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Origins and Development of the Sufi Orders (*tarékat*) in Southeast Asia

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Sufism and the islamization of the Archipelago

Any theory of the islamization of the Malay Archipelago will have to explain at least why the process began when it did, instead of some centuries earlier or later. Foreign Muslims had probably been resident in the trading ports of Sumatra and Java for many centuries, but it is only towards the end of the 13th century that we find traces of apparently indigenous Muslims. The first evidence is from the north coast of Sumatra, where a few tiny Muslim kingdoms or rather harbour states arose, Perlak and the twin kingdom of Samudra and Pasai. During the 14th and 15th centuries, Islam gradually spread across the coasts of Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, to the north coast of Java and to the spice islands in the east.

The modalities of conversion are not well documented,

leading to much speculation by scholars and sometimes passionate debate.^[1] The process is unlikely to have been uniform across the Archipelago. Trade and the political alliances of trader-kings no doubt played their parts, as did intermarriage of rich foreign Muslim traders with the daughters of local aristocracies. In some regions, as local sources suggest, Islam may have been spread by the sword, but as a rule the process appears to have been a peaceful one. It is widely assumed that Sufism and the sufi orders played crucial parts in the process.

The first centuries of islamization of Southeast Asia coincided with the period of flourishing of medieval Sufism and the growth of the sufi orders (*tarékat*). Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who made moderate, devotional sufism acceptable to the scholars of the Law, died in 1111; Ibn al-`Arabi, whose works deeply influenced almost all later sufis, died in 1240. `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, around whose teaching the tarékat Qadiriyya was organised, died in 1166 and `Abd al-Qahir al-Suhrawardi, for whom the Suhrawardiyya is named, a year later (but it is not clear from when on we can actually speak of tarékat in these cases). Najmuddin al-Kubra, one of the most seminal figures of Central Asian sufism, the founder of the Kubrawiyya order and a major influence on the later Naqshbandiyya, died in 1221. The North African Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili, founder of the Shadhiliyya, died in 1258. The Rifa`iyya

was definitely an order by 1320, when Ibn Battuta gave us his description of its rituals; the Khalwatiyya crystallized into a tarékat between 1300 and 1450. The Naqshbandiyya was a distinct order in the lifetime of the mystic who gave it its name, Baha'uddin Naqshband (d. 1389), and the eponymous founder of the Shattariyya, `Abdullah al-Shattar, died in 1428-9.[\[2\]](#)

Islam as taught to the first Southeast Asian converts was probably strongly coloured by sufi doctrines and practices. It has been suggested by various scholars that this was precisely what made Islam attractive to them or, in other words, that the development of sufism was one of the factors making the islamisation of Southeast Asia possible. The cosmological and metaphysical doctrines of Ibn `Arabi's sufism could easily be assimilated to Indic and autochthonous mystical ideas prevalent in the region. The concepts of sainthood (*wilâya*) and Perfect Man (*insân kâmil*), as has been noted by A.C. Milner, offered local rulers a rich potential for mystical legitimation such as they would not have found in earlier, more egalitarian Islam.[\[3\]](#) In the tiny sultanate of Buton (in Southeast Celebes), the sufi doctrine of divine emanation in seven stages was put to use as an explanation of a highly stratified society consisting of seven caste-like strata.[\[4\]](#)

The Australian scholar Anthony Johns has suggested that islamization was due to active proselytization by sufi missionaries

accompanying the foreign merchants. Sufi-type preachers are in fact mentioned in various indigenous accounts. Johns has further speculated that there was a close connection between trade guilds, sufi orders and these preachers, that provided the moving force behind islamization.^[5] Some may find this an attractive hypothesis; there is, however, no evidence supporting it. It is highly doubtful whether the foreign Muslims trading with Southeast Asia were ever organized in anything resembling guilds, and the earliest sources mentioning sufi orders date from the late 16th century.

Indonesian Islam is until this day pervaded with a mystical attitude and a fascination with the miraculous. Several of the great international orders have a respectable following - some orders have hundreds of thousands of practising followers - and there are numerous local Muslim orders, besides various syncretistic mystical sects. The past century has seen many, partially successful, reformist attempts to purge Islam of its mystical and magical dimensions. It is tempting to project present trends back into the past and to assume that Islam reached Indonesia in its sufi garb, that the early centuries were, if anything, more mystically inclined than the more recent past that we know better, and that only in a much later stage a more "precisian" approach associated with the study of Islamic law emerged. The fact is that we do not know. No indigenous sources older than the late 16th century

have survived even in later copies, and the contemporary foreign sources remain silent on the subject.

Two observations should make us cautious about attributing too prominent a role to the sufi orders in the first wave of islamization. Among the oldest surviving Islamic manuscripts from Java and Sumatra (brought to Europe around 1600) we find not only mystical tracts and miraculous tales of Persian and Indian origins but also standard manuals of Islamic law.^[6] The oldest extant religious treatises in Javanese appear to seek a balance between doctrine, law and tasawwuf.^[7] It is only in later Javanese writings that we encounter a much stronger presence of mystical teachings. As for the sufi orders, it appears that these did not find a mass following before the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The Sumatran mystics

The earliest Muslim authors whom we know by name, Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin of Pasai, Nuruddin Raniri and `Abdurra'uf of Singkel, all flourished in Aceh in the 16th and 17th centuries. Aceh, located on the very tip of Sumatra, was a major pepper-producing area and became, due to international trade, one of the most splendid kingdoms of the period. Its rulers patronized the

arts and sciences and made it into the region's chief centre of Islamic knowledge.

Hamzah Fansuri was the first of the sufi authors and the greatest poet among them. His name indicates that he hailed from Fansur (also called Baros) on Sumatra's west coast; he was active in the second half of the 16th century but his precise dates are unknown. He expressed sophisticated mystical ideas in prose and subtle poetry. He may have been the first to employ the poetic form of the *sya'ir* (quatrains with a fixed number of syllables and a fixed rhyme pattern) in Malay, and his mastery of the form has never been surpassed. The mystical ideas he expressed are of the *wahdat al-wujûd* kind and easily lend themselves to a pantheistic interpretation. Hamzah was well-travelled; in his poems he refers to visits to Mecca, Jerusalem, Baghdad (where he visited the shrine of `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani) and the Thai capital of Ayuthia, which he mentions by its Persian name of Shahr-i Naw. In the last-named city he was apparently in contact with the substantial Persian community, and he attributes his profoundest mystical insights to an experience he had there. Several passages in his poems appear to imply that he was affiliated with, and possibly even a *khalîfa* of, the Qadiriyya order. However he nowhere expounds concepts or techniques proper to this or any other order, and there are no indications that he ever taught it (his name, for instance, does not occur in any known Qadiriyya *silsila* from the

Archipelago).^[8]

The second famous mystic was Hamzah's disciple Syamsuddin (d. 1630), who wrote in Arabic as well as Malay. In a less poetic but more systematic way than his teacher, he formulated similar metaphysical doctrines. He was the first Indonesian to expound the doctrine of the "seven stages," *martabat tujuh*, an adaptation of Ibn `Arabi's theory of emanation that was to become popular throughout the Archipelago.^[9] In this he may have been emulating the Gujarati author Muhammad b. Fadl Allah Burhanpuri, who expounded the same doctrine in his *Al-Tuhfa al-Mursala ila Rûh al-Nabî*, which was completed in 1590 and soon became popular among Indonesian Muslims.^[10] It is not known whether Syamsuddin travelled himself to India and Arabia (though it is likely that he did, like all the other sufi authors); he may have become acquainted with Burhanpuri's work at Aceh as well as in Arabia or Gujarat. Burhanpuri was affiliated with the Shattariyya order; again, there are no indications in Syamsuddin's work or other sources as to whether he joined this or any other order. Not long after his death, however, the Shattariyya was quite popular among Indonesians returning from Arabia.

Nuruddin Raniri was born into an Arab family established in Ranir (Rander) in Gujarat. He stayed in Aceh during the years

1637-44 and became politically very influential as the sultan's adviser. His family appears to have had previous Acehese connections; an uncle, Muhammad Jilani Raniri, had earlier established himself as a teacher in Aceh. Nuruddin makes the interesting observation that his uncle had come to teach the law but was forced to engage in debate on sufi doctrines; he had to go to Mecca to acquire the requisite learning and only after his return as a sufi teacher did he make many disciples in Aceh. Nuruddin himself was a prolific writer but he became especially known for his fierce polemics against Syamsuddin's disciples, whom he accused of pantheism and some of whom, he claims himself, he had burned at the stake. It may have been due to a backlash created by own his high-handedness that he later had to flee from Aceh.^[11] Raniri himself adhered to a more moderate variety of *wahdat al-wujûd*, according to which the world has no real existence and is but an illusory mirror image of Reality.^[12] He was an adept of the Rifa`iyya order, and the *silsila* he gives in one of his books shows that the branch to which he belonged had been present in Gujarat for several generations, with Hadrami Arabs of the Al-`Aydarus family as its shaikhs. In the 19th century, the Rifa`iyya was still present in Aceh but it remains unclear whether this was due to Raniri's teaching or to a later incursion of the same order.^[13]

Raniri represents the last documented instance of a direct

Indian influence upon the development of the orders in the Archipelago. During the following centuries several other Indian branches of the great orders reached Indonesia, but they did this by way of Mecca or Medina, where Indonesians were initiated into them. This is how the originally Indian Shattariyya order became firmly established throughout Java and Sumatra.

ʿAbdurra'uf of Singkel, the last of the great Achehnese sufis, exemplifies this process. He spent no less than 19 years in Mecca and Medina, studying the various Islamic sciences under the greatest teachers of his day. Upon his return in 1661, he became Acheh's leading expert of the Law as well as the recognized authority on sufi doctrine, striking a balance between the views of his predecessors and teaching the *dhikr* and *wird* of the Shattariyya. His disciples spread the order from Acheh to West Sumatra and Java, where it has remained rooted in rural society until the present day.[\[14\]](#)

Arabia as the centre of the Southeast Asian orders

Visits to sacred places - mountain tops, caves, beaches and graves - in order to acquire spiritual power have long constituted an important part of religious life in the region. With the advent of

Islam, Mecca and Medina were added to these sacred power centres; for the self-conscious Muslims these holy cities soon overshadowed all other centres. This may explain why quite early already the number of people from Southeast Asia making the pilgrimage to Mecca was surprisingly high compared with that from other regions, especially when taking account of the greater distance. Many of those performing the *hajj* stayed in Arabia for several years, in order to obtain prestigious knowledge (or, in certain cases, for the more mundane reason that they could not afford the passage back).

The Southeast Asians, or *Jâwah* as they were indiscriminately called in Mecca and Medina, constituted a cohesive community, somewhat isolated from their surroundings by the fact that most only knew rudimentary Arabic. The most learned among them studied with the greatest scholars of the day and passed on the knowledge and sufi affiliations they acquired to the larger Jawah community, whence it spread to the home countries. Due to this process, a relatively small number of ulama in Mecca and Medina have had a disproportionate influence in Southeast Asia. In the 17th century these were Ahmad al-Qushashi, Ibrahim al-Kurani and Ibrahim's son Muhammad Tahir in Medina, who indeed were among the most prominent scholars and sufis of their time. In the 18th century, the Medinan Muhammad al-Samman acquired the same meaning for the

Indonesians. By the mid-19th century a scholar and sufi of Indonesian origin, Ahmad Khatib Sambas in Mecca was the chief focus of attention of the Jawah, and in the second half of the century the shaikhs of the Naqshbandiyya *zâwiya* on Mount Abu Qubais in Mecca overshadowed all others in popularity.^[15]

Qushashi (d. 1660) and Kurani (d. 1691) represented a synthesis of Indian and Egyptian sufi intellectual traditions. They were heirs to the legal and sufi scholarship of Zakariya al-Ansari and `Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha`rani on the one hand and had initiations into a number of Indian orders, most prominently the Shattariyya and the Naqshbandiyya, on the other. These orders had first been introduced in Medina by the Indian shaikh Sibghatullah, who settled there in 1605. Kurani, being a Kurd, probably also had access to the Persian-language literature from India; besides, he was an expert in hadith studies and took a deep interest in metaphysics. In serious controversies, it was to him that the ulama of India turned for an authoritative opinion. So did the Indonesians; it was at their request that he wrote a commentary on Burhanpuri's *Tuhfa*, interpreting it in an orthodox vein.

Of the various orders that Qushashi and Kurani taught, their Indonesian disciples had a strong preference for the Shattariyya, perhaps because the appealing ideas of the *Tuhfa*

were associated with this order. (In the Middle East, on the other hand, these shaikhs were primarily known as Naqshbandis). The said `Abdurra'uf of Singkel, who studied with both and was sent back to Sumatra as a khalifa, was the best known among their Indonesian students, but there must have been at least dozens of others.^[16] For several generations, Indonesian seekers of knowledge in Arabia were to study with Kurani's successors and seek initiations in the Shattariyya, sometimes in combination with other orders. Thus we find a number of mutually unrelated branches of this order in Java and Sumatra. The Shattariyya relatively easily accommodated itself with local tradition; it became the most "indigenized" of the orders. On the other hand, it was through the Shattariyya that sufi metaphysical ideas and symbolic classifications based on the *martabat tujuh* doctrine became part of Javanese popular beliefs.

One of `Abdurra'uf's contemporaries was Yusuf of Makassar, who still is venerated as the major saint of South Celebes. He too spent around two decades in Arabia studying under Ibrahim al-Kurani and others, and travelling as far as Damascus. He took initiations into numerous orders. He acquired authorizations to teach (*ijâza*) the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, Shattariyya, Ba-`Alawiyya and Khalwatiyya (he gives his silsila for all of these), and claims also to have entered the Dasuqiyya, Shadhiliyya, Chishtiyya, `Aydarusiyya, Ahmadiyya, Madariyya,

Kubrawiyya and several less well-known orders. After his return to Indonesia around 1670, he taught a spiritual discipline that he called Khalwatiyya but which in fact combined the techniques of the Khalwatiyya with a selection from those of other orders. This Khalwatiyya-Yusuf struck root only in South Celebes, especially among the Makassarese aristocracy.[\[17\]](#)

Almost a century later, the Jawah in Arabia were strongly attracted to the teachings of the highly charismatic Muhammad b. `Abd al-Karim al-Samman (d. 1775) in Medina. Samman was the guardian of the Prophet's grave and the author of several works on sufi metaphysics but it was especially as the founder of a new order that he became influential. He combined the Khalwatiyya, the Qadiriyya and the Naqshbandiyya with the North African Shadhiliyya (in all of which he had *ijâza*), developed a new ecstatic way of *dhikr* and composed a *râtib*, a litany consisting of invocations and Qur'anic verses. This combination became known as the Sammaniyya. Formally a branch of the Khalwatiyya (in the sense that Samman's *silsila* only acknowledges his Khalwatiyya affiliation, through his teacher Mustafa al-Bakri), it already became a separate order with its own lodges and local groups of followers during the master's lifetime. Samman moreover enjoyed a great reputation as a miracle-worker, which no doubt

contributed to the rapid spread of the order to Indonesia. A large collection of miracle tales (*manâqib*) was translated into Malay not long after the master's death and became very popular throughout the Archipelago.^[18]

Samman's best known, and possibly most influential, Indonesian disciple was `Abd al-Samad of Palembang (South Sumatra), a prominent member of the Jawah community in Arabia and the author of a number of important works in Malay. Several other `ulama from Palembang were affiliated with the Sammaniyya, and the order appears early to have found favour in high places in the Palembang sultanate. Within a few years of Samman's death the sultan of Palembang paid for the construction of a Sammani lodge (*zâwiyā*) in Jeddah.^[19] After Samman's death, numerous Jawah studied with his khalifa Siddiq b. `Umar Khan. They spread the order to South Borneo, Batavia, Sumbawa, South Celebes and the Malay peninsula. Nafis al-Banjari (of South Borneo) is the only one among them who wrote (in Malay) a substantial work on Sufism; he was probably also the person to whom the propagation of the order in this island was due. In South Celebes, where the Sammaniyya encountered the earlier Khalwatiyya-Yusuf, the two orders became rivals but also influenced one another. The Khalwatiyya-Samman, as this branch of the Sammaniyya is locally known, has grown somewhat different in its ritual from the other branches in Indonesia. Its

membership is practically restricted to the Bugis ethnic group.^[20]

The Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya is a composite order not unlike the Sammaniyya, of which the techniques of two tarékat in its name are the chief but not the only ingredients. It is the only among the orthodox orders that was founded by an Indonesian, Ahmad Khatib of Sambas (West Borneo). Ahmad Khatib, who spent most of his adult life in Mecca, had a reputation well beyond the Jawah community as an all-round scholar, well versed in the law and doctrine as well in sufi practice. He acquired a large following as a teacher of his own tarékat, which soon replaced the Sammaniyya as the most popular one in Indonesia. Upon his death in 1873 or 1875, his khalifa `Abd al-Karim of Banten succeeded him as the supreme shaikh of the order. Significantly, `Abd al-Karim had to return from Banten to Mecca in order to occupy his master's place. Two other important khalifa were Kiai Tolha in Cirebon and the Madurese Kiai Ahmad Hasbullah. `Abd al-Karim was the last central leader of this tarékat; since his death it has consisted of a number of mutually independent branches, deriving from the three said khalifa of the founder.

The Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya is presently one of the two orders with the largest following in the Archipelago. The other one is the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya, which owes its

propagation all over Indonesia to the *zâwiya* established by Maulana Khalid's khalifa `Abdullah al-Arzinjani on Mount Abu Qubais in Mecca. `Abdullah's successors, Sulaiman al-Qirimi, Sulaiman al-Zuhdi and `Ali Rida, directed their missionary efforts especially at the Jawah, who were visiting the Holy Cities in ever greater numbers during the last decades of the 19th century. Thousands were initiated into the order and underwent training during a period of retreat in this *zâwiya*; dozens of Indonesians received here an *ijâza* to teach the tarékat at home. [\[21\]](#)

The orders and Indonesian society

The few indigenous sources that we have strongly suggest that the orders found their following in court circles and only in a much later stage filtered down to the population at large. The Sumatran sufi authors mentioned above worked under royal patronage. Javanese chronicles from Cirebon and Banten relate how the founder of the ruling dynasty himself visited Arabia and was initiated into several orders (Shattariyya, Naqshbandiyya, Kubrawiyya, Shadhiliyya). The tarékat was perceived as a source of spiritual power, at once legitimating and supporting the ruler's position. It was obviously not in the rulers' interest to make the

same supernatural power available to all their subjects.

By the 18th century, various tarékat had acquired a dispersed following in the Archipelago. New returnees from Mecca and Medina spread the Shattariyya, often in combination with the Naqshbandiyya or Khalwatiyya. Adherence to these orders may have entailed little more than the private recitation of their *dhikr* and *wird*; there are no indications as to whether these orders at this stage also functioned as social associations. In the course of the century, the Rifa`iyya and Qadiriyya also definitely spread. The former was associated with the invulnerability cult named *debus*, of which remnants are still to be found in Aceh, the peninsular states of Kedah and Perak, Minangkabau, Banten, Cirebon and the Moluccas, and even among the Malay community of Cape Town in South Africa. The latter may at some places also have been associated with *debus*, but its most conspicuous impact was the emergence of a cult around its founding saint, `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. Communal readings of the saint's *manaqib* in several regions became an important expression of popular religiosity.

The first tarékat to find a mass following in Southeast Asia that could actually be mobilized was perhaps the Sammaniyya. Though patronized by the sultan of Palembang (who, as observed above, even paid for the construction of a *zâwiya* in Jeddah), the tarékat appears to have found numerous

followers among the common folk. A local written account relates how it played a part in the resistance against occupation of the town by Dutch forces in 1819: groups of men dressed in white worked themselves into a frantic trance with the loud Sammani *dhikr* before fearlessly attacking the enemy, apparently believing in their own invulnerability.^[23] In South Borneo in the 1860s the Dutch met similar resistance from a strong popular movement engaging in sufi-type exercises named *beratip beamal*, in which we may perhaps also recognize a local adaptation of the Sammaniyya.^[24]

We encounter several other cases of sufi orders taking part in anti-colonial rebellions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the largest popular rebellions against Dutch rule took place in Banten (West Java) in 1888; here it was the Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya that was involved, even if only indirectly.^[25] The same order played a part in a large-scale and violent popular movement on the island of Lombok in 1891, directed against the (Hindu) Balinese who then occupied a large part of the island. We find it once again mentioned in connection with a peasant rebellion with messianistic overtones in East Java in 1903. Another large rebellion, triggered by a new tobacco tax, broke out in West Sumatra in 1908. This time it was the Shattariyya order, since long influential in this region, that played

a prominent part in the events.

These tarékat-related rebellions span a period of around one century, from the early 19th to the early 20th century. Some of them were movements resisting the establishment of colonial authority, others revolts against specific government measures or responses to general economic deterioration and oppression. In the case of Lombok, the rebellion predated, and in fact gave occasion to, the first Dutch military intervention in the island. In none of these cases did the initiative for rebellion come from the tarékat; but once the rebellions broke out, the tarékat provided them with supra-local networks of communication and mobilisation, besides spiritual techniques believed to provide magical protection and effectiveness. It appears - but this may simply be due to the absence of reliable historical evidence - that before the said period there existed as yet no tarékat networks that could be utilised. In the so-called Java war, the largest anti-Dutch rebellion of the 19th century, led by Prince Diponegoro (1825-30), no tarékat appears to have been involved in spite of the religious motivation of many participants. One gathers that at that time no tarékat network was available in Central Java that might have been put to use by Diponegoro and his ulama advisers.

It appears - but this may simply be due to the absence of reliable historical evidence - that before the said period there existed as yet no tarékat networks that could be utilised. The

growth of the tarékat during the 19th century is related to the increase in numbers of pilgrims performing the hajj, facilitated by the invention of the steamboat and the opening of the Suez canal. Many returning hajjis had been initiated into a tarékat during their stay in Mecca, and some of them had authorization to teach the techniques of their order. The voyage to Mecca had also given them some knowledge of the wider world, and many were acutely aware of the threat to Islam posed by colonial expansion. Thus anti-colonial sentiment and the tarékat often spread in combination, which no doubt contributed to the tarékat's occasionally becoming vehicles of economic and political protest movements.

The two orders that experienced the most rapid growth during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were the Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya and the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya. The former found its strongest support in Madura and West Java (Banten and Cirebon), due to the fact that a few highly charismatic ulama from those regions became khalifa of the founder in Mecca. The Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya spread more evenly across the Archipelago but became especially prominent among the Minangkabau of West Sumatra.^[27] Another tarékat that found numerous Southeast Asian adherents during this period, mostly in the Malay Peninsula, was the Ahmadiyya, one of the orders deriving from the Moroccan mystic Ahmad ibn Idris,

about which more below.

With the emergence of modern nationalist organisations in the 1910s and 1920s, the tarékat gradually lost this political function and one gets the impression that the overall membership of the orders declined. A period of increased political repression beginning in the late 1920s, however, appears to have caused many Indonesians turn away from politics to mysticism - a process that was to repeat itself several times during this century. The late 1920s see the emergence of two new Muslim orders in Java, the Tijaniyya and the Idrisiyya, besides the rise of a number of syncretic mystical sects known as *kebatinan* movements.

"Neo-Sufi" Orders: the Tijaniyya, Ahmadiyya and Idrisiyya

Two key figures in what has been called "Neo-Sufism" - a movement said to be characterized by a rejection of the ecstatic and metaphysical side of Sufism in favour of strict adherence to the *sharî`a*, and by a striving for union with the spirit of the Prophet instead of union with God - are the North African mystics Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815) and Ahmad ibn Idris (1760-1837). It is a matter of debate whether it is appropriate to speak of Neo-Sufism as a distinct movement, [\[28\]](#) but these two sufis had a few

things in common - besides many differences - that distinguished them from most earlier founders of orders. Both were opposed to the saint veneration of their days and sympathetic to the reformism of the Wahhabis. Both were deeply influenced by the writings of Ibn al-`Arabi and nurtured ambivalent attitudes towards the great master. Both, finally, claimed to have actually met the Prophet himself and received instruction from him - directly in the case of al-Tijani, through the intermediary of al-Khidir in that of Ahmad ibn Idris.^[29] The orders deriving from them have correspondingly short *silsila*, no names intervening between the Prophet and al-Tijani, and only those of al-Khidir, al-Dabbagh and al-Tazi in the case of Ibn Idris.

Al-Tijani organized his own order, which soon spread from the Maghrib to West Africa, Egypt and Sudan. It did not reach Indonesia until the late 1920s, when it was propagated in West Java by the Medina-born wandering scholar, `Ali ibn `Abdallah al-Tayyib al-Azhari, who had received *ijâza* to teach the tarékat from two different masters.^[30] In the following years, several Indonesians studying in Mecca received initiations and *ijâza* into the Tijaniyya from teachers still active there. This was after the second Wahhabi conquest of Mecca in 1924, and most other orders could no longer function publicly. The Tijaniyya, being more reformist and opposed to the cult of saints, was apparently still tolerated. In Indonesia, the Tijaniyya met with

strong opposition from other orders but went on growing, with Cirebon and Garut in West Java and Madura with Java's eastern salient as centres of gravity. During the 1980s it experienced a period of rapid growth, especially in East Java, leading again to conflicts with teachers of other tarékat.[\[31\]](#)

Ahmad ibn Idris' teachings lived on in a number of related but distinct orders, of which the Sanusiyya, established by his student Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Sanusi, became the most renowned. Other lines of affiliation use the names of Ahmadiyya, Idrisiyya or Khidriyya. Through Ibn Idris' Meccan khalifa Ibrahim al-Rashid (d. 1874) and his successor Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Dandarawi (d. 1909), this sufi tradition first spread to Southeast Asia. It gained a substantial following in various parts of the Malay Peninsula. Tuan Tabal, a scholar from Kelantan, was the first to introduce the Ahmadiyya upon his return from Mecca in the 1870s. In the following decades, Tuk Shafi`i of Kedah and Muhammad Sa`id al-Linggi of Negeri Sembilan followed suit. Since then, the Ahmadiyya has retained a presence in various parts of the Peninsula.[\[32\]](#) The various Ahmadiyya branches in present Malaysia and Singapore have retained contact with the mother lodge in Dandara in Upper Egypt.

The sufi method of Ahmad ibn Idris later reached Indonesia by another channel. In the early 1930s, the Sundanese

kiai `Abd al-Fattah returned from Mecca, where he had met Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi, the grandson of the founder of the Sanusiyya. Ahmad al-Sharif had given him an *ijâza* to teach this order in Indonesia, and told him that he had earlier despatched another khalifa to South Celebes.^[33] In order to avoid problems with the colonial authorities, who were likely to associate the Sanusiyya with the anti-Italian resistance in Cyrenaica, Kiai `Abd al-Fattah named his tarékat Idrisiyya. It has remained a relatively small order, now led by `Abd al-Fattah's son Kiai Dahlan, with the centre in Pagendingan, Tasikmalaya (West Java) and a few local branches, where the followers appear also mostly to be of Tasikmalaya origins.^[34]

The *dhikr* of the Idrisiyya is performed standing, with a loud voice and violent bodily movements, and it is common for the participants to enter trance states. This is quite unlike the Egyptian Sanusiyya, which frowns upon ecstasy and where the *dhikr* is serene and controlled, but it strongly resembles the Malaysian (and Egyptian) Ahmadiyya, which has an equally ecstatic *dhikr*. (The prayers of both orders, of course, are identical; they are those composed by Ahmad ibn Idris). This is probably due to contacts between Kiai `Abd al-Fattah or Kiai Dahlan and their Malaysian colleagues after the Idrisiyya was established in West Java. Kiai Dahlan acknowledges that he introduced various other reforms in the order, such as the

prescription of distinctive dress and a ban on smoking.

Local tarékat

Besides the large, "international" orders, several orders of purely local character have emerged, some of them syncretic in doctrine and practices. It is not possible to draw a sharp boundary separating local tarékat from *kebatinan* movements, apart from the former's explicit attachment to the Islamic tradition. Most of the local orders are considered as unorthodox by the other tarékat, either because their teachings are suspected to deviate from the *sharî`a* or because they lack a sound *silsila*. In order to disassociate themselves from local sects of suspect orthodoxy, a number of large orders have united themselves in an association of "respectable" (*mu`tabar*) tarékat, with *silsila* and *sharî`a*-adherence as the major criteria for membership.

One local tarékat apparently influential in the late 19th century was the Akmaliiyya (or Haqmaliiyya), which had its following mostly in the Cirebon-Banyumas zone, where the Sundanese and Javanese cultures meet. It was suspected by the Dutch of anti-colonial agitation and is repeatedly mentioned in intelligence reports. Three leading teachers were arrested and

exiled; after that, it was not heard of for some time.^[35] It resurfaced in Garut, where it was taught by Kiai Kahfi and his son Asep Martawidjaja, who expounded the teachings of the order in a long didactic text in Sundanese, *Layang Muslimin jeung Muslimat*. From Garut it spread to various parts of Java where it survives in a number of small groups. The Akmaliiyya firmly adheres to *wahdat al-wujûd* metaphysics and considers `Abd al-Karim al-Jili's *Al-Insân al-Kâmil* as the most authoritative doctrinal text. It has also a distinctive meditational technique, not found in the other orders.^[36]

A number of new local orders emerged in East Java after independence, the best known among them the Siddiqiyya and the Wahidiyya. Both seem in part to reflect a turn from active politics to quietist mysticism and a change from confrontation between strict and nominal Muslims to more accommodating methods of gradually incorporating the latter into the *umma*. The Siddiqiyya is led by Kiai Mukhtar Mu`ti of Ploso, Jombang (East Java), who had previously studied various tarékat and acquired a reputation as a magical healer. He claims that the Siddiqiyya is based on teachings he received in the mid-1950s from a certain Syu`aib Jamali, who hailed from Banten and was a descendant of Yusuf Makassar. The Shiddiqiyah therefore allegedly continues Yusuf's tarékat practices, but Kiai Mukhtar also gives a Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya *silsila* for his teacher. His doctrinal teachings are

presented in a form much adapted to Javanese folk culture, and the mystical exercises taught consist of long litanies to be recited, followed by breathing exercises.[\[37\]](#)

The Wahidiyya was "founded" by Kiai Abdul Madjid Ma`ruf of the *pesantren* (Islamic school) Kedunglo in Kediri in the early 1960s. Its major devotion consists of the recitation of a long prayer (*salawât*) composed by Kiai Abdul Madjid, allegedly under divine inspiration. The collective recitations of this *salawât* generate an intensely emotional atmosphere, causing the devotees to weep loudly and seemingly uncontrollably. In spite of strong reservations on the part of other ulama, the Wahidiyya rapidly gained adherents among the common folk of Kediri and spread all over East Java.[\[38\]](#)

It is of course not only in Java that local tarékat have emerged. They are to be found throughout the country, in various gradations of orthodoxy and incorporating varying amounts of local pre-Islamic tradition.[\[39\]](#) *Wahdat al-wujûd* mysticism is condemned by most present ulama as heretical, but it is still much alive among the rural population that has not been much influenced by reformist Muslim teaching. Time and again mystical sects teaching a variety of *wahdat al-wujûd* emerge. Many are shortlived and disappear under the pressure of the

orthodox, only to re-emerge years later under the same or another name. South Kalimantan is one region that appears to be particularly fertile ground for the emergence of such sects. M. Nafis al-Banjari's *Al-Durr al-Nafîs* constitutes the scriptural base for various of these sects, of which presently the best-known is the tarékat Junaidiyya, previously known as Aliran Zauq, which was introduced a generation ago by Haji Kasyful Anwar Firdaus.

[\[40\]](#)

Do the Tarékat Have a Future?

Tarékat with mass following used to be a rural phenomenon, and the numbers of followers appear to have reached peaks in times of crisis. In recent years, the introduction of electricity, television, metalled roads and cheap motorized transport in the villages appears to have significantly weakened the following of previously popular tarékat in certain regions, though by no means everywhere.

On the other hand, some of the tarékat have found a new following among the urban population, and not only among its most traditional segments. Certain tarékat teachers appeal to an educated public and have found disciples among the highest social circles. Curing of problems such as drug addiction and

healing of psychosomatic disorders constitute one of the activities through which they attract numerous new disciples to their tarékat. Partially overlapping with this group, there are people of Muslim modernist or secular backgrounds who, feeling dissatisfied with the rational but unemotional religious atmosphere in which they grew up, seek direct, emotional religious experience in a tarékat.

Some tarékat also fulfill a number of functions that are not religious even in a loose sense. Each tarékat is also a social network, and membership in a tarékat yields a number of potentially useful social contacts. Especially for recent migrants to the city, the tarékat network may prove useful in finding work, a place to live, help in difficulties, etcetera. The tarékat is for some members also a replacement of the family, offering the warmth and protection they do not find elsewhere. The gradual demise of traditional society appears not, as has at times been assumed, to cause the inevitable decline of the tarékat but rather to give them new social functions and entire new categories of followers.

[1] Two articles surveying, from different perspectives, the debate and various theories proposed are: G.W.J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam?", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 124 (1968), 433-459, and Syed Farid Alatas, "Notes on Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago", *The Muslim World* 75 (1985), 162-175.

[2] The best overview of the emergence and development of the sufi orders is still J. Spencer Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

[3] A.C. Milner, "Islam and the Muslim state", in: M.B. Hooker (ed), *Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), pp. 23-49.

[4] Pim Schoorl, "Islam, Macht en Ontwikkeling in het Sultanaat Buton", in: L.B. Venema (editor), *Islam en Macht*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987, pp. 52-65.

[5] Anthony H. Johns, "The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 9 (1961), 143-161; idem, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions", *Indonesia* 19 (1975), 33-55.

[6] Ph.S. van Ronkel, "Account of Six Malay Manuscripts of the Cambridge University Library", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 6e volgrees, 2 (1896), 1-53.

[7] These texts have been edited with translations by G.W.J. Drewes: *Een Javaanse Primbon uit de Zestiende Eeuw* (Leiden: Brill, 1954); *The Admonitions of Seh Bari* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969); *An Early Javanese Code of Muslim Ethics* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978).

[8] Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya University Press, 1970); G.W.J. Drewes & L.F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* (Dordrecht-Holland: Foris, 1986).

[9] C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Samsu'l-Din van Pasai* (Leiden: Brill, 1945).

[10] Anthony H. Johns, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet* (Canberra: ANU, 1965).

[11] Takeshi Ito, "Why did Nuruddin ar-Raniri leave Aceh in 1054 A.H.?", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 134 (1978), 489-491.

[12] Raniri's mystical views are analyzed in: Ahmad Daudy, *Allah dan Manusia dalam Konsepsi Syeikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1983); Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Hujjat Al-Siddiq of Nur Al-Din Al-Raniri* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986).

[13] C. Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjèhers* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij & Leiden: Brill, 1894), vol. II, 256-264 describes Rifa`iyya-related practices (*debus*) in late 19th-century Aceh which may belong to a second incursion of the order, well after Raniri's time. The same practices became popular in Banten (West Java) in the mid-18th century, see Martin van Bruinessen, "Shari`a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate", *Archipel* 47 (1994).

[14] D.A. Rinkes, *Abdoerraef van Singkel. Bijdrage tot de Kennis van de*

Mystiek op Sumatra en Java (Dissertation Leiden, 1909).

[15] Snouck Hurgronje's observations in the second volume of his *Mekka* (The Hague, 1889) still constitute the most detailed and valuable source on the social and intellectual life of the Jawah community in Mecca.

[16] See Anthony H. Johns, "Friends in Grace: Ibrahim Al-Kurani and `Abd Ar-Ra'uf Al-Singkei", in: S. Udin (ed.), *Spectrum: Essays Presented to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1978), pp. 469-85, and the same author's articles "al-Kurani" and "al-Kushashi" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

[17] Martin van Bruinessen, "The Tariqa Khalwatiyya in South Celebes", in: Harry A. Poeze & Pim Schoorl (eds.), *Excursies in Celebes* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991), pp. 251-270.

[18] The Arabic original of this work, *Al-Manaqib al-Kubra*, may be lost, but numerous manuscript copies of the Malay version are extant. This Malay text is edited in Ahmad Purwadaksi's dissertation, *Ratib Samman dan Hikayat Syekh Muhammad Samman* (Fakultas Sastra UI, Jakarta, 1992).

[19] Thus the Malay *Hikayat Syekh Muhammad Samman*, see Purwadaksi, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-6.

[20] See van Bruinessen, "The Tariqa Khalwatiyya ...".

[21] The Meccan teachers of the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya receive extensive coverage in my book *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992, English edition forthcoming at KITLV Press, Leiden).

[22] This argument is presented in more elaborate form in Martin van Bruinessen, "Shari`a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate" *Archipel* 47 (1994).

[23] The said local text, *Sya`ir Perang Mèntèng*, is edited in: M.O. Woelders, *Het Sultanaat Palembang, 1811-1825* ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 194-222.

[24] Described in Helius Sjamsuddin, "Islam and Resistance in South and Central Kalimantan in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", in: M.C. Ricklefs (ed.), *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context* (Clayton, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991), pp. 7-17. The text of the *râtib* used is translated in P.J. Veth, "Het Beratip Beamal in Bandjermasin", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 3 no.1 (1869), 331-349.

[25] Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888*. 's Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1966.

[26] Kenneth Robert Young, *The 1908 Anti-Tax Rebellion in Minangkabau (West Sumatra): A Socio-Economic Study of an Historical Case of Political Activism Among Indonesian Peasants* (Ph.D. thesis, University College, London, 1983); Werner Kraus, *Zwischen Reform und Rebellion: Über die*

Entwicklung des Islams in Minangkabau (Westsumatra) Zwischen den Beiden Reformbewegungen der Padri (1837) und der Modernisten (1908) (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984), pp. 170-200.

[27] The propagation of these tarekat throughout the Archipelago is discussed in detail in van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah*. Cf. Martin van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of the Naqshbandi Order in Indonesia", *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 150-179.

[28] See the extensive critique of the concept in R.S. O'Fahey & Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", *Der Islam*, forthcoming, and the discussion in R.S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990), pp. 1-9.

[29] Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*; Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, pp. 107-116. Ibn Idris was taught one brief prayer by al-Khidir, in the presence of the Prophet; he took other prayers and techniques from his human teacher `Abd al-Wahhab al-Tazi, whose teacher `Abd al-`Aziz al-Dabbagh had similarly received them from al-Khidir.

[30] G.F. Pijper, "De Opkomst der Tidjaniyyah op Java", in Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica* (Leiden: Brill, 1934), pp. 97-121.

[31] Moeslim Abdurrahman, "Tijaniyah, Tarekat Yang Dipersoalkan?" *Pesantren* V no.4 (1988), 80-89.

[32] Hamdan Hassan, *Tarekat Ahmadiyah di Malaysia. Suatu Analisis Fakta Secara Ilmiah* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990).

[33] I have in vain tried to find remnants of the Sanusiyya or Idrisiyya in South Sulawesi. The well-known Bugis `alim Muhammad As`ad (d. 1953) did meet Ahmad al-Sharif and even became his secretary for a brief period before returning to Sulawesi in 1928; he does not appear to have taught the tarekat, however. See Muh. Hatta Walinga, *Kiyai Haji Muhammad As'ad: hidup dan perjuangannya* (Skripsi Sarjana, Fakultas Adab, IAIN Alauddin, Ujung Pandang, 1401/1980).

[34] Mustafsirah Marcoes, *Perkembangan Tarekat Idrisiyyah di Pesantren Fat-hiyyah Pagendingan Tasikmalaya* (Skripsi Sarjana, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 1984).

[35] The writings of these three teachers, Hasan Maulani of Lengkong, Malangyuda of Rajawana Kidul and Nurhakim of Pasir Wetan, which were confiscated, are analyzed in G.W.J. Drewes, *Drie Javaansche Goeroe's. Hun Leven, Onderricht en Messiasprediking* (Dissertation, Leiden, 1925).

[36] For more detailed information on the Akmaliiyya and possible origins of its technique of meditation, see my "Najmuddin al-Kubra, Jumadil Kubra and Jamaluddin al-Akbar: Traces of a Kubrawiyya Influence in Early Indonesian Islam", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, forthcoming.

[37] The mystical exercises are described in Syafi'ah, *Tareqat Khalwatiyyah Shiddiqiyah di Desa Losari Kecamatan Ploso Kabupaten Jombang* (Skripsi Sarjana, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 1989). See also Qowa'id, "Tarekat Shiddiqiyah: Antara Kekhusyukan dan Gerakan", *Pesantren IX*, No.1 (1992), 89-96.

[38] Abdurrahman Wahid, "Penelitian Pesantren Kedunglo, Kodya Kediri", *Bulletin Proyek Agama dan Perubahan Sosial* no.4 (Jakarta: LEKNAS-LIPI, 1977), 18-26; Moeslim Abdurrahman, "Sufisme di Kediri", in: *Sufisme di Indonesia* [=Dialog, edisi khusus] (Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama, Departemen Agama R.I., 1978), pp. 23-40.

[39] A number of these local tarekat are described in Djohan Effendi, "Über Nichtorthodoxe und Synkretistische Bruderschaften im gegenwärtigen Indonesien", in: Werner Kraus (ed.), *Islamische Mystische Bruderschaften im heutigen Indonesien* (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1990), pp. 100-130.

[40] Ahmad Zaini H.M., *Aliran Zauq di Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Utara* (Risalah Sarjana Muda, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Antasari, Banjarmasin, 1975); H.D. Mirhan, *Tarekat Junaidy di Halong Dalam Agung Harnai. Sebuah Studi Perbandingan* (Skripsi Sarjana, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Antasari, Banjarmasin, 1983).