



JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 12 Number 2 May 2001



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

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Typeset and Printed by The Charlesworth Group, Huddersfield, UK

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THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PROPHET IN SUHRAWARDĪ'S 'AWĀRIF AL-MA'ĀRIF

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It is said that *taṣawwuf* is about *ādāb*, therefore, for every level of *taṣawwuf* there is a particular form of *ādāb* for it. For the person who adheres to *ādāb*, [he] will learn the path of excellence. For those who do not practice *ādāb*, [they] are far away from achieving a high level of *taṣawwuf*.¹

INTRODUCTION

Karl Mannheim has argued that presenting one's ideas is a way of connecting to past thinkers, of seeking (what he refers to as) a common location in the social and historical process of creating a particular world-view or mentality.² For Sufi shaykhs, like Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234), testing his ideas against past figures was a process of locating himself within the Islamic tradition and with what was known or understood at that time. This paper examines his Sufi beliefs and how they were associated with a specific social group, in this case the Suhrawardiyya Sufi order, and with the Prophet.

Shaykh 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, like many other distinguished Sufi thinkers, tried to bring about a deeper theological understanding in the *taṣawwuf* tradition by analyzing the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīths* of the Prophetic tradition, and the texts of past Sufi shaykhs. This paper studies the intellectual aspects of the Suhrawardiyya *ṭarīqa*, focusing on how al-Suhrawardī's ideas enable us to understand the attitudes, hierarchies, psychology, culture, and religious values of the members, and in particular how his understanding of the Prophet defined the *ṭarīqa*. His Sufi manual was a major source of spiritual discipline for successive disciples who moved eastward from Iraq, such as Bahā al-Dīn Zakariyya, Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, and

¹ 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, 254.

² Karl Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generation' in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952), 276–85.

Ṣūfī Ritual: The Parallel Universe

By IAN RICHARD NETTON. Richmond: Curzon, 2000. Pp. xi, 219. Price PB £14.99. 0-7007-1254-2.

This short monograph claims that Sufi ritual is a parallel universe and that these Sufi rituals in turn lead to a fundamental alienation (ix). The bulk of the text examines ritual (*dhikr*, *samā'*, *murāqaba*, *ṣuḥba*, *wird*) in the Ni'matullahi and Naqshbandi lineages, ending in a brief multi-perspective discussion (theology, phenomenology, anthropology, semiotics). Although there is a bibliography of original sources (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Sabaen), the actual sources used are almost all in English translation. The few exceptions have not been consulted and there is no indication in the book that the author used anything but English-language sources.

It is unfortunate that Netton has not kept up with recent scholarship on Sufism written in English. Carl Ernst in his *Shambhala Guide to Sufism* has cogently shown that one orientalist misconception has been to separate the practice of Sufism from that of mainstream Islam. Reading of the primary texts (mostly written in Persian for the two Sufi lineages studied) and/or witnessing Sufi rituals over a period of time easily demonstrates that Sufi ritual is *embedded* in mainstream practices and cannot in any way be separated from these practices as the misconstrued term 'parallel universe' leads one to believe (cf. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet*).

In the Naqshbandi case, the argument for alienation is even more problematic. Netton asserts:

The paradox at the heart of Sufi ritual, then, is that it seeks union through alienation. The ritual links or unites man to God, man to man, and man to his own spiritual core or self, on the one hand, and yet on the other, it consciously seeks to alienate him from his corporeal and terrestrial links and concerns as a means to a higher goal. (181)

Mujaddidis, the mainstream of the Naqshbandi tradition, indicate clearly their goal of *baqā'* after *fanā'*. There is no paradox whatsoever. It is a function of where one is on the path. On the way to God one seeks to control the ego, to make it tranquil—an annihilation of the sense of I-ness. This is supposed to be a transitional stage and only in very exceptional and short-term cases would it involve anything approximating 'alienation from corporeal and terrestrial links'. Given the *Shari'a*-minded nature of the Mujaddidis, such alienation, were it to manifest, would run totally counter to Mujaddidi doctrine and practice. Indeed, the continual emphasis of Mujaddidis on assiduous ritual practice (i.e., mainstream Islamic practices like ritual prayer) could be seen as a skilful means to prevent alienation. Upon returning to the world as a transformed being (in *baqā'*), the Sufi 'unites' him or herself with others. It is well known across religious traditions that as one becomes closer to God there is a more compassionate relationship with one's fellow beings. Again, such basic information has been available in English-language sources at least since 1993, which Fritz Meier has explicitly cited in his *Zwei Abhandlungen* (10). Whether the practices and literature

of the Ni'matullahis support Netton's alienation thesis is a matter that I am not in a position to comment upon.

Unless a teacher wanted to spend considerable time correcting and contextualizing the material in this book, it would be unsuitable for a course on Sufism. Netton has virtually ignored Naqshbandi scholarship over the last ten years (like other non-English sources, Meier was cited but never used). In addition, the sources cited by Netton are used in an uncritical manner. For example, to position Shaykh Nazim as a typical representative of the Naqshbandi tradition is like having Reverend Moon speak for the Christian tradition. No mention is made of the Ni'matullahis being an explicitly Twelver Shi'i lineage as a 'Yā 'Alī' (158) indicates. This is yet another example of Sufi practices being embedded in the respective mainstream tradition. Methodologically, the applications of phenomenology, theology, semiotics, and anthropology are quite uneven.

Professor Netton entices the reader with a multi-faceted discussion in the introduction, where he briefly discusses the ambiguous situation of Muslims in Britain and adeptly places Sufism in that context. Throughout the book his creative use of the *Rule of St Benedict* juxtaposed with Sufi ritual demonstrates a fruitful (and valid) parallel tradition. It is questionable whether these features are enough to counterbalance essential conceptual difficulties and other misconceptions that permeate the entire book.

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Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia: Change and Continuity

Edited by ELISABETH OZDALGA. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999. Pp. 187. Price PB £16.00. 0-7007-1147-3.

This volume, another of many dedicated to the Naqshbandiyya in recent years, consists of papers presented at a conference entitled 'Patterns of transformation among the Naqshbandis in the Middle East and Central Asia', held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 9-11 June 1997. Its twelve articles deal with different aspects of the role played by the Naqshbandi order in the transition from pre-modern to modern Islamic societies, from the dying days of the Ottoman Empire to the contemporary period in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan and (the order's homeland) the newly emerged independent Central Asian republics.

The opening chapter, by the renowned Berkeley-based scholar Hamid Algar, is based on a manuscript preserved in Istanbul's Süleymaniye. It focuses on the life of an eighteenth-century shaykh of the Kāsānī branch of the order, 'Abdullāh Nidāi of Kashghar (d. 1760), who at some stage set out as a wandering mendicant, from his hometown in Turkestan, for the Ottoman capital. Describing the stages of this prolonged journey that touched the major centres of the Islamic world before reaching Istanbul, Algar points out different aspects of the shaykh's teachings, stressing his

emphasis on the pre-eminence of inner and outer *faqr* among the spiritual virtues. According to Shaykh Nidāi, this is attained through ascetic self-denial (*riyāzat*) and the abandonment of the world (*tark-i dunyā*), an emphasis seldom encountered among Naqshbandi authorities. The description of this itinerant Naqshbandi dervish and his teachings, which stress the virtues of celibacy and passive mendicancy, highlights the order's complex typology, that goes beyond the common description of the order's members as householders and wealthy participants in society. In describing the shaykh's encounters and activities in the capital of Sultan Maḥmūd, the article also illustrates the importance of Istanbul as a focal point of cultural and spiritual interchange in the eighteenth century.

Other articles concerned with Central Asia include those by Jo-Ann Gross and Boutros Abu Manneh which trace the legacy of the great Naqshbandi shaykh Khwāja 'Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār (1404–90) and his descendants. Gross's article is based largely on nineteenth-century Tsarist records. It describes the social and economic history of the Naqshbandiyya over the centuries till the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the 1860s, through analysis of the administrative organization of the *waqf* established by Khwāja Aḥrār during the fifteenth century and its impact on the local economy of Samarkand, the former Timurid capital. Manneh briefly revisits the hagiographical work, the *Rashahāt-i 'Ain al-Hayāt*, noting its diffusion in the wider Muslim world in the nineteenth century through translations into Turkish and Arabic and the advent of the printing press. Originally composed in Persian during the first years of the sixteenth century by the Khwāja's disciple Fakhr al-Dīn al-Kāshifī of Herat, the *Rashahāt* became a prominent work in Muslim hagiographical literature. It was translated into Ottoman Turkish during the reign of Sultan Murād III in 1580–85 by Ma'rūf 'Ārifī, then *qādi* of Izmir, reflecting the growing tendency among the Ottoman elite to promote the circulation of texts reflecting orthodox Sunni beliefs in order to counteract the Shī'a influence promoted by the Safavids in mainland Persia. It reached its widest circulation in the nineteenth century with the advent of printing technology, its first edition being published in Istanbul in 1236/1821, followed by another from Cairo in 1840 and 1853. In the nineteenth century the Muslim world still preserved a cultural unity in which Islamic themes were very much at the centre of people's interest.

The role of the Naqshbandiyya in Central Asia is complemented by an interesting article (73–88) dealing with post-Soviet hagiography and the reconstruction of the Naqshbandi tradition in contemporary Uzbekistan following the prolonged period of disruption of religious activity under the Communist regime. Aimed at re-educating the new generation of Uzbeks and instilling a new sense of national pride and identity, Vernon Schubel traces the modes and ways the state-sponsored policy of promoting a 'neo'-Sufi tradition tries to restore the 'golden heritage' of a medieval history in modern Central Asia in the absence of the living *pīr-murīdī* tradition that was eradicated first by Russian colonialization and later by the Socialist doctrine of scientific atheism under Soviet rule. Interestingly, it emerges that it

is the people trained as orientalists under the past regime who now function as cultural transmitters by rewriting Uzbek history in the light of the Khojagan tradition and the indigenous mediaeval Chaghatai literature, such as Navāi's *Lisān al-fayr*. As Schubel concludes, these works try to sponsor a Sufism 'stripped of its organic wholeness', as a complex of ideas and practices divorced from institutional Islam with its potential fundamentalist challenge perceived as threat by the current local government.

Apart from an interesting and useful survey carried out in 1977–78 by a Swedish scholar on the situation of the Naqshbandi *khānaqāhs* in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion (117–28), the remaining contributions to this volume consist of studies dealing with the role of the Naqshbandi Sufis in the Arab world, the Ottoman heartlands and in contemporary Turkey. One is concerned with the role of the Khālidiyya sub-branch of the Mujaddidiyya in Kurdistan, while another Swedish scholar (Leif Stenberg) discusses the ways the contemporary Naqshbandi shaykh in Damascus, Aḥmad Kuftaro, confronts social change in late twentieth-century Syria through his state-supported role as Grand Mufti of Syria and Lebanon and head of the Abu an-Nur foundation. Among the articles concerned with Turkey proper, Ilber Ortaylı's account of the shift in policy adopted by the Ottoman government towards the Naqshbandiyya while vehemently combatting the influence of other Sufi orders (in particular the Bektashis, regarded as heterodox and hostile) during the so-called Tanzimat period in the mid-nineteenth century, and Hakan Yavuz's study on the Naqshbandi influence on Islamic movements in modern Turkey (129–46) are worth mentioning for their original contribution towards the understanding of how diversely this particular Sufi *ṭarīqa* adapted itself to the change from a feudal to a modern society in order to exercise its traditional role of correcting and safeguarding Islam and Islamic societies all over the *dār al-Islām*. To bring home the point, the volume ends with a contribution by Kurkut Ozal, former MP and government minister in the 1970s, who, through his account of his personal experience as a disciple of the contemporary Naqshbandi shaykh Mehmed Zahid Kotku (d. 1980), shows how closely spiritual education, political expediency and economic interest could intertwine in the perception of the world and of the role of this ancient Sufi order, during the life of Khwāja Aḥrār five centuries ago as well as in the present time.

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Oeuvres Philosophiques et Scientifiques d'al-Kindī. Vol. 2: Métaphysique et Cosmologie

By ROSHDI RASHED and JEAN JOLIVET. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998. Pp. 250. Price HB NGL 134. 90–04–11073–9.

This is the second of two volumes embodying some of al-Kindī's philosophical and scientific writings, in a fine Arabic–French edition. The

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