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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 takiya of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis some time in the 1880’s. 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 account 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 muqābala of the Mawlawiyya in their takiya, which resembles Paradise, lying on the bank of the river Abū ʾAlī? 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 spring. I sat down in the spectators’ portico. The sight of the gardens with orange trees was plea-

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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 Ikhāʾ Arba‘īn 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-Ṭuruq al-Ṣūfīyya wa Mashā‘ikhuḥa fi Ṭarāblus, 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-Rūmi, the author of the noble *Mathnawi*'.

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]."  

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

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5 Riḍā, 172.

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

7 Cf. Durnayqa, 297.
wishiyya, which was visited by Ibn Mahāsin (d. 1053: 1642) in the year 1048: 1638. Unlike Riḥla, this earlier visitor expressed the wish that "God would grant the continuity of the beautiful dhikr till the day of resurrection". According to Ibn Mahāsin's account, the original takīya was constructed in the year 1028: 1619 by Ṣamsunjī ʿAlī, a military officer. While on an excursion Ṣamsunjī ʿAlī 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.

The beauty of the place was such that ʿĀbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī, who visited Tripolis in the year 1700, glorified the takīya in a qaṣīda as "a heaven... on which Tripolis prides itself". The account of his visit to Tripolis, al-Tuhfa al-Nābulusiyya fi al-Riḥla al-Ṭabarulusiyya, contains a description of some of the features of the takīya. The establishment and its location are also celebrated by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd 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 bride.

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 āwqiṭ which later came to be recorded as sources of revenue which were spent on the takīya (zāwīya), on those resi-

10 Ibid.
11 ʿAbd Allāh Ḥabīb Nawfil, Tarājīm ʿUlamāʾ wa Udbāʾ al-Fayḥāʾ, Tripolis 1929, 275. Published by the Tripolis-branch of the Lebanese University in a photomechanical reprint under the title Tarājīm ʿUlamāʾ Ṭabarulhus wa Udbāʾīthā, Tripolis 1984.
13 Nawfil, 276.
ding there, on the *murids* of the Mawlawiyya order\(^{14}\), and which provided a regular income for its *shaykh*\(^{15}\). Apart from payments from *waqf* revenues, we know that one *shaykh* of the *takiya* al-Mawlawiyya in Tripolis, a certain ชะ.ali ibn Muhammad, who held office in the sixties of the seventeenth century, received a regular income for his daily reciting of a part of the Qur’an at the grave of Ahmad Bâshâ the former Ottoman governor of the province of Tripolis\(^{16}\). The fact that this *shaykh* owned slaves (and manumitted them) suggests that he was a man of considerable means\(^{17}\).

The *shaykh* of the *takiya* at the time of Ibn al-Maḥāsin’s visit was a certain Mehmed Efendi al-Rūmī. Ibn al-Maḥāsin attended his majlis and listened to his comments on the Mathnawi.\(^{18}\) He also mentions his meeting with a learned resident of the *takiya*, Fidāṭi Dede al-Antābī, who had translated works by Farīd al-Dīn al-Əṭṭār and was the author of a didactic *manzūma* intended for Turkish speakers learning Arabic, and of a *Dīwān* in Turkish\(^{19}\). None of these writings have come down to us.

This is also the case with the writings of ชะ.ʿAbd al-ʿJalīl al-Sunaynī al-Ṣarābulusī, 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 Mevlevihâne of Tripolis in the beginning of 1695\(^{20}\). His predecessor, ชะ.ʿAbd al-ʿJalīl, traced his genealogy back to Mawlānā and all the later *mashāyikh* of the Mawlawiyya in Tripolis are his descendants, locally known as the Ṣl al-Mawlawi\(^{21}\). Two of these *shaykhs* are buried in a chamber next to the

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\(^{15}\) Cf. Başbakanlık Arşivi (B. A.), Cevdet Evkaf 17098 (13 Dhu‘l-Qa‘da 1106). I am grateful to Thierry Zarcone (Paris/Istanbul) for bringing this document to my attention.


\(^{17}\) Ibid. , 222f.

\(^{18}\) Ibn maḥāsin, 75.

\(^{19}\) Ibid. , 74.


\(^{21}\) Nawfil, 31.
main entrance of the the Madrasa al-Shamsiyya in the centre of Tripolis. Others are buried in the takiya of the Mawlawiyya, as are shaykhs not belonging to the Āl al-Mawlawī.

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: 1808/1809. It is likely that this shaykh is identical with Muṣṭafā al-Mawlawī mentioned in the inscription inside the takiya, recorded in ʿUmar Tadmuri’s book on the history of several Islamic monuments in Tripolis. Muṣṭafā’s brother Aḥmad established a family waqf known as the waqf bani Sunayn, which is presently supervised by one of Muṣṭafā’s descendants, Riyāḍ 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-ṭariqa al-Mawlawiyya, which coincided with the mashyakha of the takīya and entailed the office of supervisor (mutawalli) of its awqāf, was frequently held by members of this family.

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 respectively. 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

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23 Neither the members of the Āl al-Mawlawī in Tripolis, nor the officials in the Mudirīyyat al-Aqwāf al-Islāmiyya in Tripolis, seem to know the names of the mashyākha buried in the madrasa and in the takiya.

24 Nawfil, 31.

25 Cf. Tadmuri, *Taʾrīkh*, 53ff. The marble plaque with the inscription was no longer there at the time of my visit in September 1991.

26 Durnayqa, 298.

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

Aḥmad’s successor Shafiq 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 Muḍīriyyat al-Awqāf al-İslāmiyya 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 Talât. 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."

During the mashyakha of Shafiq, who died in 1931, the takṭiya became a centre where the notables of Tripolis regularly met and socialized, while the number of Mawlawi murīds increased. Shafiq 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 waʾl-Taʾlīm al-İslāmiyya. 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 replaced.

28 Durnayqa, 299.
29 Ibid.
30 Muḥammad Nūr al-Dīn Ārif Miqāfī, Ṭarāḥlus fi al-Nisf al-Qarn al-İshrīn Miṭādī, Tripolis 1978, 42. See Hikmat Sharīf, Taʾrīkh Ṭarāḥlus al-Shārīn min Aqdam Asmānīhā īlā Ḥadīthi al-ʿAyyān (Munā Ḥaddād Yekin & Mārūn ʿĪsā al-Khūrī, eds.), Tripolis 1987, 168 recto, for a photograph of the takṭiya taken in the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century.
31 Durnayqa, 299-300.
Following the death of al-shaykh Shafiq, a dispute concerning his succession arose among the members of the Al al-Mawlawi. This led to the intervention of Mehmed Bāqir Çelebi, the last Çelebi 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 Turkey\(^*\). His intervention resulted in the appointment of Shafiq’s half-brother Ḥusnī to the mashyakhat al-Mawlawiyya in Tripolis. His major contender for the position, his nephew Fūūd b. Shākir was appointed shaykh of the takiya 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 Shafiq. During his mashyakha, the takiya 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 Shafiq’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 Fūūd’s son Anwar to the mashyakha of the takiya in Tripolis\(^*\) and as mutawalli of its awqāf\(^*\).

Anwar b. Fūūd 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 ‘ulamā’h in Tripolis. Thereafter he went to Aleppo to join the circle of Bāqir Çelebi, 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 Çelebi appointed him to the mashyakhat al-Mawlawiyya in Tripolis. The appointment was approved and confirmed

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\(^*\) Durqayna, 300.

\(^*\) 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 time.\footnote{See Leiden, F. Or. A. 4653 (preliminary classification), \textit{Documents relative to the Mawlawiya in Arab lands I and II}, for relevant letters.}

Under al-shaykh Anwar\footnote{The following section is based on Riyād b. Aḥmad al-Mawlawī, \textit{'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 Dumayqa.} the 	extit{takiyya} regained its former lustre as a meeting place for Tripolis' notables in the days of his uncle al-shaykh Shafiq. During this period, it was not only the notables of the Sunni Muslim community, but also those of the Shi'a and Christian communities who met with one another in the 	extit{takiyya}. On one occasion three Christian metropolitans, two Shi'a and four Sunni ulama were present in the reception-room (mangūl) of the 	extit{takiyya}. All this added to its reputation as a centre for inter-religious debate.\footnote{Dumayqa, 302; cf. \textit{'Ḥayāt'}, 2.}

Unlike al-shaykh Shafiq 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 	extit{mashyakh at-Mawlawiya} in Aleppo, notwithstanding the fact that all Mawlawī shaykhs in the world had elected him unanimously at a plenary meeting in the āsitāna 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 	extit{mashyakh at-Mawlawiya} in Aleppo against the wish of al-shaykh Anwar and of the Mawlawiya shaykhs outside Syria.\footnote{Ibid., 303; cf., \textit{'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 Akkar, returning to the takiya only in the winter and in Ramadan. After the death of al-shaykh Anwar, no successor was appointed to the mashyakhhat al-Mawlawiya in Tripolis. From that time the takiya ceased to function, the mosque - which was part of the takiya complex - was closed, and most of the buildings were rented out for private accommodation. This de facto end of the Mawlawi tarīqa in Tripolis was made official in 1977 when the Majlis al-Awqāf al-Idārī in Tripolis appointed Anwar’s son Riyāḍ as mutawallī of the awqāf al-Mawlawiya. Since he did not hold the mashyakhhat al-Mawlawiya, this appointment indicated that the authorities had accepted the decision of the Āl al-Mawlawī to abolish the mashyakha. 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-Mawlawiya. In 1979, Riyāḍ had plans to undertake restauration works on the takiya and to revive the Mawlawiya order in Tripolis. His plans did not materialize in consequence of the Lebanese civil war. During the Syrian bombardment of Tripolis in 1985, the shrine-complex and Semakhane 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 takiya 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 Riyāḍ b. Ahmād 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. Dumayqa, 304.
41 Ibid., 307.
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Photographs

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

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

4. - Al-Shaykh Shafiq ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (d. 1931).

5. - Al-Shaykh Anwar ibn Fūād (d. 1963).