

The Shaikh's Names and Titles

A rich store of information about the author of these discourses and Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth is conveniently available, to those familiar with the religious and spiritual tradition of Islaam, in his names, his surnames, and the many titles conferred upon him by his devoted followers. It is not unusual for these to take up several lines in an Arabic manuscript, but let us start with the short form of the author's name as it appears on the cover and title page of these books.

Shaikh

A term applied throughout the Islamic world to respected persons of recognized seniority in learning, experience and wisdom. Its basic meaning in Arabic is "an elder, a man over fifty years of age. (The spellings Sheikh and Shaykh may also be encountered in English language publications.)

'Abd al-Qadir

-This is the author's personal name, meaning "Servant [or Slave] of the All-Powerful." (The form 'Abdul Qadir, which the reader may come across elsewhere, is simply an alternative transliteration of the Arabic spelling.) It has always been a common practice, in the Muslim community, to give a male child a name in which 'Abd is prefixed to one of the Names of Allaah.

Al-Jilani

A surname ending in -ii will often indicate the bearer's place of birth. Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir was born in the Iranian district of Giilaan, south of the Caspian Sea, in A.H. 470/1077-8 C.E. (In some texts, the Persian spelling Giilaanii is used instead of the arabicized form al-Jiilaanii. The abbreviated form al-Jilii, which may also be encountered, should not be confused with the surname of the venerable 'Abd al-Karim al-Jilii, author of the celebrated work al-Insaan al-Kaamil, who came from Jil in the district of Baghdaad.)

Let us now consider a slightly longer version of the Shaikh's name, as it occurs near the beginning of Al-Fath ar-Rabbaanii [The Sublime Revelation]: Sayyidunaa 'sh-Shaikh Muhyi'd-Diin Abuu Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir (Radiya'llaahu 'anh).

Sayyidunaa

'sh-Shaikh

"Our Master, the Shaikh." A writer who regards himself as a Qadirii, a devoted follower of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir, will generally refer to the latter as Sayyidunaa [our Master], or Sayyidii [my Master].

Shaikh Abdul Qadir Al Jilani

The Shaikh's Life in Baghdaad

Through the mists of legend surrounding the life of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, it is possible to discern the outlines of the following biographical sketch:

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdaad, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in the world of Islaam. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Hanbali jurist [faqih], Abuu Sa'd 'Alii al-Mukharrimii, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Abu'l-Khair Hammaad ad-Dabbaas.

Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of 'Iraaq. He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdaad, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society. He moved into the school [madrasa] belonging to his old teacher al-Mukharrimii, but the premises eventually proved inadequate.

In A.H. 528, pious donations were applied to the construction of a residence and guesthouse [ribaat], capable of housing the Shaikh and his large family, as well as providing accommodation for his pupils and space for those who came from far and wide to attend his regular sessions [majaalis].

He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to Revelations of the Unseen.

In the words of Shaikh Muzaffer Ozak Efendi: "The venerable 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani passed on to the Realm of Divine Beauty in A.H. 561/1166 C.E., and his blessed mausoleum in Baghdaad is still a place of pious visitation. He is noted for his extraordinary spiritual experiences and exploits, as well as his memorable sayings and wise teachings. It is rightly said of him that 'he was born in love, grew in perfection, and met his Lord in the perfection of love.' May the All-Glorious Lord bring us in contact with his lofty spiritual influence!"