CHAPTER 3

The Branches of the Qādiriyya and the Shādhiliyya in Northern Mozambique

Silsilas to the South

I instructed that he open the doors of the zāwiyā for the service of the poor . . .\footnote{Quote: Qādirī initiation document from Palma, Mozambique. See below.}

Contrary to the East African towns of Zanzibar and Lamu which only came under European control at the end of the nineteenth century, Mozambique had long experience with European rule by the time of the arrival of organized Sufism. This was especially so in the former Portuguese naval base of Ilha de Mozambique, which had been under Portuguese control since the early 1500s. The diffusion of the Qādiriyya and Shādhiliyya to the south was, in other words, not only a transmission beyond the immediate Swahili cultural zone, but also into another political structure with a different set of hierarchies.

Much has been written about the history of the Qādiriyya in East Africa and the role the order played in the so-called “Meccan letter affair” in German-held Tanganyika in 1908\footnote{See J.S. Trimingham, Islam in East Africa, London (Oxford University Press), 1964; B.G. Martin, “Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Uways b. Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa”, The Journal of African History, 10: 3, 1969, 471–486; B.G. Martin, Muslim Brotherhoods, 152–177; A.H. Nimtz, Islam and Politics in East Africa; R.L. Pouwels, Horn and Crescent: Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast 800–1900, New York (Cambridge University Press), 1987; A.A. Issa, “The legacy of Qadiri scholars in Zanzibar”, in: R. Loimeier and R. Seesemann (eds.), The Global Worlds of the Swahili; R. Loimeier, Between Social Skills, 66–95 and passim.}, but also its role as a social movement throughout East Africa. As S. Reese has pointed out, by the 1920s, the order “easily cut across most major social, cultural and economic boundaries.”\footnote{S. Reese, Renewers of the Age. Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir, Leiden (Brill), 2008, 214.} Focusing on the Benadir coast, Reese demonstrates how the Qādirī shaykhs aimed their teaching not only at their murīds, but at the general population. He also demonstrates how the shaykhs increasingly emphasized daily praxis (observance of...
the precepts of the law) as the way to obtain paradise, while de-emphasizing the importance of mystical exercises to obtain fanā’ (“annihilation in God”). More recent research has also deepened our knowledge about the role of this order in northern Mozambique, notably E.A. Alpers and L.J.K. Bonate. Especially the work by Bonate has expanded the history of Sufi orders in northern Mozambique as well as the complex patterns of integration into local communities. Bonate’s research also echoes the findings of Reese at the northern end of the Swahili coast; an emphasis on normative faith, preached by teachers who clearly saw themselves as “on a mission”. As late as in 1972, the Portuguese A.P. Carvalho noted that the Mozambican Qādiriyya was “under the tutelage of Zanzibar”.

This chapter will trace some of the routes of the Qādiriyya and Shādhiliyya from Zanzibar to Mozambique, and identify networks that, in different ways, took southwards the reformist impulses embedded in the ṭarīqās. The purpose is thus to contextualize and nuance earlier research, to point to parallel paths of knowledge transmission, and indicate corresponding processes of localization.

The Ṭarīqa Qādiriyya in Zanzibar

As outlined above (Chapter 2), the Qādiriyya in Zanzibar quickly acquired followers from different backgrounds in Zanzibar after the arrival of Shaykh Uways in 1884. By 1900 it was a well-established and expanding ṭarīqa, which recruited from different segments of the population, in turn generating different networks.

The “Brawanese” Qādiriyya

The first network is that which we can call “Brawanese”, propagated by a segment that was Arabic-literate educated and urban. This was a class of scholars with a clear “bookish” orientation, consisting of men who were scholars in their own right, as well as religious leaders. An indication of this orientation can be drawn from the document whereby ʿUmar Qullatayn was initiated into the Qādiriyya in Zanzibar, some time in the late nineteenth/early

4 E.A. Alpers, “A Complex Relationship”.