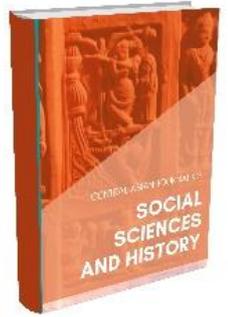




CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HISTORY

Journal homepage: <https://cajssh.centralasianstudies.org>



Saintly Family Trajectory in Central Asia

Uktambek A. Sultonov

Senior researcher, Al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Associate Professor, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

Abstract:

The article is devoted to highlighting the concept of saintly families in Central Asia, their social stratum and traditions of legitimation. The concept of saintly families of Central Asia consists not only of sayyīd-sharīfs, as in the Hijaz or the Maghreb. Its trajectory is quite wide, which covers the descendants of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥāshīm (sayyīd-sharīfs: ḥasanī, ḥusanī, ‘alawī, ‘abbāsī, ṭālibī), descendants (khawāja, mīr, shāh, tūra) of the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr Siddīq, Umar ibn Khattāb, ‘Usmān ibn ‘Affān) and saḥaba or arab commanders who came to Central Asia (for example, Uways al-Karanī, Qutayba b. Muslim).

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26-Sep-22

Received in revised form 27-Oct-22

Accepted 28-Nov-22

Available online 29-Dec-2022

Key word: saintly family, sayyīd-sharīf, khawāja, trajectory, social strata, Hijaz, Maghreb and Central Asia.

In Muslim society, the history of notables and saintly families and their impact on socio-political and cultural life attracts many. In Central Asia, such representatives of the saintly families are called ‘white-bone’ (turk.-chagat. *āqsūyak*), in contrast to ordinary populations. They have been understood by the titles of *khānadān-i nabawī*, *khānadān-i baydā* or *ādami-zādagān-i ṣaḥīḥ al-nasab* in local narratives and official legal documents. The main criterion for affiliation with this family was to be the Prophet Muḥammad’s (*s.a.w.*) descendant or relative – *ahl al-bayt*. Such families are well-known in scientific circles as the sacred, saintly family. In this work, I have categorized them under the name of saint families.

In Islam, the term *ahl al-bayt* that is used for the people who are close to the Prophet is wide in meaning and there are conflicting opinions on this topic. According to the Islamic scholars of the *ahl al-sunnah wa-l-jamā’at*, *ahl al-bayt* consists of Prophet (*s.a.w.*), his daughter Fāṭima (*r.a.*), his bridegroom ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib (*r.a.*), his grandsons, Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn and his wives. Some scholars consider the *Chahāryār* - the first four ‘rightly guided caliphs’ (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*) and the members of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥāshīm’s house as members of this category. According to Shi’a scholars, *ahl al-bayt* consisted of only the Prophet (*s.a.w.*), Fāṭima, ‘Alī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn [1: 257].

In a social context, *ahl al-bayt* includes several houses of the great Ḥāshimīs, who were close and distant relatives of the Prophet (*s.a.w.*). Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are at the center of the ‘Alawī, Ṭālibī, and ‘Abbāsī’s (relatives) lineages [1; 6; 7; 2; 5]. Their stratification and status have been developed by the *fatwās* of Islamic jurists (*faqāḥā*) and scholars (*nassābūn*) of Genealogy (‘*ilm al-nasab*). The fact that every family has a status is described by the well-known genealogist Abū Naṣr al-Bukhārī in the following simple and clear theory: *It should be noted that every Fāṭimī in the world is also an ‘Alawī; but not every ‘Alawī is a Fāṭimī. Every ‘Alawī is a Ṭālibī; but not every Ṭālibī is an ‘Alawī. Every Ṭālibī is a Ḥāshimī, but not every Ḥāshimī is a Ṭālibī. Every Ḥāshimī is a Qurashī, but not every Qurashī is a Ḥāshimī. Every Qurashī is an Arab, yet not every Arab a Qurashī* [2: 2].

The families who claimed to belong to *ahl al-bayt* had the title *sayyīd* or *sharīf* (*pl. sādāt/ashraf, shurafā*) in Islamic society. Sayyīd/sharīfs also belong to the class of saintly families in North Africa, the Middle East, and Iran because in these regions, there is no other social category that competes with them in using the social and economic benefits advantageous to members of *ahl al-bayt*. However, the concept of saintly families in Central Asia, which includes important centers of Islamic civilization, goes beyond the concept of ‘sayyido-sharifology’. To be more precise, the saintly family structures of Central Asia after the 13th century do not only consist of the sayyīd/sharīfs mentioned in the theory of Abū Naṣr al-Bukhārī. Over the last five centuries, the region's saintly families have developed with different names and statuses, such as *sayyīd, khwājah, mīr, tūra, makhdūm, shaykh* and *shāh*. The overall composition of the saintly families in the region according to their ‘biological origin’ (*ṣulb*) is as follows:

The descendants of Fāṭima and ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib are Ḥasanī and Ḥusaynī *sayyīds*;

The descendants from the other sons of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib are ‘Alawī *sayyīds*;

The descendants from Abū Ṭālib b. ‘Abd al-Mannāf’s other children, were the sons of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib – Ṭālibī *sayyīds*;

The descendants of ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Mannāf are ‘Abbāsī *sayyīds*;

The descendants of Chahāryārs – Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq, ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān and ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib (the sons of Muḥammad Ḥanafīya through ‘Abd al-Mannān and ‘Abd al-Faṭṭāh) are Ṣiddīqī, ‘Umarī, ‘Uthmānī, ‘Alawī *khwājahs*;

Claimants of ancestry from the *saḥāba* and the Arab commandants (Uways Qaranī, Qutayba b. Muslim, etc.).

According to official rules, the descendants of Ḥāshim b. ‘Abd al-Mannāf were the Sayyīd, the Chahāryārs (from ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib through only Muḥammad Ḥanafīya's sons, ‘Abd al-Mannān and ‘Abd al-Faṭṭāh), and the descendants of the *saḥāba*, and the Arab commandants had the status of a *khwājah*. But in practice these two titles were used for both categories. The most interesting point is that, until the Mongol invasion, the Central Asian sayyīds had a diverse social category consisting of different houses, such as Ḥasanī, Ḥusaynī, ‘Alawī, Ṭālibī, and ‘Abbāsī, as it was in Ḥijaz and ‘Iraq. But during the 13th century, the Ḥasanī and other ‘Alawī, Ṭālibī sayyīds ‘disappeared’. The Ḥasanī sayyīds in Central Asia appeared again in the 17-18th centuries. According to pedigrees and familial documents these families were generally descendants of ‘Abd al-Qādir Gilānī (470-561/1077-1166). For example, the ancestor of the famous Naqshbandī shaykh Sayyīd Walī-khān Tūra b. Sayyīd Muḥammad (d. 1334/1916) known as ‘Ishān-i Urgūtī’ came to the Bukharan Emirate from Qandahar.

His mother Nār-Pādshāh Āyim was Makhdūmī-‘Azamī sayyīda from Fergana (the title of *tūra* of the Sayyīd Walī-khān is from here). His son Muḥī al-Dīn-khān ishān was one of the influential Central Asian Naqshbandī shaykhs in the 1910s-1920s. Around 1927-1928 after the intensification of the Soviet regime in Uzbekistan, he immigrated to Medina, where he died in 1936. Another descendant of ‘Abd al-Qādir Gilānī - Muḥammad Amīn from Baghdad came to Tashkent and married a woman from the Kūyi-‘Arifānī khwāja family. His son, Sayyīd ‘Abd al-Radhdhāq received *ijaza* on a Qadiriya order from Sayyīd Aḥmad al-Qādirī in Baghdad and returned to Tashkent again. However, after the Mongols, there were no families who linked their genealogy (*nasab*) to them. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān’s descendants in Central Asia are less popular than other kh^wājās. One of the most prominent families in Bukhara was the ‘Ubānī khwājās, who considered themselves descendants of ‘Ubān b. Sa’d b. ‘Uthmān. The ‘Abbāsī sayyīds’ legitimacy in the region was not very successful. They were satisfied with *shaykhness* in the shrines of their ancestors and as religious leaders in their own provinces (in Samarqand and Tashkent) and regarded themselves as the descendants of Qusam b. ‘Abbās. Only in the 19th century Zākīr-khwājah b. Dānīyāl-khwājah and his two sons occupied the rank of *shaykh al-islām* in Khoqand, the capital of the Khanate for some time [3: 533, 946].

In post-Mongol societies, saintly families of the Ṣiddīqī, ‘Umarī, ‘Uthmānī and ‘Alawī khwājās, who are the descendants of the first of the four caliphs formed. The descendants of the minority and the scattered *saḥāba* and the Arab commandants did not possess strong ideological bases that could solidify their communities. They were never able to compete with soaring sayyīds and khwājās in any area. That is why a dichotomy of the sayyīds and khwājās arose in the pursuit of religious leadership and privileges. Even in the Emirate of Bukhara, there was a maximum number of religious positions occupied by sayyīds and khwājās. According to that idea, the sayyīds rose to the rank of *khwājah-kalān*, khwājās to the position of *shaykh al-islām*. However, this information is contrary to history. This is because it is absurd to say that the sayyīds could not occupy the position of the highest *shaykh al-islām* of the ‘ulamā being higher in position than khwājās. Moreover, in the history of the Bukhara Emirate, this position was occupied more by the sayyīds than by the khwājās. N. Khanikov wrote that in the 1840s in the Emirate of Bukhara, saintly families were divided into sayyīds (‘Uthmān’s and ‘Alī’s descendants) and khwājās (Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq’s and ‘Umar al-Fārūq’s descendants). But in general, the term khwājah was used for all three categories of saintly families [4: 182].

The basic requirement of belonging to *ahl al-bayt* in the social context was having closeness and kinship to the Prophet (*s.a.w.*). The kinship criteria’s system consisted of the notions of the closest (Ḥasanī and Ḥusaynī), the close (‘Alawī), and the farthest (the Ṭālibī, the ‘Abbāsī). Central Asian khwājās who are the closest people in this system by means of marriage with Ḥusaynī sayyīds belong to *ahl al-bayt*. As a result of this kind of marriage which continued in many generations, the lineage of some of the khwājās is linked to the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) through their parents, paternal grandparents, and their ancestors. There are other motives for showing that the khwājās belonged to *ahl al-bayt*. The ‘Alawī khwājās, for instance, claimed the status of ‘alawī as the other children of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib. The Ṣiddīqī, the ‘Umarī and the ‘Uthmānī claimed that they were from the Quraysh, like the sayyīds, the descendants of the Chahāryār who were the closest companions of Prophet (*s.a.w.*) [8: 206].

Conclusion. So, it should be noted that this claim was only accepted by the Islamic society of Central Asia. This social category, as a precious family who enjoys prestige and privileges as a sayyīd/sharīf, was not accepted in other regions except Muslim India (The descendants of the *Chahāryārs* gained a prominent position in Muslim India too). In Central Asia, their status as sayyīds was confirmed by the *fatwas* of scholars and the laws of the rulers. In particular, in the Emirate of Bukhara, the affairs of the

khwājah, as of the sayyīds, were decided by *naqīb* and the *shaykh al-islām*. From the beginning of the 16th to 20th centuries, there was practically no barrier for khwājahs in possessing some of the most important positions (sometimes positions even for *naqīb* and *shaykh al-islām* was given to sayyīds) or attaining other economic benefits. Even in Tashkent, Turkistan, Chimkent, and partly in Samarqand, almost all leadership was under khwājahs. Of course, in the palace documentation system, the official separation between the sayyīds and khwājahs was preserved. In practice, local scholars affirmed the *fatwās* on the one hand related to the lineage notes of khwājahs, and on another hand, of sayyīds, and on the correctness of their rights and privileges.

References

1. Ahl al-bayt / EI. 1986. Vol. 1, pp. 257-258.
2. Bernheimer T. The ‘Alids. The first Family of Islam, 750-1200. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
3. Beysembiev T.K. Kokandskaya istoriografiya. Almaty, 2009.
4. Khanykov N. Opisanie Buxarskogo khanstva. Saint-Petersburg, 1843.
5. Kiliç R. Osmanlida Seyyidler ve Şerifler. Istanbul: Kitap. 2005.
6. Morimoto K. Toward the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact // The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies 22 (2004), pp.87-103.
7. Morimoto K. (Ed.). Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet. London-New-York, 2012.
8. Sultonov U.A. Three Versions of Siddiqi-Khwaja Family Legitimation in Central Asia // Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History, 2021, (12), pp.206-211.