



## Chapter 1

# The Unseen Neighbors and a Dual Apprentice

## *Silsila*, or Drawing the Lines of Transmitting Breath

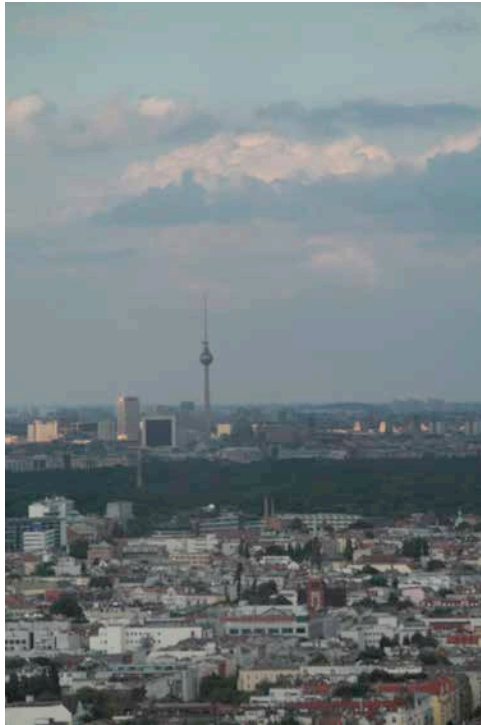
বাড়ির কাছে আরশী নগর  
সেথা পড়শী বসত করে,  
একঘর পড়শী বসত করে  
আমি একদিনও না দেখিলাম তারে...  
সে আর লালন একখানেে রয়  
লক্ষ যোজন ফাঁক রে, তবু  
লক্ষ যোজন ফাঁক রে,  
আমি একদিনও না দেখিলাম তারে।

My home is in the city of mirrors.  
I have neighbors living there.  
We have not met even once . . .

They and Lālan live side by side.  
A hundred thousand miles lie be-  
tween us.  
We have not met even once.  
—Bāul Lālan Fakir, *Arşinagar*<sup>1</sup>

I arrived in Berlin on a cold spring day in May 2012. Gi (a born Berliner) and my supervisor were the only people I knew in the city at that time. Gi had left Bangladesh the year before, having lived there for almost a decade. We met in Dhaka and shared our enthusiasm for transnational post-Marxist feminism, the sounds of Bangla Bāul music, the poetry and life story of Mevlana Rumi, especially the legend of how he met his mentor, the wandering *dervish* Shams of Tabriz.<sup>2</sup> We chatted about probable Ph.D. topics. By that time, my past interest in exploring breathing meditation<sup>3</sup> techniques shifted to a growing curiosity about Sufi healing practices in Germany. Gi was not convinced about my tentative plans. Her first reaction was: “Sufis in Berlin! Where will you find them?”

While in Dhaka, I tried out several search engines with the keywords “Sufi,” “Sufism,” and “Berlin,” going through German-language



**Figure 1.1.** Berlin—a city of mirrors, 17 June 2014. © Nasima Selim.

websites with limited success. After I arrived in Berlin, I looked for the Sufis on the ground, asking everyone I met if they knew anyone. Berlin appeared to me as an *Arşinagar* (city of mirrors), bringing to my mind a popular metaphor for the material world here and now expressed by the nineteenth-century Bengali Bāul Lālan Fakir. In this city of mirrors, very few people have seen the faces of their Sufi neighbors. They are not always visible as Sufis. So, I set out to meet these unseen neighbors, tracking the ways of their (breathing) hearts.

Sufi networks in Berlin spread themselves across several neighborhoods (*Kiez*) and districts (*Bezirke*) (see map). I tracked them by following the word “Sufi” through their websites, leaflets, announcements, publications, and by word-of-mouth. The neighborhoods where the networks were situated were different from each other, and the kinds of people who gathered in each place differed



too, whether as an audience for the public performance of Sufism or to practice it. At times the unseen neighbors spoke languages other than German, most frequently a mix of German and Turkish (Haqqani-Naqshbandi and Tümeta-Berlin) and English (Inayati and nomadic Sufis), but using many words of Arabic and Farsi origin.

The Sufi networks were super-diverse constellations of affects,<sup>4</sup> techniques, breathing practices, words, sounds, things, subjectivities, histories, and politics. The subsequent chapters describe these constellations. As I write the final lines of this book, I look back and wonder how the elements that I discerned much later seemed to have been always already present in my initial glimpses of the places where Sufi breather-wayfarers gathered to practice and experience Sufism (and healing).

## The Unseen Neighbors

### *Haqqani-Naqshbandi Dergah:*

### *Sufi Islam in Berlin's So-Called Problem Quarter*

In the summer of 2013, I crossed the threshold of the Sufi-Center Berlin for the first time. A narrow hallway led to the kitchen on the right side beside the toilet for women. Further down to the right, I entered a smaller carpeted room filled with books in Arabic, Turkish, German, and English, red sofas, a portrait of the Ottoman Sultans, and a wooden structure to mark the direction of the regulatory Islamic prayers. Adjacent to it stood the men's toilet. I saw a disclaimer sign: "If you wish to be left alone, choose a place behind or beside the camera operator because videos and photos are taken and displayed on the internet."

In the hallway, on the left side, the main prayer hall was decorated with red and black carpets, images of the Grand Sheikh, an Ottoman seal, the Ottoman declaration of human rights, large abstract paintings, and several images of whirling Sufi dervishes. Photocopied pages scattered on red cushions, containing instructions on how to do the dhikr. In one corner of the bigger hall, I saw an audio-visual recording kit. On the other corner, a huge sofa stood with a round table in front. On top of it, a fresh rose had been placed in a clean, transparent glass filled with water. It was the seat of the sheikh. The center was preparing for the upcoming Sufi evening.



**Figure 1.2.** Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi-Center Berlin in Neukölln, also known as Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya (SZR), 22 September 2013. © Nasima Selim.

Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya (SZR), formerly known as Sufi-Zentrum Berlin (figure 1.2), used to be the locally managed center of the transnational Haqqani-Naqshbandi network, registered as an association named *der wahre Mensch* (the true human). Near the Hermannplatz subway station, this center stood close to the border between Kreuzberg and Neukölln districts (Kreuzkölln). The ground floor of a spacious, old residential building was turned into a *dergah*<sup>5</sup> and operated as a meeting place, a community center that looked like a reconstructed (new) Ottoman teahouse in the Southeast Berlin neighborhood.<sup>6</sup>

In populist anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant discourse, Neukölln is perceived as one of the “problem-ridden” quarters (*Problemviertel*) of Berlin, where many people of Color live, with and without a so-called migrant background. Neukölln is also home to the largest number of mosques in the city. In contrast, there are hardly any mosques in the former East Berlin districts.<sup>7</sup> The Sufi-Center Berlin of Neukölln was a hub for German Sufi Muslims and non-Muslims,



Turkish-Germans, and “native” Germans, both white and people of Color. The *dergah* was open to their families, friends, neighbors, tourists, new migrants, and refugee newcomers. The most anticipated and crowded events were the dhikr and *sohbet* on weekend nights (Fridays and Saturdays). The center also organized language and music lessons, workshops on *Drehtanz* (whirling dance) on Wednesdays and Sundays, and *Hayy-Kraft* Yoga on Sunday afternoons (Selim 2015a). The kitchen was always busy under the care of staff members of both genders. Young men in red Ottoman caps served tea in curvy glasses, and a free meal was served on the weekends.

Most long-term members of the Haqqani-Naqshbandi network identified themselves as Sufi Muslims. The center provided an informal mosque space to host the ritual practices of the regulatory Islamic prayers five times a day, collective Friday *jumma* prayers, and various festivities, such as Şeker Bayramı (Zuckerfest in German and Eid ul Fitr in Arabic, the Islamic festival of breaking fast) at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and the Kurban Bayramı (Opferfest in German and Eid ul Adha, the Islamic festival of sacrifice).

On Friday and Saturday nights, a video camera provided simultaneous viewing for the visitors in a smaller hall room and live-streaming video on the web. The center was crowded on weekends, especially in the late evening when Sheikh Eşref Efendi led the *sohbet* and dhikr. The events at the center were occasionally featured in magazines on spirituality (SEIN and KGS), online platforms (MYP), newspapers (TAZ), and entertainment magazines in Berlin (Weiß 2017; Gunderlach 2017; Bax 2014; Rigney 2014; Efendi 2007, 2011). SZR took part in multicultural music festivals and interfaith events, such as the Long Night of Religions (2013–2015). Yet the Sufis of this center were not welcomed as neighbors. In December 2014, the Center had to leave the place (and Berlin) due to neighborhood concerns about “too much noise” late at night and followed a central decision from its headquarters in Turkish Cyprus.

Sufi-Center Berlin was not the oldest Sufi network in the city, but it was the more visible of all the networks I have followed. I found the address of the center on their well-managed website and waited for their response to my emails, written in English at that time. From 2013 to 2014, I took part in the workshops that Abu Bakr led. I joined meditation evenings that Timur Efendi led on Friday afternoons. Later, I began to participate in the weekend dhikr and *sohbet*



evenings. This is where I met Abu Bakr, Ayşe, Sheikh Eşref Efendi, and his sister Feride Funda G.-Gençaslan—leading figures in this network. Hafız and Claire, both of whom I had met in the 2012 Weg des Herzens event, also attended the festivities and the weekend activities at the center regularly with their friend Zafar.

Haqqani-Naqshbandi is one of the most prominent Sufi networks in Germany. Worldwide, the network spread under the leadership of the late Grand Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani al-Qubrusi an-Naqshbandi (1922–2014).<sup>8</sup> In addition to his initiation as a Khalidi-Naqshbandi, Sheikh Nazim was trained in the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), one of the four major Sunni schools of Islamic law, followed by many Turkish Muslims (Brown 2014).<sup>9</sup> Sheikh Eşref Efendi was authorized by Sheikh Nazim in 1995 to lead the network in Berlin until the *dergah* shifted to southern Germany in the winter of 2014, eleven years after its opening. This book draws its materials from the time the network operated in Berlin.

In my early days in the field, I was self-conscious as a woman of Color speaking “broken” German. Yet I did not feel threatened in neighborhoods like Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Schöneberg. However, hanging out in the former East Berlin neighborhood, made me apprehensive, perhaps because of the lack of visible diversity. I was not delighted when I found out that an Inayati Sufi *khanekah*<sup>10</sup> was situated in Pankow, a (former East) Berlin neighborhood in the north. On my first day in Pankow, I saw racist anti-immigrant posters of the right-wing party NPD<sup>11</sup> all over this neighborhood. They displayed the slogan, “*Guten Heimflug!*” (Nice journey back home!), featuring a flying carpet with racialized foreigners and (perceived as) Muslim figures: a dark-haired, mustached man, a big-breasted woman with a headscarf, and a blackfaced man with a talisman hanging around his neck (figure 1.3).<sup>12</sup> I wondered how Sufism, a tradition deeply embedded in the Islamic tradition, could thrive in a society fraught with anti-Muslim racism.

Despite my visceral discomfort walking around in the neighborhood, Pankow’s Sufi *khanekah* was a place that I visited frequently.<sup>13</sup> In the garden hall of an apartment building in this foreboding neighborhood, I met Murshida Rabeya, a white psychotherapist and Sufi teacher, for the first time. The transformative experience of that first meeting informed my decision to take my apprenticeship in Sufism a step further.



**Figure 1.3.** “Nice journey back home!” (*Guten Heimflug*), an NPD election poster. These posters were all over the Pankow neighborhood, 24 August 2013. © Nasima Selim.

## The Inayati Sufi Houses

### *Universal Sufism in Affluent Berlin*

When I entered the Inayati Sufi house in North Berlin, I saw an unusual piece of metal standing out in the garden. It was a bit rusty from the rain and air. Later, I realized that it was the winged breathing heart symbol of the Sufism of Hazrat Inayat Khan (figure 1.4). Inside, to the right, a wooden board with leaflets announced various events: *Dances of Universal Peace*, healing seminars, and the upcoming Sufi summer school 2013. Underneath the announcement board, there was a shelf with warm, woolen socks. The door on the right opened into a quadrangular hall with soft cushions, candles, and seating stools. A rug was hanging from the wall embroidered with numerous whirling dervishes. A flower, incense sticks, a glass of water, and a stack of books stood against the wall.

The Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat *khanekah* is a privately owned building open to the public on certain days of the week (usually Fridays, Sun-



**Figure 1.4.** The Inayati symbol, the winged heart, in front of the garden hall in Pankow. The actual symbol consists of the contour of a heart-shaped form bearing a moon, a five-angled star, and two spread-out wings. 12 May 2013. © Nasima Selim.

days, and Mondays). But in practice, the building was accessed only by members and their friends. Within a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a few long-term and senior teachers of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniyat moved to the building that consisted of individual apartments.<sup>14</sup> The ground-floor hall was designated for Sufi gatherings. Here the dances, walks, healing rituals, and *murid* meetings have taken place since the early 2000s. The earliest Dances of Universal Peace in Berlin took place in 1991, although the Inayatists have been practicing elsewhere in Germany much earlier.

Back in 2012, before coming to Berlin, I made email contact with one of the organizers of the annual Sufi Summer School of the European Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniyat networks. My Scottish contact was closely related to the Inayati network in Pankow and introduced me to Murshida Ganga and Murshida Rabeya, two senior teachers





of the German network. After arriving in the city, I wrote to them and was invited to join an upcoming weekend retreat, a Sufi healing seminar (email to the author, 14 January 2013). In this *khanekah*, I later met Andrea, Hermann, Renate, Rahima, and the current spiritual director of the transnational Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat network, Pir Shabda Kahn.

On my first day, the sidewalks were lined with cars, and a sweeping canopy of green leaves shaded the long street. I saw hardly any graffiti on the walls facing the street. It looked like a relatively affluent neighborhood of upper- and middle-class inhabitants. In contrast to the welcoming color, smells, and sounds of the Neukölln neighborhood, this predominantly white neighborhood seemed quieter, and I saw fewer pedestrians of Color. The foreboding atmosphere of the neighborhood was transformed into a welcoming one when I was greeted and embraced by Murshida Rabeya and Murshida Ganga, who had been practicing Sufi healing for more than two decades.

In the course of my fieldwork, I also visited the oldest Inayat-Khan-inspired Sufi Center in Berlin, on public occasions and for an interview. The Sufi-Heim Asal Manzil (Sufi-Home True Abode) is a grand villa in Grunewald where Mrs. Petra B. Schildbach lives and coordinates the activities of this branch of Inayati Sufis. She is the official representative of the Inayat-Khan-inspired Sufi-Movement network in Germany, the oldest Inayati network established in Berlin during the 1920s. Mrs. Schildbach organizes the practices of the Sufi-Movement in Berlin and is in charge of sending newsletters by post. Access is usually granted to members. This Sufi house is open to non-members only during public events. Mrs. Schildbach occasionally conducted Sufi walks in Berlin, retracing the history of Inayat Khan's visit to Weimar Berlin.

One of the major streams, the Inayati Order (Inayatiyya), organized its events in public places and living rooms and occasionally collaborated with local Protestant churches in Berlin. They called their placeless center *Na Kojā Abad*, meaning, "the place of no place" in Farsi. During the Easter retreat in Gersfeld in 2013, I met Pir Zia Inayat-Khan, the current head of this transnational network. There I also met Amir for the first time, through whom I came into contact with Joachim. Both became my key interlocutors in the Inayati Order (Inayatiyya).



The Inayati networks in Berlin derive their genealogy from the central figure of Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927), a North Indian Sufi and musician of the Hindustani classical tradition. He migrated to North America and Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the interwar years, he visited Berlin several times. Soon after his initial visits, the first Inayat-Khan-inspired network was established in 1925, known at that time as *Sufi-Bewegung* (Sufi Movement). The three streams of the Inayati network currently in Berlin are officially known as the International Headquarters of Sufi Movement Germany, the Inayati Order (Inayatiyya) (formerly known as the International Sufi Order), and the Sufi Ruhaniat International Germany (with its associated Dances of Universal Peace Network). Together they form the Berlin branch of the Federation of the Sufi Message, a joint association of the diverse Inayati networks worldwide, originally established in 1997.<sup>15</sup>

The Neukölln Sufi-Center Berlin and the Inayati houses were the more permanent Sufi sites where I conducted my fieldwork. The Neukölln center was supported by wealthy businessmen and donations from members and visitors. All events in the center were offered free of cost, even weekend evening meals. The Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat *khanekah* charged seminar fees for public events and accepted donations. I attended public events of the Haqqani-Naqshbandis and the Inayatīs (and private gatherings of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat) free of cost. But I paid for travel, food, and accommodation costs for annual retreats outside Berlin.

Apart from the more permanent places, Sufis also gathered in temporary places of make-shift nature. Friend circles gathered in living rooms. Protestant churches frequently accommodated Sufi events. Sufi practices occasionally took place in a physician's office and rented rooms. My next stop in this round of early impressions is one of those temporary places where Tūmata-Berlin members gathered.

## **Tūmata-Berlin**

### ***Intersecting Religion, Medicine, and the Arts***

During the early days of fieldwork, I moved around Berlin to make sense of its enormous geography and decipher the ubiquitous urban



references to the past. The city offers a prolific number of museums and exhibitions of historical artifacts. I was surprised at the number of “dark churches” (*dunkle Kirche*)<sup>16</sup> in every neighborhood. My dominant associations with Berlin were still revolving around the image of the colonial city where white Europeans decided on the fate of the African continent in the nineteenth century, followed by the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the postwar construction and fall of the Berlin Wall, and more recent perceptions as the “world capital of atheism,” a thriving queer city, and the legacy of anti-capitalist resistance in the 1980s and 1990s.

During my first autumn in Berlin, Gi and I went to an exhibition that showcased the role of the resistance of the Church against the (former) East German government. The exhibition took place in a Protestant church in Friedrichshain, a (former) East Berlin neighborhood. At the exhibition, I leafed through the displayed old newspapers from 1989. An article in one of these newspapers mentioned the founder of Tümeta in Istanbul, with the title, “Where the Sick are Healed with Music . . . Istanbul Scientist Researches the Soothing Effect of Sounds” (Pils 1989).

A quarter of a century later, Tümeta no longer lies hidden in an East German newspaper archive. Tümeta-Berlin operates in the urban landscape of alternative healing, with their breathing and whirling practices, the sounds they make, and the movements they perform. The network did not have a fixed center during my fieldwork.<sup>17</sup> The members moved around in each others’ living rooms. They also rented small rooms to organize monthly music-and-movement therapy and bigger halls for public events. A mixed audience interested in Sufism, music, and movement attended these events. Like the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi Center (Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya, SZR), Tümeta events cut across the Muslim/non-Muslim divide. They brought together the parallel lives of older and new migrants, white Germans, and postmigrants of Color.

Tümeta was established as a music and movement therapy group in Istanbul in 1976. A Turkish psychologist, ethnomusicologist, musician, and Sufi teacher, the late Dr. Rahmi Oruç Güvenç, founded the network. Together with his wife, the white German and Turkish-speaking occupational therapist Andrea Azize Güvenç, Oruç Güvenç popularized Tümeta events in Western and Southern Europe. In comparison to the Haqqani-Naqshbandi and the Inayatis, the Tümeta-



Berlin network is rather small and consists mostly of musicians and healing practitioners. Members belonged to multiple Sufi networks.<sup>18</sup> The leading figure is a white German Muslim physician, Raphael, and Minar, a Turkish-German medical student, and musician. Along with Gertrud, the healing practitioner I referred to in the Introduction, they were my key interlocutors in this network. I met them during a music and movement therapy group session in the spring of 2013.

It was a small room that accommodated about ten participants with yoga mats, blue and maroon cushions, several colorful blankets, and chairs standing at the back. A long black and brown shawl was spread over one corner. Cushions and music sheets were spread out. An *oud* stood quietly on a chair. Halima, an elderly white woman and a German-language teacher, and Raphael, the physician, together with Hannah, another white German woman, were the three leading musicians of the session. All of them were long-term students of the founder of the music therapy group (fieldnote, 15 April 2013; figure 1.5.).

My first impression of the neighborhood was slightly different from the neighborhoods in Neukölln and Pankow. It was in South Berlin at the intersection of Schöneberg and Kreuzberg. The rented room was a few meters away from one of the biggest “spiritual” bookshops in Berlin and the headquarters of KGS (*Körper Geist Seele*), a popular magazine that dealt with “spiritual” matters. On occasion, I also visited Raphael’s apartment in Kreuzberg where the group mostly met for rehearsals.

For ten Euros, anyone was welcome to subject one’s body and disposition for an hour to the hybrid practice of Sufi music-and-movement therapy, engendered with a crossover of Turkish Sufi and Central Asian Shamanic practices. The sessions usually took place once a month on Thursday evenings. For beginners, rehearsals took place in a bigger living room in another member’s home, usually on Fridays. In addition to the monthly music therapy sessions, Tümeta-Berlin offered music therapy instructions with teaching seminars, *ilahi*<sup>19</sup> singing seminars, and public *sema* (whirling ritual with accompanying music) events around the year under the tutelage of the founder. Tümeta-Berlin seemed less focused on engendering the Islamic ontologies of Sufism. They emphasized the aesthetic and therapeutic forces of breath, sound, and movement.



**Figure 1.5.** Tümata-Berlin music and movement therapy in a rented room in Schöneberg, 25 April 2013. © Nasima Selim.

## **Nomadic Sufis**

### ***Khidr's Healing-Reading Circle***

In contrast to the more or less formal gatherings organized by the Haqqani-Naqshbandis, the Inayatīs, and Tümata-Berlin, the nomadic Sufis met at the apartment of their teacher. They organized themselves as a loose network of friends around the figure of the late Sufi artist and teacher of Color, whom I call Khidr (1955–2019) (Preface). I have come into contact with my Sufi interlocutors at many different crossings on the path of the (breathing) heart. But Khidr, my primary Sufi teacher, was the only one who contacted me. Raphael (Tümata-Berlin) informed me early on about a Sufi healer who holds private Sufi gatherings on Thursday evenings. I was told that the Sufi healer would check my profile and contact me if he wished. I was curious and waited for weeks.



In August 2013, during one of those unexpectedly gloomy summer afternoons in Berlin, I received a call from Khidr, who asked me a few preliminary questions. We agreed to meet in a café in Kreuzberg. The following week I arrived early at the designated café and ordered tea, waiting anxiously for the Sufi healer. Khidr came to the meeting, wearing a flamboyant shirt, black three-quarter trousers, and a pair of silver sunglasses, with a *tasbeeh* in hand, his hands moving along the beads as he spoke. Khidr extended his hand, smiling at me. Within minutes, we began to tell each other our life stories, each taking the turn to speak.

My first encounter with Khidr felt like the beginning of a love story. This “love story” was not the romantic kind between two people attracted to each other erotically, but of another non-normative and metaphysical kind, the taste with which I was not yet familiar.<sup>20</sup> Khidr invited me to his weekly reading and healing circle on Thursday evenings at his apartment in Kreuzberg, surprisingly only two subway stations away from where I lived at that time. The apartment was filled with innumerable Sufi-themed paintings, books, objects such as *tasbeeh* (a string of prayer beads), ornaments, and perfumes that Khidr made himself. In this apartment, I later met Abdullah, Sophia, and Idris—the nomadic Sufis—who became my most intimate and trusted companions on the Sufi path.

Khidr was a polyglot writer and a multimedia artist. He spoke five languages fluently, German, Spanish, English, French, and Arabic. According to what Khidr shared, he was the son of an “unmarried” Egyptian mother who had to give him up. He was adopted and raised by white German parents in a small village near Hamburg. Khidr lived a nomadic life in the true sense of the term. At seventeen, he had left home early to travel first to Spain and later to Morocco, where he spent a considerable number of years before returning to Berlin in 2004. He was fifty-nine years old when I met him in 2013, and he died at 65, in November 2019.

Khidr was initiated and trained by three Sufi teachers from three different Sufi networks (the Naqshbandi, the Nimatullahi, and the Chishti).<sup>21</sup> But he was loosely associated with these networks in the formal sense. Khidr’s reading-healing circle consisted of occasional visitors to Berlin (Abdullah, a Black US-American activist and writer) and long-term inhabitants in the city, first-generation migrants (like



myself), postmigrants of Color (Minar), and white Germans born in the former West (Sophia) and East Berlin (Idris).

Later in 2013, Khidr provided me with full access to his private archives and accepted me as a student. Between 2013 and 2019, we met weekly, on Thursday evenings, with the other students, unless one of us was traveling or had to be somewhere else for work or appointments that we could not cancel. Khidr permitted me to publish our recorded conversations only after his death. I was not allowed to include in my doctoral dissertation (Selim 2019) any material that I recorded during these years (except the dream that I had about him, see Preface).<sup>22</sup>

In November 2019, Khidr disappeared from my everyday life, as mysteriously as he had appeared six years earlier. I found him in his apartment in Kreuzberg, in a cross-legged posture, with his long-lashed eyes wide open, looking rather surprised at the appearance of the angel of death (Azrael) (in Islamic terms) or the passing of the final breath (in secular terms) or on the way to meet his Beloved (in Sufi terms). Khidr had been ill for a few months, diagnosed with throat cancer. After extensive medical treatment and our collective healing prayers, we hoped for his full recovery. But his time was apparently over in this material world.

On 2 November 2019, as I waited for the emergency team and the police to come over, I opened the door of Khidr's apartment to get some fresh air. I wondered about what he thought and how he felt at the end. Migratory birds were flying across the gray sky of yet another Berlin autumn—as if carrying his last breath on their wings to the invisible world, from which no one returns to tell the story. I remembered the “intention” with which Khidr always started the healing practices on Thursday evenings, as I sat and breathed with him and my companions, listening to his booming voice, reciting:

*Bismillahir Rahman ir Rahim*—In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. *Ya Pir Dastgir*—Oh master, give me your hand. I affirm to be present here with the clear intention to reinforce my links with the Sufi tradition . . . the *silsila*—the chain of transmission. I also call upon all those in a position of authority within the Sufi tradition, so that their *baraka* (blessing, benediction, energy) may be accessible here. (Recorded on 13 September 2019)

Khidr invoked the names of his three teachers from three different Sufi traditions, although he studied with many other Sufi teach-



ers (including the founder of Tūmata). His students (including me) add his name to their “intention” at the beginning of their practice to remind themselves that the Sufi tradition draws its strength from breath to breath. The intention (or invocation) of Sufis, in any network, reconfigures the line of transmitting breath in the presence of Sufi teachers, their students, and others who accompany them. In Sufi parlance, such lines (or chains) of transmission are known as *silsila*.

## ***Silsila* as the Lines of Transmitting Breath**

Today Ṣufiism [*taṣawwuf*] is a name without a reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name... That is to say, formally, the practice was known and the pretense unknown, but nowadays, the pretense is known and the practice unknown.

—Al-Hujwiri<sup>23</sup>

Sufism, people say, was born in Arabia, grew up in Iran, bore fruits in Turkey, and harvested the fruits in India.

—Zafar<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to popular perception, Sufism has carved a space for itself in the urban landscape of healing in Berlin. Sufism is not just a name, as Al-Hujwiri suspected more than a thousand years ago. The Sufi history-making practice of invoking the *silsila* is a predominantly monumental practice of transmitting breath. Because it invokes the examples of revered human figures in the lineage of the network to which the Sufi actors belong as a singular line connecting one teacher to another. They are also antiquarian because the Sufi networks actively immerse themselves in traditions to which they belong to animate their present activities. The contemporary Sufi networks “look backward to the past to understand the present and stimulate their longing for the future” (Nietzsche 1873, 10). The monumental practice of invoking Sufi teachers in temporal and spatial transfer from outside the contemporary and imagined Europe and embodying the presence of past Sufi teachers, constructs a lived genealogy, moving across and creating cartographies of temporal imagination, corporeal breathing, and spatial wayfaring.

*Silsila* means a chain in Arabic (H. Ziad 2017).<sup>25</sup> In Sufi discourse, *silsila* is often described as lineage, a line of transmitting the *baraka*





(grace, blessing, energy). Whether used to mean a chain, line, or lineage, *silsila* is a well-traveled Sufi concept. During my fieldwork, I experienced the *silsila* as a monumental history-making practice in which a current Sufi teacher was linked to the teachers of the past and the founder of the respective networks. One of the usual aims of an unbroken *silsila* is the claim to authenticity by linking one's network to a well-known Sufi figure of the past and often back to the Prophet Muhammad.

In elaborating on the practical uses of *silsila*, anthropologist El-Sayed El-Aswad (2006) coined the term *spiritual genealogy*.<sup>26</sup> He discussed how various Sufi orders contributed to Islam with diverse innovations: integrating with local cultures, specific methods of experiencing, aesthetic expressions (poetic and musical), and last but not least, spiritual kinship with the material and the subtle worlds across time and place. Leaders play exemplary, charismatic roles in a spiritual genealogy/*silsila*, with “the affiliation and allegiance among members adhering to certain religious or sanctified principles, values, rituals, and practices expressed in hereditary, social, and trans-social or spiritual terms” (El-Aswad 2006, 503).

The Sufi networks engendered *fictive kinship*<sup>27</sup> among the members of the networks, calling each other brother (Bruder) and sister (Schwester), a common practice I observed in the Haqqani-Naqshbandi, to some extent in the Inayati networks, and Tūmata-Berlin as well. In contrast, Khidr and the nomadic Sufis preferred non-familial kinship terms, such as “companions” or “friends.” Both the Inayatis and the Haqqani-Naqshbandis invoked their *silsila* as a line of transmission within the network history and geographical trajectory and a spiritual genealogy of the renowned figures of the respective Sufi tradition. In the Tūmata-Berlin network, Mevlana Rumi and other “Turkish” Sufis were brought together with the Central Asian Shamanic tradition in a therapeutic genealogy.

Academic history enacts the spread of Sufism along the axis of the expansive routes of Sufi networks (Calderini 2007, 196–97). The thirteenth/fourteenth, and sixteenth/seventeenth-century origin of the Naqshbandiyya/Naqshbandi networks from Central Asia, expanded from the East to the West and further East of the region (Weismann 2007). The Khalidiyya/Khalidi branch (nineteenth century to the present) from the original Naqshbandi of Central Asia flourished in the Ottoman-ruled regions. From this latter Khalidi



branch, the contemporary Haqqaniyya/Haqqani derives its genealogy (Weismann 2007). Another line of transmission enacts the fourteenth-century origin of the Chishtiyya/Chishti networks from present-day Iraq to India, across Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hazrat Inayat Khan was predominantly initiated in the Chishti tradition (Inayat-Khan 2006). Hence the Inayati networks are connected to the Chishtis through their *silsila*.

Yet another line of transmission draws the route of the sixteenth-century Bektashiyya/Bektashi networks from Anatolia, which is also the area where the thirteenth-century Mawlawiyah/Mevlevi networks originated (Langer 2011, 2015). From these Sufi networks, Tümeta-Berlin draws its line of transmitting breath from the hearts of the teachers to the hearts of their students.

### ***Haqqani-Naqshbandi Silsila***

“Destur ya Sheikh Nazim Kubresi. Destur ya!” Sheikh Eşref Efendi began every dhikr and *sohbet*, invoking the *silsila*, and requesting permission from the late Grand Sheikh Nazim Adil Al Haqqani (1922–2014). After the death of Sheikh Nazim, the name of his successor and elder son, Sheikh Mehmet Adil Al Rabbani (1957–), was added to the invocation. The transnational Haqqani-Naqshbandi<sup>28</sup> network is a recently revitalized lineage popularized by the late Turkish Cypriot Sheikh Nazim. Like most Sufi networks, this network constructs its lineage back to Prophet Muhammad but emphasizes the link to the Prophet’s companion and the first Khalifa Abu Bakr. The most charismatic and central figure of the network was the late Sheikh Nazim, who had assumed the title al-Haqqani (hence the network is designated in the academic discourse as Haqqani-Naqshbandi).

Berlin’s Haqqani-Naqshbandi network began its activities in West Berlin during the 1980s with visits from the late Grand Sheikh (Schleißmann 2003, 59). Since 1995, Sheikh Eşref Efendi (born to Turkish parents) has been authorized to teach (*Lehrerlaubnis*) and represent the network in Berlin. Between 2003 and 2014, Sheikh Eşref Efendi led Sufi-Center Berlin, first in Kreuzberg, then in Neukölln, until the center moved to southern Germany in the winter of 2014. Since then, SZR (Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya) has conducted occasional events at a local cultural center in Berlin.

The Haqqani-Naqshbandi network in Berlin draws its line of transmission from Turkey, Cyprus, and Central Asia. The Inayati net-



works invoke another route. They draw the wayfaring cartography of Chishti Sufism from North India via North America to Western Europe, entangling the founder of universalist Sufi formation within the network and its *silsila*.

### ***Inayati-Chishti Silsila***

“The relationship between the teacher and the *murid* (student of Sufism) is not bound to the physical,” Murshida Ganga said to me with an affected voice, “So when they leave the body, the connection is [still] there” (interview with the author, 2 May 2014). The teacher of her teacher was a student of Murshid Sam, founder of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat network. Murshid Sam was a student of Hazrat Inayat Khan and Murshida Rabia Ada Martin, the first woman initiated in the Inayati tradition. Framed portraits of teachers of the lineage adorned the living room of Murshida Ganga. In the annual Sufi summer school (July 2013), the framed photographs of Inayat Khan and Murshid Sam energized and guided the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat community of practitioners.

Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927) was a classical musician from the North Indian town of Baroda (Gujarat) who arrived in New York in 1910, authorized by his murshid, Pir Abu Hashim Madani.<sup>29</sup> After his death, his brothers and students took charge of his network of students in Western Europe and North America, and later his sons. Three major streams developed from the organization Inayat Khan founded: the Inayat-Khan-inspired Sufi-Movement, the Inayati Order (Inayatiyya), the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat, and several minor ones.<sup>30</sup> All the major streams are active in Berlin.

Although healing practices played a prominent role in the Inayati network and the nomadic Sufis, and to some extent, the Haqqani-Naqshbandi network, therapeutic practices are at the heart of Tüмата-Berlin’s line of transmission, entangling Islamic Medicine with Turkish Sufism and Central Asian Shamanism from the legendary Silk Road.

### ***Tüмата’s Therapeutic Silsila***

Tüмата-Berlin’s music-and-movement therapy is often framed as an *old tradition newly discovered* at the intersections of Turkish Sufism and Central Asian Shamanism. Raphael described to me its possible origins:



With Oruç Güvenç on one side is Sufism. He is a Sufi teacher in a specific tradition . . . Sufi thoughts are always in the background. It is an attitude to life (*Lebenshaltung*). He draws the elements from the Sufi tradition in his therapy . . . For example, *sema*, this whirling dance, was originally from Mevlana Rumi . . . a very strict ritual. But Oruç conducts it only partially: three days or sixty-six days or ninety-nine days . . . There are other dances. From the Bektashis . . . There are religious but also healing dance . . . Moreover, there are Central Asian elements. The spiritual background is drawn from the Shamans . . . [I do] Arab Ottoman *makam* music therapy. (interview with the author, 25 September 2013)

“Horasan [Khorasan] is one area that covered today’s Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, north Iran . . . This area was so central in the Middle Ages, a cultural center . . .,” said Raphael, invoking the greater Khorasan road, commonly labeled as the Silk Road (interview with the author, 25 September 2013). Rather than invoking a specific Sufi *silsila*, Raphael drew a line of transmission of breath from two Turkish Sufi traditions (Mevlevi and Bektashi) and Central Asian Shamanism.<sup>31</sup>

In Tüмата-Berlin’s spiritual genealogy, the “Golden Age” (Hajar 2013) of Islamic medicine, is imagined as taking place along the historical Silk Road.<sup>32</sup> In Raphael’s narrative, as well as in Tüмата discourse, “Horasan Medicine” along the Silk Road was alive and running: “Ibn Sina was there, Al-Farabi was there, . . . and the Silk Road runs through. The Silk Road to East Asia . . . Oruç Güvenç says it was the center to meet these different cultures, so there is a certain legitimacy to bringing [these techniques] together” (interview with the author, 25 September 2013).

In addition to the people and places, therapeutic practices are significant in Tüмата-Berlin’s line of transmission. Theirs is predominantly a *silsila* of practices, a therapeutic genealogy that informs the proliferation of the community of practitioners. *Sema*, the whirling ritual, is drawn from the Mevlevi tradition (chapter 3), the *ilahis* (songs in praise of Allah) are drawn from the repertoire of Turkish Sufism (Rumi, Bektash Veli, Yunus Emre), and the AOM (Ancient Oriental Music-and-Movement Therapy; *Altorientalische Musik- und Bewegungstherapie*) combines elements from the Central Asian Shamanic traditions (chapter 5).

The ways Sufi networks draw their lines of transmitting breath illustrate monumental and antiquarian engagements with historical



figures, places, periods, and practices. Practices are as prominent as people, periods, and places. In this regard, Sufi practices of invoking the *silsila* transgress linear time, geographical restrictions, and personal biographies, connecting Sufism in the here and now to the Elsewhere<sup>33</sup> and somewhere else. Documenting the *silsila* of Sufi configurations in the contemporary is about tracing the long historical lines of wayfaring practices and how they were transmitted from one to the next, along with the whiff of breathing face to face, the divine and human breaths. As a (scholar) breather, the scribe-anthropologist had to learn the crucial lessons of “learning how to learn” by becoming a dual apprentice of Sufi practice and ethnographic fieldwork.

## Dual Apprenticeship as Method

“The uninitiated cannot join the circle,” Paul Stoller (1997, 161) mentioned the Sanghay proverb to emphasize the significance of his apprenticeship with Adamu Jenitongo, a Songhay healer of Niger: “Just as the uninitiated person can never join the circle of possession dancers, so the uninitiated anthropologist . . . can never plunge into the real—of the field” (1997, 161). What kind of initiation is sufficient for a plunge into the real? The object of my inquiry (Sufism) and my academic discipline (anthropology) made different but equally challenging demands. How was it possible to do fieldwork and critical theoretical inquiry with Sufism?

“I am trying to remember what happened,” I wrote the following lines to Murshida Rabeya, after a healing seminar with the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat in the spring of 2013:

There were so many different techniques, and they left so many different impressions on my heart, mind, and body! I do not know where to start and where to stop! Matters have become more difficult because I not only wish to learn this but also would like to write about these experiences . . . But my head and my heart conflict . . . The more I try to write about what happened, the more it slips through my fingers. I hope you will respond to this email and the confusion I find myself in. (email, 4 March 2013)

I sent off the email and waited with trepidation. Two days later, Murshida Rabeya wrote back, asking me to see her in person. It was the beginning of a teacher-student relationship that continued

throughout my fieldwork. What happened in that first one-to-one meeting set the mood of our encounters for the following years:

Nasima (N): I am not sure what I should do. Which path should I follow? I don't know if I can commit.

Rabeya (R): You have time! . . . Patience is good. *As-Sabūr* is the ninety-ninth name of Allah, which means supreme patience. It comes with time. Step by step . . .

[The silence in the room made me hear my restless breathing. I tried to jot everything down. Rabeya signaled me to stop writing.]

N: I thought I had many questions. But I do not know anymore. I have this tendency to want to know *more*. As if, if I work hard, it is all good.

R (*smiles*): And plop! You get an A! . . .

N: There were so many mixtures of techniques in this [healing] seminar. How to practice? What to practice? These are powerful techniques. Should one do them without a guide?

R: No, it is important to do it with a guide. I will help you. *Ich begleite dich!* [I will accompany you!] (fieldnote, 15 March 2013)

The healing seminar and the energizing meeting with a Sufi teacher moved my energies profoundly. Because of that first meeting and many more, Rabeya became my *murshida* (female Sufi guide). She listened to the laments of a student anthropologist trying to live in an in-between space of three languages (Bangla, English, and German) and a series of two distinct worlds: Dhaka and Berlin; anthropology and Sufism; abstract concepts and embodied practice (see also chapter 4). But at the time this conversation took place, I was still figuring out to what extent initiation and apprenticeship were necessary for fieldwork.

Ethnographers, in my understanding, are required to perform the double task of splitting their consciousness, immersing themselves in the field at first, and later creating critical distance when they write. In my fieldwork, however, another route emerged, which I call *dual apprenticeship*. Dual apprenticeship as a method is based on the epistemic ground that the way to know has less to do with belief or identity but depends on “learning to learn” (Ingold 2013, 1)<sup>34</sup> or *learning how to learn* (Shah [1978] 1985). It is about adopting a student's disposition toward practicing and experiencing.

One way of doing ethnography (the study of people) fulfills its aims by becoming a praxiography (the study of practice) (Mol 2002).



In contrast to Sufism as a tradition (within Islam or in connection with it) of embodying the Real (Allah), anthropology is a professionalized (secularized) tradition of knowing and articulating the real in terms of human (and nonhuman) differences in practice/experience. During my fieldwork, I had to learn how to use anthropological methods, tools, and techniques while learning the Sufi techniques I encountered. The methodology evolved along with efforts to situate Sufism in Berlin and the literature about Sufism in Germany. The duality becomes further evident in the combination of the ontological and existential anthropologies that inform my research questions, the hybrid design of fieldwork (sensuous praxiography), and the analysis of field materials with two traditions of inquiry.

Fieldwork also led me toward the epistemological standpoint of *affective pedagogy* (Selim 2020a).<sup>35</sup> It is a truism that we *affect* others and are *affected* by others in life and the field. But, the researchers' affects in the field can be mobilized for epistemological purpose (Stodulka, Selim, and Mattes 2018).

## The Hermeneutics of Affective Pedagogy

Fieldwork is a process of “learning to learn” and “knowing from the inside” (Ingold 2013, 2). Doing ethnography is to adopt an *apprenticeship* position and learn (Favret-Saada [1977] 1980). Ethnography is both a “dialog between the outsider and his[/her] host” and an apprenticeship, during which “an outsider is taught to decode a symbolic system [s/] he did not know before” ([1977] 1980, 26). The transformative potentials of ethnographic fieldwork offer a *rite de passage* through which the novice fieldworker becomes an anthropologist (Freilich 1970, 16).

Learning, for anthropologists, has always been integral to developing insights from the field (Hasse 2015). But, while documenting the lived experiences and practices of the host communities is the *sine qua non* of fieldwork, not all fieldworkers decide to subject themselves to the same degree to the “education of attention” (Gibson 1979, 254). The documentary purpose of ethnography does not always become the transformational process of educating our attention with a persistent focus on studying *with* and learning *from* the host communities (Ingold 2013). There are precedents for both apprenticeship and critical immersion (without becoming an appren-



tice) in anthropology. Although apprenticeship as a field method is an oft-discussed topic in anthropology (Coy 1989, Singleton 1998), the dual nature of apprenticeship, in the practice of doing fieldwork that the ethnographer must learn by doing, and in the practice that the ethnographer participates in and examines in the field, is rarely discussed together.

“There is more to learning than *being there*” (Hasse 2015, 101). Anthropologists, as professional newcomers, have often studied and inculcated certain skills, for example, that of a canoe builder (Mead [1935] 2002), a tailor (Lave 2011), an acupuncturist (Hsu 1999, 2006), or a molecular biologist (Latour 1987). Becoming an apprentice did not always end up making anthropologists experts in the practices they studied but transformed them in the process of “knowing from the inside” (Ingold 2013, 2). In terms of apprenticeship in non-biomedical healing practices, thick descriptions have often been fraught with negotiating the art and the science of ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Paul Stoller (1997, 26) proposed an embodied art of ethnography that “reverberates with the tension between the political and the poetic.” Apprenticeship is required for such incorporation, he argued, and spending long periods with the elders and experts, mastering knowledge and practice, is a fundamental task. In one of his earliest publications on Sanghay sorcery, Stoller described how he had deliberately avoided mentioning that he had been a sorcerer’s apprentice (Stoller and Olkes 1987, xi). He relegated this crucial information to a footnote and stuck to the ethnographic realism that instructed the anthropologist to be unobtrusive in the field. Later, as a mature anthropologist, Stoller (1997) wrote extensively about his apprenticeship in terms of the epistemological standpoint of sensuous scholarship, inviting scholars to engage their bodies and senses in fieldwork.

Elisabeth Hsu has argued that “participant experience” (1999, 5) modifies the “power relations between the researcher and the people with whom she works,” simply because the learner/anthropologist “puts herself into a position of a dependent apprentice” (2006, 149). Jo Wreford (2008) has described her involvement first as an apprentice and then as a practitioner of traditional African medicine to argue for a “language of spirit” in her efforts to translate a spirit-informed tradition into the language of social science. Loïc Wacquant insisted that apprenticeship is a “practical initiation” (2005, 465) in the field,





being both the object and the means of ethnographic inquiry. Dual apprenticeship as a method is in line with these notions of apprenticeships discussed in anthropology but directs further attention to the dual nature of learning to do fieldwork and learning to practice the techniques that the fieldworker examines, both happening at the same time. Dual apprenticeship is about being mindful of the politics of representation that require the ethnographer to pay equal attention to the academic tradition (anthropology) and the tradition of inquiry (Sufism) I examine in this book.

“Representation becomes significant, not just as an academic or theoretical quandary but as a political choice” (Said 1989, 224). The various critiques of anthropological discourse refer to a renewed awareness of the representative power divide between the (imperialist) West and the (subdued) non-West. However, for my work, the critique offered by *Orientalism*<sup>36</sup> needs to be complemented by its mimetic other, *Occidentalism*,<sup>37</sup> how “the West” may be perceived by “the Rest” (Nader 2015; Elie 2012; Carrier 1995).

The study of Sufi practice in “the West,” as in Western Europe, by a brown woman coming from a postcolonial Muslim-majority country does not necessarily invert the historically situated politics of anthropological discourse on the other located elsewhere (far away from home, in “the West”) studied predominantly by white Euro-Americans. Acknowledging academic orientalism as my disciplinary heritage and the shared perception of the imagined West as a postcolonial subject ensures that I do not dissolve into an identity of “the anthropologist” but specify a complex set of positionings. *Breathing Hearts*, in this regard, shifts the conventional anthropological gaze rather than radically “reversing” it (Ntarangi 2010, 9) through my sensibilities as a former physician and South Asian anthropologist. In doing so, I offer a perspective to study Germany from the point of view of the post-colony, extending the project of provincializing Europe and stepping beyond Eurocentrism (Varela and Dhawan 2015; Chakrabarty 2007; Chaudhary 2006).

Besides being cautious about either orientalist or occidentalist representation, an anthropologist must be critical of her interpretive habits. How is it possible to move from the hermeneutics of suspicion or faith toward the hermeneutics of pedagogy? *Hermeneutic pedagogy* is based on the assumption that “the human being is always understanding and understands by participating in a conver-



sation with what he or she experiences” (Sotirou 1993, 365). The hermeneutics of pedagogy is about building bridges between different worlds with a focus on learning, evoking the etymological root of the Greek god Hermes, and transmitting messages between the different worlds.

Tim Ingold (2018, 58) proposed the possibility of considering “anthropology as education,” as a way “to enter imaginatively into the world our teachers open for us, and to join with them in its exploration; it is not to close that world down” (2018, 63). Such learning from one’s research participants—who, at the same time, are teachers of others—involves paying attention to their *affective pedagogy*.<sup>38</sup> During fieldwork and its long aftermath, my primary Sufi teachers/healers, Khidr and Murshida Rabeya initiated me as a breather-wayfarer apprentice. I took their invitations seriously, entering imaginatively into the worlds that they opened up for me. Their affective pedagogy, along with other teachers of the tradition, taught me how the repetitive lessons of what, when, and how to *feel* might begin with and result in inhabiting a hyper-corporeal Elsewhere,<sup>39</sup> at once inner and outer, here-now and there-after (Selim 2020a).

“The fact that an ethnographer allows herself to be affected does not mean that she identifies with . . . [an] indigenous point of view, nor that her fieldwork is little more than an ego-trip” (Favret-Saada 2012, 443). “Being affected” by fieldwork is not without its dangers. Allowing ourselves to open up could also “mean that one risks seeing one’s intellectual project disintegrate. . . . But if something happens and the intellectual project is somehow still afloat at the end of the journey, then ethnography is possible” (2012, 443). My intellectual project of tracking Sufism seemed to disintegrate many times. During the early phases of fieldwork, I often felt overwhelmed by the experiences generated by Sufi practices. I wondered about the futility of writing up the ineffable immediacy of experience generated by breathing practices, movements, discourses, comments, gazes, embraces, and the subtle/material energies of my encounters with Sufism. These moments and their analytical potentials shaped a hermeneutics of “affective pedagogy” of the Real (Selim 2020a), built upon the premises of a sensuous, affective scholarship (Stoller 1997; Stodulka et al. 2018; Davies and Spencer 2010).<sup>40</sup>

*Learning how to learn* involved a focus on the epistemic power of one’s own emotions in the field in addition to paying attention



to the body and the senses. For fieldwork, I adapted the “emotional diary” (Stodulka 2015, 91) into a Sufi-emotion diary. It was, in part, a generic affect-focused field diary to articulate emotions, and partly the contemporary enactment of a traditional dervish diary. The diary evolved into integrated components such as significant dreams, conversations with Sufi teachers and students in the tradition, the differentiated experiences of *ḥāl* (a temporary state) bestowed from the Elsewhere and the anticipation of sustained *maqām* (station/place; a more permanent state of development) as a result of the systematic efforts of a wayfaring learner. Thus I combined the anthropological genre of field/emotion diary with the classical genre of the dervish diary. Both Khidr and Murshida Rabeya had advised me to keep one, and I followed their teaching instructions.<sup>41</sup>

The hermeneutics of affective pedagogy (of the Real) shares Jeanne Favret-Saada’s conviction and combines it with the lessons of my fieldwork. The practices/experiences of the ethnographer always get entangled with the practices/experiences associated with the object of her inquiry. A cautious analysis of our “(shifting) positionality and subjectivity is essential not only for better understanding (and rendering more transparent) our ways of coping with difficult field encounters and the moral stances we take in response to them . . . [but] also a substantial element of analyzing our data and writing ethnographic accounts” (Dilger, Huschke, and Mattes 2015, 5). In fieldwork, moral stances are imbued with immediate emotions, sustained affective dispositions, and socially coded feelings/sentiments.

Fieldwork lives its afterlife in ethnographic representation. As ethnographers, we ponder unfinished lessons. We stay troubled by contestations. We take delight in unexpected insights. We follow our longings across the meandering paths that bring us closer and further away from our interlocutors. The next chapter draws from multidirectional desire lines of wayfaring, learning from selective pathways of Sufi becoming. I discuss how postsecular subjects in Berlin encountered Sufism and what was at stake for them in practicing Sufism, in their efforts to “breathe well” along desire lines beyond conversion narratives.



## Notes

1. I recall these lines from Arşınagar (city of mirrors), a popular song composed by Bāul Lālan Fakir (ca. 1774–1890). Bāul is a Bengali tradition of composing/performing songs drawing from Sufi Islam, Vaishnava Hinduism, and Tantric Buddhism (Openshaw 2018).
2. *Dervish* is a derivative of the Farsi term *darīsh* (poor, mendicant). Dervish in the medieval Sufi tradition referred to those who practiced material and spiritual detachment and renunciation, known as “practitioners of religious poverty” (Papas 2011). The label “dervish” and “Sufi” in contemporary usage are often synonymous (Schimmel 2012).
3. In 2010–2011, I conducted fieldwork in another European city (Amsterdam) to learn about the everyday sitting and breathing practices of Buddhism-inspired Vipassana meditation. This fueled the interest in exploring the so-called Eastern/Oriental practices that have migrated to the cities of Western Europe (Selim 2011a, 2011b, 2014).
4. See Dilger, Kasmani, and Mattes (2018) for the role of affect and belonging in placemaking among a Sufi group in Berlin.
5. *Dergah* is the Turkish variation of the term *dargah*, which in Farsi denotes a Sufi shrine built in the memory of a dead Sufi saint. The term literally means a “portal” or “threshold,” a place to leave one’s shoes before entering.
6. Neukölln is often perceived as Berlin’s *Problemviertel* (problem quarter) with a high rate of unemployment, an increased number of people receiving “social support” (*Sozialhilfe*), and a large number of people with the so-called migrant background (Groeger 2001, 351). The social support system was reformed and reframed (the 2005 *Hartz-IV* Reform) (Fehr and Vobruba 2011). However, Neukölln has undergone both “social mixing” and “gentrification” in recent years (Huning and Schuster 2015, 738).
7. See Becker (2017) and Jonker (2005) for a detailed discussion on Berlin’s mosque spaces.
8. See Weismann (2007) for a historical account of the Naqshbandiyya/Naqshbandi (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries) of Central Asia and the Khalidiyya branch (nineteenth century to the present) of the Ottoman regions, from which the Haqqaniyya/Haqqani derived its genealogy. Nielsen, Draper, and Yemelianova (2006) described the transnational dimensions of this network. See Böttcher (2011) Hüttermann (2003, 2002), and Schießmann (2003) for the historical development of the network in the German context.
9. Feride paraphrased the theologian-Sufi Imam al-Ghazālī (ca. 1058–1111), “There is no tariqa without sharia and no sharia without tariqa” (interview with the author, 2 February 2018). The Haqqani-Naqshbandi network seems to follow legally subordinate Sufism or sharia-minded Sufism. However, Feride expressed her discomfort with being represented as “sharia-minded,” as “it gives a wrong impression” (interview, 2 February 2018). The word “sharia” in the current political climate gained such negative publicity



that she felt uncomfortable with the term, although she upheld the value of Islamic law. The “legally-subordinate concept of Sufism” became a dominant formation among the Naqshbandis only in the last three centuries (Ahmed 2016, 30).

10. *Khānqāh* is a word of Farsi origin, a composite term referring to places throughout the Islamic world where Sufis gathered and practiced, and still do (Chabbi 2012). Other terms, such as *tekke* and *zāwiya* refer to similar establishments.
11. NPD stands for Die Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany), a far-right political party founded in 1964 that emerged as a significant neo-Nazi organization in postwar Germany (Davies and Lynch 2002, 315); ideologically and discursively allied to the historical Nazi party, NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei/National Socialist German Workers' Party) (Kailitz 2007, 337).
12. In the 2016 provincial elections, neighborhoods like Kreuzberg and Neukölln were filled with racist posters of the right-wing populist-nationalist party AfD. AfD was initially a Euroskeptic political party founded in 2013. AfD entered the local parliaments in 2014 and 2016, and the national parliament in 2017. In Berlin, the AfD won enough votes (14.2 percent) to gain representation in the local parliament in the September 2016 state election (Statista 2017).
13. The only exception was Khidr's apartment in Kreuzberg, where I spent countless evenings and afternoons during the six years that followed.
14. House rents in this area were affordable at that time. In recent years, gentrification has taken place here, like most other neighborhoods in Berlin (conversation with Murshida Rabeya, 28 February 2018).
15. In the summer of 2016, the Sufi Federation meeting took place in Berlin. The senior leaders from all three networks attended the meeting.
16. Renate used the term *dunkle Kirche* referring to the outer gray architecture and her aversion to Christianity and organized world religions.
17. In 2017, Tūmata-Berlin established an official meeting point, Tūmata Zentrum (Center), in Kreuzberg.
18. Halima also belonged to the *Chalice* network of the renowned Sufi writer-musician, Reshad Feild. Another Tūmata member was active in the Omar Ali Shah network, *Tradition*.
19. *Ilāhī/ilāhī* is a term in Turkish referring to the genre of popular poetry inspired by religious sentiments, with/without instrumental accompaniment, sung solo or in chorus, often at sessions of dhikr in Sufi contexts (Boratav 2012).
20. In her ethnographic biography of Baba Rexheb, anthropologist Frances Trix described the process of learning, “the love of the murshid,” as a necessary step to the awareness of all-encompassing love in one's heart (2009, 40). Omar Kasmani (2022) also described the crucial role such intimacy plays in teacher-student relationships in Sufi contexts. See also Nanda and Talib (1992) for a general discussion of such a relationship.

21. Khidr was initiated by a Naqshbandi teacher he met in Spain, a Nimatullahi teacher he met in England, and a Chishti teacher in Hamburg, Germany. The Nimatullahi tradition traces its lineage back to the fourteenth-century Sufi Shah Nimatullah Wali in Kerman, present-day Iran (Nimatullahi Sufi Order 2019; Milani and Possamai 2013). The current head of the order is Dr. Alireza Nurbaksh, who was initiated and appointed by the late Dr. Javad Nurbaksh (1926–2008).
22. Khidr had appointed his lifelong friend and Sufi companion Abdullah as the heir to his written work, paintings, audiovisual materials, and archives. With Abdullah's explicit permission, a selection of the recorded conversations on Thursday evenings has now been incorporated into this book.
23. Al-Hujwiri ([1911] 1998, 44). Ali b. Uthmān al-Hujwīrī (ca. 1009–1072/77), also known as Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, wrote the first formal treatise on Sufism in Farsi (Knysh 2000, 132).
24. Interview with the author, 23 August 2013.
25. *Silsila* is considered a feature of a tariqa, as the method of handing down a particular tariqa (H. Ziad 2017).
26. The *murshid-murid* (teacher-student) relationship in Sufism can be considered “spiritual kinship,” beyond biological kin relations (Frishkopf 2003, 6). In my usage, *spiritual genealogy* refers to other temporalities and geographies, evoking the human and non-human dimensions beyond a strictly humanistic kinship and form of belonging.
27. Fictive descent relations between teachers and students do not operate in a vacuum. Fictive consanguinity among the students of the same teacher—as fictive siblings, is entangled in such relations. In the Inayati and Haqqani-Naqshbandi *silsilas*, certain branches were also led by family kin through the transmission of authority.
28. The Naqshbandiyya is a major Sufi network in history, going back to what is known in Sufi discourse as the *tariqat khawājagān* (the Way of the Masters) founded in Central Asia by Abū Ya'qūb al-Hamadān (d. 1141) whose shrine stands in contemporary Turkmenistan (Khorasan). The network was later renamed Naqshbandiyya (“design maker”) after the most influential figure, Bahā' ud-dīn Naqshband (ca. 1318–1389) of Bukhara (the capital of contemporary Uzbekistan) (Schleßmann 2003; Hüttermann 2002). Although in the beginning, the network was supposedly formed in reaction to the local prescriptive traditions dominant in that era, most contemporary Naqshbandi networks inhabit the spectrum of shari'a-centered Sunni Islam, a development often attributed to the reformist Sufi Sheikh Aḥmad Sirhindī (ca. 1563–1624) in Mughal India (Hüttermann 2002, 110). Sheikh Nazim was born in Larkana (Cyprus) to parents with lineages back to two prominent Sufi networks: the Qadiriyya (his father was the son of a Qadiri Sheikh) and the Mevleviyya (his mother belonged to the network). Sheikh Nazim, however, joined the Naqshbandi circles and traveled extensively until he met his teacher Sheikh Abdullah ad-Daghestani in Damascus, Syria. Since the 1980s, the Naqshbandiyya has experienced a revival in the



- Turkish republic (Algar 1989, 168). The current transnational network has more than a million members across the world in various countries and a few thousand members in Germany.
29. Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (ca. 1143–1236 CE) moved from Herat (present-day Afghanistan) to Delhi and later to Ajmer (present-day India) in the early thirteenth century. The Chishtiya/Chishti order turned global in the early twentieth century and during the British colonial period (Kugle 2020). See Celia Genn (2007, 2008) and Zia Inayat-Khan (2006) for a history of the Chishti diaspora and the Inayati networks.
  30. In the 1950s, Pir Vilayat Inayat-Khan (1916–2004), Inayat Khan's eldest son, became the head of the International Sufi Order. His son Pir Zia Inayat-Khan (1971–) is the current head of the network and renamed the network, and shifted the headquarters from New York to Richmond, Virginia. Until 2016, the *International Sufi Movement* was jointly led by Murshid Karimbaksh Witteveen (1921–) and Pir Hidayat Inayat Khan (1917–2016), the younger son of Inayat Khan, with its headquarters located in The Hague, the Netherlands. The current heads of the network are Nuria Sabato and Nawab Pasnak. In the 1960s, Murshid Samuel Lewis (1896–1971), a student of Rabia Martin and Inayat Khan, led to the formation of another Inayati network, known initially as the Islamiya Ruhaniyat Society, later renamed Sufi Ruhaniat International. He was survived by his students, Pir Moinuddin Jablonsky (1942–2001) and Pir Shabda Kahn (1947–), the current spiritual director of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat. There are three smaller Inayati streams, the Sufi Contact, Sufi Way, and Fraternity of Light. I did not meet anyone connected to these streams in Berlin. All Sufi organizations of the Hazrat Inayat Khan lineage are enlisted in The Federation of the Sufi Message, an association established in 1997.
  31. Oruç Güvenç's parents were of Volga Tatar background. He connected his spiritual genealogy to both Mevlevi and Bektashi Sufi networks through Turgut Baba (Turgut Söylemezoğlu), a student of the last head of the *Galata Mevlevihanesi* (Mevlevi lodge) in Istanbul and Ziya/Ayur Baba (Ziyadeddin Kuldur). See Langer (2011) for a detailed discussion of Oruç Güvenç's *spiritual genealogy*.
  32. Oruç Güvenç and Andrea Güvenç (2009, 114) discussed the term “Horasan Medicine” along the Silk Road. There had been not one but many Silk Roads. The English word is a translation of *Seidenstraße* coined by the German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905), who described the trade routes that connected India, China, and the Mediterranean areas via Central Asia, linking Europe to Asia (Christian 2000). Along with silk or other material goods, medical knowledge, music styles, and movement techniques traveled along the road. The famous Islamic physician, philosopher, and polyglot Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was trained in eleventh-century Central Asia, and part of his fame is attributed to the “Silk Road legacy” (Liu 2011, 55).
  33. Amira Mittermaier has written about the interlocutory possibility of the Elsewhere in relation to *barzakh* as a “dialogical in-between space, a space



- in which the living and the dead can meet” (2011, 36) (see also chapters 4 and 5).
34. Gregory Bateson (1972, 169) discussed “learning to learn” in terms of *deutero-learning* (second order learning) to separate it from *proto-learning*, the first order of learning that happens without reflecting on the learning process.
  35. See Nurhaizatul Jamil (2019) for the discussion of affective pedagogies in terms of Islamic self-help practices. See also Omar Kasmani and Dominik Mattes (2020) who observed affective continuities across apparently disconnected Muslim and Christian spaces in Berlin.
  36. Lisa Sijbrand (2013, 108) urged readers to situate Sufism historically, emphasizing the power structures and being aware of academic (mis-)representation.
  37. See James Carrier (1992) and Fernando Coronil (1996) for a detailed discussion of occidentalism.
  38. See James Wilce and Janina Fenigsen (2016) for an earlier discussion around “emotion pedagogies.”
  39. More recently, Annalisa Buttici and Amira Mittermaier (2020, 178) defined Elsewhere as a more than religious location, but “not a physical location in which we can do fieldwork in the classical sense of ‘participant observation.’ It is the elusive, the invisible, the unknown that unfolds, disrupts, or reframes the visible world. It is not the here and now in a material sense. But it is very much *here*. And it is very much *now*” (2020, 178).
  40. Wilce (2004) argued for a somewhat similar term, calling it “passionate scholarship.”
  41. Sufi teachers often instruct their students to jot down their questions, insights, and experiences on the path. See Michaela Özsel (1993) for a German-language rendition of the dervish diary as an experiential report (*Erfahrungsbericht*), written during her forty days of retreat in Istanbul. See Cemal Kafadar (1989) for a historical treatment of this genre of writing.