From Saint to Eponymous Founder: Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī (d. 797/1394) and His *Ṭarīqa Mawṣiliyya*

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This article offers a case study on the social role of a charismatic shaykh, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī (d. 797/1394), in fourteenth-century Damascus and Jerusalem, and on the way he established his saintly reputation and accumulated cultural capital. Based mainly on a to-date unstudied manuscript written by the shaykh's grandson, it analyzes how the shaykh managed to pass this capital on to his offspring and how they formalized, institutionalized, and consolidated his *ṭarīqa* into a stable social organization, with the Mawṣilī household at its center, which, although never spreading outside of Greater Syria, continued to flourish locally for centuries.

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen tremendous progress in the study of the social aspects of Sufism, especially compared to the heavy focus on philosophy and theology that characterized the field earlier.[1] Two of the main trends in research at the moment are the study of the Sufi *ṭarīqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*)—commonly, though inadequately, translated as "order"—as the main institution associated with the spread of Sufism; and the study of the cult of the Sufi saints, which undoubtedly stood at the core of Sufism and its popularization, especially since the twelfth century. These two developments were closely intertwined, since the *ṭuruq* usually formed around the figures of these saints.[2] Research has, understandably, focused overwhelmingly on the most popular orders, such as the Qādiriyya, Suhrawardiyya, and Naqshbandiyya, and while it has yielded significant developments and nuances in our understanding of the development, institutionalization, and organization of *ṭuruq*, there is still much to be done.[3]

Two key insights that this corpus of research has yielded are (a) that we should generally abandon the notion that projected the institutionalization, and especially the organization, of such groups back to the days of their eponymous shaykhs, but rather examine how exactly the disciples of those shaykhs institutionalized their methods, routinized their charisma,[4] and eventually turned their *ṭarīqa* into an actual social organization; and (b) that a strong emphasis should be placed on local and regional characters in the develop-

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1. A. Papas, "What is a Ṣūfī Institution?," in *Sufi Institutions*, ed. A. Papas (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 1–10.

2. D. Le Gall, "Review Article: Recent Thinking on Sufis and Saints in the Lives of Muslim Societies, Past and Present," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42.4 (2010): 673–87, at 673–75.

3. Studies on the development of the major *ṭuruq* are numerous. For some examples, see Papas, "What is a Ṣūfī Institution?," 6–7.

4. I adopt this term from M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, tr. A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), 358–92, at 358.

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ment of organized Sufism, which necessitates more specific case studies, firmly grounded in their local contexts.

When dealing with Sufism in Greater Syria (*bilād al-shām*) of the Mamluk period (1260–1516), two important observations are in order: First, during this period no substantial *ṭarīqa* grew within this region and spread beyond its borders.[5] Second, Sufi groups tended, overwhelmingly it seems, to form and operate around the charismatic figures of shaykhs, who, while they might have been related to, or affiliated with, one or more of the major *ṭuruq*, acted in complete independence and were strongly rooted in their local settings.[6]

The fact that Greater Syria did not birth any of the great Sufi masters of the period has had a significant impact on the sources available for the study of Sufism in that region. We have nothing comparable to the rich literature available in Persianate Sufism (e.g., in the form of the *malfūẓāt* or *tadhkira* genres) or even the hagiographic literature (*manāqib*) of Maghrebi or some of the Egyptian shaykhs of the period that is available on a far wider scale. Not that such sources were not produced in Mamluk Greater Syria, but what was produced did not acquire popularity and distribution on a similar level over time, or (and perhaps exactly for that reason) the equivalent attention of modern-day scholars.[7] On the other hand, the Mamluk period witnessed an unparalleled surge in historiographical writing, most notably in the form of biographical dictionaries (*ṭabaqāt*; *tarājim*), which were written overwhelmingly by ulema.[8] The combination of these two trends has led to the fact that most of what we know of Sufism in this time and place is based on the writings of non-Sufi actors, which is the complete opposite of our sources on Persianate Sufism.[9]

This does not mean, however, that Sufi shaykhs of Mamluk Greater Syria did not write or that their disciples and descendants did not memorialize their deeds. Nor does it mean that those writings were not preserved. Rather, it means that we need to dig deeper in order to locate those writings and study them, as I hope the present article will demonstrate. It aims to present a case study of one Sufi shaykh, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī (d. 797/1394f.), who was active in fourteenth-century Damascus and Jerusalem, and examine how he established his saintly reputation in society, how he and his descendants institutionalized and consolidated his *ṭarīqa* as a social organization, and how this local Sufi collective related to the more universal Sufi "orders." As such, it offers a case study that is well grounded in a very specific context, and sheds light both on local Sufism in Mamluk Greater Syria and on the dynamics behind the organization of Sufi *ṭuruq* in general.

The case of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī and his *ṭarīqa* offers us a good opportunity for such inquiries, thanks to the relatively rich and varied sources we possess. Al-Mawṣilī was an influential and admired person in his society, very much esteemed by the ulema, and for that reason his biography is included in most of the contemporary biographical literature. He was also a prolific writer, and many of his works have been preserved, which allows us to have a good understanding of the Sufi tradition and milieux he belonged to. This article relies

5. É. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie: Sous les derniers mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans. Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus: Institut Français d'Études Arabes, 1995), 216–17.

6. D. Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*, *Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard Univ., 2008).

7. One recent exception is D. Ephrat, *Sufi Masters and the Creation of Saintly Spheres in Medieval Syria* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2021). This study is based primarily on three hagiographies of medieval Syrian shaykhs who lived during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

8. K. Hirschler, "Studying Mamluk Historiography: From Source-Criticism to the Cultural Turn," in *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies – State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn Univ. Press, 2013), 159–86, at 161–63.

9. B. F. Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 4.

heavily on a virtually unstudied hagiographic work, *Futūḥ al-wahhāb wa-dalāʾil al-ṭullāb ilā manāzil al-aḥbāb*, dedicated to al-Mawṣilī, written by his grandson Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Mawṣilī (d. ca. 858/1454).[10] This manuscript offers a complementary perspective to that of the biographical dictionaries written by the ulema, and is of special importance since it includes—in addition to an exposition of al-Mawṣilī's teachings and deeds—revealing information on the consolidation of his *ṭarīqa*.

AL-MAWṢILĪ'S SUFI BACKGROUND

Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh al-Mawṣilī al-Shaybānī was born in Mosul in 734/1333f. After attaining some basic religious education, he migrated to Damascus as a youth, around the year 750/1349f., and settled in the Qubaybāt suburb.[11] There he continued his learning, concentrating on the Quran and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), while earning his livelihood from weaving. He also spent a period of time in Jerusalem, where he lodged at the Ṣalāḥiyya madrasa, before returning to Damascus.[12] Those two cities were to be the focus of his activity throughout the remaining decades of his life: he would establish a *zāwiya* (Sufi convent) in each one, and spend his time moving back and forth between them.

Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī was initiated into Sufism in Damascus by Quṭb al-Dīn al-ʿAjamī, who was his only shaykh.[13] Very little information can be found regarding this Quṭb al-Dīn (alternatively al-Dimashqī, al-Ardabīlī, al-Iṣfahandī, al-Iṣfahānī, al-Iṣfahīdī, or al-Iṣfahabandī),[14] even though he seems to have been an important authority in fourteenth-century Syrian Sufism. In fact, only Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba devotes a biographical entry (*tarjama*) to him in

10. Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Mawṣilī, *Futūḥ al-wahhāb wa-dalāʾil al-ṭullāb ilā manāzil al-aḥbāb*, MS Chester Beatty 3394 (hereafter *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*). In the handlist composed by A. J. Arberry, the manuscript is erroneously dated to the year 807/1404f., even though there are numerous references scattered throughout the manuscript to later dates. The author states that he started writing the work in Shaʿbān 842*h* (February 1439), while staying in a *ribāṭ* (Sufi lodge) in Sidon (fols. 4a, 171a), and it seems that he completed it in 844 (1440f.) (as can be inferred from statements found on fol. 156a–b). The manuscript itself was copied "from the original manuscript" (*min nuskhat al-aṣl*) in 857 (1453f.), about a year before the author passed away, and it seems that it was copied under his supervision and perhaps even in his own hand. Some additions were made to the text, or in the margins, that note the death of some of the persons mentioned in the work between 844 and 857 (see, e.g., in the margins of fol. 156b). In the margins of fol. 173a it is stated that the manuscript was copied in the year "seven," which Arberry took for 807, but should be 857. He understood the name ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Saiyārī, which appears in the line below, to be the name of the copyist. However, this name is part of a quotation from al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (ed. M. ʿA. ʿAṭā [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998], 341). See A. J. Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts*, vol. 2: *MSS. 3251 to 3500* (Dublin: Emery Walker, 1956), 62–63. I am grateful to the Chester Beatty Library for providing me with a microfilm copy of the manuscript.

11. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 148b; Aḥmad ibn Ḥijjī al-Ḥisbānī, *Taʾrīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*, ed. ʿA. al-Kundurī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003), 1: 131–32.

12. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 147b–148a.

13. Ibid., fol. 148b; Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 132.

14. Regarding the *nisba* (relational epithet), it seems plausible to assume that while in Damascus he was identified by his Iranian origins (ʿAjamī), or a more specific geographical attribution (e.g., al-Iṣfahānī), in the east he was recognized as al-Dimashqī for his settlement in Damascus. In *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, the only source in which I found the shaykh's personal name, he is called Quṭb al-Dīn Rustam al-Ardawīlī; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 148b (while on fol. 160a we have al-Ardabīlī; it is quite common in Arabic sources to interchange al-Ardawīlī and al-Ardabīlī). For some examples of the others he is attributed with, see Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ*, 12 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1934–36), 2: 111, 5: 6; Quṭb al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *al-Risāla al-makkiyya*, ed. I. al-Muḥammadī al-Ṣafawī (Allahabad: Shāh Ṣafī Academy, 2014), 38; D. A. DeWeese, "Two Narratives on Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Raẓī al-Dīn ʿAlī Lālā from a Thirteenth-Century Source: Notes on a Manuscript in the Raza Library, Rampur," in D. DeWeese, *Studies on Sufism in Central Asia*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012), no. XI, 1–43, at 9 n. 24.

his chronicle, which he copied from his master, Ibn Ḥijjī; a bit more information on Quṭb al-Dīn's beginnings is provided in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*.[15] Quṭb al-Dīn was instructed in Sufism by Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Ṣāgharjī, who initiated him into the Suhrawardī-Kubrawī spiritual chain of authorities (*silsila*).[16] I propose, with great certainty, that Quṭb al-Dīn is to be identified as the author of the popular Sufi manual *al-Risāla al-makkiyya*, which is very similar in style and content to al-Suhrawardī's *Ādāb al-murīdīn*.[17] This clearly situates Quṭb al-Dīn's Sufi bent within the Suhrawardī-Kubrawī tradition, which was very much the mainstream of contemporary Sufism.

According to *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī first met Quṭb al-Dīn in a session (*majlis*) that the latter used to hold in the Umayyad Mosque, a meeting that, suitably enough, Quṭb al-Dīn foresaw through his divine intuition two years in advance and al-Mawṣilī envisioned in a dream well before it took place. Quṭb al-Dīn then initiated al-Mawṣilī into Sufism by investing him with the *khirqat al-tabarruk* (robe of blessing), teaching him the *dhikr* (*talqīn al-dhikr*), and authorizing him to initiate disciples into the Path.[18] Since I am not aware of any other lineages Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī was initiated into, we should dismiss the assertion that he was related to the Qādirī *ṭarīqa*.[19] In fact, it was only later that his *ṭarīqa* became affiliated with the Qādiriyya, after his son Ibrāhīm was invested with the *khirqa* by the Qādirī Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ, as will be discussed below. Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is that in the reality of fourteenth-century Syrian Sufism, and especially considering the social networks to which al-Mawṣilī was connected, we should not place much emphasis on his affiliation to one *ṭarīqa* or another. The important point is that he was part of the more conservative milieu of Sufism, which emphasized strict observance of the Sharia as the foundation of Sufi etiquette, and of which the Suhrawardī and Qādirī *ṭuruq* were probably the most representative.[20]

AL-MAWṢILĪ AND THE ULEMA

This mainstream Sufi tradition regarded strict observance of the Sharia and study of the Quran and the hadith as the foundations upon which any advancement on the Sufi path must be based. These Sufis shared much with the ulema, so that it is not that easy to draw a line between them. In the biographical dictionaries of the Mamluk period, it is quite common to find ulema who are lauded for their asceticism (*zuhd*) and other qualities commonly attributed to Sufis, just as it is common to read of Sufis immersed in traditional learning.[21] Likewise, in his writings al-Mawṣilī emphasized the importance of learning the Quran, hadith, and

15. Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh ibn Qāḍī Shuhba*, ed. ʿA. Darwīsh, 3 vols. (Damascus: Institut Français d'Études Arabes, 1977–94), 2: 538–39; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 148b.

16. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 160a; al-Dimashqī, *al-Risāla al-makkiyya*, 99. From here the *silsila* continues backward in accordance with accepted Kubrawī tradition. See DeWeese, "Two Narratives," 9 n. 24; H. Landolt, ed., *Murshīd va murīd: Mukātabāt-i ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Isfarāyinī bā ʿAlāʾ al-Dawlah-i Simnānī* (Tehran: Qismat-i Īrānshināsī, Instītū-yi Faransavī-i Pizhūhishhā-yi ʿIlmī Dar Īrān, 1972), 8–9.

17. On the epistle and its author (unidentified to date), see A. M. Steinfels, *Knowledge before Action: Islamic Learning and Sufi Practice in the Life of Sayyid Jalāl al-dīn Bukhārī Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2012), 48, 54, 168; al-Dimashqī, *al-Risāla al-makkiyya*, 34–41.

18. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 148b.

19. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme*, 226.

20. One of the notable shaykhs who represented this current of Sufism during the fourteenth century was the aforementioned ʿAbdallāh al-Yāfiʿī, who studied with Quṭb al-Dīn and later also met with Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī. It would be extremely problematic to identify al-Yāfiʿī with any one particular *ṭarīqa*: according to Steinfels (*Knowledge before Action*, 48), he invested al-Bukhārī with the *khirqa* of both the Suhrawardiyya and the Qādiriyya.

21. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme*, 293–97; D. Talmon-Heller, "*ʿIlm*, *Shafāʾah*, and *Barakah*: The Resources of Ayyubid

fiqh, of strictly complying with Sharia prescriptions, and of abiding by high moral standards (*adab*).[22] It is said that he even made his disciples attach a piece of paper to their forehead on which was written the slogan *al-taṣawwuf al-khuluq al-ḥasan al-nabawī* ("Sufism is the noble, prophetic moral character").[23] As is also evident in the biographical writings about him, he viewed this as the first and most important principle in the initiation of the Sufi novice.

Al-Mawṣilī himself was highly learned in the traditional Islamic sciences. An affiliate of the Shafiʿi and Ashʿari schools, he composed several works on *fiqh* and is described as one whose legal opinions were cherished by the jurists, many of whom attended his sessions, sought out his advice on juridical matters, and considered him an authority in *fiqh*. Of course, this is a very common topos in Sufi hagiographical writing: the Sufi shaykh who outshines the ulema in their own field. But in the case of al-Mawṣilī, the evidence from non-Sufi works—namely, the *ṭabaqāt* written by illustrious and conservative fifteenth-century ulema such as Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, al-Maqrīzī, or Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī[24]—seems to be in full agreement with the information derived from his hagiography.[25]

However, the ulema did not just respect al-Mawṣilī for his knowledge in *fiqh* or for his awe-inspiring preaching sessions; many of them actually joined his *ṭarīqa* as novices (*murīdūn*).[26] The question is, then, how did they combine the arduous requirements of the *ṭarīqa* with their careers as ulema? Were they full-time members of the *ṭarīqa*, or were they what Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 564/1168f.) has termed *mutashabbihūn* (simulators) or *muḥibbūn* (sympathizers), meaning those who wished to be close to Sufis and have a taste of the Sufi way of life without having to take on the hardships of full-time novices?[27] The fact that al-Mawṣilī named several of these ulema as his deputies (*khulafāʾ*) and authorized them to initiate new disciples into the *ṭarīqa* indicates that they were probably considered full members, which raises the question of what exactly the requirements asked of al-Mawṣilī's *murīdūn* were.[28]

One of the most important principles al-Mawṣilī insists on, if not the most important one, is that his disciples work to earn their living rather than rely on donations or, even worse,

and Early Mamluk Ulama," *Mamluk Studies Review* 13.2 (2009): 23–45; M. H. Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013).

22. E.g., *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 10a.

23. Ibid., fol. 4. And compare with the somewhat different phrasing in ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Buṣrawī, *Taʾrīkh al-Buṣrawī*, ed. A. Ḥ. al-ʿUlabī (Damascus: Dār al-Maʾmūn li-l-Turāth, 1988), 59.

24. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīda fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīda*, ed. M. al-Jalīlī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), 1: 142; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, ed. M. S. Jādd al-Ḥaqq, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1965), 1: 480; Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya*, ed. ʿA. Khān, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1977–80), 3: 201–2.

25. See, e.g., *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 149a–b, regarding several ulema who asked for his advice or attended his session. Cf. the respect Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zuhrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Ṣarkhadī showed to the shaykh, in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 202; or al-ʿUthmānī's praise in *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-kubrā*, a compendium of Shafiʿi jurists, completed in 776*h* (1375f.) during al-Mawṣilī's lifetime; MS Princeton University Library, Garrett Collection 692, fol. 153b. Another contemporaneous eminent jurist who held al-Mawṣilī in high esteem was Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ghazzī (d. 822/1419f.), as attested by his son; *Buhjat al-nāẓirīn ilā tarājim al-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-shāfiʿiyya al-bāriʿīn*, ed. ʿA. al-Kundurī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2000), 158.

26. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 149b, 151b–156b.

27. ʿAbd al-Qāhir Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-murīdīn*, ed. M. Milson (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, Hebrew Univ., 1978), 19; M. Sedgwick, "The Organization of Mysticism," in Papas, *Sufi Institutions*, 335–61, at 348–49.

28. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 151b–152a.

beg.[29] This features prominently in the testaments he addressed to his sons and disciples, while according to the sources, the shaykh himself also worked for his livelihood, "and continued to do so until the end of his life."[30] Vehemently forbidding his disciples to accept charity,[31] under threat of expulsion from the *ṭarīqa*, al-Mawṣilī obviously did not envision for them a life of complete dedication to Sufi practice, of renunciation and seclusion in the *zāwiya*. As a result, his disciples were working men, deeply involved in society. According to an anecdote in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, which confirms that the *ṭarīqa* aspirants worked while on their spiritual journey, the shaykh used to hold his celebrated preaching sessions twice a week, on Sunday and Wednesday, until his disciples complained that this made them miss too much work, as most of them, while seeking advancement on the Path, also had day jobs. Since the custom in Damascus was that Saturday and Tuesday were the days off, his disciples asked him to move his sermons to those days, which he did.[32]

Al-Mawṣilī's *ṭarīqa*, then, fit the ulema very well. They were able to pursue the spiritual Sufi path all while continuing their careers as learned men and keeping their paid positions, even urged to do so.[33] Indeed, among al-Mawṣilī's notable disciples, we find a professor (*mudarris*),[34] a copyist (*nāsikh*),[35] a calligraphy teacher (who also copied many Qurans),[36] a weaver,[37] and more.[38]

AL-MAWṢILĪ AND THE RULING ELITE

Through his esteemed learning, meticulous adherence to the prescriptions of the law, abstention from receiving material goods, and rigorous Sufi lifestyle, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī

29. How well this dictum to reject material offerings was actually kept by al-Mawṣilī and his descendants will be addressed below.

30. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 202. As mentioned, he first worked as a weaver, but when he had children and his expenses grew, he rented lots in the Ghūṭa around Damascus and would plow them, and even purchased some land himself; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 147b–148a, 151a.

31. His requirements of himself and of his progeny were even stricter: he did not accept any paid positions and did not allow them to do so either. However, it is not stated that he demanded such of the rest of his disciples; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 151a.

32. Ibid.

33. Cf. M. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982), 30–31.

34. Shams al-Dīn al-Ṣarkhadī, a celebrated scholar; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 224; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 151b.

35. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Qāṣid, a Hanafī, earned his living from copying books and selling them, mainly manuals on the rituals of the pilgrimage (*manāsik al-ḥajj*) which he sold to pilgrims. He also used to write down al-Mawṣilī's miraculous feats (*karāmāt*), as well as some panegyrics on him; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 155a–b.

36. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ramlī (d. 801/1399f.), who was an expert calligrapher (*kātib*) and taught his art in Jerusalem for many years, also spending a substantial period in Damascus; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 10: 15–16; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr fī al-taʾrīkh*, ed. M. ʿA. Khān, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986), 4: 89–90; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 155a.

37. Aḥmad b. Khafājā al-Ṣafadī (d. 850/1446f.), a reputable shaykh in Safed. Similarly to al-Mawṣilī, he first earned his living from weaving, but gave up this profession and settled for the yield of his orchards; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 1: 292; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 156a–b. He seems to be the grandson of Aḥmad b. Khafājā, who, according to al-ʿUthmānī, was a highly respected jurist in the Safed region, lived in seclusion in the village of Ibnīt (near Safed), earned his living from the yields of the field he plowed, and refused to accept any paid positions or tributes; al-ʿUthmānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ*, fol. 142b; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ al-mukarramīn*, ed. M. A. al-Jādir, 2 vols. (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 2014), 1: 154–56.

38. E.g., Aḥmad al-Ḥujayrānī (d. 827/1423f.), who pierced pearls for a living; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 8: 51.

earned for himself the reputation of a saint (*walī*) among various segments of society.[39] This saintly reputation resulted in the circulation of stories of his miraculous feats, which were witnessed and preserved by his disciples. The acknowledgment he received from esteemed members of the ulema surely enhanced his reputation in society at large, but even more important for his social standing was the veneration he attracted from members of the Mamluk ruling elite.

The Mamluks' veneration for Sufi shaykhs is well documented in the sources, and recognized in scholarship.[40] While modern-day scholars have seen this as a by-product of the Mamluks' Turco-Mongol shamanistic origins, in all likelihood it should be seen as a symptom of the Islamic society into which the Mamluks had integrated—rather than tracing its origins to the Eurasian steppe, we should look for it in the streets of Cairo and Damascus.[41] And so, the veneration al-Mawṣilī received from the Mamluk elite was essentially no different than that from the local Arabic-speaking masses and elite, and was inspired by his charismatic persona in the context of the widespread phenomenon of the cult of Sufi saints.

Al-Mawṣilī's connections with the Mamluk elite were mainly on the local level, but did reach the court in Cairo. Most famously, he was revered by the late fourteenth-century sultan Barqūq, who once even came to the shaykh's *zāwiya* in Jerusalem—where he spent most of his last few years—to offer his respects (and largesse).[42] Especially during Barqūq's second reign (792–801/1390–1399), the shaykh had significant influence over the sultan.[43] We read that he "used to correspond with the sultan and order him [to do] what was most beneficial for the Muslims,"[44] which might be dismissed as typical hagiographic hyperbole if not for

39. Mujīr al-Dīn al-ʿUlaymī, *al-Uns al-jalīl fī taʾrīkh al-Quds wa-l-Khalīl*, ed. ʿA. Y. ʿA. Abū Tabbāna, 2 vols. (Hebron: Maktabat Dandīs, 1999), 2: 262. On the pious qualities that were highly esteemed in medieval Syria, see Reid, *Law and Piety*.

40. See, e.g., A. Schimmel, "Some Glimpses of the Religious Life in Egypt during the Later Mamlūk Period," *Islamic Studies* 4.4 (1965): 353–92.

41. J. Loiseau, *Les mamelouks (XIIIe–XVIe siècle)* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 248.

42. The visit is narrated in virtually all the accounts of the shaykh, and in greatest detail in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*. The context was Barqūq's 796/1394f. campaign into Syria to defend it from Tamerlane's invasion (which was eventually aborted). While marching north from Egypt, Barqūq sent a member of his private retinue (*khāṣṣakiyya*) as envoy to the shaykh, asking him to join the army's lines (which already featured an impressive cadre of Sufis and jurists), so that he would provide them with his blessing (*baraka*) and offer his supplications to God (*duʿāʾ*) for their cause. The shaykh refused to come in person, sending his answer with his son, but promised to perform the requested supplications from Jerusalem. Moreover, the shaykh promised—or predicted—that Tamerlane would not cross the Euphrates, and that the sultan would return safely and come visit the shaykh. The sultan was pleased with the reply, and after the first part of the shaykh's prediction had indeed come true, he came to Jerusalem, on his way back to Cairo, to fulfill its second part. Accompanied by the chief qadi of Egypt, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, the sultan climbed a flight of stairs (*sullam*) to the shaykh's quarters on the second floor of the madrasa, where the shaykh hosted them modestly. Later, the executive secretary (*dawādār*) Qalamṭāy came, accompanied by the preacher (*khaṭīb*) of al-Aqṣā mosque, Sarī al-Dīn, and offered the shaykh a large sum of money (*māl jazīl*) on behalf of the sultan, which the shaykh firmly declined. There is some variation in the sources regarding the identification of the madrasa in which the shaykh's dwelling was located—the Fārisiyya or the adjacent Amīniyya. The identification of al-Mawṣilī and his offspring with both institutions, as well as the Sallāmiyya, which lies just across the street, is corroborated by additional information (on which, see below). On the visit, see *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 150a–151a; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 203; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1: 142; on the location of the madrasa, see M. H. Burgoyne, with D. S. Richards, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study* (London: British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, 1987), 249–51 (on al-Amīniyya), 339 (on al-Fārisiyya); Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 91; Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns*, 2: 262.

43. According to Ibn Ḥijjī (*Taʾrīkh*, 1: 132), the sultan had met with the shaykh and honored him already during his first year as ruler.

44. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 202–3.

some additional, more concrete information, which sheds light on the shaykh's relations with the ruling authorities.

All the sources that mention al-Mawṣilī's relations with the rulers stress that they obeyed his authority, and that he used his influence over them to act as an intercessor, or mediator, for the benefit of others. His intercession requests were accepted, his petitions never rejected.[45] Two sources, one admittedly of a clearly hagiographic nature, while the other much less so, provide more detail.

In *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* we are told that the shaykh would write his petition letters to the rulers on small leaves of paper (*waraqa ṣaghīra*), addressing each with a fixed opening formula: to the sultan he would open with, "From the needy soul (*faqīr*) ʿAbdallāh Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī to the big brother (*al-akh al-kabīr*), the *faqīr*, sultan of the Muslims"; another official he would address as "Brother so-and-so (*al-akh fulān*)."[46] A story follows regarding al-Mawṣilī's relations with the governor of Damascus, the emir Sayf al-Dīn Baydamur al-Khwārazamī (d. 789/1387f.).[47] According to the story, a certain person, who was ill treated by the authorities, came to al-Mawṣilī to ask him to use his influence over the governor in order to redress this injustice. The shaykh wrote to Baydamur, who promised to fix the problem but then neglected to do so. Al-Mawṣilī wrote seven more times, until Baydamur became tired of the affair and muttered, "Two governors in one town! This cannot be!" When his utterance was brought to the shaykh's attention, he said that Baydamur was right; the emir lost his position soon after and was incarcerated in Alexandria. After hearing a voice in his dream, saying "You are not in [Sultan] Barqūq's prison, but rather in al-Mawṣilī's," Baydamur sent envoys from his cell asking al-Mawṣilī to reinstate him to his former position. The shaykh interceded with the sultan on behalf of Baydamur, who was released and reinstated.[48]

This story obviously aims to glorify al-Mawṣilī and follows well-established topoi in Sufi hagiographic tradition, which seek to show that the true men in authority, the de facto and hidden sovereigns on earth, are the saints and not the sultans, who are only rulers outwardly.[49] Still, the story reveals something about the dynamics of the shaykh's role as mediator between rulers and subjects. An even more telling example of this took place in the year 784/1382f., during the first year of Barqūq's reign.

In Shawwāl (December) of that year, the Damascene ulema were stirred up by a controversy, at the center of which stood the Hanafi, pro-Ibn Taymiyya qadi Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz (d. 792/1390f.), who criticized the poet ʿAlī b. Aybak (d. 801/1399f.) for several doctrinal deficiencies found in an ode (*qaṣīda*) he had written in praise of the Prophet.[50] That

45. Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1: 142; Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 132: "[After] his reputation spread widely, the governors (*nuwwāb*) of Damascus (*al-shām*) and the leading emirs used to visit him frequently and obey his commands."

46. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 149b–150a.

47. Baydamur reigned as the sultan's deputy (*nāʾib*) of Damascus seven times during a span of three decades, beginning in 761/1360f. See Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 3: 226–27; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2: 46–47.

48. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 150a. For Baydamur's relations with another contemporary Damascene shaykh, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qūnawī (d. 788/1386f.), who also used to send him petitions of intercession, addressing him in a most disrespectful manner, see al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3: 321; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 3: 208.

49. On this notion and its surprisingly early roots in Sufism, see L. Patrizi, "*Adab al-mulūk*: L'utilisation de la terminologie du pouvoir dans le soufisme médiéval," in *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi* adab, ed. F. Chiabotti et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 198–219.

50. On the *miḥna*, see Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 3: 89–91. This theological dispute was part of the ongoing rivalry between the dominant Ashʿaris of Damascus and the traditionalists who followed Ibn Taymiyya, whose trials (*miḥan*) in the early fourteenth century were one of the peaks of this struggle. For a good (though not comprehensive) bibliography of the vast literature on Ibn Taymiyya's trials, see L. Holtzman, "Accused of Anthropomorphism: Ibn

Shawwāl, a sultanic decree had arrived in Damascus, ordering Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz to be publicly reproached and punished for the views he propounded.[51] After a series of hearings (*majālis*), Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz was sentenced to prison. Desperately trying to avoid the harsh verdict, he wrote a letter to al-Mawṣilī, who does not seem to have been involved in the affair. In the letter Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz pleads with al-Mawṣilī to intervene on his behalf, claiming that he was treated unfairly and that his views were distorted by his opponents. Unfortunately for the poor Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz, al-Mawṣilī, who was a staunch Ashʿari himself, was evidently on the other side of this dogmatic dispute[52] and did not even bother to send a written reply, settling for an oral reproach that he had the envoy convey back to Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz. Desperate, the latter sent another plea, begging al-Mawṣilī to show mercy and use his influence over the ruling elite to help him, but to no avail. Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz ended up losing his paid positions and was incarcerated.[53]

The letter sent by Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz opens a window onto the reality behind the rhetoric of the hagio-biographical sources, which consistently claim that al-Mawṣilī had significant influence over the rulers and that "his intercession requests were always accepted."[54] The fact that al-Mawṣilī chose not to intercede on Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz's behalf is irrelevant; what is important is that he was perceived as capable of doing so.[55] In this regard al-Mawṣilī was an important social broker in Damascene, and even Mamluk, society, one able to mediate between rulers and subjects. This *perceived* ability was an important cultural and social capital. As Jeremy Boissevain has noted, the broker is one who possesses "second order resources," strategic contacts to people who possess "first order resources" (i.e., wealth, lands, political power). This network of contacts is the broker's capital, and he must constantly sustain the notion that he is in possession of those contacts. His reward as a broker

Taymiyya's *Miḥan* as Reflected in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *al-Kāfiya al-Shāfiya*," *The Muslim World* 106 (2016): 561–87, at 567 n. 30. The whole Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz affair was recently studied by Abū ʿUbayda Mashhūr Āl Salmān, whose sympathy for Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz and Ibn Taymiyya is clear. Nevertheless, his study is by far the most complete treatment to date and includes some extremely valuable editions and annotations of the relevant primary sources; Mashhūr Āl Salmān, *Miḥnat Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz al-Ḥanafī shāriḥ al-ʿAqīda al-ṭaḥāwiyya: Asbābuhā wa-mulābasātuhā wa-natāʾijuhā* (Medina: Dār al-Imām Muslim li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawjīʿ, 2018).

51. As a side note, a connection to the Ibn Taymiyya affair can be seen in the statement in the sultanic decree that, "it has come to our attention that there is a group (*jamāʿa*) in Damascus of Shafiʿis, Malikis, and Hanbalis who practice condemned innovations (*bidaʿ*) and adhere to the school of Ibn Taymiyya (*madhhab al-taymiyyīn*)." See Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 3: 89.

52. One of al-Mawṣilī's faithful among the ulema, the highly regarded Shafiʿi jurist Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zuhrī (d. 795/1392f.), tried to help Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz by claiming that there was no legal justification for his punishment; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 3: 90–91; Āl Salmān, *Miḥnat Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz*, 116–25.

53. See Āl Salmān, *Miḥnat Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz*, 132–40. The letters were apparently copied by a student of the aforementioned Shihāb al-Dīn al-Zuhrī, Ḥasan al-ʿAythāwī (d. 801/1398f.), who, according to Āl Salmān (pp. 14–15, 116–17), compiled the documents he found written by Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz regarding his trial.

54. These rare examples that provide actual content to the seemingly rhetorical statements regarding the shaykhs' social involvement are of great importance, since they allow us to approach differently the many similar statements written about other shaykhs, frequently dismissed as purely generic topoi. Compare, for example, the remarks about ʿAbdallāh al-Yūnīnī (d. 617/1221f.), whose commands the local Ayyubid ruler, al-Malik al-Amjad, would always obey. "The content of these orders is lost to history," Daphna Ephrat writes, but when we compare these with well-documented cases, we might get a better sense of the role Sufi shaykhs played as mediators between rulers and society. On al-Yūnīnī, see Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*, 76–79.

55. Almost eight decades earlier, Naṣr al-Manbijī, another Sufi shaykh, held sway over the Mamluk elite. An unstudied source shows that Ibn Taymiyya sent one of his disciples to negotiate with al-Manbijī and try to convince him to influence the emir Baybars al-Jāshnakīr—al-Manbijī's admirer and the de facto ruler in Cairo—to release Ibn Taymiyya. See Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Ghayyānī, *Nāḥiya min ḥayāt shaykh al-islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. M. al-Khaṭīb (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1948), 25–36.

is very rarely monetary, but rather consists of unspecified expectations for future services—credit—in return for his efforts.[56]

Thus, the fact that al-Mawṣilī refused to receive any kind of donation or gift from the rulers, or from anyone else for the matter, seems much less relevant. His relations with the Mamluk emirs, and his perceived influence over them, were extremely important in cementing his social position and building his cultural and social capital. As will be seen below, al-Mawṣilī's successors considered it important to continue in his footsteps in this regard and to maintain their image as brokers, capable of influencing the rulers.

FROM SAINT TO FOUNDER: CONSOLIDATING THE *ṬARĪQA MAWṢILIYYA*

Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī was one of a long list of Sufi shaykhs active in Mamluk Greater Syria. While many of these charismatic shaykhs were also active socially and, like al-Mawṣilī, exerted influence over rulers, only a few managed to translate this position into a long-lasting saintly dynasty, or something that resembles an actual Sufi "order."

Indeed, the dynamics that give rise to an organized Sufi collective, centered around the figure of the shaykh and later around his memory, are extremely nebulous. They naturally differ from one *ṭarīqa* to the other, but one commonality seems to be that all are shrouded in a hagiographical and mythical fog that makes them an especially elusive field for research.[57] What is it that allows one shaykh's *ṭarīqa* to thrive after his death, while others—indeed, most—disperse after his death or do not last longer than one generation?[58] Scholars have emphasized several components that seem to play an integral part in the consolidation of a *ṭarīqa* after the death of its—often eponymous—shaykh: routinizing the shaykh's charisma in institutions, such as the shaykhdom (*mashyakha*) of the *ṭarīqa*, and objects—e.g., his prayer rug; the *khirqa*—and through writing his hagiography;[59] having a collective and sacred space (the *zāwiya*; the shaykh's tomb);[60] dictating specific regulations, customs, and rituals for the members of the *ṭarīqa*, i.e., the *dhikr* formula, seclusion (*khalwa*), etc.; and forming a literary corpus with the writings of the shaykh and his successors.[61]

I would like to emphasize two additional factors, which feature prominently in the case of the Mawṣiliyya, al-Mawṣilī's *ṭarīqa*: an economic base (usually in the form of endowments and land property), and a formalized bequeathal of the shaykhdom to an adequate successor, one capable not just of filling the saintly shoes of the founder, but also of filling the role of

56. J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks*, *Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 147–48, 156–61.

57. Le Gall, "Recent Thinking," 679.

58. A follow-up to this question is what allowed some *ṭuruq* to spread their teachings and organization over large geographical (and cultural) areas (e.g., the Rifāʿiyya, Qādiriyya, etc.), while others, indeed most, remained rooted in their localities, as the Mawṣiliyya was.

59. A. Sabra, "Household Sufism in Sixteenth-Century Egypt: The Rise of al-Sāda al-Bakrîya," in *Le soufisme à l'époque ottomane*, *XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* / *Sufism in the Ottoman Era*, *16th–18th Century*, ed. R. Chih and C. Mayeur-Jaouen (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2010), 118.

60. Although al-Mawṣilī was not buried in his *zāwiya*, but in the Māmillā cemetery outside Jerusalem, it does seem that his tomb became an integral "saintly sphere" for his followers. He seems to have been conscious of the important role it would play for his community: on his deathbed, when his followers gathered around and mourned his inevitable separation from them, he reassured them, saying: "If anyone of you has a need [in the future], let him come to my grave with sincerity and supplicate to God—and it will be fulfilled." Indeed, *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* contains an example of this happening (fol. 151b).

61. L. Ridgeon, "Sufi Orders in the Medieval Period," in *Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, ed. idem (New York: Routledge, 2021), 203–16, at 211–12; É. Geoffroy, "Ṭarīḳa," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *New Edition*, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1950–2004), 10: 243–46, at 245. For some case studies of this process situated in twelfth- to thirteenth-century Greater Syria and based primarily on hagiographic materials, see Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*.

"the essential organizing figure," a Pauline figure who could institutionalize and systematize the founder's ideas.[62] The relatively rich and varied sources we have regarding the Mawṣiliyya allow us to get a good sense of how they operated in this regard, which is a rare opportunity in comparison with other local Sufi collectivities in Greater Syria of the period. In what follows, we will see how the shaykh al-Mawṣilī and his successors consciously—and successfully—deployed all the aforementioned strategies in order to consolidate their *ṭarīqa*. I will distinguish between the acts of the shaykh and those of his successors after his death.

In Bourdieuan terms, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī spent his life accumulating cultural capital—his religious learning and perhaps even more, his saintly reputation—which he managed to convert into social capital (his relations with the learned and ruling elites) and, in a way, despite his vehement rejection of worldly and material gain, into economic capital: he possessed two convents and at least two agricultural estates.[63] He naturally wished to hand down this capital to his descendants. While the bequeathing of material capital would have been a straightforward affair, the capital that Bourdieu labeled as hidden or symbolic may have necessitated the employment of more sophisticated strategies to be successfully inherited by the shaykh's offspring.[64]

Having formed and led an organized Sufi collective that saw him as its authoritative master and leader, al-Mawṣilī had to appoint a successor to lead the group after him. While lineal succession was very common in Sufism, especially since the *baraka* of the shaykh was considered to be inherited by his descendants, it was by no means rare for a shaykh to be succeeded by one of his notable disciples.[65] Before he died, the shaykh's disciples (*jamāʿa*) asked him who would take his place as their leader. The shaykh named his eldest son Ibrāhīm (d. 814/1411f.), who was especially close to him: he was his deputy (*naqībuhu al-khāṣṣ*) and servant (*khādim*) during his last years, and specifically attended to his needs while the shaykh was on his deathbed.[66]

62. M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210–1323* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961), 74; V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (repr. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), 145–50. Several studies have shown the key institutional role played by the successors of the eponymous founders of the Sufi *ṭuruq*. See N. Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2015), 105–10; A. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 173. These dynamics are still to be observed today, in various contexts, and anthropological studies can provide valuable insights into the medieval equivalents (with due caution). See, e.g., Y. Bilu, "The Making of Saints and the Vicissitudes of Charisma in Netivot, Israel," in *The Making of Saints: Contesting Sacred Ground*, ed. J. F. Hopgood (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2005), 23–41. In the absence of an adequate successor, a *ṭarīqa* tended to decline or even vanish; Sedgwick, "Organization," 351.

63. Ibn Ḥijjī (*Taʾrīkh*, 1: 132) states that he purchased an orchard in Jerusalem, while in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* (fol. 151a) we read that he purchased some lands in the Ghūṭa of Damascus. For the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of social capital, see P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," tr. R. Nice, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58.

64. We may consider the shaykh's capital as "saintly capital," which is an embodied form of cultural capital. As Katharine Sykes writes, "In its embodied or personal form [. . .] cultural capital can be passed on via intimate relationships"; K. Sykes, "Sanctity as a Form of Capital," *Studies in Church History* 47 (2011): 112–24, at 114. For stimulating discussions of sanctity as a form of capital, see K. Bacon, *Negotiating Sainthood: Distinction*, Cursilería *and Saintliness in Spanish Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5–21; B. Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21.2 (2003): 150–74.

65. For the tension between succession based on descent (*nasab*) and succession based on merit (*ḥasab*), see I. F. Alatas, "Ṣūfī Lineages and Families," in Papas, *Sufi Institutions*, 374–84; Sedgwick, "Organization," 350–51.

66. The fact that Ibrāhīm is depicted as *khādim*, his father's servant or caretaker during his last days, is meaningful, since, as the shaykh said, "The servants of the shaykhs are their successors (*khuddām al-mashāʾikh khulafāʾuhum*)"; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 157a. On the role of the *khādim* in the context of medieval Sufism, see E. S.

About two years before he died, the shaykh had selected a dozen of his most esteemed disciples—ten from Damascus and two from Jerusalem— as his deputies, with the authority to initiate new disciples to the *ṭarīqa* and to hand down the *khirqa* on his authority. These twelve were chosen from among the *ʿulamāʾ al-ʿāmilūn* (the scholars immersed in pious devotion), which signifies the popularity of his *ṭarīqa* in Syrian scholarly circles and his ambition to link the Sufi path with that of religious learning.[67] Their exact role is not clear, however, and in any case, the leadership of the *ṭarīqa* was to remain in the hands of the shaykh's offspring. While Ibrāhīm became the new shaykh of the *ṭarīqa* and had his seat in the Damascus *zāwiya*, his brother ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 844/1441f.) took over the Jerusalem "branch" as subordinate to his elder brother.[68] Before moving to discuss the activities of these descendants and successors, and their contribution to the consolidation of the *ṭarīqa*, it is important to consider the other steps taken to facilitate the inheritance of the shaykhdom and the organization of the *ṭarīqa*.

Alongside and part of his extremely rich literary output, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī left a testament and very specific orders for his disciples, which do more than just dictate the rules and regulations (*ādāb*) he had them follow.[69] The shaykh's testament (*waṣiyya*),[70] a didactic will of dos and don'ts addressed to his son, and apparently to his disciples at large, is a common genre of Sufi literature, not least within the Suhrawardī tradition.[71] While these writings by al-Mawṣilī deserve a separate study, which could determine how they are situated within the Suhrawardī tradition and conservative Sufism at large, and although they surely had an important role in the creation and preservation of the Mawṣiliyya as a self-identified *Personengruppe*,[72] for the purpose of this paper the more revealing documents are two contracts or oaths (sg. *ʿaqd*) he had his disciples pledge about a year and four months before he passed away.[73]

The two documents, preserved in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, were written by Abū Bakr in Jerusalem within the timespan of a week, between Jumādā II 22, 796 (April 24, 1394), and the 29th of the same month (May 1). He then ordered his son, Ibrāhīm, to copy them and send

Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 206–8.

67. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 151b–152a. See also al-Ghazzī, *Buhjat al-nāẓirīn*, 159.

68. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 5: 84; Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns*, 2: 78–79.

69. For the rules of behavior (*adab*) that al-Mawṣilī envisioned for his disciples, see his *Ādāb al-murīdīn fī taṣawwuf* (ed. Ṣ Kh. al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī [Damascus: Maktabat al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī, 1984]), which is very much in the tradition of *Ādāb al-murīdīn* of Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī and *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif* of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī. This work is of significance since we have very few known handbooks of this sort written by shaykhs who lived in Greater Syria (Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*, 101). However, I suspect that quite a few were written and are just waiting to be discovered. For example, another such guidebook was written by al-Mawṣilī's contemporary and fellow shaykh in Jerusalem, ʿAbdallāh b. Khalīl al-Bisṭāmī (d. 794/1392f.), who was also part of the Suhrawardī tradition and had good relations with al-Mawṣilī. See ʿAbdallāh b. Khalīl al-Asadabādī, *Mishkāt al-miṣbāḥ fī bayān awrād al-masāʾ wa-l-ṣabāḥ*, MS National Library of Israel, Yahuda Collection 1086.5, fols. 21a–44b.

70. Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, *al-Durra al-muḍīʾa fī al-waṣāyā al-ḥikmiyya*, MS Leipzig University Library, Vollers Collection 247.1.

71. See, e.g., A. Salamah-Qudsi, "Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's *waṣiyya* to Sufi Novices: A Testimony to Eleventh Century Sufism," *Le Muséon* 132.3–4 (2019): 509–34; E. S. Ohlander, "Situating Group, Self, and Act in the Medieval Sufi *ribāṭ*: The *Kitāb zād al-musāfir wa-adab al-ḥāḍir* of ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī (d. 655/1257)," in Chiabotti et al., *Ethics and Spirituality*, 419–48; and compare al-Mawṣilī's *waṣiyya* to that of his aforementioned contemporary al-Bisṭāmī (*Waṣiyyat sayyidī ʿAbdallāh b. Khalīl al-Bisṭāmī li-baʿḍ murīdīhi*, MS National Library of Israel, Yahuda Collection 1086.6, fols. 45a–50a).

72. Ohlander, "Situating Group," 422.

73. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 166a–171a.

those copies to "the rest of the shaykh's disciples in the various districts of Greater Syria (*murīdī al-shaykh bi-l-bilād al-shāmiyya*)."[74] The documents enjoin the shaykh's disciples to stay together, be kind and compassionate to, and rely on, one another, and to basically act as a solidarity group.[75] Other than that, the lion's share focuses on the issues that were most important to the shaykh and that obviously troubled him more than anything else when envisioning the future of his *ṭarīqa*: to keep the tenets of the Sharia at the core of the Path; to beware of what he considered unwarranted innovations and deviations—such as the exceedingly popular philosophies of Ibn al-ʿArabī; and to abstain from receiving any kind of donations or charity from others, while working for a living. The prominent place the shaykh devotes to these issues is evidence not just of the importance he assigns them, but also of his concern that his disciples would deviate from his teachings in these points. In an era in which Sufis received increasingly more stipends and allocations, especially from the ruling elites, the shaykh's concern was surely not divorced from reality.[76] Indeed, his strict prohibition of accepting any kind of benevolence is the main theme of these oaths, and he even warns that if any member of his *ṭarīqa* should accept such an offering, he is to be excommunicated by his peers.[77] It is obvious that the shaykh felt that this particular stipulation—which was certainly not merely a stipulation but a key principle in his *ṭarīqa*—was the most troublesome, and hence in the greatest danger of being neglected by his descendants and disciples, and that is why he devoted such a substantial share of the documents to it. He even names some occupations that he sees as suitable to accompany progress on the Path, such as guarding orchards and harvesting.[78]

The two documents were to be treated as binding oaths on all members of the *ṭarīqa*, and the shaykh attached to them strikingly meticulous instructions to ensure this: he ordered that they be read aloud three times in one public assembly (*majmaʿ*) of all the members—junior as well as senior—who were all to put their signatures on them. Those who were unwilling to sign and accept the heavy stipulations imposed by the shaykh could not continue to be part of the community, which, according to the shaykh, did not bother him since, "I have no desire for a plentitude of disciples (*mā anā rāghib fī kathrat al-atbāʿ*)."[79] The shaykh also stipulated who was to read the letters in the assembly (a certain Muḥammad al-ʿUthmānī, due to his pleasant voice), and that the letters be kept, with

74. Ibid., fol. 166a.

75. Ibid., fols. 166a–167a.

76. The same is true regarding the dangers of abandoning the prescriptions of the Sharia or adopting popular and appealing philosophies and practices that had gained sway in Sufism, such as the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and the *ittiḥādiyya*, or other kinds of "philosophical Sufism," against which al-Mawṣilī specifically warns (*Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 161b). Another practice al-Mawṣilī cautions his disciples about adopting is the use of musical instruments in the performance of *samāʿ* (fol. 169a), which was a popular practice in Sufism and the topic of an ongoing debate, both between Sufis and jurists and within Sufi circles. See A. Gribetz, "The *Samāʿ* Controversy: Sufi vs. Legalist," *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 43–62.

77. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 167b–168a.

78. Ibid., fol. 169b.

79. Ibid., fol. 168a.

the disciples' signatures on them, in the custody of another disciple, one Aḥmad b. ʿArab,[80] and read out again every two months.[81]

These detailed oaths, binding the disciples in obligation to the shaykh, along with certain allusions in the texts to the shaykh as a communal and religious leader analogous to the Prophet among his Companions,[82] and the positioning of his son Ibrāhīm as his successor—in the shaykh's direct appointment of him as such and as the one who copied and sent out the documents—were meant to ensure that the shaykh's disciples would preserve the group identity after his death, under the leadership of his son. It should be seen not just as the shaykh's way of ensuring the continuity of his teachings, but also as his way to bequeath his cultural capital to his descendants.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAWṢILIYYA

After the shaykh's death, his son Ibrāhīm inherited the leadership of the *ṭarīqa*, as arranged. Ibrāhīm left Jerusalem and settled in the Damascus *zāwiya*, while his brother, ʿAbd al-Malik, headed up the Jerusalem *zāwiya*. For Ibrāhīm, his brothers, and their descendants, it was especially important to portray themselves as molded in the image of their ancestor and as following strictly in his footsteps. Indeed, reading the descriptions of Ibrāhīm and other shaykhs of the family—whether in the hagiographic *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* or in other, supposably more "neutral," sources—the common theme is the ways in which they resembled their saintly ancestor and continued his work.

The author of *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, Abū Bakr's grandson and Ibrāhīm's nephew and close disciple, seems to try to legitimize the succession of the shaykhdom within the family. He writes that, at first, many of the ulema doubted Ibrāhīm's ability to reach the spiritual rank of his father, but that he quickly showed that he was more than capable of the task. Soon his reputation spread far and wide, he started performing miraculous feats, and he became "the sultan of his age."[83] Great emphasis is placed in the sources on the ways in which Ibrāhīm followed his father. The short biographical notice that al-Sakhāwī devotes to Ibrāhīm is indicative of this tendency:

> The righteous and pious shaykh, Ibrāhīm, son of [. . .] Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī: He became the sole shaykh [of the *ṭarīqa*] after his father. He walked in his father's path of not accepting the people's donations or their tributes. He lived in al-Qubaybāt, in his father's house, and had a *zāwiya* and a mosque. The notables from among the jurists and the Mamluks (*al-turk*) used to

80. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿArab al-Raḥbī is mentioned as one of the twelve deputies appointed by al-Mawṣilī (ibid., fol. 152a). He is described as a scholar (*ʿālim*), a Hanafi, and a "friend of God" (*walī Allāh*), who would copy the shaykh's works, as well as the prose and poetry of his disciples, and write down stories of the shaykh's *karāmāt* and mystical states (*aḥwāl*). The shaykh cherished him for this service. Because he was appointed as one of the twelve, the second of the two documents was addressed to him, and because the designated successor Ibrāhīm was staying with his father in Jerusalem, it seems probable that Ibn ʿArab oversaw the Damascus *zāwiya* during the shaykh's last years, and that the shaykh envisioned him as continuing to play an important role in the *ṭarīqa* after his death.

81. This is stipulated at the end of each document; ibid., fols. 168b, 170b.

82. For example, the first document starts with the Prophet's *duʿāʾ* to God, "Bless them for my sake and bless me for their sake" (*bārik Allāh fīhim lī wa-bārik lahum fiyya*), the phrasing of which is later repeated regarding the shaykh and his disciples. See *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 167a, 168b. Regarding the popular analogy in Sufism between the relations between the shaykh and his disciples and those of the Prophet and his Companions, see Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*, 50.

83. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 157a–b.

frequently visit him, and whenever he gave them an order they complied, since he was greatly venerated.[84]

In addition to the rejection of material donations,[85] Ibrāhīm also continued his father's practice of arranging scholarly gatherings on Saturdays and Tuesdays, and, like him, was proficient in *fiqh* and the exoteric sciences, and highly respected by the ulema, five of whom he appointed as his deputies.[86] His influence over the ruling elite, who, we are told, always accepted his petitions for intercession (*shafāʿāt*), was considerable. According to *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, Ibrāhīm saw it as his duty to serve the people and look after their interests, calling it his devotion (*hādhihi ʿibādatī*).[87] When an oppressed person would come to him, he would immediately write a letter to the sultan, the governor, or another state official to intercede on his behalf. Ibn Ḥijjī remarks that Ibrāhīm would write these petitions on leaves of paper (*awrāq*).[88] According to *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, Ibrāhīm would harass the governor of Damascus, the emir Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī (who was later to become the sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad),[89] with petitions in which he addressed him harshly, but due to his admiration for the shaykh, the governor was unable to reject his requests.[90] The governor used to visit the shaykh, honor him, and once even told him, "You are the prophet of this city."[91] Thus, like his father, Ibrāhīm acted as a social broker, whose relations with the ruling elite increased his prestige in society.

One way Ibrāhīm outdid his father was in his multiple pilgrimages to Mecca: nineteen times versus "several times" (*ghayra marra*).[92] On three occasions Ibrāhīm even entered the state of ritual purity (*iḥrām*) already from his dwelling in Damascus, and three more times from Jerusalem. In his annual pilgrimages he was followed by a group of his disciples, for whom he took care of provisions for the journey, while performing all kinds of rituals en route.[93] Symbolically, he died on a return trip from Mecca, and was buried at the pilgrimage stop of Tabūk. His tomb there became an object of visitation (*ziyāra*) for local Bedouin.[94]

84. Al-Sakhāwī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 60. Cf. al-Ghazzī, *Buhjat al-nāẓirīn*, 157.

85. See also al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 1: 36.

86. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 157b. One of the five was the shaykh Aḥmad al-Aqbāʿī (d. 853/1449f.), who later established his own *zāwiya* in Damascus and had many followers of his own. It is not possible at this stage to gauge the relationship between al-Aqbāʿī's *zāwiya* and group of followers and those of the Mawṣiliyya. On al-Aqbāʿī, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 2: 255; *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 156a.

87. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 157b.

88. Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 970: *wa-kāna yaktubu al-awrāq ilā arbāb al-dawla kullihim fī qaḍāʾ ḥawāʾij al-nās wa-qalla mā turaddu awrāquhu*.

89. Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī was appointed governor (*nāʾib*) of Damascus in 804/1402f. He reigned as sultan 1412–1421.

90. The theme of the Sufi shaykh manifesting utter disrespect to the ruler, who swallows his pride and humbly complies with the shaykh's orders, is a very common topos in Sufi hagiographical writings. See above for the same pattern with Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī and the ways he addressed the governor.

91. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 164b. Another Damascene shaykh who was greatly admired by al-Malik al-Muʾayyad was Ibn Qudaydār, one of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī's disciples and deputies. After the death of Ibrāhīm, he became "the shaykh of al-shām" (*Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 152a); al-Maqrīzī writes (*Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3: 347) that he became associated with al-Malik al-Muʾayyad when the latter was governor of Damascus and sent him on several diplomatic missions. The governor erected a *zāwiya* for the shaykh, whose influence greatly increased when his benefactor became the sultan.

92. Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 132.

93. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 157b–158a.

94. Ibid., fol. 158a. According to this, the local Bedouin used to take oaths (*nudhūr*) at the grave, around which a cemetery developed over time. It is also related that the Bedouin saw a lion who used to lie next to the grave, which is another common topos in Sufi hagiographical writings. Al-Ghazzī also claims (*Buhjat al-nāẓirīn*, 157) that he visited the tomb during his *ḥajj*.

It is significant to note that in *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, the author emphasizes that he twice accompanied Ibrāhīm on his *ḥajj*, and especially on his last journey, during which he became ill and died. Nāṣir al-Dīn relates several miracles that his uncle performed during this journey, but it seems that it was especially important for him to mention that he was his uncle's closest companion, and that he took care of him during his illness and attended to his burial.[95] Thus, just as his uncle Ibrāhīm attended to Abū Bakr during his final illness, which proved that he was his appropriate successor, so Nāṣir al-Dīn's claim hints at his being a worthy successor to Ibrāhīm, who in fact passed the shaykhdom of the Mawṣiliyya to his son, ʿAbd al-Qādir (d. 862/1457f.).[96] Leaving aside Nāṣir al-Dīn's possible intentions vis-à-vis his cousin, who led the *ṭarīqa* at the time *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* was written, it is clear that not only Ibrāhīm but also other members of the family are portrayed as combining their saintly pedigree (*nasab*) with a virtuous lifestyle (*ḥasab*).[97] Similar things are written about Ibrāhīm's brother, ʿAbd al-Malik, who headed the Jerusalem *zāwiya* and was buried next to his father in the Māmillā Cemetery,[98] as well as about other members of the family who succeeded them as leaders of the *ṭarīqa* in the following generations, such as ʿAbd al-Qādir.[99] By imitating their ancestor's lifestyle in their behavior and customs; commemorating his saintly vita in writing; and maintaining, indeed routinizing, his charisma through the role of shaykh, the bestowing of the *khirqa Mawṣiliyya*, etc., the Mawṣilī family retained its control over this Sufi collective and continued to prosper, even if on a local and somewhat provincial scale, in both Damascus and Jerusalem.

Although there is no evidence that they expanded outside of these two cities, the Mawṣiliyya shaykhs accumulated landed property in the fifteenth century and established new convents and trusts (*awqāf*) for their disciples. In Damascus, Nāṣir al-Dīn and ʿAbd al-Qādir each added a convent around the mid-fifteenth century,[100] which, along with other buildings erected by members of the family over the following generations, were clustered in the al-Qubaybāt/al-Maydān suburb-cum-quarter of Damascus, around the original convent founded by Abū Bakr. The trusts that supported these establishments promised them durability over a long period of time. As Brigitte Marino has showed, the presence and building activities of the Mawṣilī clan were important factors in the growth of al-Maydān, and the family's presence there is attested well into the modern period.[101]

The family's presence in Jerusalem also continued uninterrupted well into the Ottoman period. Abū Bakr's convent in Jerusalem was located on the street Ṭarīq Bāb al-ʿAṭm, adja-

95. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 157b–158a.

96. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4: 259; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, Yūsuf b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Hādī Ibn al-Mibrad, and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʿat al-adhhān min al-tamattuʿ bi-l-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān*, ed. Ṣ. Kh. al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1999), 1: 82.

97. On Nāṣir al-Dīn, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 10: 65.

98. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fol. 156b; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 5: 84.

99. For ʿAbd al-Qādir, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4: 259; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mutʿat al-adhhān*, 1: 82; and for others, for example, Nāṣir al-Dīn's son Maḥmūd (d. 891/1486f.), Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mutʿat al-adhhān*, 2: 802, who writes: "he would hold [gatherings for the performance] of *dhikr* and litanies (*awrād*) in their convents in their quarter [. . .], receive oaths (*yaʾkhudhu al-ʿahd*), dress [the disciples] with the Mawṣilī Sufī *khirqa*, according to the Shaybānī creed (*bi-ʿaqīdatihā al-shaybāniyya*), teach the *dhikr* formula, and hold a *dhikr* assembly (*ḥalqat al-dhikr*) every Friday at the Umayyad Mosque [. . .]." Cf. al-Buṣrawī, *Taʾrīkh*, 109. For other examples, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mutʿat al-adhhān*, 1: 80–84, 203–4, 275, 405, 461, 2: 618, 663–73, 802–3. The editor of the printed edition of this work by Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Mawṣilī, is a distant descendant, and provides plenty of valuable material regarding his ancestors from the time of shaykh Abū Bakr into the twentieth century; see, e.g., 1: 381.

100. Perhaps each shaykh established his own as part of his attempt to strengthen his position within the *ṭarīqa*.

101. B. Marino, *Le faubourg du Mīdān à Damas à l'époque ottomane: Espace urbain, société et habitat (1742–1830)* (Damascus: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 1997).

cent to the northern wall of al-Ḥaram al-sharīf (Temple Mount), in either the Amīniyya, Sallāmiyya, or Fārisiyya madrasa.[102] The Mawṣilī *ṭarīqa* might have taken possession of the Sallāmiyya later, but it is this building that seems to have become their main base in Jerusalem. In 831/1427f., ʿAbd al-Malik, the shaykh of the Jerusalem branch, endowed one-third of the income of various lands for its use. The other two-thirds were endowed for his descendants. He later set up another endowment of agricultural lands, to be divided in the same manner.[103] The one-third of each trust was to pay for the maintenance of Quran and hadith specialists, with any excess to be distributed to "the Sufis of the Mawṣiliyya."[104] ʿAbd al-Malik's son Aḥmad then endowed a quarter of the village of Bīra to his offspring, which, if they died out, would go to the Mawṣilī convent in Damascus and to the Sallāmiyya madrasa, which in time came to be known as the Mawṣiliyya.[105]

All this activity naturally required some resources, but the sources we have remain largely mute about this aspect. If we are to countenance that members of the family adhered to Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī's strict prohibition of accepting any form of charity or donations, it is hard to believe that all this income and assets came purely from working in the fields or such humble occupations as weaving, etc. Without being too speculative, I assume that Abū Bakr's prohibition was not followed as strictly as the sources would suggest, and that the Mawṣilī family did accept humble offerings from the commoners, as well as the largesse of the ruling elite, which has been shown to be crucial for the growth of Sufi communities and *ṭuruq*.[106] This assumption is strengthened by a seemingly incidental comment by Ibn Ḥijjī, who knew both Abū Bakr and his son Ibrāhīm personally. He writes that Ibrāhīm "was detached from this-world material concerns. He did not accept anything from anybody and forbade his disciples to accept any kind of donations, except a little (*illā qalīl*). This was also the way of his father."[107] The qualification *illā qalīl* is a minor, albeit significant, change from all the other remarks on this issue, which stress that *all* donations were forbidden. I would further speculate that the art of maneuvering between the ideal of complete avoidance of material support and the, posssibly concealed, reality of acceptance of some largesse was a key skill for Sufi shaykhs in this period.

Another development that took place after the death of Abū Bakr was the incorporation of the Mawṣiliyya into the Qādiriyya, whose presence in Greater Syria steadily increased during the fifteenth century.[108] The link seems to be a certain Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ (d. 804/1402f.), an extremely influential shaykh based in Cairo, who played an important role in the dissemination of the Qādirī line in Egypt and Syria. Like Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, he also possessed influence over the Mamluk elite, and specifically the sultan Barqūq, whom he

102. See n. 42 above.

103. The Ottoman tax registers mention a trust (*waqf*) founded by ʿAbd al-Malik for his children and offspring (*awlāduhu wa-dhurriyyatuhu*), which consisted of agricultural plots of land, mainly in villages in the Jerusalem hinterland (e.g., al-Bīra and Jabʿa). The *waqf* is mentioned consistently in the tax registers of the Jerusalem district (*liwāʾ al-Quds*) at least until the end of the sixteenth century. See M. A. al-Bakhit and N. R. al-Sawariyyah, *The Detailed Defter of the Liwa' of Noble Jerusalem: A Critical and Annotative Study of the Ottoman Text with Arabic Translation*, 6 vols. (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2005–12), 2: 278–79. As mentioned above, Abū Bakr also purchased an orchard in Jerusalem.

104. Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 299–301. Burgoyne wondered if this referred to Sufis coming from Mosul, although the evidence he meticulously assembled clearly shows that the intention is the Sufis of al-Mawṣilī's *ṭarīqa*.

105. Ibid.

106. N. Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 7–8.

107. See Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 970. Cf., e.g., al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 1: 36.

108. D. Ephrat, "The Shaykh, the Physical Setting and the Holy Site: The Diffusion of the Qādirī Path in Late Medieval Palestine," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 19.1 (2009): 1–20.

accompanied in the aforementioned campaign to defend Syria from Tamerlane, at the end of which the sultan visited Jerusalem, where he paid homage to al-Mawṣilī.[109]

The author of *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* writes that in the same year—presumably after the Syrian campaign—he was initiated by Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ in Cairo into both the Qādirī and Shādhilī orders (*silsila*). According to him, his uncle Ibrāhīm also received the *khirqa* from Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ. But it is only later that members of the Mawṣiliyya start to be identified as Qādirīs. Possibly the most important shaykh responsible for the spread of the Qādiriyya in Greater Syria, and especially in Palestine, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Arslān (d. 844/1440f.), received the *khirqa* from both Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī and Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ.[110]

The most detailed information we have regarding the spiritual lineages of Abū Bakr, his son Ibrāhīm, and his grandson Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad comes from the latter's *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*.[111] In addition to Abū Bakr's Kubrawī spiritual chain, of which it is known that his initiation was through his shaykh, Quṭb al-Dīn, and those of the Qādirīs and Shādhilīs, which went through Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ, the author mentions one of his own that is of interest. He was initiated into it by his uncle Ibrāhīm, from whom it descends to Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī (d. 810/1408f.), the renowned Sufi poet from Tabriz. Muḥammad Shīrīn was known for the influence of Akbarī ideas on his poetry, and indeed one of those he transmitted to Ibrāhīm b. Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī (and from him to his nephew Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad) was the *silsila Ḥātimiyya*, which goes back to Ibn al-ʿArabī. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad, in turn, is mentioned as a link in the transmission of this *silsila Ḥātimiyya* in later sources. However, there it is written that he was not initiated into it by his uncle Ibrāhīm, but by one Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bilālī (d. 820/1417f.), himself a disciple of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, who went on to be the shaykh of the convent (*khanqāh*) Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ in Cairo, which position he held, remarkably, for almost thirty years.[112] Conflicting versions of this kind are so common in Sufi chains of initiation that we should hardly be surprised.

What is noteworthy is the initiation of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī's son or grandson into this *silsila*, despite its association to Ibn al-ʿArabī, whose writings Abū Bakr denounced and strictly forbade his disciples from reading. In *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad does not just mention that he received the *khirqa* from Muḥammad Shīrīn, but continues for more than a full page, detailing the various ways in which the *silsila* diverges after Ibn al-ʿArabī.[113] While this still needs more study, I think that for Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad and others like him, being initiated into this *silsila* was purely a matter of conferring blessing (*tabarruk*), and did not imply any philosophical or theological inclinations to Akbarī doctrine. It is suggestive that instead of Ibn al-ʿArabī, the name by which he was best known, Nāṣir al-Dīn

109. Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1: 347. When the sultan's entourage camped outside Damascus, Ibn al-Nāṣiḥ bestowed robes upon several local Sufis, including Abū Bakr ibn Dāʾud (d. 806/1404f.) and his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 856/1452f.), who established their own familial *ṭarīqa* in Damascus at that time, one that was well connected to the same Syrian Sufi circles in which the Mawṣiliyya operated. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4: 62, 11: 31; Geoffroy, *Le soufisme*, 227.

110. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 1: 282–83. On Ibn Arslān, who was born in Ramla and spent many years in Jerusalem, and his role in the diffusion of the Qādirī *ṭarīqa* in Palestine, see Ephrat, "Shaykh."

111. This is reported in the final chapter of the work (*Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 160a–161b).

112. On al-Bilālī, see al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3: 435–36; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 8: 178–79. Regarding the *silsila Ḥātimiyya*, see now G. M. Martini, "Muḥammad Šīrīn Maġribī (d. 810/1408) as a Key Agent in the Transmission of Akbarī *Silsila*s," *Arabica* 68 (2021): 121–70. The earliest attestation Martini found of this *silsila Ḥātimiyya* to go through Muḥammad Shīrīn was from Ibn al-Karbalāʾī's sixteenth-century *Rawḍat al-jinān* (p. 156). The attestation from *Futūḥ al-wahhāb* predates it by some two hundred years. I thank Giovanni Martini for providing me with a draft version of his article.

113. *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 160b–161a.

calls him Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥātimī al-Ishbīlī al-Andalusī,[114] and provides no further information. He concludes the long survey of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *silsila* by apologetically remarking that he only mentioned it because of the many great masters who are included from earlier generations, "since I was not able to omit the blessing (*tabarruk*) associated with mentioning the names of those masters." He then immediately asserts that, like his grandfather Abū Bakr, he denounces any kind of unwarranted innovation and anything that contradicts the Sharia, such as the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī (here mentioned by his better-known name).[115]

CONCLUSIONS

The case of the *silsila Ḥātimiyya* is another indication that we should be wary of assigning too much importance to the various spiritual chains certain shaykhs were initiated into, and of rushing into "affiliating" them to one of the major Sufi groups that started to spread from the twelfth century onward. Just as the Mawṣiliyya was not in any way associated with the philosophy of Ibn al-ʿArabī, so should it not be seen as a branch of the Qādiriyya, or the Suhrawardiyya, both of which, at least when it comes to Greater Syria, to be considered more as traditions than actual organizations or Sufi orders. At least until well into the fifteenth century, Sufism in Greater Syria centered around the charismatic presence of local shaykhs and their teachings.[116] Certainly, they were heavily influenced by the teachings of the great masters of the past—luminaries as al-Jilānī, Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī, and Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar were among the most influential figures in this regard. But rather than approaching Abū Bakr al-Mawsilī as a Qādirī or Suhrawardī shaykh, it would be more meaningful to simply locate him within the local tradition of Syrian Sufism. Only a meticulous study of his numerous writings could better situate his Sufi thinking and his *ṭarīqa* on the theoretical level.[117]

The focus of this paper has been much more practical, seeking to offer a case study of the social dynamics that were behind one shaykh's consolidation of his position in society and his recognition as a saint, and then the consolidation of his *ṭarīqa*, in the meaning both of a spiritual path and, especially, of a social organization. The diverse sources available on al-Mawṣilī's life and his role as the leader of a Sufi community allow us to put together a relatively high-resolution picture of this process, which is a rare opportunity given the scarcity of available sources on Sufism in Mamluk Greater Syria.

As Nathan Hofer has observed regarding the Shādhiliyya, the most successful and widespread *ṭarīqa* to take shape in the Mamluk sultanate, which then spread mostly in Egypt and the Maghreb, it was more the activities of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī's successors—especially Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309f.)—that routinized his charisma and organized the *ṭarīqa* associated with his name and teachings into a *ṭāʾifa*, an actual social organization.[118] The case of the Mawṣiliyya is somewhat different, since here we can detect conscious steps taken by the founder to organize his *ṭarīqa*, by means of appointing successors, writing down his teachings, and especially by leaving a testament and having

114. Ibid., fol. 160b.

115. Ibid., fol. 161b.

116. Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers*.

117. Al-Mawṣilī wrote a lot: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Shaybānī (*Ādāb al-murīdīn*, 185–90) lists forty-seven works attributed to him, twenty-two of which he located, either printed or in manuscript form; the rest may be lost (some were apparently burned during Tamerlane's notorious sacking of Damascus). See also *Futūḥ al-wahhāb*, fols. 159b–160a.

118. Hofer, *Popularisation*, 105–59. In this paper I have consciously not used the term *ṭāʾifa*, for the simple reason that it does not appear anywhere in the sources regarding the Mawṣiliyya.

his disciples take oaths upon his death. Still, the role of Abū Bakr's successors was crucial, both in maintaining his leadership of the group and in routinizing his charisma through the writing of his hagiography and other practices. Since the leadership of the Mawṣiliyya was a familial affair—in contrast to the Shādhiliyya—we might claim that Abū Bakr's charisma was transferred to, and in a way routinized in, the persons of his offspring, who took great pains to depict themselves as his worthy successors, in terms of both *nasab* and *ḥasab*.[119] It is also important to keep in mind the importance of the economic basis for the formation of a Sufi organization. Even though the sources from which the Mawṣiliyya obtained its properties mostly remain obscure, we can certainly see that they provided the means to support such an organization. And as a saint venerated by various segments of society, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī possessed impressive social and cultural capital, which he was able to pass to his descendants. In time, this translated into economic capital, albeit in concealed ways.

Despite its success and longevity, the Mawṣiliyya never spread beyond the borders of Greater Syria, remaining concentrated in Damascus and Jerusalem where their ancestor had operated. It is difficult to explain how one *ṭarīqa* managed to spread far and wide—as the Shādhiliyya did—while others did not.[120] Perhaps as a familial *ṭarīqa*, the Mawṣiliyya never really aspired to expand beyond their home base. Nevertheless, none founded and based in Greater Syria ever managed to spread to other regions. At the end of the day, the Mawṣiliyya was one in a line of similar Sufi groups active in late Mamluk Greater Syria. It was conservative, scholastic, highly social, and well connected to other like-minded Sufi groups in the region[121] as well as to wider Sufi intellectual networks.[122] But above all, at the center of the *ṭarīqa* stood the Mawṣilī household, and as such, it achieved remarkable success in maintaining for centuries its position in society, which was built around the saintly reputation of its ancestor, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī.

119. Pedigree and lifestyle. However, the Shādhiliyya also had some familial branches. See, e.g., Sabra, "Household Sufism," 102.

120. One of the striking similarities between the Mawṣiliyya and the Shādhiliyya was the insistence that their members should work and be part of normal society. This, of course, attracted many disciples who were not keen on devoting their entire life to the Sufi path, and it is mentioned as one of the factors that facilitated the popularization of the Shādhiliyya. See Hofer, *Popularisation*, 161.

121. For example, the Bisṭāmiyya, Wafāʾiyya, and Qiramiyya of Jerusalem, and other Sufi groups in Damascus.

122. A clear example of this is the arrival in *Bilād al-Shām* in the fifteenth century of the renowned Suhrawardī shaykh from Herat, Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī (d. 838/1435f.), where he associated with several members of the Mawṣiliyya and similar Sufi groups, while exchanging *khiraq* with them. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 9: 260–62, 10: 65.