A short note on a silsila of the Qdiriyya brotherhood in Ethiopia
Gori, Alessandro

Published in:
Collectanea Islamica

Publication date:
2012

Citation for published version (APA):
Sources for the study of Islamic societies

Fuṭūḥ al-buldān

Sources for the study of Islamic societies
Series edited by
Nicola Melis, University of Cagliari
Mauro Nobili, University of Cape Town

Editorial board
Pejman Abdolmohammadi, University of Genoa
Abdessamad Belhaj, Pazmany Peter Catholic University – Piliscsaba-Budapest
Luca Berardi, University of Naples, “L’Orientale”
Andrea Brigaglia, University of Cape Town
Wasim Dahmash, University of Cagliari
Alessandro Gori, University of Florence
Francesco Alfonso Leccese, LUSPIO, Roma
Francesco Zappa, Aix-Marseille Université

All inquiries should be directed to:

Futūk al-buldān
Nicola Melis
Di.S.S.I.
Università degli Studi di Cagliari
Viale S. Ignavio 78,
09123 Cagliari
futuh.al.buldan@gmail.com
www.nicolamelis.org

Futūk al-buldān is a refereed series. It is indexed by Index Islamicus, Abstracta Iranica, Turkologischer Anzeiger/Turkology Annual, ATLA Religion Database.

The series will accept contributions in English, French and/or Italian. Each contribution will be read by two referees (three, if discordant).

Image courtesy of Shamil Jeppie, editor of the volume
Futūḥ al-buldān

Series edited by Nicola Melis e Mauro Nobili

*Futūḥ al-buldān* is a well-known work of al-Balāḏurī (d. 297/892), one of the most important Muslim historians who lived in the third century of *hiǧra*. The reference to classical Muslim historiography in the series’ title is coupled with the semantic spectrum of the Arabic root of the word *fath*. It refers to ‘military conquest,’ as well as to the ideas of to ‘open,’ ‘begin,’ and/or ‘reveal.’ Thus, the title of the series is a tribute to a great Muslim historian, but it also represents a synthesis of the ideological framework that underpins the series, which is to disclose pieces of history of Islamic societies.

The series aims at publishing original works with a multidisciplinary approach, in the field of Islamic history and culture, drawing connections between the past and the present. *Futūḥ al-buldān* will privilege case studies from areas and languages which are often – and questionably – regarded as ‘peripheral.’
Collectanea islamica

edited by

Nicola Melis
Mauro Nobili
CONTENTS

Contents p. V
Notes on Transliteration p. VII
Notes on Contributors p. IX

INTRODUCTION

A plurality of historical and linguistic experiences
Nicola Melis – Mauro Nobili p. 1

SECTION I: HORN OF AFRICA

A short note on a silsila of the Qādiriyya brotherhood in Ethiopia
Alessandro Gori p. 17

Silvia Bruzzi p. 27

SECTION II: WESTERN AFRICA

Aḥmad b. Furṭū, portrait d’un ʿālim soudanais du XVIe siècle
Rémi Dewière p. 45

Risāla min Maryam bt. Fūdī ila al-ībn. A brief contribution to the study of Muslim eschatology in 19th century Nigeria
Mauro Nobili p. 71

SECTION III: OTTOMAN “PERIPHERY”

L’emprise ottomane en Géorgie occidentale à l’époque de Süleymān Ier
Güneş Işıksel p. 89
VI

The “talking machine” affair in Ottoman Yemen (1907)

Nicola Melis p. 107

SECTION IV: MISCELLANE

‘Voi sì che avete una religione!’ Identità e alterità alla frontiera greco-albanese

Antonio Maria Pusceddu p. 155

Il pensiero politico di Moḥammad Moṣaddeq: costituzionalismo, patriottismo e democrazia

Pejman Abdolmohammadi p. 179

“Nous n’avions pas d’autre choix.” Colonialisme et guerre de libération au Maroc à travers les témoignages des protagonistes de la Résistance

Manuela Deiana p. 199

SECTION V: NOTES

Una nota sull’apporto fornito da Sībawayhi alla grammatica araba

Ali Kadem Kalati p. 219


Michele Petrone p. 227


Evelin Grassi p. 235
A short note on a silsila of the Qādiriyya brotherhood in Ethiopia

Alessandro Gori
(University of Florence)

Introduction

In spite of a lack of exact and reliable information on the present distribution of the Islamic mystical brotherhoods in Ethiopia (and Eritrea),¹ the Qādiriyya is the most widespread Islamic brotherhood, ṭarīqa, in the country.

In the present paper I carry out a brief research on a spiritual genealogy (silsila) of the Ethiopian Qādiriyya trying to shed light on the ways the ṭarīqa followed to spread in the different regions of Ethiopia, and to contribute to the reconstruction of the history of the group in that country.

1. The Qādiriyya in Ethiopia

‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ğīlānī (m. 561/1166) is widely known and devotedly venerated in Ethiopia. His cenotaphs are scattered across the country, and mosques named after him are found in many different towns and

¹ The research on which this article is based was made possible thanks to the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.

¹ The Somali Qādiriyya is, on the contrary, relatively well known (see Alessandro Gori, Studi sulla letteratura agiografica islamica somala in lingua araba, Dipartimento di Linguistica, Firenze 2003, in particular pp. 28-32).
villages. To mention only a few examples, in Harar, a famous maqām of ‘Abd al-Qādir and his mother Umm al-Ḥayr Fāṭima (locally called Umma Koda) is located outside the wall of the old town (ḡugal), in the area known as Qurra-be limay just in front of the main bus-station. Eighteen kilometres east of Harar, in the Argobba land, a renowned sacred compound hosts the shrines of ‘Abd al-Qādir and Umma Koda with a house for the congregational meetings of the Qādiriyya brotherhood (ḥadra). Both locations are cherished holy sites to which the faithful of the Harar region flock in pilgrimage to seek the baraka of the saint and his mother. In Eritrea, a very famous shrine (mazār) of ‘Abd al-Qādir exists on the homonymous stretch of land north of Massawa and local traditions obviously claim that the saint actually died there. Emir ‘Abd al-Šakhr b. Yūsuf of Harar (d. 1794) had a mosque called ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī built near the shrine of šayḥ Ḥusayn in the south Ethiopian region of Bale. In Asmara a modern mosque with a maqām perpetuates the memory of the eponymous of the Qādiriyya.

‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī is invoked in devotional poems and prayers

2 Unfortunately, no exhaustive list of the cenotaphs of ‘Abd al-Qādir in Ethiopia (and in the Horn) is available. There is no need to underline the interest and the importance that such a list could provide to clarify the dimensions of the cult of this saint in Northeastern Africa.


6 Enrico Cerulli, *Studi etiopici I. La lingua e la storia di Harar*, Istituto per l’Oriente, Roma 1936, pp. 44 and 51.

with the names of local Ethiopian holy men. The text collection recited during the mawlid ceremony in Harar contains a poem attributed to ‘Abd al-Qādir (Tuf bi-ḥalī sab‘an) and a long pious supplication to ask for his help (Yā quṭ bā yā rabbānī al-hayakal al-nūrānī ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ǧilānī). In many Ethiopian Muslim regions, famous Qādir centres exist: Anna in Rayya Qobbo (Wällo), Dana in Yaggū (Wällo), Qatbare in Qabeena and Galamssoo (Gälämso) in Oromia are among the most celebrated headquarters of the brotherhood and host famous Islamic schools which attract scholars and students to teach and study not only mysticism but the whole syllabus of the Islamic traditional education.

A number of Ethiopian Islamic renowned learned men were affiliated with the Qādiriya (e.g. Ğamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī, d. 1882; Ḥaṭam al-Dīn Mūḥammad al-Aṭbarī d. 1903; ‘Īsā b. Ḥamza al-Qatbarī d. 1947, ‘Umar b. ‘Alī al-Ġalamsī, fl. first half of the 20th century) and contributed to enhance the influence and the prestige of the ṣaṭrīqa.

Despite the apparent rooting of the brotherhood in the country, the history of the Qādiriya in Ethiopia has never been investigated by scholars and is therefore almost completely unknown. The ways the ṣaṭrīqa followed in its spread into the different cultural and ethnical landscapes of Islamic Ethiopia are so far only vaguely describable. The reciprocal relationships of the various centres of the brotherhood are not precisely identifiable and the biographies of the Ethiopian qādirī masters can only be sketched. First-hand sources on the mystical group and its literature (manāqib, silsilas, handbooks of doctrine, litanies and devotional texts) are still to be located, collected and critically published.

---

11 Dirk Bustorf, s.v. “Qatbære,” in EAE.
12 Mohammed Hassen, s.v. “Gälämso,” EAE.
It is often repeated in scholarly literature\textsuperscript{14} that the first introducer of the \textit{Qādiriya} in Ethiopia was Ābu Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydrūs, the revered patron saint of Aden (d. 1508), member of the al-Saqqāf branch of the Ḥadrami Bā ‘Alawi sayyid, who allegedly brought the \textit{ṭarīqa} to Harar. However, no evidence for this assertion has ever been shown yet.\textsuperscript{15} The first inception of the brotherhood remains thus still enshrouded in obscurity.

The late Hussein Ahmed was the first researcher to concretely contribute to the enhancement of our knowledge of the Ethiopian \textit{Qādiriya}. While carrying out some field work in his native region, he came to know a local \textit{silṣila} of the \textit{Qādiriya} that sheds light on the spread of the brotherhood from Harar into Wällo in the 19th century.

The \textit{silṣila} published by Hussein Ahmed runs as follows:

\textit{Sayyid Musāfir} – \textit{faqīh} Ḥāšim – Ahmad b. Šāliḥ – \textit{faqīh} Zubayr – \textit{ṣayḥ} Muhammad Šafī (d. 1814/15)\textsuperscript{16} – Muhammad b. \textit{faqīh} Zubayr – \textit{ṣayḥ} Ğamal al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Anī – Ahmad b. Ādam (d. 1903) – Muḥammad Yasin (d. 1924); \textit{sayyid} Ibrāhīm (d. 1956).\textsuperscript{17}

According to Hussein Ahmed’s informants, \textit{sayyid} Musāfir was of Yemeni origin\textsuperscript{18} and thus was a \textit{trait-d’union} between the local Ethiopian \textit{Qādiriya} and the broader brotherhood network. He initiated to the \textit{Qādiri} \textit{wird} “a certain \textit{faqīh} Ḥāšim” of Harar who in his turn entrusted the \textit{ṭarīqa} to Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ. The latter took the brother-


\textsuperscript{15} The personality of Ābu Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydrūs is still little known and deserves more in-depth research. He is credited to have introduced the habit of drinking coffee into Arabia. His connection with the \textit{Qādiriya} is still unclear as some sources point instead to his affiliation to the Ṣaḥiliyya (Oscar Löfgren, s.v. “‘Aydarūs,” in Clifford E. Bosworth et al. (eds.), \textit{The Encyclopaedia of Islam}, 2nd edition, Brill, Leiden 1960-2005).

\textsuperscript{16} On this figure see Hussein Ahmed, s.v. “Muḥammad Šafī,” in \textit{EAE}.


\textsuperscript{18} Interviewed by Hussein Ahmed, \textit{ṣayḥ} Muḥammad Wale said that \textit{sayyid} Musāfir came from a not well-specified “West” and that \textit{faqīh} Ḥāšim received the \textit{qādiri} \textit{wird} also “from an unknown ‘ālim from Medina” (Hussein Ahmed, \textit{Islam in Nineteenth-Century}, p. 69).
hood to Wällo where it took root in the entire region.

The spiritual genealogy collected by Hussein Ahmed provides us with at least two important pieces of information: 1) the Qādirīyya most probably arrived in Ethiopia from Yemen, although not through the intermediation of Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydarūs, whose name appears nowhere; 2) the Qādirīyya came to Wällo through šayḥ Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ among whose pupils also figured the much revered saint and learned man sayyid al-Bā’ al-hāḍḍ Buṣra b. ʿĀy Muḥammad.19

Hussein Ahmed’s informants were not able to give further details on the personalities of the three oldest šayḥs mentioned in the silsila, so they remain nothing more than simple names. However, it is possible to identify with certainty faqīḥ Hāṣim with the Harari learned man and member of the Harari emir family Hāṣim b. ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1765)20 who authored a much renowned Arabic collection of pious litanies and prayers in praise of the Prophet (called the Fath al-Raḥmānī [sic!]), a wīrd for the Qādirīyya brotherhood and a Harari poem, al-Muṣṭafā, known both in a shorter and a longer version.

2. Šayḥ Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ and his silsila

Very recently, new evidence on the silsila of the Wällo Qādirīyya has been brought to light.19

---


20 For some introductory information on him see Ewald Wagner, s.v. “Hāṣim b. ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz,” in EAE. The affiliation of faqīḥ Hāṣim to the Qādirīyya is proved by an unpublished silsila contained in the manuscript Hs. or. 10472 of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (see the description of the document in Ewald Wagner, Afrikanische Handschriften. Teil 2. Islamische Handschriften aus Äthiopien, “Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland 24-2,” Steiner, Stuttgart 1997, pp. 10-11.)
come into light. In Ramadan 1425 (Oct.-Nov. 2004)\textsuperscript{21} the Na\textsuperscript{ñ}ası printing press, the main Islamic publishing house of the country based in Addis Ababa,\textsuperscript{22} published the İqāż himam al-ağbiyā‘ bi-raṣḥ qatra min tarāḏīm al-’ulamā‘ wa-al-awliyā‘ fi ḡumhūrīyyat Iṣyūbiyā, a collection of short biographies of holy men written by the renowned Wāllo šayḥ Muḥammad Wale.\textsuperscript{23}

Among the saints whose manāqib were published in the book there is also šayḥ Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ, \textit{trait d’union} between the Harari and the Wāllo branches of the Qādirīyya. No factual detail about the life of šayḥ Ahmad b. Šāliḥ is recorded in the short biographical note of the İqāż.\textsuperscript{24} The sources of the information given in the book are not revealed. The dates of birth and death of the holy man remain unknown and the data about his genealogy are not ascertained. The fact that someone calls Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ “Aḥmad Kubrā” irritates the author/collector who deems it as a manifestation of coarse ignorance of the basic principles of the Arabic language.

Among the many prodigies which are commonly attributed to šayḥ Aḥmad, Muhammad Wale reports only a single karāma which he himself seems to consider unbelievable. It is said that Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ on his way to Yāḡğu where he was to give the iqāza to faqīḥ Zubayr, made a detour to Rayya. There, he noticed a girl who was playing with some boys. He stopped her and announced that she would give birth to someone who would renew his ḡikr: she was actually the mother-to-be of šayḥ Gamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī. Besides the general skepticism of the author about karāmāt, in this specific tale

\textsuperscript{21} This is the date given on page 2 of the book. In the short biography of the author however, it is said that the text was published just a few days before his death (Sep. 10\textsuperscript{th} 2005).


\textsuperscript{24} Muhammad Wale, İqāż himam al-ağbiyā‘, pp. 137-140.
Muḥammad Wale stresses also a general theological inconsistency: it is highly questionable whether it is legitimate to give a sort of iṯāza in absentia to someone who is not (yet) alive.25

Notwithstanding its scanty amount of information, the section of the Iṯāz is very interesting because it records the complete silsila of Aḥmad b. Ẓāliḥ. The spiritual genealogy connecting šayḫ Aḥmad back to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡīlānī runs as follows:


The reliability of the silsila linking the Ethiopian branch of the brotherhood to the wider Islamic world can hardly sustain critical analysis. Quite surprisingly, most of the names mentioned, from Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq (one of the sons of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡīlānī) down to ‘Alī al-Ḥāṣimī, Šaraf al-Dīn and Baḥr al-Dīn Aḥmad, correspond to the physical and spiritual genealogy of the Āl al-Ḡīlānī al-Ḥamawī, the descendants of ‘Abd al-Qādir in the Syrian town of Ḥamā.27

In particular, the nasab of this šarīf group almost literally confirms the section of the Ethiopian silsila/nasab: ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḡīlānī –

25 Ibidem, p. 139.
Alessandro Gori

al-sayyid Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Razzāq – qāḍī al-quḍāt al-sayyid Nāṣir (called al-Nāṣr in the Syrian source) – al-ṣayḥ Abū al-Nāṣr al-sayyid Muhammad – al-ṣayḥ Ẓāhir al-Dīn al-sayyid Aḥmad – Sayf al-Dīn al-sayyid Yaḥyā. Sayf al-Dīn Yaḥyā (d. 734/1333-34) was the first member of the offspring of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḡilānī to settle in Ḥamā in 685/1286-87 on his way back from the ḥaγg (hence his nickname nazīl Ḥamā) and from him the whole Āl Kīlānī group originated. The names from Sayf al-Dīn Yaḥyā back to al-sayyid ʿAlī al-Hāṣimī are not completely identical in the Syrian nasab and in the Ethiopian silsila but the relatively slight discrepancies between the two texts can be easily explained with some disruptions in the transmission.  28 The only really missing person in the Syrian nasab is Ibrāhīm al-Qādir who, however, could be an avatar of Ibrāhīm b. Ṣaraf al-Dīn b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Hāṣimī who appears in the nasab of ṣayḥ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kīlānī, naqīb al-ašrāf in Damascus (d. ca. 1172/1758-59).  29

As for sayyid Musāfīr al-Maḏrībī, who should be the person who practically introduced the tariqa into Ethiopia, he lays in complete obscurity: one can only speculate on his nīsha which often is used in Ethiopia to refer to individuals coming or originating from Sudan. It is of course theoretically conceivable that this sayyid Musāfīr al-Maḏrībī could have met a member of the Kīlānī family somewhere in the Near East or in the Arabian Peninsula and have been initiated to the Qādirī brotherhood by him. Such an event, however, would probably have been recorded in Ethiopian tradition with much emphasis. It is thus much more likely that sayyid Musāfīr al-Maḏrībī is nothing but a ghost name functioning to connect the Near-eastern silsila with Ethiopia.

The Ḳāz also contains a cursive mention of the line of Qādirī spiritual descendency initiated by ṣayḥ Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ. The silsila in this

29 How the Syrian nasab came to be known in Ethiopia so that Muḥammad Wale could insert it in his book as a silsila is not clear. A feedback from an Arabic written source is most likely but cannot be proven.
case is:


This is once more the famous Anna-Dana silsila, already recorded by J. Spencer Trimingham and then studied by Husseini Ahmed.31 From the al-Dānī al-Ṭānī, the Ethiopian Qādirīyya apparently managed to spread widely in every corner of Ethiopia. Among the most famous disciples of the “second” al-Dānī ṣayḥ, Muḥammad Wale mentions:

al-ṣayḥ al-Sayyid b. al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Tālī; ṣayḥ Abū al-Baṣṭ – ṣayḥ Mahmūd Kanz – ṣayḥ Šahīd al-Dār ṣayḥ al-Karamī who was, in his turn, master of al-ḥāṣṣ Muḥammad Zayn al-Dānī (the third Dānī).32

This local Ethiopian section of the silsila thus includes the names of the main representatives of the Qādirīyya of Wāllo in the recent past and today. It provides the standard chain of spiritual descent for the whole region, highlighting the pivotal role played by the Anna-Dana connection.

This is the only Ethiopian Qādirī silsila known so far. Other silsilas based on different Qādirī centres in Wāllo and/or in Harar which, for sure, exist are still to be discovered. Only further research on the written local tradition of the tarīqa will hopefully allow us to make a more detailed assessment of the network of the Qādirīyya in the whole region.

30 Muḥammad Wale, Ḥizāḥ himam al-aḡḥiya’, p. 139.
32 Muḥammad Wale, Ḥizāḥ himam al-aḡḥiya’, p. 139.