

have made a fire and sat in it. If a poisonous snake bit a Dervish, he would not be harmed because his faith in God and the Path would neutralize the poison of the snake. If a Dervish cuts himself into pieces he will not die. Yes, if he does it, it is possible to put him together again. It all depends upon a man who has total faith."

'Ali the shepherd boy, expressed his belief in the Sheikh's power and said:

"When I'm performing with the skewer or dagger, I call on Pir, Ghawth and Sheikh. I shout out loudly and I call out to the Sheikh, to Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad, to Sheikh Hossein, Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad and Sheikh Hossein call out to God to help me. They send God to help me. God takes away the pain of the skewer from me, the Sheikh takes away my pain. The Sheikh cures the wound of the dagger and skewer. The Sheikh doesn't let me die."

The Sheikh is regarded as a powerful protector of the Dervishes in secular life. He is a spiritual supporter who supports his mureeds against calamity, misfortune, sadness, difficulties and enemies. He does not let his believers suffer or fail in their ordinary life. Dervish Hassan described this spiritual power of the Sheikh as supernatural:

"Our faith in the Path helps us in life. If I just, for example, rush to hit you, you as a government official can't rush back and defeat me, because the head of the Path wouldn't let it happen. It is impossible to overcome a Dervish. But I would defeat you with the

Sheikh's support and the support of the Pirs of the Path. The Path helps us in that way. That is the help. What kind of help do you think it should be? No one can force Dervishes to do anything. You can't force us because of our Head. Anyone who is not respectful of Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad, would not be successful in his life. He would fail. He would be hurt. By God, he wouldn't live. Anyone who didn't like Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad could not live in this World or the other world."

The Dervish creates an image of the Sheikh in which he is invested with an absolute omnipotence. He has thus formed an ideal whose every order he will obey and whose every idea he will embrace. This belief is reinforced by the Dervishes image of the Sheikh as his true spiritual ancestor, who has the power of determination over all aspects of his life.

These beliefs are the symbolic cement in a rigid hierarchical structure centered on one individual – the Sheikh himself. They are supported by the ritual practices of the Dervish orders which depend on absolute leadership from the Sheikh throughout. The system is strong at present, but one is continually conscious of the rapidity with which it could be destroyed through the incursion of selectively placed interference from outside the community.

* * *

1. Field work for the present article was carried out in Kurdistan during 1973, 1974 and 1975. I wish to thank the Centre for Iranian Anthropology for support during this period. I also wish to thank Dr. William Beeman for help in the preparation of the English text.

fects them through their Sheikh. 'Izat said "The Sheikh is the representative of God on earth." Dervish Hassan, explains that when he performed with a skewer or a dagger in the ritual he called out to the Sheikh and "the Sheikh called on God to protect and help me." 'Ali, the shepherd boy, says that in the physical ritual the Sheikh sends God to help the Dervishes and take away their pain.

In consequence, the Sheikh possesses a divine power in this world. He functions as a medium between the secular life and the sacred life. The most important of his functions is that of serving as a medium through which his followers can enter into communion with God.

The Sheikh is also seen as a **FATHER**. In the talqin, as I mentioned, the Sheikh receives the candidate as his son in the Order. This means that the Sheikh's function in the Path is as a father with relation to the members of the Order. Therefore, the relationship between him and his murceeds should be regarded as the relationship between a father and his children. As a result, there exists a tie of brotherhood between the Dervishes through which they are united to each other.

The Sheikh is seen as a shâfi' or shafii' (intercessor) for his believers on the Ruze Qiyamat (the Day of Judgement). It is the Dervishes' general belief that the Sheikh will intercede for them with his ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad, and with God on the Day of Judgement. In accordance with the Muslims' belief, the Prophet Muhammad is — an intercessor for his descendants (Seyyeds) with God in the resurrection, and God will forgive the sins of the Apostle's followers for His sake. This general belief is opposed to some verses of the Qurân in which God explicitly refuses any intercession for anybody.

In interviewing 'Izat, I attempted to get his view about this general belief. Therefore I asked him, if he did a wrong or sin whether the

Sheikh of the Path could help him and intercede for his sins at the throne of God in order for him to enter into Paradise. He answered:

"Yes they could. When we die, God can forgive our sins for Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad's sake."

To support this idea, he gave an example and explained it in this way:

"If I had a quarrel with my brother, (He meant one of the Dervishes who are regarded as brothers), and we were taken to the border-station, you, for example, as a government official could go to the police and have me released for your sake. The Sheikh does everything for God's sake, therefore God forgives us for His sake."

The Sheikh is regarded as a spiritual healer. He possesses a supreme power of Divinity to cure ill persons and patients and to heal the Dervishes' wounds from the sword and skewer in the ritual. It is generally believed that the Dervishes who have total faith in God, in the Prophet Muhammad, in the Saints, in the Sheikhs of the Order, and in the reality of the Qâderi Path will not be harmed by anything. God will protect them through His Saints and Sheikhs against any harm or danger. For a wounded Dervish, for example, it is beneficial and effective if the Sheikh touches his wound and blesses him.

Sheikh Hossein, Kâkâ Muhammad's son, expressed the spiritual power of the Sheikh as follows:

"In our Order, if a Dervish performed with sword and skewer, he would not die, he would be healed. If he were to swallow fire and were to be burnt, he would also be cured without any wound or infection.

There have been many Dervishes who

the Prayer of the Fatiha together. Then the Sheikh receives the young and newly initiated Dervishes whose wounds are bleeding and blesses them by rubbing his right hand on their wounds. He convinces them that their wounds will be healed very soon.

The Qâderi Dervishes are free and have choice in performing the physical ritual. No member of the Path is forced to take part in this ritual. But if anyone wishes to join the Dervish fanatics in the physical ritual, he will receive permission from the Sheikh.

The Dervishes who perform the physical practices, in the state of their frenzy and ecstasy, are professional and adroit. (I saw only a few children and young boys who performed the bodily ritual for the first time). They mainly commence it when they are fairly young. There are progressive stages for performing the physical practices. An initiated young boy, if he wishes, is allowed to lick a red-hot iron or to eat glass. The young Dervishes over ten years old are permitted to perform with skewers. Thereafter the Dervishes can get permission to perform the more extraordinary practices

There is a difference between the regular collective dhikr and the physical performances of the Dervish Path. The former is performed twice every week, but the latter is done only in the official ceremonies and on very special occasions.

THE FUNCTION OF MUSIC IN THE DERVISH DHIKR

Music plays a great part in the collective dhikr, particularly in the tigh bâzi ritual. It stimulates the Dervishes' emotions and causes them to lose consciousness of their physical bodies and to be driven into spiritual ecstasy.

There is, in general, a disagreement on the use or prohibition of musical instruments in Dervish

rituals. On the whole the difference arises from the lack of a "nass-e sarih" (clear injunction) about the matter in the Holy Qurân. Sufis and Dervishes, in this matter, generally follow Islamic scholars and their leaders. In the Alchemy of Happiness, "Kimiyyâ-e Sa'âdat", Gazzali, one of the greatest Persian mystics, points out that the "samâ" (lit. singing, hearing and dancing) is lawful with instruments such as drum and tambourine, because these two instruments have not been regarded as unlawful in Muhammadian law. He, as an orthodox Muslim Sufi, also regarded song and music as "a door to Eternity".

The Qâderi Dervishes consider that any music or singing which excites lust is unlawful. The common attitudes of the Bâyvehi villagers toward music are determined by the opinions of the Sheikh. Sheikh Hossein, the son of the Qâderi leader in the village, says: "Music is not 'harâm' (unlawful), but the surî (a kind of oboe) is an unlawful instrument". In general, he explained his ideas as follows: "Anything that does not make man lustful is 'halâl' (lawful)".

THE METAPHORICAL PERSONALITY AND SYMBOLIC ROLE OF THE SHEIKH

The Sheikh as the head of the Order is a man of great spiritual personality. He possesses a religious position and a spiritual power both of which award him a respectable social rank in the community of Bâyveh. In the image of the Dervishes, he is a possessor of divine spirit whose will and command must be eagerly obeyed.

The Sheikh is seen as a wâsete (medium) between God and the Dervishes. In a word, he is a spiritual medium between heaven and earth. A Dervish in ecstasy, it is believed, can make a communion with God through the mediumship of the Sheikh.

The Dervishes believe that there is a sort of spiritual connection between God and the Sheikh. They believe that Haqq (the Real) helps and pro-

dhikr is "jalyy". The Sheikh ends the ritual of the dhikr with the prayer (do'â) of the Fâtiha and the Salawât (the praise to the Prophet Muhammad).

The second phase of the dhikr is accompanied by musical instruments. At this point the Dervishes stand in a halqe (circle) holding each other's arms. The Sheikh who is holding a tasbih (rosary) of 99 beads (symbolizing the number of names of Allâh) in his hand, stands in the centre of the halqe. Two or three Dervishes who are responsible for beating tambourines and drums, also stand in the centre of the circle. The dhikr is commenced with the permission of the Sheikh. The Dervishes begin reciting the names of Allah and the wirds, turning in circles and moving their heads forward and backwards, swaying right and left. Their chanting is in harmony with their rhythmical movements and is accompanied by the beating of the tambourines and drums. They commence reciting the words softly and moving themselves slowly but as they continue, they change the tone of their voices and turn faster, quickening the movements of their heads and bodies. The Sheikh walks within the circle and conducts them in chanting the dhikrs. He keeps count of the number of repetitions of each wird with his rosary and changes it to a new wird after a certain number of repetitions.

The third phase of the dhikr ritual is the stage in which the Dervish enters into a state of ecstasy. This phase is the most exciting and amazing ritual performance of the Dervishes. In this process, the Dervish abandons his nafs (soul) and in a state of almost unconsciousness is transported to a mysterious realm of hâl (ecstasy), which is said to be the - frenzy of divine love.

In order to attain the state of hâl, Dervishes who feel a "burning inclination" in their insides, continue reciting the dhikr ritual with the permission of the Sheikh, after the second phase. They first take off their peichs (turbans) and throw them away. Some have long hair which they normally tie up and keep under their turbans. The hair then falls to their shoulders, and they commence the

dhikr moving their heads violently forward, backwards, to the right, and to the left, shouting Allâh, Hu (He) - Allâh, Hayy (Alive) - their chanting and dancing accompanied by the violent voice of the drums and tambourines.

In this state of a full sacred ecstasy some Dervishes go into violent convulsions and continuously cry and call the names of Allâh - and the attributes of the Saints, Sheikh Qâder Gilâni, and the other Sheikhs of the Order. Others rush to get the ritual tools in order to perform physical demonstrations. Dervishes who are in extreme ecstasy, each take one ritual tool such as sword, tigh (awl, skewer), shovel (which is red-hot), glass, nails and recently a live electric wire with great eagerness and inflict extraordinary physical punishments on their own bodies without seeming to cause injury.

In this mystic atmosphere of excitement with cries of the hawâr (scream) Allâh, Allâh, Hu, Hu, Pir, Pir, Ghowth, Ghowth (Pir: Leader, Ghowth: Helper, they are both the attributes of Sheikh 'Abd al-Qâder), and the wild sound of the drums and tambourines, the Dervishes begin cutting their stomachs with the swords, passing skewers through their cheeks and chins, eating glass and nails, licking the red-hot irons, taking the electric wires, and handling poisonous snakes. To an observer they seem to be impassive and indifferent to harm, pain, and danger in their state of ecstasy.

The continuation of the physical ritual depends on the degree of frenzy of the Dervishes and the will of the Sheikh. In any case the Sheikh is the one who warns them to stop the ritual and start chanting the wirds once again.

The general term for the Qâderi ritual is dhikr. However when the Dervishes perform the physical acts above, they use the term tigh bizi (tigh bâzi), meaning the performance of sword and skewer.

To end the ritual, the Sheikh and all participants, the Dervishes and non-Dervishes, recite

accordance with the Dervish ideology, the Path has successively been transmitted from the founder of the Qâder, Sheikh Qâder, hand by hand up to the present Sheikhs of the Order.

In the talqin ritual, a strong dichotomy exists between lawful and unlawful matters and between good and evil things and actions. All these lawful and unlawful things and instructions are admittedly established for characterizing holiness and purity on the one hand and controlling social order in the Dervish community on the other. On the whole, any member of the Order must respect these dichotomies. After the ritual purification of the talqin, a Dervish can keep himself separate from unclean and profane life only by obeying these instructions.

With regard to these points, the talqin can certainly be said to represent a ritual of separation from the unsacred and impure world and re-incorporation into the sacred and pure life -- a true rite of passage.

Traditionally in the Islamic cultural pattern, the opening chapter of the Quran (The Sura of the Fâtiha), which is also called the "Praise", is often recited at the completion of religious rituals, traditional ceremonies, commercial contracts, customary bargains, and moral and political treaties. For example, it is chanted seven times in the name of the deceased after the burial of its body, it is recited in the sixth day of the birth of a child, it is recited in the marriage contract celebrations, etc.

The recitation of the Fâtiha is for health, remedy, healing, victory, fortune, and success. In the end of the rituals of the talqin, dhikr, and physical practices, the Sheikh and the Dervishes also chant it together to mark the termination of the ceremony.

THE RITUAL OF THE DHIKR

In the ritual of the talqin, the Sheikh requires the candidate to recite dhikr constantly and

join the other Dervishes in performing the collective dhikr in the tekye on Monday and Thursday eves. This is one of the fundamental elements of the Dervish covenant which is sealed through the ritual of the initiation. The Dervish must be solidly respectful of this sacred compact and be faithful to all its conditions.

In the Quran, God instructs Muslims to remember Him by perpetual recitation of His names.

So it is logical that the principal pillar of the Qâderi Order is based on the performance of the dhikr of Allâh, and remembering Him individually and collectively in the Dervish rituals, since it is a way of communication with God.

The regular collective dhikr and its various phases are recited on Monday and Thursday eves in the tekye. On these two evenings, all faithful Dervishes of the village congregate in the tekye. After the Night prayer, 'Ishâ, they all sit cross-legged either in two lines or in a circle facing each other. Sheikh Hossein, on behalf of his old father, also sits by the Dervishes in the line or circle. They put their hands on their knees and commence reciting the dhikr after receiving permission from the Sheikh.

The first phase of the collective dhikr begins with chanting the Tahlîl ("La ilaha ila Allâh"). For this, they sway their heads constantly towards their right and left shoulders. When their heads are inclined towards the right they recite the first part of the Tahlîl "La ilaha", which is the nafy (the negation) of any other god except Allâh, and recite the second part "illa Allâh", which is the ithbât (the affirmation) of God, with a strong stress on "illa" (except) when they incline their heads towards left and towards their hearts. They recite the Tahlîl 200 times.

The second wird (invocation) of the dhikr is repeating the name of "Allâh", three hundred times. Following this, they recite several other different wirds. These wirds are all recited loudly "jalyy". For this reason it is said that the Qâderi

THE SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF THE TALQIN

Sheikh Hossein, the son of Kâkâ Muhammad, explains the talqin as follows:

"For the admission to the Path, there is no appropriate age for candidates. As soon as a boy approaches the age when he begins to distinguish between male and female and between objects, if he wishes, he can be admitted to the Path". This stage does not, in fact, conform to the age of puberty, since boys as little as 8 or 9 years are seen in the dhikr rituals.

Admission to the Path for a boy is his transition from childhood to manhood. But after this transition he is not supposed to be subject to all the religious laws and Dervish rules which affect the adults. So until the stage of puberty, he is regarded as a novice who can take part in the dhikr rituals unofficially. Of course he can, if he desires, get permission to lick the red-hot shovel, to eat glass, and to pierce various parts of his body with the skewer in the physical phase of the Dervish rituals. In consequence, though an initiated small boy is a member of the Dervish Order, he is not a full member until the age of his legal puberty.

Purification is one of the basic elements of the initiation ritual, because the candidate must be in a state of complete cleanliness and purity in order to be able to undergo the talqin, to make the compact and enter into the holy atmosphere of the Path. To achieve this pure state of cleanliness the candidate rids himself of impurity such as the arising from sexual copulation with his wife (if the candidate is an adult and married man), by performing a wuzu (ablution) with clean water.

Repentance is another important part of the talqin ritual. Before receiving the talqin from the Sheikh and undergoing the transition to the sacred life of the Dervish community, each candidate must make repentance to God for sins and evil deeds. The importance of repentance is such that in the Quran one chapter is entitled Tawba (Repentance). Many times in the dif-

ferent chapters of the Quran, God points to repentance and promises His believers that they will be redeemed if they return to Him and repent from sin and wrong deeds.

Repentance is, in fact, a spiritual form of purification. The candidate must first purify himself physically with clean water, and then spiritually by making repentance to God in front of the Sheikh. The act of repentance thus may be taken as a vehicle for the transition from the profane to the whole sacred life.

As we learned from the account of the talqin ritual above, the Sheikh gives the talqin as he holds the candidate's right hand. In his testimony, the candidate must testify aloud that the hand of the Sheikh is the hand of Sheikh Qâder Gilâny, and the 'ahd (covenant) he is making is the 'ahd with God.

In Islamic culture from ancient times to the present, it was a common practice for people to clasp each other's right hands when making any political, economic, or moral compact. Linguistically in Persian tradition, one of the figurative meanings of "dast dâdan" (to shake hands) is "to make a covenant".

The right hand, culturally and linguistically is an emblem of Divinity, sacredness, and fortune in Islamic society. The left hand conversely symbolizes the demon and profane. Indeed, it is believed, based on the Sura Qaf of the Quran, that the Angel who records the good deeds of a man in the man's daftar e a'mâl (the Book of Actions) is sitting on his right shoulder while the Angel recording the evil deeds is sitting on his left shoulder.

The compact itself is regarded as a symbolic covenant with God. Thus good Muslims are very faithful in their treaties and try not to break them.

Thus, from these Islamic viewpoints, the candidates make their 'ahd, and the Sheikh consecrates, blesses, and cures his Dervishes whenever he wishes with his right hand.

The hand of the Sheikh is taken as a symbol of the hand of Sheikh Qâder Gilâni, because in

synonymous with initiation. In the book Al-Fuyuzat al-Rabbaniyah, ascribed to 'Abd al-Qâder Gilâni', the ritual of the Qâderi talqin has been clearly described.

The general practice of the talqin (the ritual initiation) in the village at present is somewhat different from that described in this classic source.

The candidate for initiation into the Qâderi Tariqat, first of all, cleans himself and performs wuzu (ablution). Then he kneels before the Sheikh and kisses his right hand. They clasp each other's right hands, and the Sheikh begins giving the talqin, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful". He advises the candidate to make repentance for his sins and his wrong and evil deeds, calls him to the obedience of God and His will and commands, and to the worship of Him. He requires the candidate to be faithful to the Order, to obey and to follow the Sheikhs of the Path, and to believe that the Prophet Muhammad gave the Path to the Caliph 'Ali, 'Ali gave it to his son the Holy Hossein, and after him it is traced down through a silsile (chain) of Saints and Sufis and Sheikhs to the present day.

The candidate should learn and always remember the names of the Sheikhs and leaders of the Qâderi Order, from the founder of the Path up to the present Sheikh, and believe that the hand of the Sheikh symbolizes the hand of 'Abd al-Qâder, and the 'ahd (covenant) he has made is a sacred 'ahd with Sheikh 'Abd al Qâder.

The candidate is admonished not to eat taboo and forbidden foods, not to receive any prohibited and unlawful thing, to avoid what is wrong; is forbidden to look at people's wives and daughters, except his own wife and his close female relatives, and is warned not to turn away from or act against the Shari'at (the religious law) and the Tariqat (the Path's instructions).

The Sheikh bids the instructions to the candidate to perform daily prayers and be steadfast in it, to fast the whole Ramezân, (the month of fasting), to eat only clean and lawful foods, to give zakât (alms), to recite 40 times "I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed" before every Dawn

prayer, to recite two tasbihs (rosaries) "There is no god but Allâh", and three rosary recitations of "Allâh" after each Dawn and Night Prayer, and four recitations of the "Salawât" (O God, have mercy on Muhammad and his descendants) during the day.

The Sheikh also requires him to make a khatm (retreat) one day every year, and recite 80,000 times "There is no god but Allâh" in it. He asks the candidate to participate in the collective dhikr (recitation of the names of God) at the tekye (assembly place), which is performed twice a week on Monday and Thursday eves. He is also asked to fast every Monday and Thursday if he feels well. Then the Sheikh announces the end of the talqin and recites the Fatiha together with the aspirant. The candidate who is then considered a full member of the Path, kisses the right hand of the Sheikh, stands up and leaves the Sheikh, walking respectfully backwards with slow steps, never turning his back to the Sheikh.

In discussing the way of giving and taking the Dervish talqin, several Dervishes from the different age-stages explained their knowledge as they had understood it. Dervish Sa'id, the sixty year old shepherd, described his understanding as follows:

"I took the talqin from the Sheikh, Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad. At the time of giving the talqin, we must have faith in God, in the Prophet, in the leaders of the Path, and in all the Sheikhs. We must believe that the Sheikh took the Path from the hands of the Prophet and 'Ali. The Dervish teachings specify that you mustn't lie, you mustn't eat forbidden foods, you mustn't look at other people's wives, you mustn't insult children. But you must pray, you must fast, you must give zakât, and you must perform the dhikr."

The Symbolism of Leadership among the Qâderi Dervishes of Iranian Kurdistan.

by: Ali BOLOUKBASHI

The village of Bâyveh is a small settlement in Iranian Kurdistan. Bâyveh is situated 24 km. north-east of the city of Marivân, on the border between Iran and Iraq. The village population is about 150 families.

This rural society is under the domination of a Dervish religious order, which is called the Qâderi Tariqat (Qâderi Path). The Qâderi Path in Bâyveh is led by a man who is supposed to be the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and spiritual successor of the founder of the Qâderi Path, 'Abd al-Qâder Gilâni'.

'Abd al-Qâder ibn Abi Sâlih was born in the village of Gilân, a zone of Kirmânshâhân in the west of Iran, in A.H. 471/A.C. 1077. He went to Baghdâd in A.H. 488, and studied religious law and tradition according to the Hanbali school, one of the four main schools in Islam. He died in A.H. 561, when he was 90 years old.

The Dervish system of Qâderi is a survival of an old, strict philosophical school of the Sufi orders whose function is the training of novices under Islamic Law and the Qâderi teachings. According to the Qâderi teachings, the system of Qâderi leadership endeavours to lead Dervishes to faqr (the poverty of normal life), to sincerity and integrity, to contentment and satisfaction, to love and devotion, to brotherhood and friendship, and finally to the highest status of humanity through which mureeds (aspirants) are released from "xod" (self) and their souls leave their bodily prisons, which are the wordly abode for them, to become absorbed into undifferentiated unity and union — a perfect communion with Allâh destroying the

duality of Allâh and "self".

* * *

Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad, the Sheikh of Bâyveh, and his kin are from that group of the Kurds, who fled to Iran 15 years ago, during the war between the Iraqi government and the Kurds. They were settled in different parts of Kurdistan by the Iranian government. A great number of them, about 55 families, who claim that they are all the Dervishes of the Sheikh were settled in the village of Bâyveh.

Because of his religious and spiritual power, which is based on his descent from the Prophet Muhammad, through his daughter Fâtima, and his succession to the leadership of the Qâderi Order, Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad has been given social control over the society of Bâyveh.

In order to understand the nature of this social control and the leadership functions revised by Sheikh Kâkâ Muhammad, we must first gain an understanding of the Dervish rituals as practiced by the Qâderi order.

* * *

TALQIN

The world talqin is a verbal noun which means inculcation, but in the category of the mystic vocabulary has the meaning of religious and mystic instructions which are given to a candidate in order to initiate him into the Path. It is almost