adept is then given presents of clothes and other gifts, and he is free to go home.

Obviously, not all nuqabat and adepts can participate in the *khalwa*. There is a finite number of cells, and it is now more difficult than ever to take leave from work for three days straight. Despite these exigencies, there is avid participation. While some leave before completing the duration of the *khalwa*, either because of family responsibilities or for some other reason, this is unusual. Hence, the number of adepts who do not complete three days is small, and generally all the cells are full.

All members return for the *mahiya* if it is scheduled for that week. Otherwise, they return at the next meeting. The next *mahiya* is usually one of great celebration and joy; the Khalwatiya have undergone a transformation through disciplined silence, recitation, and listening to the Qur'an and prayer. It is a time of great spiritual refreshment, and it is passed on to all the brethren, regardless of whether they were able to do the *khalwa*.

There is another *khalwa*, a much more severe retreat. It is modeled on Ramadan, with an extended period—forty days—during which time the murid remains cloistered in a cell, coming out only for prayers and the washroom. Once again, silence is observed, and the focus is on the whispered text throughout. The exception within the forty-day retreat is that the individual breaks his silence at the time of breaking the fast at day's end. Following food and refreshment, he retreats again to his cell to resume his silent meditation.

This is a particularly heroic *khalwa* that only the most rigorous undertake, usually in response to a vow in return for some major benefit. It can be undertaken in pleading for a cause, such as the healing of a loved one or the return of a child from some dangerous path.

The Social Dimension of the *Mulid* Celebration

The *mulid* is a community celebration and thus not just the culmination of the annual *khalwa*. Generally speaking, the connection of the *khalwa* to the celebrations of the *mulid* is rather tenuous. The principal role of the *zawiya* is to hold its *dhikr* on its usual Thursday evening, which is the central night of the *mulid*. In the past, a week of celebrations was held from 8–15 Sha‘ban.⁵ De Jong notes that Wednesdays and Thursdays are the *ziyara* (visiting) days for the shaikh, and he speculates that these days had something to do with the tax breaks accorded to those participating in the fair when the shaikh controlled taxation in the region.⁶ Obviously this procedure only lasted as long as the shaikh controlled taxation. However, Thursday evening is the occasion for impressive giving on the part of the Demirdash household, especially of food for the community, which might be the reason that that evening attracts so many people. Major gifts of food and clothing have always been a tradition among the Demirdashiya, and the *mulid* is so engrained in the religious psyche of the neighborhood that there is a heightened sense of spiritual benefits.

Moreover, there is none of the extravagant circus atmosphere that tends to exist in some *mulids*, with music and *sama‘* sessions lasting all night. It certainly is nothing like the celebrations the Rifa‘i orders undertake. Special Qur‘an reciting takes place, special meals are served, and the presence of women and children is evident. Members speak of the saint being present in a special way. It is also a major social integrator, as Shaikh Ahmad indicates:

We spend about LE20,000 on the *mulid*. Much of it goes to each of the nuqabat who then spend it on their *khalwa* or on gifts to the poor. Almost all of the money goes to members of the order and the poor in the neighbourhood. We have to increase the amount by 7 to 10 percent a year.⁷

But there are elements of the Islamic ritual year present in the activities of the Demirdashiya *mulid*. Following the beginning of Ramadan, many Muslims are attentive to the needs of the poor. For an order whose roots go so deep in Islamic history, with a long tradition of social and community betterment, giving to the poor is a crucial liturgical responsibility.

It can be conceived of as a kind of ritual *shari'a*, of a working out in life of the basic *fiqh* of the order. Plans are constructed during this period that have repercussions for the year—raising members to the level of nuqabat and petitioning men to join the order—all require the special blessing that this time of year affords.

Furthermore, decisions have to be made about the level of gifts to be given, depending upon the largesse of the shaikh and his family, the nuqabat, and wealthy members. Distribution takes place normally through the mosque community, and the informal organization around the *zawiya*, but care is taken that the poor of the district also receive a share. There is the elaborate dinner with the shaikh and sometimes a series of smaller affairs that must be planned and executed.

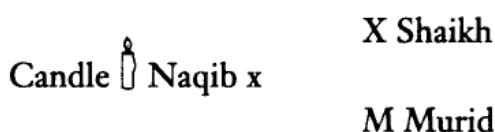
On one occasion when I was at the *zawiya*, a poor man from the community loudly cried out in the mosque that the shaikh was forsaking him and his family since they had nothing to eat during Ramadan. Apparently the man was known for his antics around the mosque, and various muridin smiled to each other at the claim. The shaikh was giving a solemn dinner, and the man's raised voice was of such a pitch that people snickered. Clearly the shaikh was embarrassed by the tumult caused by the man; he was also bothered because some thought the whole matter humorous. Even though food had been distributed to the poor and the man had obviously been remiss in not coming for his share, the shaikh instructed that a plate of food be prepared for the family and invited the man to share his table that night. This period is also one of counseling and small favors. The shaikh and nuqabat know many people, and there are always those who want to meet with them or wish someone to use influence on their behalf. All of these kinds of activities take place during the *mulid*.

Then there are the serious requests for *baraka* for one's self or a relative because of ill health. The shaikh does not advertise this feature of *mulid* life, but the Demirdashiya has a long tradition of helping people experiencing health problems, and either the shaikh or one of the nuqabat must maintain that tradition. There are prayers and meditations handed out to address such needs. In effect, the *mulid* is a time of significant community engagement with the *baraka* of the order at a number of different levels.

Ceremonies Joining and Raising Members to Higher Levels

Periodically, but especially during the *mulid*, there is the opportunity to bring new members into the order or to incorporate members into a closer union. This is done in two types of ceremony: the joining and the elevation rites.

The joining celebration is known as the *abd*. It is normally held after the nuqabat have had time to consider the personal petition of a person who wishes to officially become an adept. When the decision is made, it can take place after any *mahiya*. The structure is in the care of one of the nuqabat, who makes the formal arrangements. Beyond that, the ceremony itself is quite simple. The murid is seated in front of the shaikh who is kneeling on his carpet. The murid is facing the shaikh in this configuration:



The naqib in charge of religious affairs places one hand on the murid's head. Then the shaikh's hand is placed on top of the naqib's hand. The hands and the top of the murid's head are then covered by a handkerchief while the naqib whispers a verse from the Qur'an into the murid's ear. The murid understands this to be his special verse. Once the verse is given, the murid stands, shakes hands with the naqib, with the shaikh, and with other brethren in the assembly. We also have a description of this ritual by Edward William Lane in the nineteenth century:

He was admitted by the shaikh of the Demirdashiya. Having first performed the ablution preparatory to prayer (the wudu); he seated himself upon the ground before the shaikh, who was seated in like manner. The shaikh and he (the "murid", or candidate) then clasped their right hands together in the manner which I have described as practised in making the marriage contract. In this attitude, and with their hands covered by the sleeve of the shaikh, the candidate took the covenant, repeating after the shaikh the following words, commencing with the form of a common oath of repentance:

"I beg forgiveness of God, the great . . ." (three times): ". . . than whom there is no other deity: the Living the Everlasting. I turn to him with repentance, and beg his grace, and forgiveness, and exemption from the fire." The shaikh then said to him, "Dost thou turn to God with repentance?" He replied, I do turn to God for repentance; and I return unto God; and I am grieved for what I have done (amiss), and I determine not to relapse." . . . And then repeated, after the shaikh "I beg for the favour of God, the Great, and the noble Prophet; and I take as my shaikh, and my guide unto God (whose name be exalted), my master 'Abd al-Rahim al-Demirdash, al-Khalwatiya al-Rifa'i al-nabawee; not to change, not to separate; and God is our witness. By God, the Great!" (repeated three times) "there is no god but God" repeated three times. The shaikh and the murid then recited the Fatiha together, and the latter concluded the ceremony by kissing the shaikh's hand.⁸

The other significant rite is the *kayfa al-tazim*, which is the creating of a new naqib. When asked when such an occurrence takes place, the brother of the most recent naqib replied that "a new naqib occurs when the shaikh decides who is ready to be one of the nuqabat, and it is 'just when it feels right.'"⁹

In fact, there are other considerations. When a naqib dies or resigns, which has happened on some recent occasions, a spot is left vacant. Then it is a matter of determining who has the qualifications to move into the position. Since the nuqabat handle much of the daily involvement with members and are responsible for the social and religious programs of the order, an individual must have demonstrated the kinds of leadership that will be valuable to the order. It is not just the quality of his spiritual life that is under consideration. Clearly, too, family connections plays a role, since Mahmud, the most recent naqib, is also the youngest son of the great Rifa'i and Demirdash leader Yahya al-Zeiny, who for many years was a naqib in both orders. Al-Zeiny's death was a serious blow to the Sufi connections of the Demirdashiya, as he brought his intelligence and insight from two organizations to bear on any discussion. Of course it is also true that the order has historically been associated with the aristocracy, and while there may not be much of this strain left after

Nasser, there is still the desire within the Demirdashiya to maintain a high social position among the new business class.

The naqib ceremony takes place in the general assembly room of the shaikh's private suite. In the ceremony, the Qur'an is recited, then the future naqib stands in front of the oldest naqib of the order. He is already dressed in the ritual garb that indicates his new role as naqib (a deep, rich blue open gown over a satin *gallabiya* and waistcoat). As he stands, a turban, emblematic of the one worn by the shaikh is presented to him. It has a red insert and a white cloth turban band. The shaikh himself is dressed in a special garb. Then the naqib stands before the shaikh, and the shaikh fastens a long corded golden rope about his waist, the *shurut al-bizam*, which is emblematic of the wealth in esoteric knowledge that he has as a naqib and the influence he hopes to use for the betterment of the community. Following this, he is greeted by all the nuqabat, and a special dinner is prepared. It is understood that the wealth of the individual will play a role in how generous he can be with the order, but there are some expectations that come with being raised to this level. He will, in time, provide a cow for the *mulid* celebrations or other gifts indicative of his status. However, the most important aspect of this rite is that he now has access to the doctrines of the group, and can learn to meditate upon them in a systematic manner.

Personal Rituals

The Demirdashiya insist that belonging to the order is essentially not a public activity. It is a matter of personal discipline. The benefits of belonging are most often felt in one's personal life, because the rituals extend into one's home and work. The following is an outline of a daily ritual the murid undertakes. This ritual shapes his attitudes and his perspectives on daily life and prepares the ground for the spiritual aspect of living. In this selection, drawn from Naqib Hamdi Suleiman's collection, called *Adab al-tariqa*, the daily round of prayers and ritual activities is highlighted.

The Daily Rituals ('Uqud)

In most orders, the daily rituals are called the *awrad*. In the Demirdashiya, they are called the '*uqud* (plea) because every *wird* (devotional phrase) from the *awrad* has added to it a prayer or special plea to God. This ritual is performed mornings and evenings in one's home. There are certain requirements for the recitation of the '*uqud*.

The murid should not read the *awrad* unless he received them directly from the head naqib or an individual who represents him.

He must perform the ablution during the recitation.

All conversation is forbidden during the recitation and if he talks he has to start over again, with the exception of saying greetings (*salam*).

It is forbidden to eat or drink during the recitation.

It is forbidden to discuss the *awrad* that he has received because they are the secrets of the order.

If the murid comes across a problem, he should consult the head naqib.

One's prayer beads should not be given to anyone but a member of the Demirdashiya, and he should not convey the explanation of each bead.

When one of the members dies, his beads are handed to one of the nuqabat, who performs the ceremony of transferring the beads from their late owner to the murid who wants them. The beads of a deceased member are not buried with him. They are given to a younger member because they are held to be particularly effective in spiritual discipline.

Morning 'Uqud

Morning 'uqud starts at twelve at night and runs until twelve noon. It commences with opening prayers:

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful

O God, I sit between your hands repenting, and I come decrying (my sins); I am your slave and the son of your poor slave. In your presence my activities are in your hands—under your fair judgement. You are above me and under me, behind me and in front of me; You are on my right hand and on my left. You see my place and hear my plea. You are the witness who is pointing at me, and You are the One who has spoken and your speaking is the truth. Who even does evil things or is not just to himself; he must beg God's forgiveness. He will find God is a kind forgiver.

The First 'Uqud

I beg God's forgiveness from every sin and I repent to Him.
(100 times)

In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful.

O my Lord, whenever I sin a sin, your care called me to repent and when I repented, I was (still) drawn to commit sin, so my repenting did not last and sin did not leave me. I don't know how it is going to end for me. But my trust is in You, and it made me come to You. You are held in high respect by Your slave! To You, my God, I plead to You for repentance that will stop the crisis of desires within me, and will stop the crisis of sins in my heart. Instead, decorate it with the armaments of faith and with the beauty of knowledge. There is no god but You. I was from the torturer. (10 times)

The Second *'Uqud*

Al-Fatiha (100 times) and 132 times upon Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Demirdash leaders.

O my God, with his position and his importance to you and Your love for him, and his love for You and the secret between You and him, I ask You to pray peace upon him and bestow peace on his family. Double my love for him and make me to know his rule and his order. Help me to follow him and follow his manners and his sunna. Bring me closer to him and make me enjoy his sight and draw me closer to his presence. Make me happy through talking with him and keep away all obstacles, allowing me to enjoy hearing his message. Prepare me to receive from him and prepare me to take from him. Make my prayers to be a light upon him, bringing complete disclosure, erasing all darkness and injustice, and prevent me from believing and committing bad things. Make it a cause to attain the best order in sincerity, so that none will doubt Your Oneness. Make me fit for Your presence, and make me one of the close ones, by holding onto his teachings with a strong rope relying on his high standard of presence at every moment.

O God, You are the light, the truth, and the transparent. (10 times)

The Final Prayer

O Allah, you who are the light, the truth, the clear, light up our hearts with Your light and wake us to witness you. Show us the pathway to You, make it an easy road by your honor. Teach us in Your presence and clothe us even as the devout who come from You and to You. You are capable of everything, the best divinity, the greatest supporter. Forgive us as we come to You, for there is no power like Yours. You are above us, You are the great (One).

We pray to Your holiness and perfection upon Your most honored human, who petitions You by Your permission and shows the correct path, our Prophet Muhammad, his family and his companions. Praise be to God, the God of the universe; accept our petitions. You are the knowing listener. Make us to repent and, because You are the benevolent forgiver, forgive us. O Make our end good. Amen.

We offer God's benediction and peace upon Muhammad and his family, his companions, all of them. Homage to God, the God of stature beyond description; peace upon all messengers and praise to the Lord of the Universe.

Evening *'Uqud*

The evening, *'uqud* or *'uqud al-massa*, may start as early as noon and runs until two o'clock in the morning. It is recited with the same requirements as the morning liturgies. The text is basically the same as that for the morning, but without the addition of the third *'uqud*. This is referred to as *'uqud al-kawthir*. It is to be read each time, beginning with "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent," and the murid should not say "Amen" until he reaches number one hundred and one; then he prays to God whatever he wishes, and following that says "Amen." This *'uqud* is as follows:

O God, I ask you to give me knowledge concerning Your power and Your mercy. knowledge of Your Holy power and Your great beauty in kindness. Grant me the words for Your description and all Your Names.

O God, there is no god but He, the Living One, the Self-Subsistent, the Eternal. You are the most merciful! (3 times)

I ask you to pray and bestow peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family, to the extent of Your power and knowledge! Keep me alive through Your eternal life, through our Prophet Muhammad's soul. Guide me to the right path. Protect me from evil, according to Your will, by means of Your Eternal Face, O God. There is no god but He, the Living One, the Self-Subsistent, the Eternal. You are the most merciful (3 times)

Peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, who delivered this knowledge with great satisfaction from knowing all. Your mercy is unlimited and all things are possible with You!

O God, You own all, and You are most Holy, You are the most merciful! (10 times)

The Third 'Uqud: (*Surat al-Kawthar* or 'Abundance')
(Repeated 100 times)

This 'uqud has two aspects, one small and the other large. The small aspect is as follows:

O my Lord, enter me into Your garden of Names through that special door that is neither hidden in light nor in darkness, nor in anything within or without. Let my hand be strong, (so I may) bath in Your goodness. Inspire me to practice what I have experienced so I can be hard working in You and for You.

O, You are a gentle and kind forgiver (10 times)

The large aspect is as follows:

Praise be to God, God of the universe, and praise be to the Most revered of His messengers, our Prophet Muhammad and his family and his companions, all of them.

O God, I ask You, my Lord and the Living One, the Self-Subsistent. You are the most gracious, the most merciful, with the greatness in Your Name, both great and greater, and

Your wise words which You gave to the best human and made him rejoice in Your message.

To You have we granted the Fount of Abundance.

Give me to drink from the water of Your love and from the Holy knowledge. Make me to see the beauty of your lover. Make me victorious through Your victory and supply me with strength from Your power the way You supplied Your Prophet Muhammad.

Therefore, to him I turn in prayer and sacrifice.

Protect me from evil and keep me far from every enemy and jinn and human and all others. Enter me into Your protection and forbid to them from those things that they desire. What You said and what you did is the truth, viz, "For he who harms you, He will cut off from future hope."

O God, Make me always to be with You, safe with You, in Your love devoted, and with Your knowledge and greatness. Create a bond between You and me so that nothing is closer to me than You. Secure for me Your Prophet in every instant, and keep the difficulties from me. Pray peace upon our Prophet Muhammad in every circle and in every circumstance until the end, so You can show me Yourself in the most perfect form. You who has holiness, (the most merciful—three times). Prayers upon our Prophet Muhammad, the unlettered, and upon his family and companions. Peace and praise be to God, the God of the universe.

The Fourth *'Uqud*

The fourth *'uqud* concentrates upon the Prophet Muhammad, repeating elements of the third *'uqud* and ending with:

Peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, Your worshipper, Your Prophet, Your lover, Your messenger, the unlettered one. And upon his family, and his companions, peace. . . .

O God, O Light, O Truth, O Eternal One. (10 times)¹⁰

These personal rituals provide us with several crucial insights. First, the rituals of the *mabiya* constitute only a small part of the discipline

imposed on the life of the murid. Indeed, what we see is a rather extensive system for maintaining God-consciousness within one's mind and heart almost totally throughout the working day. Second, the vast majority of the daily litanies revolve around extolling and engaging with the person and life of the Prophet. Third, contrary to popular perceptions, the litanies focus almost exclusively upon petitioning God for blessings that are general and even innocuous from a theological perspective. Fourth, the amount of time given over to this kind of piety captures a major part of a person's energies. The time commitment alone, were the practice to be carried out diligently and completely, would drain a regular day. The daily rituals are, in a very real sense, the fulcrum of the Demirdash ideology, dwarfing the *mahiya* ceremony on Thursday evenings. Finally, the discipline for the proper exercise of these rituals indicates that the demands upon the participants do not just arise out of a loyalty to the shaikh and the traditions of the order but also out of a rich inner life of communion with God. From that perspective, the *khalwa* is but a symbol of a discipline placed upon one's whole life. The discipline is really only expressed publicly and formally in the rituals of the *mahiya*, weekly, and in the three-day retreat once a year. At all other times, it is a secret discipline of the heart that empowers the murid to be an active Muslim every day of his life.

The Theosophy of the Ritual Life

The liturgical life of the Demirdashiya is based upon a mystical progression enunciated over the years and developed by each of the shaikhs according to his own spiritual insights. These steps are akin to laws within the universe, and hence are analogous to *shari'a*. Critics have often argued that Sufis make up their own set of laws based upon the caprice of the shaikh. From the order's perspective, this is entirely erroneous. Religious law is multidimensional and requires nuances in order to encourage the spiritual life.

In actuality, the Demirdash system relates to a multileveled universe, with an ascent to the ultimate at its heart. According to my sources, there are seven steps (*maqam*) in this system, which are related spiritually to the progression of the soul through seven different phases on its way to reality. The whispered verses concept is based upon a perception of the Divine Names, for there are seven Names that the adept must

come to understand in a mystical way if he is to ascend in his spiritual life. The true searcher (*salik*) pronounces each of these Names in his *dhikr*, and in the course of his coming to learn each of these steps, he discovers the powers that are resident in each Name of God.

In effect, one way of perceiving the Demirdash path is to see it as a discipline of meditated learning, through the inner life of the spirit, of the true meaning of God. The process takes place by means of an appropriation of the Divine Names as the medium. Within each soul there is constituted a range or pattern of religious experiences, and each of these acts as a kind of roadmap for the Khalwati to come to know reality. The Divine Names have liturgical force because coming to know them is to grasp the eternal truths at the deepest spiritual level; when one *knows*, then the Names can bring one to a place of progressing to the next level of enlightenment. The seven-step structure is as follows:

1. The soul that commands the bad (*al-nafs al-ammara bi-l-su'*). This corresponds to the name that is said during the first part of the *shahada*: *la ilaha ila Allah*.
2. The soul that condemns or chastises (*al-nafs al-lawwama*). The corresponding name to say is *Allah*.
3. The inspired soul (*al-nafs al-mulhama*). Here, the corresponding name is *Huwa* (He).
4. The tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-mutma'inna*). This step constitutes the first level of awareness of oneness with God. The name is *al-haqq* (the Real).
5. The satiated soul (*al-nafs al-radiya*). The name is *al-hayya* (the Living).
6. The complacent/agreeable soul (*al-nafs al-mardiya*). The name is *al-qayyum* (the Self-subsisting).
7. The perfect soul (*an-nafs al-kamila*). The final name, and the most difficult to know, is *al-qabbar* (the Overwhelmer).¹¹

Each of these levels is constituted by its own *fiqh*. This means that the Divine Name is not just a descriptor but also a world of understanding. When one understands that level, one is able to see how it holds together in a system of rights and wrongs, codes and powers. Each has its own potential miracles associated with it, dependent upon the coding of

that level. Thus, one comes to understand that some kinds of wrongs, or some types of illnesses, can be cared for by the application of the Divine Name at that level. Thus *faqih* Abd al-Hafiz 'Ali suggests that there are codes by which one knows which name to apply, and those codes constitute a kind of law. The wisdom of his statement, "The source of some kinds of miracle (where, for example, something must be done when someone has imbibed a body fluid) is activated by applying a seal on which appears a venerated name of God."¹² His explanation is as follows:

This is a tract which exposes the Sufism founded upon *fiqh*; in effect, as practitioners of *tasawwuf* understand, at the same time as the observation of the exterior commandments of the divine law (*ahkam al-shari'a al-zahira*), it is the means by which the soul purifies itself. It is why it is said: "He who makes himself a *fiqh* without becoming a Sufi, the same person becomes a sinner; he who makes himself a Sufi without becoming a *faqih*, that one falls into atheism; he who makes himself at the same time a *faqih* and a Sufi, that one finds the truth."¹³

The Demirdashiya theosophy is thus an integrated life lived according to a spiritually perceived *shari'a* that is not at odds with the exterior *shari'a* but is a refinement of it for the spiritual tastes of the mystic. The murid endeavors to spiritually explore the state of soul to which he has been introduced. This provides the vitality of his life at that moment and gives a spiritual roadmap by which to discover the truths hidden within the Divine Name. Through this Divine Name he can unlock the truths of the mystical soul at his personal level. The more he learns at this level, the more he comes to know the rules and powers inherent in the Divine Name. The more he experiences the varieties within his mystical soul, the more he comes to appreciate the benefits and responsibilities that are resident in the Divine Name. As he grows in discernment, he comes to know something of the power of God and the potential within his own soul. He is 'enlarged' to contain the insights at that level until he comes to comprehend the basic truths inherent in the Divine Name at that level. He then is capable of moving on to another level.

While the most important means for coming to understand these truths is clearly the *khalwa*, the way truth is conveyed at each level is not restricted solely to that means. Rather, through the entire structure of the ritual and liturgical life, the murid comes to know in ways he could not in any other medium. Thus it is not sufficient to come for the annual *khalwa*; rather, there is a constancy demanded at each level that requires participation in the full range of spiritual activities conveyed by the order throughout the ritual year, which shows mystical life has its cycles, just like life itself. This is what makes the daily discipline so valuable. Engagement at the full range of this mystical year is thus mandatory to maintain understanding and insight. Furthermore, one can lose spiritual sharpness by disengaging from this kind of religious activism. This means that one of the assumptions of the order is an attentiveness of the soul and the mind in a constant engagement. Indeed, one should seek insights in all ways—socially, ritually, theosophically, and personally.

Three insights drawn from Henry Corbin help to delineate the foundational theosophy of the Demirdashiya. The first is that the Divine Names are powerful because of the ability of our spiritual makeup to perceive the realities that affect it. This means that without a spiritually attuned mental apparatus, we could never comprehend God or even enter the spiritual state. Corbin calls this ability “the creative imagination” and describes its structure in this way:

Without Imaginative Presence or “dignity” there would be no manifest existence, that is, no theophany, or in other words, no Creation. But when the Divine Being manifests Himself in this existence whose being is theophanic Imagination, He is manifested not as He would be in Himself, in His Ipseity, but in a manner conforming with the theophanic Imagination. Hence the verse which states the great principle of theophanic metamorphoses: “Everything shall perish except *His Face*” (28:88). These words, if fully understood, sum up the entire theophanic idea. The orthodox literalists, it goes without saying, take them to refer to the Divine Face. Our theosophists understand: “Everything . . . except the Face of *that thing*.”¹⁴

The second insight is to utilize Western Christian terms to delineate what Ibn 'Arabi is describing. A spiritual reality, which Corbin calls the Holy Spirit, is the operative power; it becomes an individually expressed object of our spiritual senses. In that process, the reality that the spiritual element constitutes, in the very act of constituting itself, takes on a divine or ultimate dimension. As it does so, that ultimate form is not an object that *looks like* the divine; rather, it *is* the divine insofar as the ultimate can be expressed in that particular way. In Corbin's language, this is the "being of God" insofar as God can be said to be expressed in any form at all:

Or in other terms: it is the Holy Spirit, whose perfection is individualized in each object of the senses or of the intellect; this Holy Spirit designates the divine Face by which the Face of each creature is constituted. But this divine Face in each thing is essential to the being of the divine Lord; the "Form of God" belongs to God as a reality constitutive of Himself. It is to this that allude the two hadith: "Adam was created after the form (*'ala surat*) of the Compassionate One," and "God created Adam according to His own Form."¹⁵

Such an ideology allows us to comprehend the Demirdash meaning of the Divine Names. The Names are not happenstance but essential elements of the way God is related to and understood. Furthermore, because we can know these Names and relate to them, we ourselves are the vehicles through which God manifests Himself. Hence the process that God has utilized for unveiling Himself to humans is in and through ourselves. Since each of us has different perceptions of greatness, or what might be termed Lords, God unfolds Himself to us through our Lords. Thus Corbin's exposition of Ibn 'Arabi is as follows:

The Names, which are the divine Essence itself, because, though not identical with the divine Essence as such, the attributes they designate are not different from it, have existed from all eternity: these Names are designated as "Lords"

(*Arbab*), who often have all the appearance of hypostases though they cannot strictly be defined as such. We know them only by our knowledge of ourselves (that is the basic maxim). God describes Himself to us through ourselves. Which means that the Divine Names are essentially relative to the beings who name them, since these beings discover and experience them in their own mode of being. Accordingly these Names are also designated as Presences (*Hadarat*), that is, as the states in which the godhead reveals Himself to his faithful in the form of one or another of His infinite Names. Thus the Divine Names have meaning and full reality only *through* and *for* beings who are their epiphanic forms (*mazahir*), that is to say, the forms in which they are manifested. Likewise for all eternity, these forms, substrate of the Divine Names, have existed in the divine Essence (*A'yan thabita*).¹⁶

Theosophy and the Liturgy of the Demirdashiya

The theosophy of Ibn 'Arabi provides the means by which the spiritual imagination of the Demirdashiya adept may encounter his Lord. What the order does is to provide the opportunity for the advanced seeker to engage in this project of self-awareness and God-consciousness.

With this in mind, the Demirdashiya have developed rules for the *khalwa* that point the seeker in the right direction. The rules are to be conceived of as a kind of *shari'a* of the cloister, guiding the adept ever deeper in spiritual awareness. All sixty-seven rules are considered essential for defining the spiritual liturgy associated with the Demirdash. If correctly applied, the rules provide access to the spiritual reality understood to be present in the Divine Names. They have the same power to provide an entry into the divine realm. Drawn from the rulebook of the Demirdashiya, they define the pathway.

1. Then, O spiritual leader, there follows seclusion (*'uruf*) for the advanced ones, the glorious ones (i.e., members or lords).
2. This is guidance for the murid; through purification (*tasfiya*) one attains purity.

3. It is the truth, that the Lord of Creation (Muhammad) secluded himself (*ihatala*) until he received a revelation, O you exalted ones.
4. And he was on the mount of Hira', O knowledgable one! Thus, there was the beginning, with the beloved lord.
5. The cloister of the Sufi is intended for the recitation of the litanies (*awrad*), the disclosure of which enlightens the hearts (of the reciters).
6. Adopt them, truly you have received them as disclosures, as a beneficence, whose requirements are to be observed.
7. Through the actions of those faithful to their vows, known among the people as Sufis.
8. They are those who are pure in spirit as (they are) in conduct, those who are active in the service of the Creator.
9. Those who deadened (their normal feelings) in sleeplessness while in seclusion, their litany (*wird*) is free of distracting thoughts.
10. Those who followed it with a sincere heart, in so doing preserved the pious visions.
11. Whose *dhikr* surpassed all other *dhikr*, their ecstasy (*masrab*) lasted beyond the early morning (dawn).
12. Seclusion has twenty-five requirements; accept them entirely, for they are completely desirable.
13. The first is to accustom oneself to poorer sustenance in order to refine the life of the senses.
14. Before entry, one must stay awake for a long time; the most important thing being that this must last into the early hours (dawn).
15. The second is to ask permission of the shaikh, for such shows of steadfastness.
16. Let no one force his way in without permission for (such acts) reveal all inner motives.
17. The third is, on entry, determine to offend no one in order to achieve what one hopes for.
18. If one avoids offending people oneself, then people have nothing to reproach one with.

19. The fourth is, on entry, beg God for help; then say, "in the Name of God," so that any evil committed will disappear.
20. Then let the shaikh enter—this is a requirement in this situation—and perform therein two *rak'a*.
21. And let him beg spiritual guidance for the novice from the Kind One, the One God, the Sublime.
22. Before the murid enters the cell, let the shaikh say in it an intercession as preparation.
23. Once the entrance has been accomplished, let the shaikh instruct him about what he is to recite. (This is regarded as the fifth rule.)
24. This recitation is in the form of a litany, and, after he performs two supererogatory *rak'a*, has the import of transforming him into a 'good' person (as pure and as good as Egyptian jasmine).
25. The sixth rule is a conviction in the belief in God, free of any human quality (*tanazzuh*).
26. The seventh is that he should not be concerned to rise higher than his (already attained) level.
27. The eighth is to avoid leaning against a wall and such acts; be guided in the right way.
28. The ninth is to try sincerely in one's heart to reach the meaning of *dhikr*, which is the intimate knowledge (of God).
29. The tenth is to fast in an orderly fashion; to eat less rather than more.
30. He should eat when food is brought to him; moreover, only a little.
31. Let him eat little of it; one meal suffices for a day and night.
32. The eleventh is to keep the cell dark in order to concentrate the senses, and then to avoid the sensations (*lamasa*).
33. Of brightness, light, and air so that he will be prepared for healing.
34. The twelfth is to perform immediately the ritual washing, for washing illuminates the limbs with light.
35. The thirteenth is to keep silence, except for performing the *dhikr*.

36. Keep it and strengthen it and do not waver, and thus perhaps you will achieve the (experience of) the nearness of the Lord of Heaven.
37. That the cloister be far from human habitation; this is a requirement, namely the fourteenth.
38. (Because) the one who turns his heart to God does not listen to human talk.
39. That one should not leave the *zawiya*. This, O meditating one, is a requirement, namely the fifteenth.
40. However, it is required that one undertake what is necessary, even though this is regrettable.
41. Such as ritual washing and community ritual prayer. Take note of this, and may God lead you. Mark well!
42. Human need (i.e., natural function) and through washing (*istinja'*) permit going out in an emergency.
43. If he goes out, let him bow his head and avoid looking around and listening.
44. The sixteenth is to adhere to the ritual obligatory prayers; do not put it off.
45. Beyond its proper time, and let him conform to the community, not excepting Fridays out of obedience.
46. To God, but let him go outside for the non-obligatory exercises (*sunan*) and let him perform by himself alone the ritual prayer.
47. The secluded person must practice moderation—not to be immoderate in eating or in drinking.
48. Let him drink water only if mixed with something else (e.g., with lemon according to the instructions of the founder). O Lord, may relief be granted to him!
49. Drinking harms the pure; O man, the seventeenth requirement ends thus with its good work.
50. The eighteenth is that he not sleep in an impure state, since this is a sin.
51. It is a requirement to ban all distracting thought, that which appears in thought or in the heart.
52. The nineteenth is fulfilled thus: know this and keep all that I have said and you will profit from it.

53. The twentieth is fulfilled by him who unites his heart with his shaikh, since he is the source of nearness to God.
54. Sometimes what is difficult becomes easy through the shaikh, for he is the compassionate father.
55. The twenty-first is to shut the door to the cloister and to separate oneself from (man-made) things (*asbab*).
56. The twenty-second is to keep his vision secret, whether it (comes) in sleep or in a state of wakefulness.
57. Let him tell it only to his (spiritual) mentor, without adding or omitting (anything).
58. He should not consider it good or bad and not be sad or glad about it.
59. He should not seek to interpret it, either, nor wish a distraction from his love.
60. The twenty-third is to constantly practice the mindfulness of God (*dhikr*), always and at all times.
61. Let him recite it with zeal and concentration (*budur*).
62. The twenty-fourth is shortening of the timespan; if the (situation) is impossible for him, let him leave after it (i.e., the *dhikr*).
63. No time-span is fixed for the going-out, since the impulsive soul looks to each circumstance (to go out).
64. So that you desire to leave, when it is the end; you leave at the appointed time and end the meditating. (This is twenty-five.)
65. The requirements of seclusion are at an end. (These are) handed down by Sufis, those who have experienced inspiration (revelation).
66. They are those who know certainly and really, (they are) the God-fearing people, pure in their actions.
67. Whoever oversteps their requirement offends against the rule/custom (*adab*); he (is one who) completely fails to achieve gradual (spiritual) progress.¹⁷

In addition, there are what might be called norms of behavior, or *adab*. These address attitudes and values expressed by members of the order, within the *khalwa*, and with outsiders. This *adab* of the order is

based upon a certain congruency between the inner act of the heart and the exterior expression of the body:

God, may He be exalted, has commanded inner acts which reveal the heart and the exterior acts, which reveal membership and He has forbidden us both certain interior and exterior acts. . . .

The interior acts which have been ordained are the faith in God and in His Prophet, that is to say the proclamation of the truth of the Prophet—may God bless him and protect him—and in all that he brought of the necessary science touching religion and Islam. This is submission of the heart and humility in the face of the legal commandments (*shari'a*): it consists of being in accord with the predestination and that which is determined, and to submit to God—He who is exalted—and being patient in tribulation, to believe that all grace received comes from Him, the Most High, to reflect on Him—be He exalted—in all things a good morality, humility and submission, the fear and the hope received from Him, the sincerity in which one makes to Him, the love for Him, for His apostle and for His saints (*awliya*). The hatred of His enemies such that they are His enemies. It consists of overthrowing the animal soul (*nafs*) of following bad instincts and passions, to that which a man loves for his brother so that he loves him as himself, to exercise the control of the soul on all the infractions which prevent him from coming closer.

The interior acts which He has forbidden for us are: vanity and hypocrisy, the love of honors and reputation, the desire to dominate, the love of rank, so as to glorify oneself, the pride, the envy, that is to say that one grace received by another will cease, the rancor, the avarice and all that which opposes good actions mentioned above.

The external acts which He has forbidden for us are numerous: among them is adultery, the act of drinking wine, the unjust accusation of good people, the killing of a human being and not aiding one's fellowmen.

Among those figuring especially is the calamny, speaking evil, insulting, defamation in matters of honor and all that which is attached to it as the *shari'a* exposes. Those who do not acknowledge nor fear God. It is by fear that one opens to Him the mystical awareness of God—who is powerful and majestic—with a special manner among the friends of God with the divine secrets and the revelations (*mukashafat*) of the veil.¹⁸

When in the *khalwa*, members follow special rules of observance. The main purpose of holding to these rules is to develop a spiritual decorum toward God. Out of this comes a sense of fear—not a fear of God, but a fear of not being close to God. The result is that certain prescriptive rules apply:

Fasting. Unless he does this often, the murid will not have the inner fortitude to support fasting. He should therefore eat at the beginning up to the point where his soul acquires the necessary self-possession. It is written in the hadith, “It suffice for man to have, for nourishment, several mouths which sustain him.” And, also it says, “It is by fasting that the material soul (*nafs*) is whittled down.”

Refrain from forcing humans to change (their lifestyle), save in case of necessity (i.e., to save a life). Do not insist on what you know (of the science of the heart). Do not deny common household activity, such as the buying and selling (of the marketplace), for those who are so constrained.

Maintain a silence, of both interior and exterior, except for those who do extensive *dhikr* of God—may He be exalted.

Keep the veil of *dhikr* and meditation during the last vestiges of night, up to the rising of the sun. One should especially abstain from all superfluous things in nourishment, speaking, and sleeping.

Give yourself over to *dhikr* under the form that your shaikh himself has taught and never pass to another form (of *dhikr*) without his permission. Practice especially the particular *awrad* of your shaikh.

Remember, it is the shaikh who guides the *tariqa* and understands what it contains.¹⁹

Clearly the historical circumstances of the order, including when the shaikh was out of the country for several years, have eroded the position of the shaikh. We will address the current role of the shaikh in the final chapter, but it may be worthwhile to record the traditional views of the power of this key individual in the order. Thus, according to Ahmad al-Dardir:

Respect and veneration to him without reserve, externally or internally, and never to oppose him on any aspect of his conduct even if it seems that he is doing something haram. He will explain why there is confusion. The murid gives him the precedence on everything and does not render to any other man the same homage. He does not pay a visit to any other living wali, nor show any piety to anyone without his (the shaikh's) permission. He does assist in a liturgy without permission, nor listen to any other than he who has drunk the water of the secret of his shaikh. In speaking like this I address the followers and the devotees. These are not all those who have been initiated to the *dhikr* by the shaikh who will be beneficiaries. There are those shaikhs who would exert an exclusive domination over each of those who has been initiated to *dhikr*, will certainly be in error and they will manifest by this that they are not a true master in the vows of the friends of God.

The murid must not sit down while the shaikh is standing, and he should not rest in the shaikh's presence without his permission unless it is necessary, as if he were of the same rank as his shaikh.

The murid should not speak much in his presence, even if he is at ease with him, nor sit down on his carpet, nor serve himself from his water for prayer, nor sit at a place that is prepared for him. He must not implore him for anything, nor journey, nor marry, nor undertake anything important without his permission. He must not take his hand, for example to greet him, while his hand is occupied with something else, such as holding a feather, or eating or drinking, but he should salute him verbally and then wait on orders.

He must not walk in front of him, nor at his elevation; it is only during the obscurity of night that he can precede him to protect him from some eventual harmful situation. He must not make favorable comments in front of his enemies, and he must fear anything that might serve someone to speak ill of him.

One should guard his reputation, whether he is absent or present. When he is attentive or absent-minded, in his counsels, traveling or in his 'presence,' or even when his 'blessing' envelopes him entirely.

He should not visit those whom the shaikh does not like or those whom the shaikh has sent away. In general, he must love those whom he loves, and refuse all those who displease the shaikh.

He must examine each benediction he receives, whether it concerns this world or the next, with the benediction from the shaikh.

He must support the severity of his master and the fact that he leaves him, and not say: "Why does he treat me this way and in that manner?" Otherwise he will not be docile to his direction. In truth, this concerns one of the most important requirements of an internal and external docility. I preach this to all friends of God.

He must take the word of the shaikh he is following in a literal sense and conform himself to it, except if there exists a reason for departing from the literal sense. If the shaikh tells him: "Read this or pray in this fashion," it is a lesson in obedience. And suppose when he is young, he tells him: "Rompe around with the youth!" then he should rompe. The shaikh is developing a disposition, hidden to the *murid* at the moment, to train his disciples with affability, making it easier for them to participate in the rigors of the order's observances until he senses in them the perfume of sincerity and fervor. And he keeps his distance for their consideration, repulsing them severely and showing them the durability with which the passions live within them and which they exorcise in the love of God Most High. At this moment

finally he is pushing to see proof of their sincerity or not to him.

He must give himself over to the liturgy that the shaikh composed because of its role in helping him exercise control through the liturgy. He must demonstrate that he is reticent to give up on discipline provided by the liturgy. He should know that a true direction requires endurance.

He must not spy on the shaikh to know his manner of prayer or his habits. One such attitude will be the ruin of the murid. He must not enter without permission into the *khalwa* of the shaikh or raise the drapery that encloses the entrance, until he has performed as one who has arrived at a high level. He must not pay him a visit without being in a state of ritual purity, because the presence of the shaikh is the same presence as God. He must have in all circumstances a good opinion of his shaikh and not prefer the love of another for his love—the love of God and of His apostle plays a part then because it is the essential goal, and love for the shaikh is only a means to it.

He must demand any charge from the shaikh for any affair. Even if he renders a trip for him, it is the murid who must hasten to go and greet him without delay before the shaikh can come himself to do so. All these rules are now sufficient. And he who wishes to increase the measures by that which has not been said has the assistance of that which has (i.e., new rules must build upon the rules that have come before).

Among the rules most important, the following are representative of the Demirdash tradition even though they were drawn by Bannereth from al-Dardir:²⁰

The sufi should empty his heart of all that which is not God, nor seek the world, nor recompense, nor promotion: but he should invoke only God with intense *dhikr* for the love of Him, who as the poet said:

“I love you, not for me, but because you are the exalted.
And I desire nothing but you!”

He should close his eyes, because this accelerates the illumination of the heart. When the surroundings are obscured, and if there is a lamp, light it and carry it in front so as to generate a state of meditation. He should pronounce the words of the *dhikr* with fervor while inclining the head towards the right conscientiously and concentrate his attention in the direction of his chest, and not first in the direction of his heart, that is to say to the left. He exhales his words from his throat towards his heart just as the majesty descends in His heart in order to consume the remainder of his malevolent thoughts.

He should articulate well the *hamza* and prolong the pronunciation of the letter "a" naturally (in the word *ilaha*) or with an advantage, and pronounce the sound a after the letter *ha* in the word *ila ha*, and the final *ha* in the word *Allah* without resonance. In the same manner for the second name, that is to say *Allah*, and then following suit for the rest of the Divine Names. He should exhale these from his throat and make them rest in his heart and turn all the intensity of the *dhikr* (*hala*) towards his heart and recall the meaning (*ma'na*) even as his heart remembers (*dhakir*) while he, himself waits. He should not carry out his exercises before being transported into a sort of submersion (*istighraq*) which inspires in himself the gentleness of *dhikr* and has obtained a certain desire and an ardent sensibility. Finally after having finished he should rest silently and immobile, and repose in the spirit of the *dhikr*, making it take its place in his heart and savoring the coming of this remembered grace. Perhaps an inspiration (*warid*) will suddenly come to him erasing his self in a way that thirty years of effort had not been able to do. This inspiration will reflect an inclination towards asceticism or toward a delicate awareness, or the assistance with an offense, or a grace of illumination or of love (*mahabba*), etc. . . . If he has the experience, he should remain immobile and retain his exhalation processes, and this inspiration will move to all corners of his soul. (He should agitate himself slowly up to the place where he is rendered more firm, otherwise he will pass out). Al-Ghazzali has said: "This silence is governed

by two rules of conduct: the attention to God as if He was in front of him, the concentration of the senses to the point the hairs of his body have the same attentiveness as a cat in the presence of a mouse and finally the fact of his constraint frequently in this attitude such that the influence penetrates in all regions of his heart and the idea of God insinuates itself into his heart.

Another rule touching *dhikr* is the incensing of the environment, the body, and the mouth, wiping out repugnant odors because the 'celestial spirits' do not accept such odors. And if they turn away from the *meditation of dhikr*, one is deprived from their aid in the same way as if one had lost his taste.

It is a certain requirement that one should not drink water before or during the *dhikr* because the *dhikr* has a heat that attires the luminaries and the revelations that overcomes them. Drink the water that increases this heat. At the very least, one should abstain for around a half hour of astronomical time and the more that one prolongs this, the better it will be, to the point where the sincere discipline drinks only in the case of real necessity. These, therefore, are the concerns of the way of the Sufis in general."

Demirdash tradition rests in a triadic environment: first in the interaction between the *baraka* of the shaikh and the murid, then between the murid and the liturgical structure, and finally between the order and its theosophical underpinnings. It seems evident that the complex interrelationship of these three spheres of power cannot be reduced to that of one of these elements. That is, one cannot reduce what occurs within the Demirdashiya tradition to the political power (or lack thereof) of the shaikh. In the long development of the order, each element seems to work best in some kind of creative tension with the others. Thus it is impossible to say that the *dhikr* itself provides the impetus that keeps the order ever in motion, even though it is clearly crucial in the life of the order. Rather the combination of all of these elements seems to be propelled by the drive for renewal and betterment, a kind of energy of change of the entire spiritual enterprise, beginning with oneself in one's practice of Islam. The result is that the

description of what has occurred throughout Demirdash history will not provide us with the key to this inspiring impetus. Indeed, following Marshall Sahlin,²¹ we should be wary in applying a western yardstick to this whole process.

Rather, the liturgical reality of the Divine Names may well be beyond our conceptual grasp precisely because we do not and never have sat at the feet of someone representing such spiritually powerful teaching. We have not knelt for what must be long and difficult hours in retreat; we have not encountered silence in all its religious force; we have not risen at the midnight hour to recite phrases one hundred times. Thus, while some of the details explored in this chapter may make a certain amount of sense, there is still the uneasy awareness that there is something at work here that has not been articulated. My best suggestion is to refer to it as the 'personal reformist spirit' in the Demirdashiya tradition.

Notes

Preface

- 1 Emile Dermenghem, *L'Eloge du Vin (Al-Khamriya): Poème mystique de 'Omar Ibn al-Fâridh* (Paris: Les Éditions Vêga, 1931), 129.

Introduction

- 1 Vincent Crepanzano, *The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1973).
- 2 Joseph Fletcher, "Les <voies> (turuq) soufies en Chine," in *Les Ordres mystiques dans l'Islam: cheminements et situation actuelle*, A. Popovic and G. Veinstein, ed. (Paris: EHESS, 1986), 18.
- 3 Frederick de Jong, "Mustafa Kamal al-Din al-Bakri (1688–1749): Revival and Reform of the Khalwatiya Tradition?" in *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, N. Levitzion and J.O. Voll, eds. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 117–32.
- 4 See Knut S. Vikør, "Jihad, 'ilm and tasawwuf—Two Justifications of Action from the Idrisi Tradition," *Studia Islamica* (2000), 153–76.

1. Historical and Religious Background of the Demirdashiya

- 1 Victor Danner, "The Early Development of Sufism," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 239–64, especially p. 241. Danner has rooted this three-fold structure in the life of the Prophet and his legacy.
- 2 Danner points out that there were five historical thrusts that contributed to the rise of the Sufi movement as we know it today, including the 'confusion' of asceticism with the path and the rise of Islamic philosophy, see "Early Development," 252.

- 3 Abu Wafa' al-Taftazani, *Tasawwuf misriya* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1990), 197. The selection he is quoting is found in Abu Talib al-Makki, *Qut al-Qulub* (1932), 3rd part, 78.
- 4 See Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, rev. ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1968), 201ff.
- 5 Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimension of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 109–30.
- 6 Translated in Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 64. *Khidr* is a mythic being of considerable complexity in Islamic theosophy and theology, but it appears to have been used by the sage as a metaphor for inner being.
- 7 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat al-makkiya* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1911), 2:325.
- 8 Julian Baldick, *Mystical-Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989), 83–84.
- 9 From "Tadhkirat al-khawass wa 'aqidat ahl al-ikhtisas" (unpublished manuscript), translated as *La Profession de Foi*, with introduction, translation, and commentary by Roger Deladrière (Paris: Sindbad, 1978), 118–19. "We think that here it is necessary to understand the terms *Mulk* and *Malakut* in the sense of a divine action which reigns in 'the sensible world' and on 'the supersensible world' designed precisely by these two habitual terms." (Editor's footnote.)
- 10 Ibn 'Arabi, *La Profession de Foi*, 133–35.
- 11 Ibn 'Arabi, *La Profession de Foi*.
- 12 A.H. Johns, "Tariqah," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 347.
- 13 Ibn Batuta, *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*, vol. 1, C. Defremery and B.R. Sanginetti, eds. and trans. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1873–1879), 67ff.
- 14 Yehia Gould, *Dreams and Their Meanings in the Old Arab Tradition* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991).
- 15 A.J. Arberry, author of *Sufism* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), clearly thought so, since he included a section on ascetics in this book (pp. 31–44), but I suspect Danner does not agree.
- 16 See J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 159ff. I have added Naqshaband because of my belief that it influenced the *khalwa* group. The Demirdash nuqabat also claim a Naqshabandi connection. Mahmud al-Zeiny, oral communication, October 2002.
- 17 Abu Wafa' al-Taftazani, *Tasawwuf misriya* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1990), 38–45. His *silsila* has been modified with the addition of materials from Gilbert Gelanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l'Égypte du XIXe siècle (1798–1882)*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1982), I:188–242.
- 18 Rachida Chih, *Le soufisme au quotidien: Confréries d'Égypte au XXe siècle* (Paris: Sindbad, 2000), 53–56.
- 19 H.J. Kissling, "Aus der Geschichte des Chalvetijje-Ordens," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Morgenlandes Geschichte* (ZDMG), vol. 103 (1953), 246.

- 20 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Shar'ani, *al-Tabaqat al-kubra* (Cairo: Maktabat wa Matba'at 'Ali Sahih wa Awladuhu, 1960), 50.
- 21 Al-Shar'ani, *al-Tabaqat*, 53.
- 22 See Mahmud al-Sirghani, *Mahiya al-tariqa al-dimirdasbiya* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1950–51), 56.
- 23 See Mahmud al-Sirghani, *Mahiya al-tariqa al-dimirdasbiya* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1950–51), 28, 56, 58, 59.
- 24 Ernst Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt: Quelques aspects de la vie d'une confrérie," in *Mélanges: Institute Dominicain d'études orientales du Caire* 8 (1964–66), 3, quoting al-Shar'ani's *al-Tabaqat al-kubra*, vol. 2, 3–4.
- 25 Rachida Chih, *Le soufisme au quotidien: Confréries d'Egypt au XXe siècle* (Paris: Sindbad, 2000), 56.
- 26 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-atbar fi-l-tarajim wa-l-akhbar*, Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann, eds., vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), 1:338.
- 27 Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 3, quoting Shar'ani, *al-Tabaqat al-kubra*, vol. 2, 133.
- 28 I have followed Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 8–9, on Bakri's life and early morning *dbikr*. His sources are al-Jabarti, al-Nabahani, and al-Muradi, the Turkish biographer.
- 29 His justification is given in his *Kitab kifayat al-murid* edited and published in AH 1122 / AD 1710 in Jerusalem. He says it was purely for devotional purposes.
- 30 See *Majm' awrad al-Bakri*, 43–47; Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 9.
- 31 See Mohammad 'Id al-Shafi'i, *Makan al-tasawwuf wa-l-sufiya fi-l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1964), 115, and Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 13.
- 32 See Antoine Giacobetti, *La confrérie de la Rahmaniya* (Algiers: Maison-Carrée, 1949), 5.
- 33 Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, vol. 2, 1:338.
- 34 See Yunan Labib Rizk, "A Diwan of Contemporary Life," *Al-Abram Weekly*, no. 567, January 3–8, 2002, 2.

2. The Khalwatiya and Social and Political Institutions

- 1 See Jere L. Bacharach, *A Middle East Studies Handbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 22.
- 2 See al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, vol. 3, 294.
- 3 See Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 16.
- 4 André Raymond, *Egyptiens et Français au Caire, 1798–1801* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1998), 335.
- 5 Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, 3:297.
- 6 Frederick de Jong, *Turuq and Turuq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).
- 7 Gilbert Gelanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l' Egypt du XIXe siècle (1798–1882)* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1982), 1:49. Translation from the French by the author.

that, at least at that time, the Sufi shaikhs had little power on the Council and that their role was largely ceremonial. This is confirmed by de Jong: "Thus the large number of Sufis does not mean that the leaders of the brotherhoods are particularly powerful; in practice greater control has passed into the hands of the state, exceeding nineteenth-century developments." Frederick de Jong, *Turuq and Turuq-linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 159.

25 Interview with 'Ali al-Baqi, February 6, 1985.

26 Earle Waugh, *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song* (Columbia University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 147.

27 Interview with Shaikh Ahmad al-Demirdash, March 1992.

3. Reform through the Liturgical and Religious Life of the *Tariqa*

1 Duncan Black McDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1909), 66.

2 Recorded by author, March 10, 1985.

3 Recorded by author, March 10, 1985.

4 See 'Abd al-Qadir b. Muhyi al-Din al-Irbili, *Hujjat al-dbakirin wa radd al-munkaiin* (Baghdad(?), 1836/1966), 52-59. B.G. Martin discusses this issue in "A Short History of the Khalwati Order of Dervishes," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, Nikki R. Keddie, ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 287.

5 'Ali Mubarak, *al-Khitat*, vol. 1, 91 and Bannerth, "Über den Shifter und Sonderbrauch der Demirdashiya-Sufis in Kairo," in *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Des Morgenlandes*, vol. 62 (Wein, 1969), 129ff.

6 Frederick de Jong, "Cairene Ziyara-Days," in *Die Welt des Islam*, vol. 17 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976-1977), 37.

7 Interview with Shaikh Ahmad al-Demirdash, March 1992.

8 Edward W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (The Hague and London: East-West Publications, 1978; first pub. 1836), 247.

9 Interview with Mamud's brother, Abdullah al-Zeiny, March 13, 1992. He is an accountant for national television and purchases all the major equipment for television from abroad.

10 Hamdi Suliman, *Adab al-tariqa* (Cairo: np, nd.), 17-19.

11 'Abd al-Hafiz 'Ali, *al-Hidayat al-ragibin fi-l-sayr wa-l-suluk ila malik al-muluk* (Fez, AH 1315 / AD 1897-98), 12-36.

12 'Abd al-Hafiz 'Ali, *al-Hidayat*, 290.

13 'Abd al-Hafiz 'Ali, *al-Hidayat*, 292.

14 Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Ralph Manheim, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 244.

15 Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 245.

16 Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 115.

17 From *al-Musamab Tubfa al-tullab al-ra'in hadra al-wahbab*, in Ernst Bannerth "Über den Shifter und Sonderbrauch der Demirdashiya-Sufis in

Kairo," in *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* (Wein, 1969), 62:124–28.

- 18 See Ernst Banneth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt: Quelques aspects de la vie d'une confrerie," in *Mélanges Institut Dominica d'études orientales du Caire*, vol. 8 (1964–66), 21–28. This is based on the writings of Ahmad al-Dardir.
- 19 See Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 23.
- 20 See Bannerth, "La Khalwatiya en Egypt," 29–30.
- 21 Marshall Sahlins is concerned about our kind of "commonsense bourgeois realism" which often dictates how we read religious and cultural matters. He is concerned too that this "conceit" is read back into past times and places as if we know that the world always can be known that way. See Marshall Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14.

4. A Demirdash Reformist Writer

- 1 There is some debate about the birthdate: *al-Abram* says 1899, while others say 1898.
- 2 Al-Sayyid is a title given to those who trace their line to the Prophet.
- 3 The term can also be used in Egypt for someone like Sabra, who was a munshid (chanter) of considerable power; see Earle Waugh, *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 143. There is also a female shaikh of an order in Alexandria whom I met during my research.
- 4 A casual remark by chanter Nabil al-Jaiy of Morocco about the women of the order, who often provided both inspiration and support to the men adepts. His point was that it may be the men who had the public role in the orders, but it was the women who encouraged, constrained, debated, and cajoled them into greater spiritual achievements. It was conveyed during my research for my book, Earle Waugh, *Memory, Music and Religion: Morocco's Mystical Chanters* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005). It seemed very important because no one had ever pointed out to me that women's efforts contributed to Sufi spiritual growth.
- 5 S. Faraghi, "Women in the Ottoman World: Mid-18th to Early 20th Centuries," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, vol. 1, Suad Joseph, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 157.
- 6 Fayza Hassan, "A Matter of Mistrust," *Al-Abram Weekly*, no. 464, January 13–19, 2000, 4.
- 7 It was changed to *al-Tarbiya al-wataniya wa al-akblaq* (National Upbringing and Morals). See Lisa Pollard, "Learning Gendered Modernity," in *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies*, Amira el-Azhary Sonbol, ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 259.
- 8 See Pollard, "Learning Gendered Modernity," 263.
- 9 See Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and National Politics in Egypt," in

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