Neguin Yavari

Shifting Modes of Piety in Early Modern Iran and the Persephone Zone

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Abstract: If any one thing marks early modern history, it is religious transformation. Confessional and pietist movements, both European firsts, are prominent examples of such catalysts for change.[1] In large parts of the Islamic world in the 15th and 16th centuries, it was Sufi piety that carried the day. The historiographical record reveals strikingly new *imaginaires* and novel modes of connectivity to the past. The focus in this paper is on the manifold ways in which new forms of religiosity redefined the landscape of politics in the eastern Islamic world. It traces invocations of the past in Fakhr al-Dīn Kāshifī's (d. 1532) *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt*[2] (Sprinklings from the Fountain of Life), a 16th-century collected biography of Naqshbandī Sufi masters, to argue that the classificatory schema adopted by the author reveals a template of secularity that marks a significant departure from past manners of adherence.

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1   On religious change rather than incremental secularism as the engine of change in early modern Europe, see Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003); on parallels between modern (18th-19th century) Sufism and American pietism, see Albrecht Hofheinz, "Illumination and Enlightenment Revisited, or: Pietism and the Roots of Islamic Modernity," Lecture delivered at the University of Bergen, 1996, http://folk.uio.no/albrech/Hofheinz_IllumEnlightenment.pdf; and for confessionalization as the impetus for state formation, see Heinz Schilling, *Early Modern European Civilization and its Political and Cultural Dynamism* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2008).

2   Mawlānā Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṣafī ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn Wāiʿẓ Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt*, ed. and intr. ʿAli Asghar Muʿiniyan, 2 vols (Tehran: Bunyad Nikukari Nuriyani, 1977); Arabic translation as ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Kāshifī al-Ṣafī, *Tarjamat Rashahḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt*, tr. Muhammad Murad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Qazani (Mecca: Matbaʿa al-Muhammadiya, 1882 or 1883); English translation as Mawlana Ali ibn Husain Safi, *Beads of Dew form the Source of Life,* tr. Muhtar Holland (Oakland Park, CA: Al-Baz Publishers, 2001). On the manuscript history of the text, see H. Beveridge, "The Rashaḥāt-i ʿAin al-Ḥayāt (Tricklings from the Fountain of Life)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 48, no. 1 (1916). "Sprinklings from the Fountain of Life" is Nile Green's translation, see "The Dilemmas of the Pious Biographer: Missionary Islam and the Oceanic Hagiography," *Journal of Religious History* 3, no. 4 (2010): 386. For more on the author, see Jürgen Paul, "ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Wāʿiẓ al-Kāshifī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson, 2009.

1   Introduction

In the standard iteration that governs the history of Sufi movements, the altered social and political landscape brought about by the Mongol invasions which began in the early 13th century is regarded as the impetus for their flourishing. In that narrative, a mystical dimension to Islam was born sometime late in the 9th century, and developed as a spiritual alternative to the legalistic Islam of the *'ulamā'*.[3] On the political register, the flourishing phase was coeval with the fall of the Abbasids, a protracted process that began in the mid-9th century and lasted until the Mongol invasions, and the ensuing freefall that lasted from the mid-13th to the mid-18th century, when colonial interventions derailed indigenous modes of social, political and economic life and reset the clock. Told as such, the history of the Islamic world in the contemporary period is severed from that which transpired in the pre-colonial past. If Sufi movements and currents dominated large swathes of the Islamic world in the 16th and 17th centuries, they are mostly absent from histories of the modern Islamic world, the contours of which are held to have been determined by the encounter with Europe beginning in the 1800s, rather than by currents and developments that may have percolated in the region over long centuries.[4]

In the larger study of which this paper is a part, I suggest a recasting of that conventional narrative, and the periodization schema that accompanies it – a central component of which is the erasure of an early modern phase from Islamic history. Here, however, the focus is on two specific dimensions: the broader, more historicized context and the instrumentalization of the past

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3   For a history of that scholarship see Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1–124.

4   Devin DeWeese has come to much the same conclusion regarding Sufi movements in Central Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Devin DeWeese, "Re-Envisioning the History of Sufi Communities in Central Asia: Continuity and Adaptation in Sources and Social Frameworks, 16th–20th Centuries," in *Sufism in Central Asia: New Perspectives on Sufi Traditions, 15th–21st Centuries,* ed. Devin DeWeese and Jo-Ann Gross (Leiden: Brill, 2018). For a historiographical discussion of early modern Sufism, see Rachida Chih, "Discussing the Sufism of the Early Modern Period: A New Historiographical Outlook on the *Tariqa Muhammadiyya*," in *Sufism East and West: Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World,* ed. Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh (Leiden: Brill, 2019). For more on the historiography of the early modern period in the Islamic world, see Justin Stearns, "Writing the History of the Natural Sciences in the Pre-modern Muslim World: Historiography, Religion and the Importance of the Early Modern Period," *History Compass* 9, no. 12 (2011).

to legitimate a new religious ethos, and the performative regard of religious discourse that seeks to effect political change, both of which are exemplified in the text under consideration. I will begin with an examination of the deliberate rooting of Naqshbandī history in earlier debates and developments in Kāshifī's 16th-century collected biography. The performative regard of Sufi discourse, and the perlocutionary force of Kāshifī's genealogical approach and the architectural layout of his text is the subject of the second and third sections. The focus in the remaining sections is on several aspects of the new Sufi piety that lords over the religious landscape of the eastern Islamic world in the early modern period, including its novel approach to sectarian affiliation, its proximity to power, its explicit recognition of the pursuit of common good and the preservation of public peace as the prerogatives of religion, its adoption of Persian as the lingua franca of the new piety, and its emphasis on individual piety. The conclusion attends to the question of a global early modern context to the new piety.

2   Mobilizing the Past: Abū ʿAlī al-Fārmadhī

There may have been ascetic, pietist, or Sufi luminaries, and even spiritual communities that coalesced around them since the earliest days of Islam, but the political engagement of the Sufi reformation that altered the landscape of the Islamic world had its roots in the political crisis that engulfed the Islamic domains in the 11th century. At that critical juncture, it had become increasingly clear that the de facto formula for Abbasid rule – a caliph in Baghdad, and one or several strongmen, usually Turks, holding the empire together – could no longer be sustained. Resolving the crisis and pushing back against attempts to resuscitate the caliphate with inoperable notions of Islamic legitimacy attracted the energies of intellectuals from all walks of life. At stake was the very scope and purpose of government in a properly ordained Islamic society.

On the social register, the 11th century witnessed an intensification of factional violence, between Ḥanbalī Sunnis and Shiʿis in Baghdad. In the greater Khurasan region in the east, which is our geographical focus, however, sectarian strife was inter-Sunni, between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs. It was in this context – of increasing intransigence and frequent outbreaks of violence – that Sufism gradually rose to prominence, thanks to its robust

and explicitly anti-sectarian stance.[5] As such, it also provided support in the prescient anti-sectarian policies enacted by statesmen such as Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), the fabled 11th-century vizier who ruled for three decades over the Saljūq empire in the sultan's stead.

According to medieval sources from an astonishing array of ideological positions, the vizier's true legacy was his enduring political vision, marked by pragmatism, compromise, and the fostering of durable institutions. Of the latter, the Niẓāmiyya schools dedicated to the propagation of Shāfiʿī law and Ashʿarī theology, founded and funded by the great vizier, are the best known. Although he patronized leading *ʿulamāʾ* from a host of legal and theological backgrounds, his own writings as well as other medieval sources testify to his singular attachment to Sufi notables and institutions, his chief allies in the denouncement of sectarian partisanship. Many of the Sufi masters that dominated the intellectual landscape of the post-Mongol period, especially in Iran, began their careers at a Niẓāmiyya school.[6] This is in stark contrast to the dearth of notable jurists associated with the schools in later centuries.[7]

The luminaries in the story of Sufi ascendancy in 11th-century Khurasan are well-known: Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), and to a lesser extent, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī

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5   On Sufi anti-sectarianism in the 11th century, see Neguin Yavari, *Future of Iran's Past: Niẓām al-Mulk Remembered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 118–25; and on Qushayrī's politics and theology, see Martin Nguyen and Matthew Ingalls, eds., "Al-Qushayrī and His Legacy," Special Issue, *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013).

6   Apart from al-Fārmadhī who was associated with the Niẓāmiyya in Nīshāpūr during Niẓām al-Mulk's lifetime, and al-Ghazzālī and Ghujduwānī who turned to Sufi practice following a Niẓāmiyya career, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492) was educated at the Niẓāmiyya in Herat, and Abū al-Najīb Suhrawardī (d. 1168) was appointed as *mudarris* to the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad in 1150 by the Saljūq ruler Masʿūd (r. 1134-52), to mention but a few of the best known among them. For the role played by madrasas in the propagation of Sufi teachings and extra-curricular activities in Baghdad, see Erik S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 34–42, 79.

7   On the Niẓāmiyya schools, see Yavari, *Future of Iran's Past,* 90–94; Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 69–90; and on the disconnect between the Niẓāmiyyas and the religious or administrative elite of the period, see Vanessa van Renterghem, "Les élites dans le monde arabo-musulman médiéval: l'exemple de Baghdad sous les Seldjoukides," *Hypothéses* 1 (2001); and Daphna Ephrat, "Religious leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Seljuk Baghdad," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies,* ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

(d. 1085). Extensive reference is also made to the fame and stature of Abū ʿAlī al-Fārmadhī (d. 1084), and his multifarious connections to key figures in the period. Despite this, scant attempt has been made to assess such references and explain the significance of his impact. Looking at contemporary sources, a historian in search of the Sufi master and madrasa instructor would have to surmise that he was often mentioned but little known. Nothing of substance has survived from his writings either, although it should be noted that particularly in the case of Sufis in earlier periods, word of mouth was often used in place of the written word.

Al-Fārmadhī is known to have shunned power, but the biographies of Niẓām al-Mulk, including the account of the noted genealogist and *ḥadīth* scholar al-Fārisī (d. 1134), record in abundance the Sufi master's close interactions with the vizier, who served for a while as *khādim* (superintendent) at al-Fārmadhī's lodge (*khānaqāh*).[8] Al-Fārisī was intricately connected with al-Fārmadhī's circle of friends: his mother was the daughter of al-Qushayrī, he studied jurisprudence with al-Juwaynī, and recited *ḥadīth* on the authority of al-Fārmadhī. It is reported by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233) that whenever al-Qushayrī and al-Juwaynī visited Niẓām al-Mulk, he would rise to greet them. Yet when al-Fārmadhī called on him, he would stand up and offer him his own seat. When questioned about this, the vizier responded:

> The former two and their like praise me for that which I do not possess, and their words make me arrogant and vain. Al-Fārmadhī mentions the flaws in my soul and how much I am living in injustice, and it makes me refrain from much of what I am.[9]

If al-Fārmadhī shunned power at all, he did it not in terms of withdrawing from earthly concerns or avoiding encounter with power, but rather, in

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8   Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ghāfir b. Ismāʿīl al-Fārisī, "Taʾrīkh al-Nīsābūr: al-muntakhab min al-siyāq," in *The Histories of Nishapur*, ed. Richard Frye (London: Mouton, 1965), f. 121, r + v; and Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad al-Ṣarīfīnī (d. 1243-44), *Al-Ḥalqah al-ūlāʾ min taʾrīkh Nīsābūr: al-muntakhab min al-siyāq taʾlīf Abū Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ghāfir b. Ismāʿīl al-Fārisī*, ed. Muhammad Kazim al-Mahmudi (Qum: Jamaʿat al-Mudarrisin fi al-Hawzah al-ʿIlmiyah, 1983), 600.

9   Ibn al-Athīr, ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan, *The Annals of the Saljūq Turks*, transl. and ann. D. S. Richards (London: Routledge, 2002), 257. The same story is found in Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa al-ʾumam* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Osmania Oriental Publishers, 1939–41), XVI, 303; and Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf b. Qizughlī Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aʿyān*, ed. Salman al-Juburi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2013)*,* XIII, 207.

drawing on his spiritual capital to critique power. And why was he singularly important to Niẓām al-Mulk's heart?

The historical import of al-Fārmadhī appears in the full light of day in the collected biographies/histories of the 15th century. The Naqshbandī master, Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's (d. 1492)[10] collected biography of Sufi notables, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, for example, offers a slightly more textured portrait. We learn that al-Fārmadhī had first-rate teachers. He was first a disciple of Abū Sa'īd Abū al-Khayr (d. 1049),[11] and then studied with al-Qushayrī. Even such illustrious instructors did not sufficiently quench his thirst for learning. Al-Fārmadhī's search for "someone to take him beyond where he was led him to Kurragānī (d. 1073 or 1077), who took him on first as a tutee, and then a son-in-law."[12]

There is yet another valence to al-Fārmadhī's lore that sets him apart from his peers. According to al-Dhahabī, quoting al-Fārisī, al-Fārmadhī was unique among his Sufi peers for his mode of *tadhkīr*,[13] a form of Sufi devotion in which the worshipper is absorbed in the rhythmic repetition of God's name and his attributes. Although al-Fārisī does not elaborate on the matter, his privileged status as an attendee of al-Fārmadhī's *ḥadīth* sessions, lends credence to the claim.

Overall, the later recollections of al-Fārmadhī point to a legacy that was conjured up retroactively. A few centuries after al-Fārmadhī's death, as institutionalized Sufism gained ground, so too did his fame and reputation.[14] This may perhaps explain the exceptional favor he carried with Niẓām al-Mulk. The vizier desired effective rule, which in turn demanded justice. As such, in the hyper-sectarian milieu of 11th-century Iran, unsectarianism

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10 Hamid Algar, *Jāmī* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The tabaqāt genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001).

11 Muhammad b. al-Munawwar, *Asrār al-tawḥīd*, ed. Muhammad Rida Shafi'i-Kadkani (Tehran: Agah, 1987), I, 118–20, 180–81.

12 Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, ed. Mahmud 'Abidi (Tehran: Ittila'at, 1991), 318–20.

13 Shams al-Dīn b. Muhammad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. S. al-Arna'ut and H. al-Asad (Beirut: Risala, 1984), XVIII, 565–66.

14 Al-Fārmadhī was not the only Sufi master who grew in splendor with the passage of time. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1221), the famous composer of *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* and other masterpieces, "was hardly known as a poet in his own lifetime […] and his greatness as a mystic, a poet, and a master of narrative was not discovered until the 9th/15th centuries;" see Benedikt Reinert, "Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online,* accessed June 4, 2019 [1987]. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/attar-farid-al-din-poet.

emerged as a cornerstone of Niẓām al-Mulk's political views.[15] In that quest, the Sufis were among his best allies, and among the Sufis the vizier proffered special favor on those who shared his vision, and were keen on fostering institutions and lasting policies. Much later the Naqshbandīs chose a posthumous alliance with al-Fārmadhī, with whom they shared not just a worldview, but a desire to put that worldview into action and fashion society and politics along its lines as well.

3   The Performative Regard of Religious Discourse

The performative regard in Sufi cosmology in the 11th century, along with the rise of Sufi movements in tandem with the fall of Abbasid power, has not gone unnoticed.[16] As various Sufi communities stepped up to the plate and assumed certain functions of governance abandoned by the dysfunctional caliphate, Sufi manuals adopted multi-dimensional metaphors of regality. To take one example, the adoption of the title *shāh* by spiritual guides coincided with the Būyids' (932–1062) assumption of the same title, according to Richard Gramlich and Fritz Meier before him, and highlights their efforts to delegitimate Shiʿi Būyid rule.[17] In the same period, the Ḥanafī Sufi Ḥakīm Abū al-Qāsim Samarqandī (d. 953), referred to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767), eponym of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* as the *shāhanshāh* of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in his popular *Sawād al-aʿẓam*, and traced his lineage back

15   I have written elsewhere on the political valences of Niẓām al-Mulk's alleged disdain for Shiʿis and for non-Shāfiʿīs in general, see Yavari, *The Future of Iran's Past*, 105–26; and Neguin Yavari, "Deciphering Difference in Premodern Islamic Political Thought," in *Origin, Transmission and Metamorphosis of the Concept of* Adab, ed. Catherine Mayeur Jaouen, Francesca Bellino, and Luca Patrizi (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2019).

16   For a concise overview of previous scholarship, see Luca Patrizi, "Adab al-mulūk: L'utilisation de la terminologie du pouvoir dans le soufisme médiéval," in *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab*, ed. Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Luca Patrizi (Leiden: Brill, 2016); and for the far-reaching impact of the close ties between the Baghdad-based Sufi master ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Nāṣir, see Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition,* 187–248.

17   Richard Gramlich, *Adab al-mulūk: Die Lebensweise der Könige* (Stuttgart: Kommissionsverlag Steiner, 1993), 5–6 of Gramlich's "Introduction," as quoted in Patrizi, "Adab al-mulūk," 205–06; Fritz Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Naqšbandiyya* (Istanbul: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), 188–95.

to the pre-Islamic Sasanids (224–650).[18] Jean-Claude Garcin[19] and Alexandre Papas[20] have studied Sufi strategies for appropriating power – symbolic and political – beginning in the 14th century in the Maghrib and India, and in the 15th century in Egypt. In a recent study, Luca Patrizi found similar analogies between political and spiritual power in much earlier texts, such as the 10th-century anonymous *Kitāb Adab al-mulūk fī bayān ḥaqāʾiq al-taṣawwuf,* wherein the assumption of regality by Sufi masters is fully conceptualized as *al-mulūkiyya al-ṣūfiyya* (Sufi kingship).[21]

Both the texture and the tenor of Sufi involvement in political life changed dramatically in the altered landscape of the Islamic world in the post-Mongol period, in the Maghrib, Egypt, Iran, Asia Minor, Central Asia, and India.[22] The emergence of Sufi *silsila*s – or chains of authority – that linked living leaders to the Prophet and entwined moral exemplars to create saintly genealogies in the Mongol and Tīmūrīd periods (ca. mid-13th to early 16th centuries) is an important watershed in this regard.[23] Genealogical tables and *ʿilm al-rijāl* as legitimacy tools have of course been a widespread feature since early times, most notably among *ḥadīth* scholars and Turkic dynasts. With *silsilas*, Sufis forged a corporate identity, Devin DeWeese argues.[24] In this new template, heirship was no longer a mere

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18   Abū al-Qāsim Isḥāq b. Muhammad Ḥakīm Samarqandī, *Tarjumah-i al-Sawād al-aʿẓam*, ed. ʿAbd al-Hayy Habībī (Tehran: Bunyad Farhang Iran, 1969), 22. Incidentally, Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā revised *Kitāb Sawād al-aʿẓam* in 1393, to make the language more contemporary.

19   Jean-Claude Garçin, *Espaces, pouvoirs et idéologies de l'Égypte médiévale* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987).

20   Alexandre Papas, *Soufisme et politique entre Chine, Tibet et Turkestan: études sur les Khwajas Naqshbandis du Turkestan oriental* (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 2005); and Alexandre Papas, "No Sufism without Sufi Order: Rethinking *Ṭarīqa* and *Adab* with Kāsānī Dahbidī (1461-1562)," *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* 2, no. 1 (2008).

21   Luca Patrizi, "*Adab al-mulūk*: L'utilisation de la terminologie du pouvoir dans le soufisme médiéval," in *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab*, ed. Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Luca Patrizi (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

22   Lawrence G. Potter, "Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 77–82; and Jo-Ann Gross, "The Naqshbandīya and Khwāja ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār," in *The Letters of Khwāja ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār and His Associates,* ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Maḥmūd Aḥrār, ed. Jo-Ann Gross and Asom Urunbaev (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 14–17. On the spread of institutional Sufism from Iran to the western Islamic domains, see Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 145–68.

23   Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 11–12.

24   Devin DeWeese, "Spiritual Practice and Corporate Identity in Medieval Sufi Communities of Iran, Central Asia, and India: The Khalvatī/ʿIshqī/Shaṭṭārī Continuum," in *Religion and Identity in South Asia and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Patrick Olivelle,* ed. Lindquist

biological matter. Succession was determined by spiritual affinity and personal charisma rather than descent.

Among those to adopt the *silsila* model was the Naqshbandiyya community that sprouted from several Sufi lineages – collectively known as the Khwājagān – in the 14th century, under the leadership of Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 1389) and his disciples. A century later, now led by ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār (d. 1490), the protagonist of Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt*, the community spread throughout Central Asia and the Ottoman empire, including Syria and the Hijaz. Initially, inherited leadership and the *silsila* were both rejected among the Naqshbandīs,

> leaving personal charisma (including direct spiritual contact with deceased masters or the Prophet himself) as the main grounds of leadership, even if, of course, shaykhs also could identify their immediate teachers and therefore could pose as their spiritual heirs.[25]

The adoption of the *silsila* model was instrumental in facilitating the spread of Naqshbandī influence; and that new identity was amplified in collected biographies such as Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt al-uns* and *Rashaḥāt* itself.

The *silsila* template was essentially a rhetorical strategy used to distinguish one Sufi order from another, as Alexandre Papas has suggested.[26] His point draws attention to narrative strategies as a clue to understanding what Sufi communities did, and how they participated in and reshaped power relations in the Islamic world, and invites close reading and interpretation, suggesting that there is more to Sufi movements than theosophical debate. The interconnections between peers, disciples, mentors and exemplars were also integral to the institutionalization of Sufism, which was crafted primarily on the narrative plane. This is only superficially a paradox as I hope to explain below. Various Sufi groups bound their community to past authority through histories and genealogies so that doctrine and practice could be reinterpreted to accommodate and outlive changing circumstances, the true prize of institution-building.

Steven E. (London; New York; Delhi: Anthem Press, 2011), 251–54.

25 Jürgen Paul, "The Rise of the Khwajagan-Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Timurid Herat," in *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*, ed. Nile Green (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 81. On Bahāʾ al-Dīn's explanation of why the *silsila* is not required, see Aḥmad Ṭāhirī ʿIrāqī, "Naqshī az Naqshbandiyān," in *Jashn nāma-i Muhammad Parwīn Gunābādī*, ed. Muhsin Abu al-Qasimi (Tehran: Tus, 1975), 267–74.

26 Alexandre Pappas, "Shaykh Succession in the Classical Naqshbandiyya: Spirituality, Heredity, and the Question of Body," *Asian and African Studies* 7, no. 1 (2007): 37.

Sufis lineages in Iran and Central Asia were also key participants in the process of vernacular regionalization, to use Travis Zadeh's term, continuing a tradition that commenced earlier in the 10th century under the auspices of the Ghaznavid (977–1186) and Sāmānid (819–1005) local dynasties, and was initially confined to producing Qur'an commentaries in Persian.[27] The text studied here, *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt,* enjoys the distinction of being the first dedicated collected biography of a single Sufi community – as opposed to earlier ones that charted and classified vitae of all Sufi luminaries, regardless of creedal orientation. It is also the fourth collected biography of Sufis written in Persian.[28] Significantly, the adoption of Persian as the language of Sufism was a deliberate and even theoretical move by Sufi thinkers, as is evident in the discussion on the relative merits of Arabic and Persian in the Kubrawī master ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla Simnānī's (d. 1336) "Zayn al-muʿtaqad li zayn al-muʿtaqid" to cite but one example. Noting that all languages are ill-suited for expressing abstract principles, Simnānī points to Persian's particular inadequacies when compared to Arabic, and relies on Arabic loanwords to instruct his disciples in their quest for the Truth (ḥaqq, ḥaqīqat).[29]

Lamenting the limitations of the Persian language was not limited to Sufi authors. Simnānī echoes the sentiments of the celebrated scholar and polymath Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī (d. after 1050) on the inadequacies of Persian

27 Travis Zadeh and Alya Karame, "The Art of Translation: An Early Persian Commentary on the Qur'an," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2 (2015): 185; and for a more comprehensive account of the emergence of New Persian literature, see Gilbert Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4, The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljūqs,* ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 628–32.

28 *Rashaḥāt* follows after Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Hujwīrī's (d. 1073) *Kashf al-maḥjūb,* Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's (d. 1221) *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ,* and Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt al-uns.* For a comparative analysis of Persian-language Sufism, see Denise Aigle, "ʿAṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* and Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt al-uns:* Two Visions of Sainthood," *Oriente Moderno* 96, no. 2 (2016).

29 Maria Giovanni Martini includes a critical edition of ʿAlā al-Dawla Simnānī's "Zayn al-muʿtaqad li zayn al-muʿtaqid," in his *ʿAlā al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power: A Persian Lord and Intellectual in the Heart of the Īlkhānate* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 379. Appraisals of the relative merits of Arabic and Persian are not rare. See, for example, Jurfādiqānī's lament in his translation of al-ʿUtbī's (d. ca. 1036 or 1040) history of the Ghaznawids, completed in 1206-7, Abū al-Sharaf Nāṣiḥ b. Ẓafar Jurfādiqānī, *Tarjumah-i Tārīkh-i Yamīnī,* ed. Muhammad Jaʿfar Shiʿar (Tehran: Bungah Tarjumah va Nashr Kitab, 1978), 10. For more on the face-off between Arabic and Persian, see ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Asadī Ṭūsī's (d. 1072-3) account of a debate between an Arab and a Persian reproduced in Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Asadī Ṭūsī," *Majallah-i Dānishkadah-i adabiyāt va ʿulūm-i insānī Danishgāh Firdawsī* 14, no. 1 (1978).

for writing scientific prose. Bīrūnī described the fate of a scientific text when translated into Persian as follows:

> …it loses all clarity; its horizon becomes blurred and its practical application disappears. The function of the Persian language is to immortalize historical epics about the kings of bygone ages and to provide stories to tell on night-watches.[30]

By establishing Persian as the language of this new piety that is mindful of its audience,[31] by downplaying sectarianism while at the same time upholding boundaries and marking communities (as we shall see), and by reconfiguring the principle of hereditary rule to combine charisma with the legitimacy of past authority, Sufi communities redefined the ideational landscape of late medieval/early modern Khurasan. How the Sufis drew on the past was a key component of that transformation, and in the case of the Naqshbandiyya, spiritual authority was twined with the remembrance of al-Fārmadhī,[32] who is credited in *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt* as a principal fount of the Naqshbandiyya. The Naqshbandīs also recast the Sunni-Shiʿi divide, a constitutive element of the new piety they advocated. What follows is a detailed investigation of the illocutionary force of the text. I argue that the text's apparent identity as a genealogy is in fact the top layer of a complex edifice, designed to serve as a new template of authority; one that in effect proselytized a nation.

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30 Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, *Al-Ṣaydana*, as cited in Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," 631.

31 The bibliography on this subject is extensive. For a recent example, see *Jāmī in Regional Contexts; The Reception of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th–14th/20th Century*, Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 27–223.

32 The present study does not engage with doctrinal specificities, but it is useful to bear in mind that certain elements of the teachings of al-Fārmadhī's star pupil al-Ghazzālī were incorporated into Khwājagān-Naqshbandī principles according to Alexei Khismatulin, including Ghujduwānī's eight principles that shaped the Khwājagān. Khismatulin's point is that rather than a Persian translation of his *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazzālī's *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat* must be considered as an independent text and one of the earliest specimens of Sufi books written in Persian; see Alexei A. Khismatulin, "'The Alchemy of Happiness': Al-Ghazālī's *Kīmīyā* and the Origins of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyya Principles," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal,* ed. Sebastian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

4 Forging a Context of One's Own

Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt* is a clear example of textual institutionalization.[33] The author hailed from a family of scholars active at the court of the last Tīmūrid sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqara who ruled in Herat from 1469 to 1506. His famous father, the preacher and polymath Ḥusayn Wāʿiẓ al-Kāshifī (d. 1504), wrote on both Sunni and Shiʿi topics.[34] His exegesis on the Qurʾān was popular among Persian speakers in eastern Iran and northern India (the vast majority of whom were Sunni); while prominent philo-ʿĀlīd themes and references in the family's writings generated accusations of Shiʿi sympathy.[35]

Both Kāshifīs were prominent members of the Naqshbandī community, a Sunni Sufi community that rejected antinomian currents and sought to integrate the Sufi *ṭarīqa* (spiritual path, almost Tao) with the practice of the *sharīʿa*.[36] Such was their steadfast orthodoxy that one 13th-century Naqshbandī leader boasted that only one of his disciples would have sufficed to save al-Ḥallāj who was accused of heresy and executed by the Abbasid caliph in 922, and set him on the correct mystical path.[37]

A collected biography with a distinctive authorial voice rather than a descriptive primer on Sufi etiquette, the approach to Sufi history in *Rashaḥāt* is thoroughly classificatory with a prescriptive spatial structure.

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33 For an insightful discussion of the codification and institutionalization of Sufi thought and practice in Baghdad, see Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition,* 187–248.

34 For his biography, see Maria E. Subtelny, "Kāšefī, Kamāl-al-Dīn-Ḥosayn, Wāʿeẓ," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, accessed June 4, 2019. Originally published December 15, 2011. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kasefi_kamal. According to Aḥmad Ṭāhirī ʿIrāqī, Ḥusayn Kāshifī followed the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, see his "Introduction," in Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā-yi Bukhārāʾī, *Qudsiyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ṭāhirī ʿIrāqī (Tehran: Tahuri, 1975), 27.

35 Abbas Amanat, "Meadow of the Martyrs: Kāshifī's Persianization of the Shiʿi Martyrdom Narrative in the Later Tīmūrid Herat," in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung,* ed. Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); and Muʿiniyan claims that Fakhr al-Dīn Ṣafī ʿAlī may have converted to Shiʿism sometime in the early decades of the 10th/16th century; see *Rashaḥāt,* "Introduction," 85–86.

36 For more on the Naqshbandiyya and a comprehensive account of the extensive secondary literature on their history and creed, see Jürgen Paul, "The Rise of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyya Sufi Order;" Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandīs in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 14–33, and Jo-Ann Gross, "The Naqshbandīya and Khwāja ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār," 1–22.

37 *Rashaḥāt,* I, 66.

In Kāshifī's own words:

> The construction of this collection rests on a preamble (*maqāla*) that recounts the Khwājagān generations of the Naqshbandī *silsila*, three chapters (*maqṣad*) – each divided into three sections (*faṣl*) – on the life and accomplishments of Khwāja 'Ubayd Allah Aḥrār, his origins and the beginnings of his quest; first-hand accounts of his doctrines, beliefs and the anecdotes he has recited; and mirabilia attributed to him; followed by an epilogue (*khātima*).[38]

Kāshifī's organizational principle is decidedly teleological: it begins with a long introduction on the birth of the Naqshbandī *silsila*, culminates in the life and legacy of Aḥrār the Sufi master who wielded enormous political influence, and ends with his transition from this world to the next, and the brief tenure of two of his sons as spiritual authorities. This fortuitously coincides with the downfall of the Tīmūrids in 1501, and the fall of Samarqand to the Uzbek Shībānī Khan (r. 1501–10). In Kāshifī's own words, the text is constructed in this manner because "from Him is the beginning and to Him the return."[39]

The preamble – the longest section of the book – crafts a prehistory for the Naqshbandīs by linking them to the earlier Khwājagān order, with the 12th-century Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 1140) as its founder. Yet the origins of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī lineage are stretched further back to the lifetime of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 634), the first caliph who ruled for two years following the death of Muhammad in 632.[40]

Apart from the connection to the first caliph, the preamble also includes a complex genealogy that connects the order via several distinct lineages to Abū Bakr's main rival, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and to his progeny, who in due course came to be regarded as the twelve holy imams of the Shiʿis. Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī appointed

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38 *Rashaḥāt*, I, 10.

39 *Rashaḥāt*, I; the phrase is a frequent Qur'anic quote [Q 2:156].

40 Conflating genealogies was de rigueur in Tīmūrid Herat. Tīmūr (Tamerlane, r. 1370–1405) himself claimed, apart from the title *ṣāḥib qirān* (Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction), genealogical affiliation with Chingis Khan (r. 1206–27), and ʿAlī, the aforementioned cousin, son-in-law and eventually successor of Muhammad. For Tīmūr's colorful genealogy, see John E. Woods, "Tīmūr's Genealogy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson,* ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1990); Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian Studies* 21, no. 1–2 (1988); and Denise Aigle, "The Transformation of a Myth of Origins, Genghis Khan and Timur," chap. 6 in *The Mongol Empire Between Myth and Realities, Historic Anthropological Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

four caliphs to represent him and to propagate his teachings. That too, is an appropriation of the past, as it resonates with the four rightly guided caliphs who ruled the Islamic community following Muhammad's death (Abū Bakr, r. 632–34, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, r. 634–44, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, r. 644–56, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, r. 656–61). That template of pious government wherein succession was not hereditary lasted for thirty years, after which dynastic rule prevailed when the Umayyad dynasty was founded in 661. It deserves mention here that statecraft organized around the principle of four, as in the fourfold division of the Mongol empire following Chingis' death in 1227, or the four subordinate *beys* leading four ruling tribes, often referred to as clans in modern scholarship, prevailed in the Mongol successor states and was a staple of Turco-Mongol political life.[41]

The fourth of Hamadānī's caliphs was ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghujduwānī (d. 1220). Among those who mentored his mentors was the Prophet's great great grandson and Shiʿi imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who had passed in 765, a long time before Ghujduwānī's teachers were born. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq was a great grandson of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and a descendant on his mother's side of Abū Bakr.[42] In other words, he was scion of the two leading contenders for Muhammad's mantle which in time became known as the Sunni and Shiʾi communities, where Shiʿism is best considered as a conceptual antipode to Sunnism, rather than a derivative of it. The fusion of Sunni and Shiʾi lineages of authority is a recurring feature of Naqshbandī creed, as we shall explore in further detail below.

The lineages, genealogies and biographical information in the text are accompanied by detailed discussions of *rashaḥāt* (sprinklings, singular *rashḥa*), teachings transmitted by the masters.[43] In fact, *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt* is a quasi three-dimensional text, one where a genealogy is mapped spatially and is best read with the aid of a floorplan rather than a table of contents. In this spatial classification, each *ṭabaqa* (generation as well as floor) is

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41 Uli Schamiloglu, "Tribal Politics and Social Organization in the Golden Horde," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Columbia University, 1986, 19–32, 127–71. For a parallel system of four spiritual leaders alongside the four *qarači* beys, see 71–73; for the four *uluṣ* emirs in Īlkhānid Iran (1256–1335), 83–86.

42 Abū Bakr's grandson Qāsim was Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's maternal grandfather, see *Rashaḥāt*, I, 11–13.

43 *Rashaḥāt,* I, 38–51; the dicta proffered by Naqshbandī masters also functioned to cool one's spirit, as in the sprinklers used in summer houses, another meaning associated with *rashḥa/rashaḥāt*.

built upon a set of four pillars, the caliphs appointed by the previous master shaykh. While the Sufi masters uphold the floors, the walls of the edifice are provided by *rashaḥāt* or sprinklings, rules and instructions that flow from generation to generation to bind and nurture the Naqshbandī community. The text traces each set of four lineages, each of which in turn produce their own successor chains, so as to draw an ever-expanding cladogram comprising successive generations as they replicate themselves fourfold.

The house that the Naqshbandīs build, or at least the one that Kāshifī builds for them, boasts both concrete pillars and abstract ones. While prominent masters or lead chains, their caliphs and their sprinklings represent the former, the collusion of ʿAlī and Abū Bakr in the forged prehistory that brought about the order in the earliest days of Islam is an example of an abstract pillar. As mentioned, the template of authority in *Rashaḥāt* is explicit in its intention to connect Naqshbandī-Khwājagān elders with both Sunni and Shiʿi luminaries. ʿAlīd exemplars are aplenty, as is explicitly anti-Shiʿi polemic. In a master stroke, Kāshifī both historicizes creeds and ideologies by reducing them to human actors, a strategic move necessary to instrumentalize the past for present concerns; and, at the same time, defies natural law by crafting an anachronistic genealogy that assigns 7th-century teachers and companions to 12th-century Sufi masters. The multiple connections and inter-connections between the various lead chains, their teachers – actual and imagined – and their successors, prevent a chronological reading of the history of the Naqshbandī order. Kāshifī's genealogy does not trace the development of his Sufi community over time, but instead conjures up a history of the past that underscores themes, tropes and watersheds that bolster its creedal and political standing by forging its own ideational context.

And he does more still. For the house that Kāshifī builds is part of a country – a land that the Naqshbandīs come to claim as their own. It is enclosed by Samarqand, Herat, and Bukhara on one side, and stretches widely, through travel and diffusion, as well as lineage, to include Baghdad, Egypt/Syria, the Hijaz, and India. Hamadānī traveled to Baghdad at the age of eighteen, and studied in Isfahan and Bukhara, and had followers in Iraq, Khurasan, Khwarazm and Transoxiana.[44] And Khwāja Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband's exertions took him around Khurasan, Central Asia, Hijaz and

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44   *Rashaḥāt*, I, 13–14.

Syria.[45] In fact, the Naqshbandīs had several centers: the community was prominent in the region of Bukhara during the lifetime of Naqshband, the disciples around Jāmī were anchored in Herat, and Aḥrār and his devotees moved to Samarqand in the mid-15th century. Armando Salvatore has written on the conceptual ties between locality and institution-building in modern Sufi organizations.[46] Beyond holy sites, however, which is the focus of Salvatore's piece, the house that Kāshifī built also reveals the territorial claims of the Naqshbandīs. By affixing a place for Sufi activity not just in terms of a school, or a place of congregation, a hostel, or even a sacred site associated with a specific master – the traditional geographies of Sufi piety – but also in terms of a country, Kāshifī set about the task of institution-building. In traveling saints, in acquisitions through conquest by princes under Sufi protection, and most importantly in links forged across time and space, or to borrow Yuri M. Lotman's term, a *semiosphere*,[47] a cultural boundary crafted by proselytization, Kāshifī and his Naqshbandī friends redrew the contours of the landscape of politics and of religion in late medieval Islam, and claimed land to transform their spiritual community into a concrete, if textual, institution.

5 Contextualizing Old Divides in the New Piety

The desired outcome of Kāshifī's constructivist agenda is a model for religion which can be put to use in politics – a religious blueprint for a genuinely Islamic society that tempers religious fervor with the preservation of public peace, while simultaneously drawing on the past to legitimate the direct involvement of religious leaders in political life. Kāshifī's template (much like Khomeini's several centuries later) is for a public religion,[48] one

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45 *Rashaḥāt*, I, 93–99.

46 Armando Salvatore, "Notes on Locality, Connectedness, and Saintliness," in *Dimensions of Locality: Muslim Saints, their Place and Space,* Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam 8, ed. Georg Stauth and Samuli Schielke (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008). See too Martha L. Henderson. "What is Spiritual Geography?" *Geographical Review* 83, no. 4 (1993).

47 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 123–42.

48 By public religion I have in mind a concept similar to what the "Early Modern Civil Religion Reading Group" based at Newcastle University have chosen to call "civil religion" – a language and concept seeking to reconcile government with religion, and to craft a model for religion that is conducive to maintaining public peace. "Liberated from the confines

that lubricates the machinery of governance. This illuminates the rising fortune of Sufi movements in the 11th century, as part of a concerted effort by politicians and religious leaders to stem confessional strife, and address a political crisis that had been simmering for decades.

As mentioned, institutionalized Sufis movements came of age a century or so after Niẓām al-Mulk's death, in the course of the two and a half centuries that separate the fall of the Abbasids in 1258 and the coming to power of the Ṣafavid (1501–1736) ruling house. These are arguably the most critical centuries in the social and religious history of Iran, at the end of which an overwhelmingly Sunni Iran was transformed into a robustly Shi'i nation, or so at least the conventional story goes. The role of Sufi communities in transitioning Iran between the two creeds remains hotly debated. Hamid Algar attributes the rapid Shi'ification of Iran to a crypto-Shi'ism arising in Khurasan and moving westwards sometime after the 15th century. Patricia Crone and others, including Abbas Amanat, see an increased devotion to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his progeny among Sunni Iranian Sufis in the 14th and 15th centuries that predisposed Sunnis in Iran to embrace Shi'ism.[49] The consensus in the field, though perhaps never explicitly recognized, is that states and governments were not the main agents of the social changes that overtook the Iranian/Persephone world from the 13th to the 16th centuries. Should that role instead be attributed to the Sufis?

It is in this light that the anti-Shi'i polemic of the Naqshbandīs is best understood. While they accept the sanctity and special status of 'Alī and his progeny, and even the hotly contested concept of a *mahdī* that will return at the end of time, the venom of Naqshbandī Sufis is directed at the rejectionist strand that has shaped Shi'i history from its very inception. Shi'i failure to accept the choice of the majority of the Muslim community upon Muhammad's death, and the ensuing split that has defined Islamic thought and history ever since, is regarded as an unpardonable offence.

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of being a subsidiary to republicanism," and explored as an intellectual tradition on its own terms, they argue, civil religion emerges as a "rich and complex discourse, through which efforts were made to develop a persuasive vision for a religion conducive to a tolerant and harmonious citizen body," see https://newcastlecivilreligion.wordpress.com/category/news/, accessed June 27, 2019.

49 For a summary of the debate, see Hamid Algar's review of Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*, in *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 8, no. 3 (2015); and Christoph Werner, "Die Schia in Iran: Von der Minderheit zur Mehrheit," in *Religiöse Minderheiten und gesellschaftlicher Wandel,* ed. Edith Franke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014).

Hence the appellation *rāfiḍī* (rejectionist, referring to those who rejected the consensus of the majority of the Muslim community) in Naqshbandī and other polemical literature.[50] In that vein, the Sufis of this period present their creed not as a hybrid Sunni-Shiʻi affair, or even a synthesis of the two, but instead as a new religion, albeit cast as "the true Sunni" creed. In the words of Simnānī:

> true Islam is that of the Sunnis, the most balanced of persuasions, in which the four rightly guided caliphs and Muhammad's progeny (*ahl al-bayt*) and his disciples are praised; no Muslim is accused of disbelief; and all prophets, scriptures and angels are respected, so that confessional prejudice is eschewed and various communities can live in peace.[51]

In this novel iteration of the Sunni creed, Sufis are its most perfect practitioners, as we shall explore in more detail below.

A similar architecture of the Sufi creed, again found in the company of a new template of public Islam, is the central thesis of Simnānī's *Al-Wārid al-shārid al-ṭārid shubhat al-mārid,*[52] a refutation of philosophy, specifically of Avicenna (d. 1037) and the Aristotelian tradition. *Al-Wārid* is composed of three architectural stages, argues Giovanni Maria Martini. It demolishes an old construction that was built with the 'wrong' architecture, it uses pieces from the old edifice to reconstruct the 'right' new architecture, and finally, it rebuilds a new edifice. First, a demolition ball is taken to philosophical views, then Simnāni collects viewpoints on those views from across the spectrum of Islamic thought, and shows how all except one are incompatible with the rest. To rebuild the edifice correctly, he ranks the various creeds

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50 The succession crisis that followed Muhammad's death in 632 divided the nascent Islamic community. The *shīʻat ʻAlī* (followers of ʻAlī), Shiʻa for short, held that ʻAlī had been robbed of his rightful position as the Prophet's heir and leader of his community. The opposing view, which was the default position of the vast majority of Muslims, came to be known in time as the *ahl al-sunna wa al jamāʻa* (those who uphold past precedence and the community's consensus), Sunni for short. The latter argued that as judgment belongs to God alone, Muslims should postpone taking a stance on the issue of succession. In the Sufi writings considered in this study, the Shiʻis are scorned not on account of minutiae of doctrine, but because they rejected the consensus of the community, refused to accept the course of history and sowed dissent.

51 ʻAlāʼ al-Dawla al-Simnānī, "Zayn al-muʻtaqad," in Martini, *ʻAlāʼ al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power,* 298–9.

52 It is telling that Simnānī also practiced silent *dhikr*, and corresponded with the Naqshbandī Khwāja ʻAlī Rāmtīnī on that topic. See Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ʻAlāʼ ad-dawla al-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 201; and *Rashaḥāt,* I, 63.

from the most exclusionary to the most universal. The most limited view belongs to the naturalists, followed by the physicists/mathematicians, the philosophers, and finally the Sufis, who sit atop the entire edifice, as a roof.[53] Its practice is the purest, its outlook the most universal, and its worship the most perfect.[54] Just as the Sunni creed, the wider net, is the most universal of Islam's creeds, the Sufi *madhhab,* the fifth Sunni *madhhab,* is the most universal: it is built upon the principle of community and consensus.[55] It comprises all that is esoteric and material; it honors all proper boundaries, desists from slander and raising accusations of heresy and infidelity against anyone who prays to the Kaʿba, and its followers revere their religious leaders, the Prophet's companions and his family, and all prophets and messengers.[56] Simnānī's ideal creed is not the antidote to Shiʿi doctrine, but the optimal safeguard against factional zeal and sectarian violence. It does not seek to reconcile Shiʿi beliefs with Sunni ones but to construct a new path to true Islam, the Truth.

An unsectarian worldview cloaked in sectarian terminology is the hallmark of Naqshbandī langue. They considered the Shāfiʿī al-Fārmadhī among their principal founders, but many of their leaders, including Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā and Jāmī,[57] are known to have hailed from a Ḥanafī background. Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī is claimed for the Ḥanafīs in *Rashaḥāt*, but he is listed as a Shāfiʿī in several earlier sources.[58] Although Kāshifī notes ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār's veneration for the Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, frequently referred to as *imam-i aʿẓam* (supreme leader), such high esteem has its limits. In one anecdote, the Sufi master Zayn al-Dīn Abū Bakr Tāybādī (d. 1389) asks one of his disciples if he likes the Imam-i Aʿẓam Abū Ḥanīfa more than his own shaykh. The disciple confesses that he likes his own master better. Offended at his response, Zayn al-Dīn insults the man and expels him from the gathering. Moments later, he

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53   Martini, *ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power,* 126–28.

54   Martini, 211.

55   Martini, 111–12, 216.

56   Martini, 211–12, 455.

57   Dina Le Gall suggests most Naqshbandīs, at least among those in the east, were of the Ḥanafī persuasion, whereas among their adherents in the Kurdish territories, Arabia and Egypt, Shāfiʿism prevailed; see *A Culture of Sufism*, 92–93; and according to Algar, Jāmī at least "does not appear to have attached any significance to this fact," Algar, *Jami*, 129.

58   Al-Samʿānī's 12th-century collected biography of Shāfiʿī notables is one such example, see Wilferd Madelung, "Yūsuf al-Hamadānī and the Naqšbandiyya," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5, no. 6 (1987–1988), 499–509.

regrets his extreme reaction and seeks the disciple in order to apologize. The disciple says,

> I followed the *madhhab* of the Imam-i A'ẓam for several years, but none of my defects were rectified. After a few days following this leader, however, I have shunned all dishonor. What is wrong with liking such a master more than the Imam-i A'ẓam, and is it written anywhere that such sentiment is abhorrent and forbidden?

Zayn al-Dīn apologizes and praises him.[59] The moral of the story, it appears, refutes the significance of *madhhab* affiliation. Finally, from a poem valorizing the Sufi path, we learn that the truth of divine love is revealed only to those with an esoteric inclination and not to jurists; Abū Ḥanīfa did not teach it, and al-Shāfiʻī (d. 820) said nothing on the matter.[60]

While Naqshbandī commitment to orthodoxy and to the Sunni consensus is ubiquitous, the political freight of their allegedly anti-Shiʻi stance remains contested. Consider an anecdote by ʻUbayd Allāh Aḥrār regarding the cursing of Abū Bakr by Shiʻis: A Sufi master happened onto *rāfiḍī* territory. A group of extremists gathered around his retinue and cursed Abū Bakr. The shaykh's companions wanted to attack the offenders. But the shaykh intervened:

> Do not harm them, for they do not curse our Abū Bakr. Our Abū Bakr is different from their Abū Bakr. Their imagined Abū Bakr landed the caliphate without merit and bore ill-will against the Prophet and his family; we too repudiate their Abū Bakr.

The rejectionists (*rāwāfiḍ*) regretted their actions and repented of their false beliefs.[61] The account carefully segregates individual Shiʻis from unpalatable dogma, but it also highlights the contingencies that divided the Muslim community, thus opening a path to reconciliation. The divergent readings of early Islamic history naturalize difference, and temper sectarian sentiment by suggesting a modus vivendi between conflicting creeds. They also stand in stark contrast to the violent and even obscene confrontations of the time between Shiʻis and Sunnis as reflected in popular literature.

Dogma, even if well entrenched, is subject to interpretation. In one *rashḥa*, Aḥrār, drawing on the authority of two prominent Naqshbandī masters, suggests that a dedicated and careful disciple is not obligated to

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59 *Rashaḥāt,* II, 462–63.
60 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 511.
61 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 490–91.

follow a master to achieve spiritual perfection. Revelation makes it clear, he claims, that the holy book and prophetic precedence suffice as guidance.[62]

Nuance is key in distinguishing the proper from the deficient. The good and the proper in the Shiʿi worldview is carefully separated from its deficiencies with a command exhorting the true Sufi to hold descendants of ʿAlī in the highest esteem, as laid out in a *rashḥa*.[63] In his own writings, Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā (d. 1420), Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband's *khalīfa* active in Bukhara is equivocal in his full confidence in the probity of Muhammad's companions, a sui generis pillar of the Sunni creed, and in the necessity of venerating the twelve imams, a core element of the Shiʿi school.[64] The same has been said of Jāmī. Pointing to his writings on ʿAli and other Shiʾi imams, Sajjad Rizvi suggests that Jāmī's triumphalist Sunni identity must be considered as part of a concerted effort to bolster Tīmūrid legitimacy against rival claims forwarded by Shiʿi and messianic movements "through acts of appropriating for the Sunni imperial traditions the very figures and symbols that defined Shiʿi identity: the Imams."[65]

In another *rashḥa,* Aḥrār is found to fix a Sufi cosmological hierarchy:

> There is *sharīʿat*, *ṭarīqat* (Sufi path) and *ḥaqīqat* (truth): *sharīʿat* is fulfilling God's exoteric commands, *ṭarīqat* is mindfulness and undivided attention to various aspects of the internal life, and *ḥaqīqat* is sharp insight into those matters.[66]

The triangulated rules of piety in Aḥrār's model abrogate any competition between *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa* by proposing a third plane that encompasses and transcends – in its purview as well as its content – the exigencies of both. Like Simnānī's philo-ʿAlid Sufi *madhhab* that integrates the teachings of the four Sunni schools of law with basic elements of the Shiʿi creed, and surpasses them all, the reach of Aḥrār's *ḥaqīqa* extends far beyond the ideals promulgated by both the *sharīʿa* and the *ṭarīqa*.

62 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 467.

63 *Rashaḥāt*, II.

64 Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* (Tashkent: Litografiya Gulam Khasandzhanova, 1913), 400–43, as quoted in Hamid Algar, "The Naqshbandis and Safavids: A Contribution to the Religious History of Iran and Her Neighbors," in *Safavid Iran and her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 31. Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā is also known for updating the Sufi Abū al-Qāsim Isḥāq Samarqandī's *Sawād al-aʿẓam,* a popular exposition of the Ḥanafī creed; see Wilferd Madelung, "Abuʾl-Qāsem Esḥāq Samarqandi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, accessed June 4, 2019. Originally published December 15, 1983. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-qasem-eshaq.

65 Sajjad Rizvi, "Before the Safavid-Ottoman Conflict: Jāmī and Sectarianism in Timurid Iran and Iraq," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 255.

66 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 503.

Resorting to a sectarian past is another feature of Naqshbandī history that is called upon to evidence its divisive core. The outlier Naqshbandī choice of performing *dhikr,* which, as noted above, also distinguished Abū ʿAlī al-Fārmadhī from his peers, is one such example. Where the majority of Sufis practiced vocal *dhikr*, the Naqshbandīs opted for the silent mode. In Naqshbandī lore, it was the prophet Khiḍr who initiated Ghujduwānī into the Sufi path, and gave him special dispensation to persist in silent *dhikr*.[67] In so doing, Ghujduwānī contravened the practice of Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī, who introduced him to the Khwājagān communi-ty.[68] Ghujduwānī's prescription for silent *dhikr* was adopted by Bahaʾ al-Din Muhammad Naqshband. When still the Khwājagān, the order practiced silent *dhikr* in private sessions and resorted to vocal incan-tation in public. The conversion from private silent *dhikr* and public vocal *dhikr* to silent *dhikr* to the exclusion of vocal incantation marked the revival of true piety in this Sufi community, and was commemorat-ed by its being renamed the Naqshbandiyya. The rebranding must date to the 16th century, ʿAlī Asghar Muʿiniyan suggests, since Khwājagān still predominates in Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt* and Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt*.[69] And Devin De-Weese and Jürgen Paul have shown that the connection was wrought at the expense of those collateral lines of the Khwājagān that did not lead to Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muhammad Naqshband, and reflected internal disputes.[70]

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67 *Rashaḥāt*, I, 35; Anna Krasnowolska, "Ḵeżr," Encyclopaedia Iranica Online, accessed June 4, 2019. Originally published April 15, 2009. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kezr-prophet.; Patrick Franke has gathered over a hundred accounts of encounters with Khiḍr, see his *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Is-lam* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000); and for a superb description of Khiḍr in Sufi literature, see Armando Salvatore, "Notes on Locality, Connectedness, and Saintliness".

68 According to Ghujduwānī's *Maqāmāt Yūsuf Hamadānī,* Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī too practiced silent *dhikr*, although the claim is contradicted in Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt*, see Ha-mid Algar, "Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. Ayyūb Hamadānī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online,* ac-cessed June 4, 2019. Originally published December 15, 1983. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-yaqub-hamadani.

69 See Muʿīniyān's "Introduction," *Rashaḥāt*, I, 45.

70 Devin DeWeese, "The Legitimation of Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband," *Asiatische Studien* 50, no. 2 (2006); and Jürgen Paul, *Doctrine and Organization: The Khwājagān/Naqshbandīya in the First Generation after Bahāʾuddīn* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1998), 18–30. Ha-mid Algar offers an alternative interpretation, see his review of Dina Le Gall's *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450–1750* in *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007).

The ideological freight of vocal vs. silent *dhikr* has, in addition, a sectarian component, according to Algar, who points to the association of vocal *dhikr* with ʿAlī, and of silent *dhikr* with Abū Bakr. In Naqshbandī writings, the origin of silent *dhikr* dates to the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina. Fleeing persecution, Muhammad took refuge with Abū Bakr in a cave. The Qurʾanic revelation:

> [h]e had no more than one companion; the two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, 'Fear not, for God is with us;' then God sent down His peace upon him [Q: 9:40];[71]

is read in that tradition to mark the birth of silent *dhikr* that provides the same peace that Abū Bakr received.[72] The attribution of silent *dhikr* to Abū Bakr, however, must be understood as a later hagiographical interpolation, and certainly not indicative of standard Naqshbandī practice. The adoption of silent *dhikr* by Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband followed intense inter-Naqshbandī strife, as documented in earlier sources, including the 14th-century *Masālik al-ʿārifīn.* In the period before Bahāʾ al-Dīn, when neither uniform doctrine nor practice prevailed among the Khwājagān, both styles of *dhikr* were present, and both persisted among his followers. Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā, for example, advises those among his followers who engage in vocal *dhikr* to make sure that their heart is in sync with their tongue when so doing, which is necessarily a dispensation to persist in their practice.[73] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that silent *dhikr* was the modus operandi of a good majority of Naqshbandī Sufis. What is questionable is whether that preference was endowed with a confessional lineage.

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71 ʿAbdullah Ysuf ʿAli, The Meaning of the Glorious Quran, accessed June 4, 2019, http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/QURAN/9.htm.

72 Hamid Algar, "Silent and Vocal dhikr in the Naqshbandī Order," in *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft, Göttingen, 15.–22. August 1974,* ed. Albert Dietrich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 41; and Paul, *Doctrine and Organization,* 18–30.

73 Muhammad Pārsā's "Kashfiyya," still in manuscript, is cited in Paul, *Doctrine and Organization*, 28.

6　The *adab* of *siyāsa* in the New Piety

The *adab* of *siyāsa* – the ethics of politics – is spelt out nicely in one anecdote, where the protagonist Aḥrār explains how it is that the Naqshbandīs have not overcome their competitors. Had we not been preoccupied by the command to protect Muslims from injustice, Aḥrār claims,

> there would not have been a single shaykh from another Sufi lineage who could boast even one disciple. But we need to interact with sultans to conquer their souls and in this manner avail the wellbeing of Muslims.[74]

Activism and involvement in the social world while continuing to tend to one's spiritual needs is explicitly endorsed in Naqshbandī teaching, as reflected in a series of paired contraries: *khalwat dar anjuman*, or seek solitude in the crowd, and *safar dar waṭan*, or journey in the homeland (one's own soul), which point out that preserving one's spiritual equanimity is possible even if one goes into the crowd or attends a princely court, as long as one does not lose sight of a higher spiritual realm.

For spiritual leaders who claimed to shun mundane affairs, Sufi masters placed a heavy premium on proximity to power. That conundrum is nicely captured in a modern collected biography of Naqshbandī shaykhs by the Egyptian Sufi master and poet Yāsīn b. Ibrāhīm al-Sanhūtī (d. 1935). The Sufi worldview, he holds, is one that rests on shunning worldliness, but at the same time it is tasked with upholding justice, ensuring that governors act in accordance with the law of God, and promoting public welfare.[75]

That concept of a public religion that acknowledges the imperative of governance – as has been sketched in this study – exemplifies secularity, understood not in contradistinction to religion or at least not allied with or hostile to any particular religion, but rather in a more specific sense to denote those "institutionally as well as symbolically embedded forms and arrangements that distinguish between religion and other societal areas."[76]

74　*Rashaḥāt,* II, 531.

75　Yāsīn b. Ibrāhīm Al-Sanhūtī, *Al-Anwār al-qudsiyyah fī manāqib al-sādah al-Naqshbandi-yya*, (Cairo: Matba'a al-Sa'ada, 1925), 130. For modern Naqshbandī political involvement, see Dina Le Gall, "Forgotten Naqshbandīs and the Culture of Pre-Modern Sufi Brotherhoods," *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003).

76　Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Research Programme of the HCAS 'Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities'," *Working Paper Series HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 1 (Leipzig University, 2016), 8; see too Armando Salvatore, "The Euro-Islamic Roots of Secularity: A Difficult Equation," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005).

In Armando Salvatore's explanation, secularity "manifests itself most directly in concrete modes of governance, and in the way religion is reconstructed as experience and belief to be confined to the private sphere of life."[77]

Kāshifī's account of an encounter between two rival Tīmūrid princes, Abū Saʿīd (r. 1451–69) in Samarqand and Abū al-Qāsim Bābur (r. 1447–57), who ruled in Khurāsān, is telling in this regard. Faced with an imminent attack from Bābur's forces, Abū Saʿīd asked ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār for advice. The military commanders in his service had ruled out resistance as futile, and advised the sultan to seek refuge in Turkestan. Aḥrār disagreed, and said: "I have assumed the task of defeating Bābur. Rest assured: I will fulfill my task." The commanders protested, but the Sufi shaykh prevailed because, we are told, the sultan was steadfast in his conviction. The commanders of Bābur's army knew that Abū Saʿīd's forces would not survive in battle against them. They were certain that his commanders would arrange his escape from Samarqand, and planned their attack on that basis. As Bābur's army descended on the city, Abū Saʿīd's soldiers were dispersed in various neighborhoods. The people of Samarqand put up a fierce resistance, and as instructed, proceeded to cut off the nose and ears of each captured soldier. Bābur's army was in despair. Then a cholera epidemic befell their horses and the trenchant smell of decaying corpses exacerbated their misery. Bābur sent an emissary to Aḥrār to sue for peace.[78]

But the story does not end there. As the vanquished Bābur lay on his side outside the city walls, he is said to have cried out:

> It may be true that we did not conquer Samarqand, but we did learn the truth about Khwāja Aḥrār, who is not an ʿārif, for if he were, he would not have destroyed us so.

Aḥrār's retort in defense of his spiritual credentials elevated the status of Sufi saints to that of prophets:

> Like prophets, ʿārifs are judged by the cause not the consequence of their actions. For if it weren't so, justifying the destruction wrought by the likes of Noah and Hūd who destroyed their own people by water and wind would be a problem.[79]

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77 Armando Salvatore, "The Euro-Islamic Roots of Secularity," 415. The Sufi exception to Salvatore's definition – their espousal of a distinctly public master-disciple relationship alongside an internalized religious experience based on individual practice – is addressed in more detail in the following section.

78 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 522–24.

79 *Rashaḥāt*, II, 525–26.

To support his claim, Aḥrār cites Q 8:11, which, addressing the believers, claims that it was not they who killed the unbelievers, but God himself.

In this episode, Aḥrār emerges as the true ruler of Samarqand, the people of the city his true army, and their truth confirmed by divine intervention. The mandate of restraining rulers, and its handmaiden, promoting the common good, is only feasible if religious leaders engage with political life – a nexus of secularity in early modern Islamic political thought. Restraining rulers denotes a differentiated notion of society, for it recognizes a political realm that must be tamed by religion, and an ideational sphere of religion which must be tempered to make good government possible. Crucially, however, it does not formulate a secular society, from which religion is segregated. Instead, Kāshifī's *Rashaḥāt ʿayn al-ḥayāt* constructs a public piety that, although in tension with politics, eschews a secular/religious divide.

7   New Pieties

That the religious landscape of Iran was drastically transformed in the period between the Mongol invasions and the coming of the Ṣafavids, originally leaders of a Sufi movement, is self-evident. Most conventional accounts read that history as a gradual migration from Sunnism to Shiʿism, facilitated by "Twelver Sunni" religious leaders or creeds that combined Sunni dogma with elements of the Shiʿi faith.[80] These 'syncretistic' creeds and actors paved the way for a full-scale conversion by spending hundreds of years warming Iranian hearts to a Shiʿism-lite, a creed fused with philoʿAlidism, spirituality, and reverence for human agents, from imams to Sufi *pīrs* (masters). Algar has argued against both the claim that Sufi communities prepared Iran for conversion to the Shiʿi creed, and the

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80   The term was coined by Muhammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb, cited in Algar, "The Naqshbandis and Safavids," 31; for a rebuttal of the 'soft Sunnism' hypothesis from a different angle, see Sajjad Rizvi, "Before the Safavid-Ottoman Conflict: Jāmī and Sectarianism in Timurid Iran and Iraq," in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, 227-30; and for the Sunnitization of Shiʿism in the Islamic west exemplified in the Almohad conception of authority in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Maribel Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 3 (1999), and her "The Almohads and the Fatimids," in *The Almohad Revolution: Politics and Religion in the Islamic West during the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Maribel Fierro (London: Routledge, 2012).

claim that Iran would have converted with or without the Shi'i Ṣafavids at its helm. His view rests to a very large extent on what he sees as the Sunni zeal of the Naqshbandī Sufis.[81] The predominance of the fiercely Sunni Naqshbandī Sufis in the region, he writes, should have sufficed to prevent any warming to the Shi'i cause. However, Ṣafavid Shi'ism was just one of a plethora of new pieties that took hold in the 14th century, a good number of which were not 'syncretistic' and looked not to reconcile but to override differences among communities of Muslims.

One such piety is the Mughal emperor Akbar's (r. 1556–1605) much-celebrated *dīn-i ilāhī*, or 'true religion,' which pivots around the principle of *ṣulḥ-i kull,* or universal conciliation. Against the prevailing consensus that places the impetus for such cross-confessionalism in the Mughal court and its interest in preserving public peace, Abbas Amanat has recently suggest-ed that the agnostics at Akbar's court, such as the Nuqṭawīs, played a more significant role in its formulation than previously considered. Pointist Nuqṭawī cosmology "advanced a theory of mystical materialism and cyclical renewal that essentially called for a renewed humanist creed beyond the pale of Islamic dispensation."[82] Brought to India by Iranian scholars fleeing Ṣafavid persecution, Nuqṭawī doctrine was naturalized in India's multi-confessional religious landscape as it spread among Sufi communities. A particularly influential individual was the Nuqṭawī scholar, Mīr Sayyid Sharīf Āmulī (d. 1625) who arrived at Akbar's court in 1576. According to Amanat, Āmulī persuaded Akbar that kingship, as a reflection of the divine, should incorporate the full gamut of diverse creeds, but this may be overstating Āmulī's reach.

Equally emblematic of the new pieties is the politically active and apocalyptic Ḥurūfiyya (Lettrist) movement founded by Faḍl Allāh As-trābādī, who claimed to have received the full meaning of Muhammad's message in a revelation, and was executed for this and other such inno-vative beliefs by the Tīmūrid governor of Azerbaijan in 1394. His follow-ers were particularly influential among the Bektashi Sufis in the Ottoman

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81 Algar, "The Naqshbandis and Safavids," 32.
82 Abbas Amanat, "Persian Nuqṭawīs and the Shaping of the Doctrine of 'Universal Concili-ation' (*SULḤ-I KULL*) in Mughal India," in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam,* ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 367.

empire.[83] Although the so-called Ḥurūfiyya were considered a heresy and decried in mainstream historical sources, the innovations in their creed were, for the most part adoptions of Shiʿi tenets. These included *taʾwīl* (in Shiʿi creed, the ability to bridge the inner and outer meanings of prophetic revelation, a privilege granted specifically to the imams), the imam as the manifestation of the divine word and spiritual guide, the means by which the divine attributes can be known, as well as the eschatological witnesses which will explain all the Qurʾan's ambiguities at the end of time.[84] In his testament, Astrābādī compares himself to Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, Muhammad's grandson who was killed in battle in 680 and the paradigmatic martyr of Shiʿi Islam.[85]

In Egypt, overcoming sectarian differences and active involvement in the design and practice of politics was the Sufi master ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's (d. 1565) project. Shaʿrānī was close to two Sufi communities of his day, the Shādhilīs and the Aḥmadīs, and although a prolific writer, he never professed his own affiliation.[86] Samuela Pagani has suggested that Al-Shaʿrānī's project in his hagiographical treatise, *al-Mīzān al-kubrāʾ,* was to arrive at a synthesis between the legal and spiritual traditions in Islam.[87] To that end, al-Shaʿrānī resorted to a "wide language" (*kalām wāsiʿ*) to bridge between the *madrasa* (colleges of Islamic legal and theological learning) and the *zāwiya* (Sufi gathering sites), popular and high Islam, and to publicize esoteric Sufi doctrine in a form that was palatable to the literalist (*ẓāhirī*) *ʿulamāʾ*.

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83 For more on the Ḥurūfī creed and its history, see Hamid Algar, "Horufism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, accessed June 4, 2019. Originally published December 15, 2004. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/horufism.

84 Aḥmad Ṭāhirī ʿIrāqī, "Introduction," in Khwāja Muhammad Pārsā-yi Bukhārāʾī, *Qudsiyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ṭāhirī ʿIrāqī (Tehran: Tahuri, 1975), 24–25; and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "*Ummī*s versus Imāms in the Ḥurūfī Prophetology: An Attempt at a Sunnī/Shīʿī Synthesis?" in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam,* ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

85 Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astrabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 39–40.

86 For al-Shaʿrānī's biography, see the introduction to Al-Shaʿrānī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, *Advice for Callow Jurists and Gullible Mendicants on Befriending Emirs,* trans. Adam Sabra (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); and for his political activities, see Neguin Yavari, "Sufis as Court Advisors," in *Handbook of Sufi Studies: Sufi Institutions*, ed. Alexandre Papas (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2020).

87 Samuela Pagani, "The Meaning of the *ikhtilāf al-madhāhib* in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's *al-Mīzān al-kubrāʾ,*" *Islamic Law and Society* 11, no. 2 (2004).

A similar argument lies at the heart of Armando Salvatore's distinction between the rival ethics of *adab* and hadith inspired moralism,

> a rather 'soft' distinction, whereby the ethical and literary tradition of *adab* works as an harmonious counterpoint more than as a sheer alternative, to the normative discourse subsumed under the notion of *shari'a*, the law originating from Divine will (*shar'*).[88]

That soft distinction has forged differentiations, even if ambivalent and uncertain, between religion and other spheres of human activity, including politics, law, art, and the economy.

8   Global New Pieties?

In thinking about the Naqshbandīs and other Sufi communities as agents of religious change in the early modern period in global terms,[89] our attention is quickly drawn to the confessionalization paradigm put forward by Heinz Schilling and others to explain the role of religion in modern European history. There too, religion at the service of politics, at religion's instigation, is a constitutive element. In brief, Schilling argues that the end of the 16th century witnessed the birth of three or four confessional churches that belong squarely to Europe's modern history: the Lutheran Church, the Calvinist/Reformed Church, the Tridentine Catholic Church, and the Anglican Church. The new churches divided Europe into distinct cultural religious systems, gave birth to a new state system, redefined political identities and spawned new nations. Confessional Europe may have been Christian for seventeen centuries, but the dawn of secularization in the 18th century that marked the beginning of modern Europe would not have taken hold had it not been for confessionalization.[90]

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88   Armando Salvatore, "The Islamicate *Adab* Tradition vs. the Islamic *Shari'a*, from Pre-Colonial to Colonial," *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 3 (Leipzig University, 2018), 7.

89   Alan Strathern, "Global Early Modernity and What Came Before," *Past & Present* 238, no. 13 (2018).

90   Heinz Schilling, *Early Modern European Civilization*, 11–32; and his "Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, J. Hillerbrand and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 21–35, and Thomas A. Brady, Jr. "Confessionalization – The Career of a Concept," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory*

For the most part incorrectly, in my opinion, recent discussions on confessionalization in the Islamic world take the paradigm to imply an intensification of confessional strife and are focused on the fostering of sectarian identity by the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal states in the 16th century. A number of those studies are reviewed in a recent *Past & Present* review article by Chris Markiewicz.[91] What Markiewicz fails to note, however, is that confessionalization crystallizes on the social register rather than in government policy, and that as such, the impetus for a well-bounded confessional identity comes from religious actors, be it Aquinas' disciple Ptolemy of Lucca (d. 1327), or his near contemporary at the Īlkhānid court, 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī. In this vein, the new Sufi *madhhab* is confessional, that is, it believes in the truth of its creed as well as its superiority to its many competitors, but also promotes a universal religion that is open to all, accommodates public peace and prioritizes the common good.

The majority of the new pieties that marked early modern Islamic history may have been short-lived and unsuccessful in birthing new religions (Babis and Bahais are notable 19th-century exceptions). But they were instrumental in crafting new molds of pious behavior, focused on individual practice, and centered around a politically active and intensely mobile individual leader.[92] They also begat secularity.[93] As Reinhard Schulze has demonstrated, the new pieties spawned modern confessional conceptions of religious identity in the

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of Bodo Nischan, ed. John M. Headley, J. Hillerbrand and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 1–20.

91 Christopher Markiewicz, "Europeanist Trends and Islamicate Trajectories in early Modern Ottoman History," *Past & Present* 239, no. 1 (2018). See too Nile Green, "Islam in the Early Modern World," in *The Cambridge World History,* ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and for another unconvincing application of the confessionalization paradigm to the Middle East, see Ayşe Baltacıoğlu, "Formation of Kizilbaş Communities in Anatolia and Ottoman Responses, 1450s–1630s," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 20, no. 1–2 (2014).

92 The kinetic energy of the Sufi masters and their proselytizing agents who crisscrossed the Islamic lands on a regular basis recalls the role of religious immigrants in creating the entrepreneurial class of the new capitalist cities of Europe in the 17th century, see Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 28–42.

93 Reinhard Schulze, "The Ambiguity of the Religious Self in Pre- and Postnational Social Worlds: Examples from 17th-Century Morocco and 20th-Century Germany" (lecture, 16th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions, Bern, June 17, 2018); and idem, "Islam and the Global History of Secularity" (lecture, Conference on "Secularities – Patterns of Distinction, Paths of Differentiation" convened by the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities," Leipzig, October 5, 2018).

16th and 17th centuries, that by the 19th century, led to the emergence of national identities, and in time, the rise of nation states. What is genuinely at stake in recasting the religious history of the early modern Islamic world is not simply a call for new, improved labels, a cleverly angulated composite noun to supplant 'syncretistic,' 'hybrid,' or 'synthesis.' Rather, the hope is for a paradigm of religious change that is not restricted to a spectrum stretching from Sunnism to Shi'ism, along which pieties of dazzling variety may be plotted.

In the longer run, this felicitous turn may finally put to rest the seemingly interminable quest for Islamic secularism, or for an indigenous enlightenment.[94] We may be able to stop asking, as Amanat does in his study on Nuqṭawī influence at the Mughal court, why it was that "the agnostic trend of the early modern Persianate world differed from [its] equivalents in Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries," and failed to produce "a lasting philosophical movement similar to the early Enlightenment in such places as the Dutch Republic,"[95] and instead consider the Enlightenment

> less as the birthplace of secularism than as the birthplace of a distinctly modern form of religion whose presence and power continues to shape the present.[96]

How will our understanding of modern religion change if, in line with the aforesaid, modern confessions such as Bahaism and Salafism are considered in tandem as equally a part of modern Islam?

The new pieties of the early modern period demand not just a thorough revision of how the history of Sufi movements and practices is studied, and a reevaluation of categories and concepts used to differentiate religious

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94 Albrecht Hofheinz has argued that Sufi movements (what he, following Reinhard Schulze, calls Neo-Sufi movements) of the 18th and 19th centuries differed sufficiently from their earlier counterparts to successfully catalyze an Islamic Enlightenment. They shared an agenda with Pietists – especially the American Methodists – that included: "Carrying the simple (and simplified) message of Truth beyond the sterile debating rooms of the theologians, carrying it to the common people, implementing it in real life, [and] making every individual responsible for its implementation;" see "Illumination and Enlightenment Revisited, or: Pietism and the Roots of Islamic Modernity," 18. Nile Green has noted several differences between Western mysticism and Sufism regarding the latter's collective and public rather than individualistic and private aspects, see his *Sufism: A Global History*, 1–10. For more on the Naqshbandīs in that period, see Waleed Ziad, "From Yarkand to Sindh via Kabul: The Rise of Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi Networks in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, in *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere*, Abbas Amanat and Assef Ashraf, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 125–68.

95 Amanat, "Persian Nuqṭawīs and the Shaping of the Doctrine," 389.

96 Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization," 1080.

movements and identities, but also a rethinking of Islamic history in the context of global history. Even if convergence between various parts of the early modern world – in both what came before early modernity and what came after it – remains elusive, a comparative approach to religious change may help illuminate global currents that defy easy categorization and, crucially, predate the empire-building impulse that for many early modernists sculpts their era from what came before it.[97]

Focusing on religious change will also force a reconsideration of arguments premised on absence of one sort or another. The absence of institutions – no matter how broadly defined[98] – is one example, as it has been taken to explain why it was that Islamic societies missed the boat to modernity, secularization and, ultimately democracy. Eduardo Manzano's study on the different processes of institutionalization in the medieval Christian and Islamic worlds is a case in point. While institutions served as engines of growth in 14th-century Europe, he writes, they failed in the Islamic world,

> because of the separation between power and authority that emerged at an early and critical stage in the Islamic polity; and, the distinctive notion of community that emerged as a result of this and helped to shape the self-definition of Muslim societies and the making of the social regularities that performed processes of institutionalization in early Islam.[99]

Manzano's thesis – that strong states grew to dominate the Christian lands whereas states in the Islamic world remained weak as religion successfully monopolized the discourse in authority – has been the mantra of scholarship on the Islamic world for almost a century.

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97 In his defense of the 'Cambridge method' against accusations of insularity and Eurocentrism, J. G. A. Pocock suggests an axial age common to several civilizations around the globe, which was succeeded, "circa 1500–1700, by an age of global empire, in which European commerce dominated the global ocean and permitted economic and political domination of the world's cultures." See J. G. A. Pocock, "On the Unglobality of Contexts: Cambridge Methods and the History of Political Thought," *Global Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2018): 7; and for an opposing view, see John Dunn, "Why We Need a Global History of Political Thought," in *Markets, Morals, Politics: Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought,* ed. Béla Kapossy et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

98 For a range of possibilities for what can be defined as an institution, see Gadi Algazi, "Comparing Medieval Institutions: A Few Introductory Remarks," in *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, ed. John Hudson and Ana Rodríguez (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 5–7.

99 Eduardo Manzano, "Why Did Islamic Medieval Institutions Become So Different from Western Medieval Institutions," *Medieval Worlds* 1 (2015): 127.

In important ways, the reach of this new approach is more modest, although it extends beyond the question raised by Gadi Algazi:

> Can we engage in large-scale comparisons between societies and even groups of historical societies and ask why they changed in one and not the other without assuming the superiority of one particular historical path, without taking this path for granted even while rejecting any value judgements, and without reducing alternative trajectories to no more than the roads not taken?[100]

The new approach calls for new strategies of reading that will, one hopes, give rise to better questions, and a modern conceptual lexicon for rethinking the past. Any attempt at globalizing Islamic history, be it premised on exchange, influence, cross-pollination, or combinative,[101] will ultimately rest on globalizing – read modernizing – its historiographical apparatus. And that is where we must begin.

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100 Gadi Algazi, "Comparing Medieval Institutions," 3.

101 For more on the various attempts to capture the infrastructure of cross-cultural exchange in the premodern period, see James E. Montgomery, "Islamic Crosspollinations," in *Islamic Crosspollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East,* ed. James. E. Montgomery, Anna Akasoy and Peter E. Pormann, (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 148–93; and Catherine Holmes and Naomi Standen, "Introduction: Towards a Global Middle Ages," *Past & Present* 238, Issue supplement 13 (2018).

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