

**THE NAQSHBANDIYYA: ORTHODOXY AND ACTIVISM IN A WORLDWIDE SUFI TRADITION. By Itzhak Weismann.**  
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This is a historical survey of one of the Umma's greatest Asian Sufi tariqas or paths (a term the author translates as "brotherhood") famous for its sunnism, universalism, reformism, scholarliness and socio-political engagement in nine chapters, "Core and contours", "Beginnings (13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)", "Consolidation and expansion", "Shari'a and renewal (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries)", "Inner rivalries and cooperation", "Scholarship and organisation into the modern world", "Persistence of the older traditions", "Modern transformations (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) and "Contemporary situation".

Weismann untangles the aetiologies of the Path: the "legendary founder" is the Bukhari master 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Ghijduwani who was a student of the first khwaja, Yusuf al-Hamadani, and who devised the path's distinctive eight principles as well as silent *dhikr*; the "eponymous founder" is of course Khwaja Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari who became known as Shah Naqshband and added three more principles (p. 27); and the "actual founders" are "the disciples of the eponym, foremost among them the charismatic 'Ala'uddin 'Attar and the scholarly Muhammad Parsa, and to some extent, the younger Ya'qub Charkhi, who actually laid the foundation of the new path while evoking the name of the master as a source of legitimisation" (p. 14).

The term Khwaja originally designated Prophetic descendants but designated "masters" by the time it became a spiritual label (p. 19), although the Cairene Naqshbandi Shaykh Muhammad Amin al-Kurdi in his *Tanwir al-Qulub* identified Khwaja Baha' al-Din Naqshband as "Hasani and Husayni" – titles not found in the early sources.

The characterisation of the proto-Khwajagani lineage (Nabi *salla Allahu 'alayhi wa-Sallam*-Siddiq-Salman-Ja'far-Tayfur-Abu al-Hasan) as "obviously spurious" (p. 22) not only ignores one of the principal characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya which is spiritual (*rūhānī*) transmission (out of which grew the distinctive concepts of *rābita*/*tawajjuh*, which can be defined as "*suhba* in absentia"), as evinced, for example, by al-Ghijduwānī's apprenticeship under al-Khidr according to the author of *Rashahāt 'Ayn al-Hāyāt*; it also applies *isnād* criteria in the wrong context, something even a rigorous hadith master such as al-Sakhāwī avoided when he affirmed that the *baraka* of Sufi chains superseded their biographical historicity. Not that Weismann belongs in a hadithic camp in the least: more than once he appears to treat "hadith" and "Shari'a" as mutually exclusive disciplines (cf. p. 97) and, Schacht-like, misconceives "hadith literature" as "stretch[ing] back" (p. 22) to the Prophet, upon him peace, rather than issuing from him forward in time.

The book is dedicated to Michel Chodkiewicz, arguably the most knowledgeable Western expert on Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi, whose teachings Weismann shows were by and large espoused and propagated by most of the Sufi paths including the Naqshbandiyya, leading to the synthesis attempted by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, the founder of the Subcontinent offshoot thereafter known as the Mujaddidiyya. (Weismann considers that the two most famous studies on the Mujaddid are in fact the least reliable, namely M A H Ansari's *Sufism and Shariah* and Burhan Ahmad Faruqi's *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid*, over which he prefers Johan G J Haar's *Follower and Heir of the Prophet* and Shah Abu al-Hasan Zayd Faruqi's views related by Marc Gaborieau in his article "Protestations d'un Soufi Indien contemporain contre trois interprétations récents [sic] de Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi".)

The book's documentation of the loud/silent *dhikr* dichotomy through the history of the Naqshbandiyya is sure to surprise those who view loudness as an innovation – in China, the *Jahriyya* ("Loud Way") is identified as "New Teaching" (p. 82) – when in fact it is present at the eponymous root since it was practiced by Shah Naqshband's teacher Khwaja Amir Kulal and perpetuated by the latter's son Amir Hamza, a parallel successor. Parsa also allowed it, though "stress[ing] that the vocal *dhikr* must not be performed as a means to gain fame or material benefits... Charkhi took a more radical approach, rejecting the vocal *dhikr* altogether" (p. 27). Closer to our times, "in a treatise he dedicated to the *tariqa*, Ghazi Ghumuki" – a main figure in the latter-day Khalidiyya's Caucasian offshoot, one of whose branches culminates with our Cypriot teacher Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani – "stressed the supremacy of the *shari'a* and espoused the silent *dhikr* and the *rabita*, but he also made room for the vocal *dhikr* and especially restored the primary importance of accompanying the master (*suhba*)" (p. 107), the latter being in fact the mainstay of all Sufi *tariqas*. The Khalidi Kurd 'Umar Diya' al-Din, son and successor of the great Damascene 'Uthman Siraj al-Din, "introduced the vocal *dhikr* into his branch", adopted by his successors Muhammad Sa'id in Baghdad and Muhammad Amin al-Kurdi in Cairo (p. 103). This flexibility is but one aspect of the Naqshbandiyya's "pan-tariqism" over the 41 paths epitomised in Istanbul's great Khalidi hadith scholar Ahmed Zia'uddin Gümüşhanevi's *Jāmi' Usūl al-Awliyā'* ("The Summa of the Canons of the Friends of God") which I was privileged to read with the elderly Shadhili-Khalidi master of Hims, Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id al-Kahjl.

Another interesting documentary aspect is the highlighting of the Khwajagan/Naqshbandiyya and its Mujaddidi and Khalidi offshoots as persistently committed to orthodox missionarism as well as jihad resistance to tyranny in Eastern lands (the Middle East, Ottoman and Kemalist Turkey, Mughal India, monarchist and post-monarchist Afghanistan, Tsarist and Soviet Russia, China especially Xinjiang, and southeast Asia), at times in overly political and economic garb at the expense of spiritual emphasis, though at times embracing the political status quo, yet retaining its reputation as the most scholarly of all Sufi paths. The author notes such pragmatism is foreshadowed even in the Central Asian mother path, in some of the policies of the hugely influential Khwaja ‘Ubayd Allah Ahfār and his successors (p. 34-47), and becomes in post-Kemalist Turkey, for example, transformed "from purely religious networks into informal educational and cultural associations" (p. 152) – notably through the modernist *Risale-i-nur* movement of Sa‘id Nursi and his successor Fethullah Gülen – while morphing into business and politics on the Indian and Afghan scenes or philanthropism in Australia. In Indonesia, the author notes, the Naqshbandiyya "to this day is the most widespread brotherhood in the country" and the village of Babussalam founded by Tuan Guru Abdul Wahab Rokan al-Kholidy (d. 1926) "is probably the only Naqshbandi village in the world; to this day, all the inhabitants are required to join the brotherhood when they reach the age of fifteen" (p. 110-111).

Equally remarkable is the Path's image as reformist from its inception through our time. In chapters Eight and Nine (p. 133-151) the book's nuancing of many of the central players of the (mostly) anti-Sufi purported reformers of the last 200 years as originally Naqshbandi, whether through formal training (‘Abduh and Rida in Egypt, the Baytars, al-Qasimi and Emir ‘Abd al-Qadir in Syria and the Alusi family in Iraq), lifelong affiliation (Shah Waliullah and Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi in India), claimed affiliation (Sayyid Ahmad Khan Bareilvi and Siddiq Hasan Khan in India) or mere student-days tutelage (Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab under Muhammad Hayat al-Sindi in Makka), even if ultimately a curiosity, is nevertheless interesting as it shows that critics of Sufism were generally able to challenge what they perceived as its mistakes without feeling they must demonise it in the process. The latter phenomenon is a recent development born of ignorantism.

Weismann would have profited from the several treatises by the late Daghistani Naqshbandi-Shadhili master Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Quhhi (d. 1356H) published by ‘Abd al-Jalil ‘Ata in Damascus in the nineties even if he shows little interest, beyond historical variegations, in the more essential contribution of the Naqshbandi Path as a method for the redress of the soul so it can know God.

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