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THE TAKIYA OF THE MAWLAWIYYA IN TRIPOLIS

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In a brief paragraph in the autobiographical accounts in his *al-Manār wa'l-Azhar*, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā recorded his visit to the *takīya* of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis some time in the 1880's¹. During this visit he publicly denounced Mawlawī ritual and its practitioners, which remained the talk of the town for a long time thereafter. He himself seems to have looked upon the occasion as a crucial event in his life, since he presents his account² explicitly as "my first public rejection of the members of the sufi orders". Riḍā, who would have been in his late twenties at the time, describes the event as follows:

"It was said to me: Don't you want to watch the muqābala³ of the Mawlawiyya in their *takīya*, which resembles Paradise, lying on the bank of the river Abū °Alī ? I said yes, and I went along with those who were going after the Friday prayer. It was the opening of the season for these meetings in the spring⁴. I sat down in the spectators' portico. The sight of the gardens with orange trees was plea-

¹ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa'l-Azhar*, Cairo 1353, 171-172.

² The same account is included in Shakīb Arslān, *al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā aw Ikhā° °Arba°in Sana*, Damascus 1937, 95f.

³ I. e. the *samā°*.

⁴ Traditionally, the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis held four public *samā°* sessions annually, all in April; cf. Muḥammad Durnayqa, *al-Turuq al-Sūfiyya wa Mashāyikhuhā fi Tarāblus*, Tripolis 1984, 299, 301.

sing to the eye, the scent of their flowers was pleasing to the nose, and the murmur of the river below was pleasing to the ear until it was time for the *muqābala*, when Mawlawī darwishes appeared before us, who had gathered for their session, facing the spectators' portico and with their official *shaykh* in the seat of honour. There were handsome beardless youths among them, dressed in snow-white gowns like brides' dresses, dancing to the moving sounds of the nay, turning skillfully and swiftly so that their robes flew out and formed almost equal circles, at regular distances and not encroaching on one another. They stretched out their arms and inclined their necks, and passed in turn before their *shaykh* and bowed to him. I said: 'what is this?'. It was said: 'This is the *dhikr* of the ṭarīqa of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, the author of the noble *Mathnawī*'.

I could not control myself, and stood up amidst the spectators and shouted at the top of my voice something like this: 'O people or [perhaps] Muslims! These are forbidden acts, which one is neither allowed to look at nor to be silent about, since that would be to accept them. To those who commit them God's word applies, "They have made their religion a joke or a game". I have done what I was obliged to do, leave now and may God bless you. "Then I left the place and quickly retraced my footsteps to the city. As I was going I looked back, and I found behind me a small number who had left [returned], while the greater number stayed on and neither disapproved of me nor of the Mawlawiyya [al-qawm]."⁵

The *takīya* where Ridā voiced his public protest was constructed in the year 1184 : 1770, as mentioned in an inscription over the entrance⁶, probably at the expense of a certain Mehmed Khulūṣī who is referred to in the inscription as the person who revived the order in Tripolis⁷. This building probably replaced the Mevlevihâne, locally known as al-Dar-

⁵ Ridā, 172.

⁶ The marble plaque with this inscription was still in place when I visited the *takīya* in September 1991.

⁷ Cf. Durnayqa, 297.

wīshiyā⁸, which was visited by Ibn Maḥāsīn (d. 1053: 1642) in the year 1048: 1638. Unlike Riḍā, this earlier visitor expressed the wish that "God would grant the continuity of the beautiful *dhikr* till the day of resurrection". According to Ibn Maḥāsīn's account, the original *takīya* was constructed in the year 1028: 1619 by Ṣamsunjī °Alī, a military officer⁹. While on an excursion Ṣamsunjī °Alī was struck by the beauty of the site which, as he felt, "required the construction of an establishment for the Mawlawiyya". This he accomplished and he also established a *waqf* in support of the *takīya*¹⁰.

The beauty of the place was such that °Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulūsī, who visited Tripolis in the year 1700, glorified the *takīya* in a *qaṣīda* as "a heaven . . . on which Tripolis prides itself"¹¹. The account of his visit to Tripolis, *al-Tuḥfa al-Nābulusiyya fī al-Riḥla al-Tarabulusiyya*, contains a description of some of the features of the *takīya*¹². The establishment and its location are also celebrated by °Abd al-Raḥmān ibn °Abd al-Razzāq al-Dimashqī (d. 1725), the one-time *khaṭīb* of the Sināniyya mosque in Damascus. In a *qaṣīda* he explains enthusiastically that the *takīya* is for Tripolis what flowers are for the bride¹³.

We know neither the reasons for the discontinuity of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis, some time in the first half of the 18th century, nor the fate of the *takīya* and the *waqf* established in support of it. Yet, the earliest *waqf* may well have been one of the *awqāf* which later came to be recorded as sources of revenue which were spent on the *takīya* (*zāwīya*), on those resi-

⁸ For a reproduction of a probably mid-nineteenth-century lithograph representing the *takīya*, see °Umar °Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Ta'rikh Ṭarāblus al-Siyāsī wa'l-Ḥadārī °abr al-° Uṣūr*, vol. 2, Tripolis 1981, 426.

⁹ Yaḥyā b. Abi'l-Ṣafā b. Aḥmad al-ma°rūf bi-ibn al-Maḥāsīn, *al-Manāzil al-Maḥāsiniyya fī'l-Riḥla al-Ṭarāblusiyya*, ed. and introd. by Muḥammad °Adnān al-Bakhīt, Beirut 1981, 76.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ °Abd Allāh Ḥabīb Nawfil, *Tarājim °Ulamā° wa Udabā° al-Fayḥā°*, Tripolis 1929, 275. Published by the Tripolis-branch of the Lebanese University in a photomechanical reprint under the title *Tarājim °Ulamā° Ṭarāblus wa Udabā°ihā*, Tripolis 1984.

¹² °Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulūsī, *al-Tuḥfa al Nābulusiyya fī'l-Riḥla al-Ṭarābulusiyya*, (ed. H. Busse) Beirut 1971, 73ff.

¹³ Nawfil, 276.

ding there, on the *murīds* of the Mawlawīya order¹⁴, and which provided a regular income for its *shaykh*¹⁵. Apart from payments from *waqf* revenues, we know that one *shaykh* of the *takīya* al-Mawlawiyya in Tripolis, a certain °Alī ibn Muḥammad, who held office in the sixties of the seventeenth century, received a regular income for his daily reciting of a part of the Qurʾān at the grave of Aḥmad Bāshā the former Ottoman gouvernor of the province of Tripolis¹⁶. The fact that this *shaykh* owned slaves (and manumitted them) suggests that he was a man of considerable means¹⁷.

The *shaykh* of the *takīya* at the time of Ibn al-Maḥāsin's visit was a certain Mehmed Efendī al-Rūmī. Ibn al-Maḥāsin attended his majlis and listened to his comments on the Mathnawī.¹⁸ He also mentions his meeting with a learned resident of the *takīya*, Fidāʾī Dede al-°Antābī, who had translated works by Farīd al-Dīn al-°Attār and was the author of a didactical *manzūma* intended for Turkish speakers learning Arabic, and of a *Dīwān* in Turkish¹⁹. None of these writings have come down to us.

This is also the case with the writings of °Abd al-Jalīl al-Sunaynī al-Ṭarābulsī, who was *shaykh al-Mawlawiyya* in Tripolis in the second half of the 17th century till his death in 1102: 1690. He was probably succeeded by a certain Ismāʿīl Dede, who is on record as *shaykh* of the Mevlevi-hāne of Tripolis in the beginning of 1695²⁰. His predecessor, °Abd al-Jalīl, traced his genealogy back to Mawlānā and all the later *mashāyikh* of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis are his descendants, locally known as the Āl al-Mawlawī²¹. Two of these *shaykhs* are buried in a chamber next to the

¹⁴ Samīh Zayn, *Taʾrīḥ Ṭarāblus*, Beirut 1969, 447.

¹⁵ Cf. Başbakanlık Arşivi (B. A.), Cevdet Evkaf 17098 (13 Dhū'l-Qaʿda 1106). I am grateful to Thierry Zarcone (Paris/Istanbul) for bringing this document to my attention.

¹⁶ Nahdī Subḥī al-Ḥimsī, *Taʾrīḥ Ṭarābulus min khilāl Wathāʾiq al-Maḥkama al-Sharʿiyya fi al-Nisf al-Thānī min al-Qarn al-Sābiʿ °Ashar al-Milādī*, Tripolis 1986, 237.

¹⁷ Ibid. , 222f.

¹⁸ Ibn Maḥāsin, 75.

¹⁹ Ibid. , 74.

²⁰ Cf. B. A. , Cevdet Evkaf 17098, 13 Dhū' l-Qaʿda 1106.

²¹ Nawfil, 31.

main entrance of the the Madrasa al-Shamsiyya in the centre of Tripolis²². Others are buried in the *takīya* of the Mawlawiyya, as are *shaykhs* not belonging to the Āl al-Mawlawī²³.

The first of the Āl al-Mawlawī to hold the office of *shaykh* of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis was Muṣṭafā al-Mawlawī, who died in Beirut in 1223: 1808/1809²⁴. It is likely that this *shaykh* is identical with Muṣṭafā al-Mawlawī mentioned in the inscription inside the *takīya*, recorded in °Umar Tadmurī's book on the history of several Islamic monuments in Tripolis²⁵. Muṣṭafā's brother Aḥmad established a family *waqf* known as the *waqf banī Sunayn*, which is presently supervised by one of Muṣṭafā's descendants, Riyād al-Mawlawī (see below). In the course of time, the Āl al-Mawlawī also obtained control over the Mawlawī *takīyas* in Jerusalem and Aleppo. In these towns, the office of *shaykh al-tarīqa al-Mawlawiyya*, which coincided with the *mashyakha* of the *takīya* and entailed the office of supervisor (*mutawallī*) of its *awqāf*, was frequently held by members of this family²⁶.

Of the European visitors to Tripolis in the nineteenth century, two have left us descriptions of the *takīya* in the 1830's and the 1870's respectively²⁷. These descriptions neither mention the names of the *shaykhs* of the establishment at the time nor do they give any information concerning these officials. Thus, it was not until the end of the 19th century that a member of the Āl Mawlawī was again recorded as the incumbent to the

²² On the Madrasa al-Shamsiyya, see Hayat Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture of the Mamluk City of Tripolis*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1983, 125-7, 203-8; and °Umar °Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Ta'rikh wa Āthār Masājid wa Madāris Tarābulus fī'l-°Aṣr al-Mamālīk*, Tripolis 1974, 278ff. The latter author also gives biographical data and further references concerning some of the early *shaykhs* of the Āl al-Mawlawī, also known as Banī Sunayn.

²³ Neither the members of the Āl al-Mawlawī in Tripolis, nor the officials in the Mudīriyyat al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyya in Tripolis, seem to know the names of the *mashāyikh* buried in the *madrasa* and in the *takīya*.

²⁴ Nawfil, 31.

²⁵ Cf. Tadmurī, *Ta'rikh*, 53f. The marble plaque with the inscription was no longer there at the time of my visit in September 1991.

²⁶ Durnayqa, 298.

²⁷ See Tadmurī, *Ta'rikh*, 52.

mashyakha. This was Muṣṭafā al-Thānī²⁸, who, after his death, was succeeded by his brother Shākīr. Shākīr was in turn succeeded by Muṣṭafā's son Aḥmad, who died in 1328: 1910.

Aḥmad's successor Shafīq b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, who was his paternal nephew, had been initiated and trained by his uncle Muṣṭafā. He combined the *mashyakha* with the office of Director of the Mudīriyyat al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyya in Tripolis, and was deeply involved in Ottoman politics. He was a supporter of the Committee of Union and Progress, and had close contacts with its leadership, in particular with Talāt. These connections seem to have been instrumental in obtaining his appointment to the *mashyakha al-Mawlawiyya* in Tripolis in the year 1910. For this appointment he had been competing with his nephew ʿĀdil b. Aḥmad, who was subsequently appointed to the *mashyakha* of the Mawlawiyya in Jerusalem "to appease him"²⁹.

During the *mashyakha* of Shafīq, who died in 1931, the *takīya* became a centre where the notables of Tripolis regularly met and socialized, while the number of Mawlawī *murīds* increased³⁰. Shafīq was concerned with the material and social development of Tripolis where he was instrumental in providing the city with public waterworks and took part in founding the Dār al-Tarbiyya wa'l-Taʿlīm al-Islāmiyya. His concern with the quality of education and his involvement in politics would seem to explain why he was chosen to be the leader of a delegation of notables from Tripolis who went to Beirut to protest against the repressive measure of closing the schools and dismissing the teachers of Tripolis, taken during the period of the French Mandate. The delegation returned with the promise from the then President of Lebanon, Emile Eddé, that the measure would be replaced³¹.

²⁸ Durnayqa, 299.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Muḥammad Nūr al-Dīn ʿĀrif Miqāṭī, *Tarāblus fī al-Nisf al-Awwal min al-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn Milādī*, Tripolis 1978, 42. See Hikmat Sharīf, *Taʾrīkh Tarāblus al-Shaʿm min Aqdam Azmānihā ilā hadhihi al-Ayyām* (Munā Ḥaddād Yekin & Mārūn ʿĪsā al-Khūrī, eds.), Tripolis 1987, 168 *recto*, for a photograph of the *takīya* taken in the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century.

³¹ Durnayqa, 299-300.

Following the death of al-shaykh Shafīq, a dispute concerning his succession arose among the members of the Āl al-Mawlawī. This led to the intervention of Meḥmed Bāqir Çelebī, the last Çelebī to reside in Konya, who had taken up residence in the *āsitāna* of the Mawlawiyya in Aleppo following the suppression of the sufi orders in Turkey³². His intervention resulted in the appointment of Shafīq's half-brother Ḥusnī to the *mashyakhat al-Mawlawiyya* in Tripolis. His major contender for the office, his nephew Fūʿād b. Shākir was appointed *shaykh* of the *takīya* in Aleppo.

Ḥusnī b. Aḥmad was a man without learning, who had been a trader before assuming the *mashyakha*. His chief merit on record is that he saw to it that the *dhikr* sessions were held regularly as had been customary in the era of his brother, al-shaykh Shafīq. During his *mashyakha*, the *takīya* apparently ceased to function as a centre where the notables of Tripolis met and socialized while discussing matters of religion and politics, as had been the case in Shafīq's days. When Ḥusnī died in 1936, he left no children who had an interest in the affairs of the order. This was one of the factors which smoothed the way for the appointment of Fūʿād's son Anwar to the *mashyakha* of the *takīya* in Tripolis³³ and as *mutawallī* of its *awqāf*³⁴.

Anwar b. Fūʿād al-Mawlawī was born in Tripolis in 1901. He received his formal education in the Ottoman school-system while also studying under a number of well-known *ʿulamāʾ* in Tripolis. Thereafter he went to Aleppo to join the circle of Bāqir Çelebī, who had become the *shaykh* of the *āsitāna* in that city. Anwar served there for the required period before he was granted the *ijāza* of the Mawlawiyya, and seems to have stayed on in Aleppo till 1936 when Bāqir Çelebī appointed him to the *mashyakhat al-Mawlawiyya* in Tripolis. The appointment was approved and confirmed

³² Cf. L. Massignon, *Annuaire du monde musulman 1954*, Paris 1955, 201.

³³ *Durqayna*, 300.

³⁴ See Leiden, F. Or. A. 4653 [preliminary classification], (*Documents relative to the Mawlawiyya in Arab lands*) / III, fo the appointment decree.

by the French High Commissioner in the Lebanon, in accordance with legal requirements at the time³⁵.

Under al-shaykh Anwar³⁶ the *takīya* regained its former lustre as a meeting place for Tripolis' notables in the days of his uncle al-shaykh Shafīq. During this period, it was not only the notables of the Sunnī Muslim community, but also those of the Shīʿa and Christian communities who met with one another in the *takīya*. On one occasion three Christian metropolitans, two Shīʿa and four Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* were present in the reception-room (*manzūl*) of the *takīya*. All this added to its reputation as a centre for inter-religious debate³⁷.

Unlike al-shaykh Shafīq and perhaps the majority of his Arab contemporaries, Anwar deeply deplored the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the Caliphate. In his opinion, the abolition of this institution, which could not be transferred or revived elsewhere, constituted a great danger to Arabs and Muslims. Accordingly, he was against the nationalist tendency of discriminating between Arabs and Turks. This was borne out in the thirties when he actively opposed the Syrian Government's refusal to confirm the son of Bāqir Çelebī as his father's successor in the *mashyakhāt al-Mawlawiyya* in Aleppo, notwithstanding the fact that all Mawlawī *shaykhs* in the world had elected him unanimously at a plenary meeting in the *āsītāna* in Aleppo. Anwar's opposition initially resulted in a decision on the Government's part to have him expelled from Syria. The decision was later revoked and thereafter Anwar conducted discussions with the Syrian Prime Minister and the Minister of Awqāf about the candidacy. In the end the Syrian authorities deposed the son of Bāqir and appointed an Arab candidate to the *mashyakhāt al-Mawlawiyya* in Aleppo against the wish of al-shaykh Anwar and of the Mawlawiyya *shaykhs* outside Syria³⁸.

³⁵ See Leiden, F. Or. A. 4653 (preliminary classification), *Documents relative to the Mawlawiyya in Arab lands* / I and II, for relevant letters.

³⁶ The following section is based on Riyād b. Aḥmad al-Mawlawī, 'Ḥayāt al-shaykh Anwar al-Mawlawī', which is an eleven page unpublished biography (a photocopy is preserved at Leiden University Library in F. Or. A. 4653). This biography was also used by Durnayqa.

³⁷ Durnayqa, 302; cf. 'Ḥayāt', 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 303; cf., 'Ḥayāt', 4f.

During the decade before his death in 1963, Anwar lived a life of worship, prayer and contemplation in the relative isolation of his retreat in the village of Funaydik in ʿAkkār, returning to the *takīya* only in the winter and in Ramaḍān. After the death of al-shaykh Anwar, no successor was appointed to the *mashyakhāt al-Mawlawiyya* in Tripolis. From that time the *takīya* ceased to function, the mosque - which was part of the *takīya* complex - was closed, and most of the buildings were rented out for private accommodation. This *de facto* end of the Mawlawī *ṭarīqa* in Tripolis was made official in 1977 when the *Majlis al-Awqāf al-Idārī* in Tripolis appointed Anwar's son Riyād³⁹ as *mutawallī* of the *awqāf al-Mawlawiyya*. Since he did not hold the *mashyakhāt al-Mawlawiyya*, this appointment indicated that the authorities had accepted the decision of the Āl al-Mawlawī to abolish the *mashyakhā*. It indicates also that an appointment to the office of *shaykh* was no longer deemed a prerequisite to being appointed supervisor of the *awqāf al-Mawlawiyya*⁴⁰. In 1979, Riyād had plans to undertake restoration works on the *takīya* and to revive of the Mawlawiyya order in Tripolis⁴¹. His plans did not materialize in consequence of the Lebanese civil war. During the Syrian bombardment of Tripolis in 1985, the shrine-complex and Semā^ckhāne were hit by a rocket and largely destroyed. Thereafter, much of the woodwork, marble tiles, and blocks of stone from the collapsed walls of the central section of the *takīya* were removed to be re-used elsewhere as building materials. The parts of the complex which are still standing are presently (1991) inhabited by refugees from Beirut.

³⁹ I am grateful to Riyād b. Aḥmad al-Mawlawī for granting me access to a number of relevant historical documents in his possession and for allowing me to photograph most of them.

⁴⁰ Cf. Durmayqa, 304.

⁴¹ Ibid. , 307.

Photographs

1. - and 2. - The *takīya* al-Mawlawiyya in the 1950's.

3. - The *takīya* al-Mawlawiyya as it looks today.

4. - Al-Shaykh Shafīq ibn °Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 1931).

5. - Al-Shaykh Anwar ibn Fū°ād (d. 1963).